After the last stitch:

Palestinian dresses and anticolonial feminist filmmaking

Joy Stacey

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This practice-as-research project comprises a film, Inti Samida (She the Steadfast) and accompanying thesis. It is a feminist and anticolonial investigation into embroidered Palestinian dress cultures, which interrogates the contemporary relationship between indigenous dress as a gendered heritage object and young women living in urban society under settler colonial occupation and global patriarchy. I argue for collaboration through local modes of knowledge production as a basis for anticolonial research. Viewing Palestinian dress cultures as liquid assemblage objects within a rhizomatic culture of women's knowledge production, I locate Palestinian dress as an expression of both the individual woman's life and body, and their identity within indigenous collectivist society.

Inti Samida is centred on five Acts made in collaboration with women living in the West Bank through Palestinian theatre-making methodologies. These performances are premised on the act of dressing in an object that connects women's lives and knowledge across time and space. The Acts are correspondingly 'dressed' in a patchwork assemblage of archival and found audio and visual material from Palestinian film, literature, poetry, music, academia, feminism and activism, as well as documentary material by ally makers, to contextualise and examine the epistemologies and histories informing the collaborations. The symbolism of embroidery can thus be found emulated in the symbols and collisions that these patches contain and create. I also include short samples of audio from international media commentary, imagining these as cheap imported lining fabrics, offering context but lacking in nuance, and locating dispersed Palestinian narratives within permeable and precarious epistemological borders.

As a White British maker, I endeavour to decolonise knowledge production through centring Palestinian voices. To achieve this I use evolving debates in Palestinian feminist anti-colonial

resistance to guide the narrative as video editor in arrangement of assemblage materials sourced from primarily Palestinian makers, writers and commentators. I use Edward Said and Jean Mohr's publication *After the Last Sky* (1986) and Elia Suleiman and Jace Salloum's short film *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (1990) to inspire a transposing of assemblage Palestinian dressmaking structures into a hybrid patchwork filmic structure. I also draw on Yara Hawari's notion of Palestinian indigenous time (2019), treating Palestinian temporality as fluid and rooted in the trauma of the Nakba, allowing numerous histories and temporalities to rhizomatically connect, repeat and collide in the edit form.

The accompanying thesis contextualises the filmmaking process, exploring the historical research, working relationships and anticolonial feminist thought that informed the development of the film. In this, I argue for a de-centring of the PLO's nationalist and patriarchal icon of the Embroidered Woman in dress culture histories, focussing instead on histories of inherited dressmaking cultures as a form of women's knowledge production that incorporates both collectivist and individual identities. Palestinian women's diverse and subjective identities, lives and resistances to colonial and patriarchal abuse can thus be viewed within an open-ended and non-linear history of gendered agency, activism and power.

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This practice-as-research (PaR) project began as an investigation into embroidered Palestinian dressmaking, and its evolving roles in Palestinian society. Palestine is home to a rich indigenous dressmaking culture, taught through women's kinship relations and symbolising the wearer's village, religion, marital status and wealth. Since the rupture of the Nakba (catastrophe) in 1948, images of women wearing these dresses have saturated representations of Palestine in arts, culture and the political sphere. These dresses have been used to symbolically convey complex heritage and identity narratives before and after the Nakba, becoming iconised in the 1960s as key to Palestinian national imagination. Among many meanings, images of women in Palestinian dress can symbolise tacit indigenous knowledge, women's histories, nationalist notions of Mother of the Land, social gender roles, the politics of visibility, and resistance to colonial erasure and ethnic cleansing. Since the Second Intifada (casting off) in 2000-2005, Palestinian society has seen numerous upheavals, with the evolving power abuses of the Israeli occupation compounded by widespread disillusionment in the national project, governmental corruption, the active suppression of political opposition (Maira, 2013), and a lack of meaningful legal protections for women (Hawari, 2019).

This PaR then, investigates changing relationships to Palestinian dress within a generation of women who are negotiating intergenerational and patriarchal notions of nationalism and identity. The creative practice part of this research consists of a 49-minute film *Inti Samida* (*She the Steadfast*), inspired by the assemblage construction of embroidered dresses made within

kinship relationships (Jad 2018) and collectivist society.[1] The film is constructed around a series of collaboratively made theatrical 'Acts' generated with five young women living in the West Bank, titled *Memory*, *Family*, *Work*, *Anger* and *Change*. These performances are inspired by Palestinian theatre-making practices and use fictional narratives to reflect on collaborators' perceptions of gendered lives, inspired by their own understanding of what it means to wear Palestinian dress in the present day. These performances are subsequently connected, contextualised and unpacked through an assemblage patchwork of film, audio and textual materials. These materials are woven into a narrative form through single and split screens, disconnected, fragmented and layered audio, manipulated and repeated temporalities, and textual overlays. In the light of Israel's confiscation and destruction of Palestinian archives, these materials were sourced from Palestinian makers, cultural institutions and ally makers, as well as from YouTube and global news platforms, combined with some original footage and interviews from my own fieldwork. The assemblage threads together diverse, rhizomatic narratives to explore the means by which young women in contemporary Palestinian society negotiate their relationships to the dress and gendered histories.

This accompanying thesis serves to contextualise the making process, identifying the history, creative making, working relationships and anticolonial feminist thought informing the development of the film. Highlighting and expanding on the importance of these within my approach to filmmaking, I argue for a feminist anticolonial research methodology led by pre-existing Palestinian modes of making and knowledge production.[2] This thesis is structured with the Introduction identifying key research questions, establishing anticolonial approaches to research in Palestine, and clarifying my own entry point. The first chapter then establishes a

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[1] Sagy et. al. (2001) define Palestinian society, as well as broader Arab societies, as predominantly collectivist, emphasising "values that promote the welfare of their in-group" over and above those of the individual.

[2] 'Feminist' refers to actions towards women's rights, in resistance to global patriarchy, and with the acknowledgement that this language may not be used by women who engage with these actions due to colonial connotations. 'Anticolonial' refers to resistance to imperialist colonisation, as well as coloniality within the academy and within knowledge structures.

feminist framework led by Palestinian thought by contextualising the historical and academic basis for the film. This includes the construction of a conceptual basis for knowledge production that is directly inspired by Palestinian dress-making cultures, and a history of women's actions and anticolonial feminist thought that is traced in relation to the development of gendered nationalisms.

The second chapter delineates and analyses the fieldwork and collaborative filming processes, exploring dress in Palestinian theatre-making methodologies, as well as the precarities in performing gendered experiences and the messiness of subjectivities within PaR. The third chapter examines the film's dress-inspired construction through assemblage patchwork forms, threading pre-existing and newly made narrative forms into a kinetic narrative led by women's words and local modes of cultural production. I conclude by advocating for a feminist view of Palestinian dress that differentiates between women's tacit knowledge and intangible heritage across time, and narrow nationalist gendered imaginaries developed by patriarchal leadership under settler colonial occupation. In this, I echo Sahar Khalifeh's assertion that Palestinian liberation must be reached with equality on all fronts (Nazareth and Khalifeh, 1980, pp 83), which I argue includes gender, sexuality, class and ethnic identities.

The fieldwork conducted in this research took place over a series of six one-month trips to Palestine[3] between February 2016 and July 2019. During my trips I was based in Bethlehem, and travelled broadly to West Bank cities including Jerusalem, Ramallah, Nablus, Hebron, Jericho, and numerous surrounding villages, within Israel/1948 Palestine, to Haifa and Jaffa, as well as visits to Beirut, Lebanon, and Amman, Jordan; both homes to sizable Palestinian refugee communities. It is important to highlight that Gaza is inaccessible to most researchers due to the ongoing Israeli blockade. This alone is the reason for not working with Gazan women directly,

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[3] This work understands Palestine to be a territory that has been recognised for 4000 years (Masalha, 2020). In the present day, this territory also contains the state of Israel, which is colonially imposed on top of Palestinian territory, and can be understood to exit simultaneously to it.

while Gazan writers and makers do inform and are integrated into this research.

This thesis is rooted in an understanding that the Nakba is essential to framing Palestinian history and experience. This intentional and structured massacre, displacement and exile of Palestinians during the establishment of Israel in 1948 left an estimated 15,000 dead, 750,000 displaced, and over 400 towns and villages completely erased (IMEU 2015). Today, 13.8 million Palestinians live in exile, many in refugee camps across the region, while 1.9 million live within Israel (IMEU 2021), 3.12 million live in the occupied West Bank, and 2.11 live in occupied Gaza (PCBS & UNFPA 2021). Contemporary scholarship argues that the events of 1948 began a process of ethnic cleansing that continues today through a decades-long occupation and denial of refugees' right to return; therefore the Nakba is an ongoing event (Khoury, 2012). Given the displacement and fragmentation of Palestinian community, and their continued statelessness, this thesis will refer to Palestinian people as a community in that it is one rooted in the Nakba (Said, 1986, pp 5), prior to diverse and subjective lives and experiences among a vast population.

Responding to the conditions of the settler-colonial occupation of Palestine, this thesis is written from a position of anticolonial allyship. Despite Israeli state denial of the fact, the occupation of Palestine amounts to a crime against humanity under international law, on the basis of apartheid and persecution (HRW, 2021). Conversely, resistance to the occupation remains legal under international law. To quote the Geneva Convention;

> …the struggle of peoples under colonial and alien domination and racist régimes for the implementation of their right to self-determination is legitimate. (Geneva Convention Additional Protocols, Paragraph 8:65, 1984)

This research does not in any way endorse violence, yet nor can it condemn violence committed by people within resistance to colonial domination. Instead, this research recognises that violence saturates Palestinian experiences under settler-colonialism, and cyclically within its own community. Within this complex and fraught space, I seek to understand gendered epistemologies and women's narratives.

A basis for anticolonial research on Palestine

Anaheed Al Hardan's 2013 paper, *Decolonizing Research on Palestinians: Towards Critical Epistemologies and Research Practices*, queries how researchers who are structurally positioned within academies in colonial nations during ongoing coloniality can decolonise knowledge production in work with stateless Palestinians. Offering a practical model through which this thesis can be structured, Al Hardan argues that the process of decolonisation must be enacted in the 'before, during and after' of research; the *before* of these being a requirement to address the sphere of the academy. Palestinian histories must be adhered to, and theoretical grounding must centre Palestinian thought.[4] In the *during*, Al Hardan refutes the reductive dichotomy of outsider/insider, pointing to the multi-layered subjectivities in personal and researcher relationships, and the consequential precarity of "truths" spoken to the researcher in their practice. This relationship then must be framed as clearly as possible within my own subjectivities. It follows that meanings and findings cannot be presented as fundamentally truthful or definite; embracing the messiness of subjectivities provides a valuable alternative. In the *after*, Al Hardan writes that research on Palestinian community must be for that community first and foremost.

To begin to respond to Al Hardan, this thesis must be premised with a location of colonial infringements on Palestinian narration. In 1969 Israeli Prime Minister Golder Meir famously stated that "Palestinians don't exist". This language of erasure followed the ethnic cleansing of

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[4] While this alignment with Palestinian thinkers is essential to an anticolonial praxis, centring that thought does not imply passive allyship.

Palestinians in the ongoing Nakba, and was echoed in 2021 with Israeli Knesset member Bezalel Smotrich's refusal to debate with Palestinian members of parliament;

> You're here by mistake, it's a mistake that Ben-Gurion didn't finish the job and didn't throw you out in 1948. (Shpigel, 2021)

In this, Smotrich demonstrates a continued silencing of Palestinians. Edward Said famously wrote that Palestinians have been denied "permission to narrate" (1984); an allegation evidenced at an event within my own University. In May 2017 a conference took place at the University of Sussex titled *Occupation at 50: Pasts, Presents, Futures*. A number of Palestinian speakers boycotted it due to the disproportionately large number of Israeli speakers, and the roster of panels remaining on the programme almost exclusively focussed on the means by which Israel structures and maintains the occupation. The conference title itself implied that the occupation began with the military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and Golan Heights in 1967. The settler-colonial occupation of Palestine began in 1948 and led to the subsequent military occupation in 1967; the conference was therefore premised on a distinctly imperialist view of historical beginnings. Some speakers did not mention Palestinians at all. Others went as far as to use analysis of the occupation's structures to discuss exclusively Israeli experiences.

In recent years discussion of the occupation of Palestine and the Zionist national project has become embedded in settler colonial theory; a theory separating colonialism from settler colonialism in understanding their distinctly different functions. Veracini explains:

> …one is hierarchical, the other rhizomatic; one aims towards its reproduction, the other towards its supersession. (2019)

Both are imperialist and one can intersect with the other, however, colonialism seeks to conquer and reproduce its power structures onto the colonised, while settler colonialism seeks to violently replace civilians in order to claim a "new" land. This theory has gained enormous traction in connecting the Palestinian experience to those of settler-colonised peoples such as indigenous Americans and Australians. This conference, however, exemplified the academy's fallibility in

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this substantial turn to settler colonialist studies as a basis for discussion of Palestine, which has inadvertently contributed to the silencing of Palestinian perspectives in privileging analysis of the occupiers. Indeed, Rana Barakat (2018) argues that settler colonialism is a field best suited to the study of Israel and Zionism. There is a clear need for anticolonial research to begin from a position that counters and refutes this turn. Barakat follows the writing of Steven Salaita (2016), with both writers advocating for a position in which Palestine and Palestinians are instead approached through the field of indigenous studies; this research will thus focus on the indigenous Palestinian population itself, which, while imposed upon by the settler colonial occupation, is separate and distinct from it. Within this focus, identifying and leading research with the history of the Palestinian population is essential to anticolonial praxis; a concern that is central to the first chapter.

At the end of the aforementioned conference, two Palestinian academics, Yara Hawari and Hana Sleiman, raised their concerns regarding the event's structural bias. They were legitimately concerned that British institutions are increasingly silencing Palestinian advocacy, noting that events and conferences are often cancelled due to Zionist lobbying. They left the lecture theatre rapidly in order to avoid hostility, but were quickly followed by an Israeli professor and organiser of the event, who physically accosted them, repeatedly asking, "Who are you?" Hawari and Sleiman (2017) have since observed that this encounter directly emulated the language and threatening behaviour used by IDF soldiers in order to identify an individual's ethnic (therefore legal) status, and the subsequent parameters of their behaviour towards that individual.

Hawari and Sleiman published an article responding to these events, recounting the applause received from attendees when they offered their critiques, and the shockingly contradictory silence of attendees during their very public encounter. Their conclusion was directed at allies in the academy, and is formative to this research;

> If academic allies spoke up more often, we would have to deal less with the political and
> professional ramifications of critiquing those who are in a more privileged and powerful

position in the academic and political spheres. Some allies, and rightly so, are concerned with speaking over Palestinians and thus also adding to the silencing of oppressed voices. However, it is important that this concern does not mean that allies abandon us in our time of need, or stand around and watch as was the case in this incident. Speak alongside Palestinians; use your inherent privilege to voice your support of us.

Hawari and Sleiman identify a politics of voice: who speaks, who listens, and who has the power/privilege to speak. This event was revisited by Hawari, Plonski and Weizman (2018), who expand to suggest that, in maintaining the tension between Zionist and Palestinian positions as a space for "debate", discourse "stagnates" in denial of the right for Palestinians to speak. They subsequently take Hawari and Sleiman's call to action a step further, arguing that in order to understand and decolonise Israel's settler-colonial occupation of Palestine, one must;

> …see Palestine as both the site of particular convergences of territorial, capitalist and nationalist logics, and as part of global and regional processes; a space of circuits and dialectic relations that feed into and out of global capitalist and colonial intersplices. (2018)

They echo Al Hardan's concluding call to the researcher to "align herself with these struggles" in academic work, concluding that the researcher should view Israel and Palestine "through the lens of Palestine"; each setting a clear precedent for anticolonial research praxis.

This project – the film and thesis – views indigenous Palestinian lives, culture and society as distinct from settler-colonial occupiers, and for this reason, Israel is discussed as a settler-colonial national project imposed over an indigenous Palestinian nation. Furthermore, if one is to view Palestine as a site in which power abuses converge, then the intersections of these abuses must be considered. Veracini (2019) writes that settler-colonial occupation is rhizomatic, meaning that this practice-led research will respond to a multifaceted and moving colonised space. Finally, in order to maintain an anticolonial research praxis, the filmic and written work will be consistently guided by Palestinian voices and perspectives.

Locating researcher subjectivities and privileged access

Locating my subjectivity in an exploration of a culture outside of my own is an essential precursor to both the thesis and practice (Gupta & Ferguson 1997, Mosselson 2010, Baker 2021). Al Hardan (2013) identifies that colonial research praxis assumes the researcher is "universal", requiring decolonial praxis to refute this notion in identifying researcher subjectivities and limitations. To achieve this, the role of international researchers within Palestine must be considered, and clarity must be lent to my point of entry, interpersonal relationships with collaborators, qualitative research, and authorship, ensuring transparency.

El dawleyeen, or, "the internationals", is a term used within the West Bank to refer specifically to first-world individuals working in solidarity with Palestinians as well as in the NGO, development and government sectors. This term and category of actors within the occupied territories emerged after the Oslo accords in 1994 and hinges on the ability to move between borders in what Linda Tabar (2013) identifies as "an uncanny mirroring of the movement and logics of global capital", in a mode of solidarity that is in itself a racialised privilege. My ability to work in the West Bank is a privilege born of my passport and my Whiteness.

Tabar goes on to trace the history of *el dawleyeen* to the Second Intifada, noting how, from 2001, the Palestinian NGO Network began strategically recruiting international observers to witness the impact of the occupation. This resulted in the establishment of the International Solidarity Movement, which seeks to utilise those with White privilege to create a "protective presence".

To evidence the impact of my racialised presence in Palestine, while conducting this research, a friend driving us between villages found themselves caught in an unintended U-turn in front of a large checkpoint. I watched as the soldiers began to stand and pick up their rifles. I rolled down my window on the passenger side, hung out my bare-skinned arm and smiled at the soldiers from behind my sunglasses. The soldiers then relaxed, moved back and rested the buts of their rifles

on the ground. This provides a basis from which to understand the perceived and problematic meaning of my presence in the West Bank by both Palestinians and Israelis. What began as a novel defensive strategy rapidly grew into a sometimes (but not always) effective normalised form of human shielding, which Tabar notes fails to challenge the racialised paradigms that constitute the basis of colonial control itself.

In addition, my gender privileges in Arab societies as a British woman are substantial. Privileged alterity affords foreign women, particularly White women, access to men's spaces, women's spaces, and restricted institutional spaces, with Schwelder (2006) going as far as to argue that "western" women constitute a third sex in Arab cultures. While this assertion is inadequate to the nuances of racialised gender dynamics and mitigates the presence of non-binary and trans* Arabs, Schwelder's claim that White women experience privileged access in Arab societies does correspond with my own experience. Further to this, I am relatively unconstrained by social conservatisms, and both Israeli and Palestinian governance; while I do not seek to disrespect my hosts, I have a safety and agency in word and thought not afforded to those living within Palestine. Lastly, in respect to my own identity, my poor Arabic language skills must be addressed. While this dyslexia-caused inadequacy restricts my work in access to texts and in conversation with participants and collaborators, I am anecdotally told that my lack of spoken Arabic indicates that I am unlikely to be a spy. This constrained linguistic access also provides a means by which I can diffuse my power and offer agency; a notion I will expand upon in the second chapter.

My institution and funding must also be discussed in relation to my privilege. International funders are culpable for the depoliticization of the Palestinian women's movement, with access to funding conditional on non-participation in the Palestinian political sphere (Jad 2007). Combined with widespread public sector corruption and Israeli economic normalisation policies, in Palestinian society, there is a high level of scepticism towards funders. It is important to state

that my financial support does not infringe on freedom of speech or expression.[5]

Finally, I will account for my prior experience in Palestine in order to contextualise the establishment of my research question. My personal engagement with Palestine and the Palestinian community pre-exists and will extend beyond this project. I first visited Palestine in 2010 in the final year of my undergraduate study. At that time my practice focussed on photojournalism and I had arranged to spend a month with non-violent protestors in the Bethlehem district through NGO The Holy Land Trust (HLT)[6], with whom I had arranged an exchange in which HLT staff members would act as fixers in return for my photographs.

Protests were strictly orchestrated with a meeting schedule, a significant number of international activists and observers, and a planned route for the march, normally leading towards the newly constructed separation wall. Darweish and Rigby (2015) analyse this period of post-Second Intifada protests, which, they write, grew in an attempt to prevent the construction of the separation wall. By my visit in 2010, the urban portions of the wall were fully formed and the protests had evolved. While preventing the wall build was no longer possible, the proliferation of new and affordable digital technologies and the rapid expansion of internet access had created another opportunity for non-violent resistance to Israeli oppression through the documentation of their abusive tactics. Darweish and Rigby quote an activist in the Hebron area;

> The Israeli soldiers have changed. They are more scared of us, or actually they are scared of our cameras. When they shoot at us we can record all of that now.

Within these protests, camera lenses documented events that exemplified Israel's abuses of

[6] HLT was established from the Palestinian Centre for Nonviolence, founded in Jerusalem in 1983 by Palestinian-American Psychologist Mubarak Awad. M. Awad was an advocate of the teachings of Ghandi; his methodologies of nonviolence and civil disobedience were published in the influential article *Non-Violent Resistance: A Strategy for the Occupied Territories* in 1984.

power, while the nonviolence of the protestors performatively implied moral authority over the occupier's use of violence. Each clash was aired and broadcast in Palestinian news outlets, on Facebook and through activist websites. My presence as a photographer was in high demand, yet once I reached the protest, I would find dozens of other photographers already darting in and out of the crowd. These protests can be understood then as performative demonstrations of the constraints of the occupation, performed specifically to the lens in the hope of gaining solidarity from a witnessing audience, demonstrating a lens politic specific to Palestinian resistance practices (Maimon, V., & Grinbaum, S. 2016).

Having maintained friendships in Bethlehem, I returned while continuing my Masters study in 2013. Reflecting on the performance of Palestinian resistance acts to the camera, I was struck by advertising for the *Bet'Lahem Live Festival*, HLT's new program promoting internal unity and international awareness. The signature marketing image for the first year of the festival featured a young couple in traditional Palestinian dress, standing in the Church of the Nativity and gazing up to the heavens (Fig.1), surrounded by red and gold detailing and Canaanite stars.[7] Responding to the disparity between this nationalist iconography and the contemporary urbanites I knew in the town, I created my first films with models from the festival flier: *The Tourist* (2013) (Fig.2). Each of the performers stood facing the camera by the entrance to the Church of the Nativity, posing as though for an ethnographic photograph, stationary within a moving environment thronging with disinterested tourists. The two 12-minute films were then projected first onto the Israeli separation wall, and later in a gallery installation, each figure facing the other, creating a gaze between the two performers that excluded the viewer.

On graduation I received a job offer from a consultant working with the HLT, developing international marketing for the second instalment of *Bet'Lahem Live.* This was a challenging

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[7] One argument regarding Palestinian indigeneity is the genetic root in the Canaanite tribe, who preceded the Israelites. Recent studies identify that most Palestinians and Jews have genetic links to both tribes. (Agranat-Tamir et. al., 2020)

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period which allowed an insight into some fundamentally important conversations about Palestinian identity, resistance, and gender narratives. This was also a time of upheaval for the staff, who were then being asked by their employers to engage in dialogue with Israelis.[8] Language was hotly debated, and meetings in which the team attempted to redefine the organisation's core principles underwent months of re-drafting. There was significant debate over the representation of women in the festival's marketing. The Christian staff were unwilling to use a model wearing hijab; a garment which was viewed as inauthentic to Palestinian identity despite now being worn by huge numbers of Palestinian women, having been introduced in the '90s. Conversely, a model carrying a basket of pomegranates, which I was informed was a cultural symbol of fertility, was viewed as authentically Palestinian and included in the marketing. I raised my concerns that Muslim women were being marginalised and that valuing women primarily through fertility was reductive, and was not unreasonably told that I did not have the cultural understanding to be eligible for an opinion.

These experiences alongside my many continued friendships in Palestine laid the foundations for my research questions, demonstrating some of the fractures, problematics and sensitivities in both collective and gender identities in Palestine, both of which appeared constrained in their variations and subjectivities by a desire to foster a unifying national resistance narrative. My understanding of Palestine had consistently evolved through lens-based making facilitated or made in collaboration with local activists and friends. Furthermore, my earlier work solidified my understanding of the perceived power of lens-based representation as performative resistance within occupied Palestine. With my later return for employment, I identified that representations of gender in Palestine required further examination and understanding. A key concern was the question of how young women in Palestine today might relate (or not relate) to the performative icon of the woman in an embroidered dress that the HLT staff so keenly perpetuated; while I

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[8] Normalisation of the occupation through the performance of open dialogue is an intentional colonial strategy used by Israel to some success (Allegra et al 2017).

understood this icon to be historically important, what was the history behind this, and how did it relate to real women's bodies and lives in contemporary Palestinian culture?

Chapter 1

"I have become a symbol?"

A feminist reading of Palestinian histories and narratives

On this land,

There is what makes life worth living

On this land

The lady of our land

The mother of all beginnings

And the mother of all ends

She was called Palestine

Her name later became Palestine

My lady…

Because you are my lady

I deserve life.

- Mahmoud Darwish, written during the 1960s

When Beauvoir claims that woman is an "historical situation," she emphasizes that the body suffers a certain cultural construction, not only through conventions that sanction and proscribe how one acts one's body, the 'act' or performance that one's body is, but also in the tacit conventions that structure the way the body is culturally perceived.

- Judith Butler, 1989

Representations of Palestinian women wearing indigenous dress constitute an icon that Sherwell writes "proliferates in work by artists and appears in museum collections across the world" (1996). The development of gender and identity performance in Palestine must be understood in order to explore the perceived meanings of these performances. As Butler (1990) argues, gender is performative and a product of socially constructed enactments, subconsciously repeated and reproduced. Academic enquiry in Palestine has only recently begun to examine

intential performances within the arts (Duffy, 2010, Varghese 2020, Johansson & Wallin 2018), and while these performances can reference the performative, performativity in and of itself is discussed minimally. A select community of Palestinian writers and allies have developed a canon of academic writing on feminism and gender both under occupation and in resistance (Jad, 2011, 2011, 2018; Johnson 2007, 2009; Hammami & Johnson, 1999; Kassem 2011; Kuttab, 1993, 2008, 2010; Johnson & Kuttab, 2001; Richter-Devroe, 2018; Sayigh 1981, 1983, 1985, 2007, 2010, 2017). While Butler has discussed Palestine and their support of BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions against the Israeli state) with Israeli leftist newspaper Haaretz (Aloni, 2010), their notion of gender performativity has not been discussed in relation to women in Palestine.

Zionist settler-colonial narratives attempt to erase and replace Palestinian society and history, meaning that Palestinian resistance has been forced to incorporate an evidencing of their identity, history and existence as an anticolonial act and precursor to discussion of the occupation. Palestinian identity in itself has been closely debated, defined and discussed (Khalidi, 2009), despite the diversity of lived identities and precarious messiness in attempting to define people on mass. As Hasso (1998) notes, national identity is often created by men, and is in itself heavily gendered. While constructed performances of gendered national identity is discussed in Palestinian arts (Swedenberg, 1990; Sherwell, 1996; McDonald, 2013; Ghabra 2020), little attention has been given to the relationship between this staged performance of gender and women's socialised gender roles within contemporary culture. Acclaimed historian Rosemary Sayigh has written on women's perceptions of selfhood in Palestinian refugee camps in Lebanon (2007). Situating her analysis within individual women's conceptions, she draws on the deep connections individual women have formed between national identity and gender roles, concluding that women's selfhoods would incorporate collectivist narratives:

> In camps, gender conservatism was multi-sourced, forming a link with Palestine, a boundary differentiating Palestinians from the "host" population, and resistance to coercive change. (2007, pp.86)

Ruba Salih (2017) likewise researches women in refugee camps, arguing for an exploration of women's embodied experience in her research into elderly women. To Salih, affect caused by the ongoing Nakba can be better understood through bodily memory, which thus becomes an essential site for exploration given that bodies are the primary target of Israeli violence and oppression. While this views women's narratives through a lens adjacent to performativity in its shift to the embodied, the focus on older women's experiences, while invaluable, does not speak for the younger generation or to those not living in refugee camps. Writings on the current young generation of Palestinians draw from contemporary subcultures, almost entirely focussed on hip-hop and techno music cultures (Andersen, 2013; Mays, 2019; Maira, 2013; Mc Donald 2008, 2016; Salih & Richer-Devroe, 2014; Withers, 2021), and do not address any relation to women's histories and embodied gender in Palestine.

In order to explore the intersections and divergences between these concerns, it is essential to understand the development of each in line with Palestinian history. As is popularly recognised in the field of cultural studies, culture is a forum within which political resistance and agency can be enacted (Pappe, 2018), rising to particular prominence in a community without governmental representation (de Cesari, 2017). Cultural practices are therefore instrumental in this history. The following chapter identifies these histories and their corresponding epistemologies in order to contextualise the premise for *Inti Samida* and define the basis for its conceptual framework.

The following text establishes a conceptual basis for filmmaking inspired by women's assemblage dressmaking as knowledge production, using Delueze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*, Judith Bulter's writing on gender performativity (1990, 2010), and Yara Hawari's construction of Palestinian indigenous time (2018). This chapter then expands into a history of women's political agency, creative practices and feminist narratives in public and political spheres; corresponding with the development of the Palestinian liberation movement, gendered nationalist discourses, and the genesis of the Palestinian Authority. This qualifies an anticolonial and feminist understanding of Palestinian histories, while forming a basis from which this work is epistemically informed by Palestinian women's words and gender narratives. While this thesis

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must be concise and not all histories can be comprehensively covered, I endeavour to provide a contextual overview of gendered epistemologies in Palestinian history as a basis for filmmaking, starting with dressmaking, and highlighting pivotal moments, actions and narratives.

Palestinian dress before the Nakba: Assemblage materials, local intersections and the personal in the collective

Since 1300 BC, *Filastin* has been the most commonly recognised name for the territory that sits between the Mediterranean Sea and the River Jordan (Masalha, 2020). Under the Ottoman Empire, Palestine was understood to be a province in Greater Syria; a region with a rich history of intricately ornate clothing born of access to varied materials obtained through its prolific trade routes. In 1920, the artificial borderlines created in the Partitioning of the Middle East, drawn by French and British politicians at the Ottoman collapse, delineated and defined a region that is home to numerous localised dress styles.

Collectors and academics have written about Palestinian dress making cultures extensively (Kawar, 1980, 2011; Wier, 1989; Hroub, 2015; Dedman, 2016). Elaborately embroidered dresses were worn by women in the working class, who demonstrated significant diversity and complexity of dress in comparison to wealthier classes, who would wear clothing synonymous with Ottoman or European fashions. The majority of the Palestinian population pre'48 were socially understood to be *fellahin*, which scholars far too often translate to 'peasant'. Nasser Abufarha (2008) questions this translation, noting that until 1858, fellahin communities operated in *musha'*; cooperatively owned and run land systems under Ottoman law (Kamel, 2014). Most Palestinians lived in autonomous collectivist communities that owned their own land; a system that is not comparable to European feudal hierarchies. Worker-of-the-land is therefore a more appropriate translation.

Palestinian clothing during the Ottoman period referenced distinct social and gender roles. Women's dress shapes and the forms of the stitching indicated the wearer's town or village, marital status and familial wealth, celebrating their kinship networks and connection to indigenous lands (Kawar, 2011). Men's clothing on the other hand was significantly less varied, at most indicating their region of origin within the Ottoman Empire, whilst primarily reflecting their class, profession or military status (Weir, 1989). Elaborately embroidered Palestinian dresses can be traced back to the mid-19th century, with some extremely rare dresses from this period held in private collections, and the earliest surviving records created by Biblical Orientalist painters and early photographers in the mid-19th Century (Kamel, 2014).[9] There however remains substantial evidence that *fellahin* clothing in the region followed a similar style for centuries prior; in 1990, eight Maronite mummies with dresses still intact were discovered in a cave in Lebanon's Qadisha Valley, dating back to 1283. Their white linen smocks with red embroidered chest panels and sleeves evidence a well-established regional dressmaking style that pre-exists records of Palestinian dress by at least seven centuries (Hourani, 2000).

Kawar (2011) writes that women would learn to embroider from their mothers, beginning at age 7, with the intention of creating their own wedding dress. Panels would be removed from old and worn-out dresses and incorporated into new dresses, often passing through family members. Styles of stitching were also shared through kinship relationships; women would gather to embroider together in late afternoons after their daily housework and food preparation were completed. Embroidery was a social ritual practiced in a collective in the same way that the land would be farmed. These dresses can be understood to be the product of a collective and inherited form of making, tailored to the body and preferences of the wearer within the context of their family and community kinships.

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[9] To date, the earliest example of Palestinian dress I have located is an extraordinary and pristine Bethlehem wedding dress in George Al Ama's collection in Bethlehem, and dates back to the 1850s

Each woman would make their individual collection of clothing in the period of their engagement with the help of their family, creating a selection of festive and practical clothing to be worn and used as of the day of their wedding (Weir, 1989). Prior to engagement, women wore much simpler dresses, understood to be incomplete. The red stiches that characterize married women's dresses referenced the blood from a broken hymen on the wedding night. A woman's dress collection was contained in a trousseau alongside veils, girdles and jewellery. This collection would symbolise the bride's transition into womanhood and a new life (Hroub, 2015). The pre-marriage collection, the *jihaz*, was paid for by the bride's father while the groom would contribute a *kisweh* on the wedding day, consisting of luxurious dresses or the materials to make more. Dowries were worn in the form of coins stitched onto headdresses and hung from jewellery.

Kawar refers to the Bethlehem dress style as "The Queen of Dresses" due to the richness of the fabrics, which she writes was envied across the region. Bethlehem was a centre for trade dating back to the 13th century, leading to relatively significant wealth, with disposable incomes and trade networks allowing for imports of silk, and in the early 20th century, velvets and gold thread.[10] This access to varied materials is exemplified by the *malak* (angel) dress (Fig.3), combining silk and linen woven in bright stripes in multiple colours, while its wide pointed sleeves demonstrated the ability to afford larger quantities of fabric. Stitching in Ramallah on the other hand was styled around cross-stitching in geometric shapes, with headpieces taking the style of a halo-like headband (Fig.4), while in Jaffa, stem stitching was more prominent (Fig.5). Across Palestine, patterns were stitched into dresses in the shapes of birds, fish, animals, as well as plants and crops such as cypress trees, orange blossoms and grape vines. A particularly endearing dress in Ishaq Al Hroub's collection is embellished with a cross stitched groom on a horse, with his name, Ziad, in red stitches above – a rare find in a largely non literary society

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[10] This trade continues today, primarily exporting religious memorabilia made from olive wood and mother of pearl.

(Hroub, 2015, pp.264). Red stitching was predominant in most styles, with blue stitches understood to represent the death of a husband, and blue with red representing a second marriage (Weir, 1989). Silks imported from Damascus influenced Northern styles, and as the flat lands in the North needed constant maintenance there was less time for embroidery, making patchwork a more appealing alternative. Weir writes that women in the North, "…used to say that lots of embroidery showed not only lack of work, but also a waste of time and money." Silk slips would be worn under a long 'abayeh (jacket), with openings over the chest area for the convenience of breastfeeding (Fig.6).

Dresses in the Jordan valley area would be made at lengths of three to six meters, which were folded and gathered with strips of fabric at the waist (Fig.7). In the south, Gaza styles would favour pink threads over the typical red stitches, and would symbolize fish in their designs (Fig.8). The Bedouin again had their own styles with narrower strips of fabric used as constructing panels due to lack of access to weaving, wearing heavy face veils carrying coins from their dowry (Fig.9). In addition to dowry coins, amulets were worn on jewellery by women across the region. Whilst maintaining the same style amulets in all faiths, engraved texts or icons would vary, referencing the Koran, Bible or Torah in Arabic, Hebrew, Aramaic or a combination, according to the wearer. Through these amulets you could not only identify the wearer's faith but also whether they were married, breast-feeding or pregnant; these objects emblemised the perceived connection between women's bodies and familial wellbeing. Weir (1989) observes the immense breadth of costume languages through her case study into the development of dresses in the village of Beit Dajan, east of Jaffa. She traces the clear signifiers of fertility that were designed as long, open slits in the front of the dress skirts (Fig.10). After the establishment of the British Mandate, these slits were then stitched up to prevent sexualizing colonial gazes.

While the construction of dress was specifically local, the materials were from more diverse origins; Kawar writes that silks weaves were imported from Damascus, threads came from France, and the linings were made from cheap cotton imports. A white dress with red and green strips was woven by local manufacturers and named the 'Heaven and Hell' dress, while the

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darkness of blue or black linens made in the Jordan Valley would reveal your family wealth; only the wealthier families could afford the amount of indigo required to dye a fabric black rather than dark blue. With a boost in the economy at the start of the British Mandate, velvet became more readily available from Belgium, and dowry coins, jewellery and amulets were no longer silver, but gold.

Dress styles were most elaborate across Palestine in the years preceding the Nakba (Kawar 2015). Around the same time, wealthy *fellahin* traders in major trade centres began to adopt "western" fashions (Fig.11). While imports of European printed cottons had been widely available for decades, they had been relegated to dress linings until this period of encroaching modernity, and I have on more than one occasion found cheap British tartan and floral cottons hiding under the neck panels of dress linings. This particular history informs the presence of internationally produced materials used in *Inti Samida*, acknowledging that the women's tacit knowledge in both dress construction and in contemporary society hold transnational influences.

Palestinian dress as subject and method

Palestinian dress is designed around an assemblage form, with front, side, chest and shoulder panels forming a personally tailored structure which is then adorned with silk patchwork applique and sleeves that were purchased separately (Hroub, 2015). Seams and panels are heavily embellished with diverse and intricate forms of embroidery, and the ensemble is then completed with veils, headpieces, belts and jewellery. These assemblage forms hold unique epistemological status within a historically non-literary population; both representing the wearer through their taste and construction, and their relation to their broader indigenous community through stylistic representations of their village, town and/or region. I, therefore, argue that Palestinian dressmaking cultures can be conceptualised through a decolonial reading of Deleuze and Guattari's montage theory as a smooth space, rhizomatic form of knowing.

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Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus* (1980) explores the construction of embroidery

and patchwork in their identification of smooth and straited space. In their understanding,

straited space comprises a structured science, likened to the warp and weft of fabric weaves,

which can lengthen exponentially in their grid-like form, and yet never widen due to the

limitations of the loom or the linear designation of horizontal and vertical threads. Conversely,

smooth space is nomadic and moves outside of structure. They write that this can be likened to a

patchwork quilt, or assemblage form, in which each piece holds its own integrity and yet once

each piece is stitched together into one form; there is no centre, no beginning, and no end.

Smooth space is liquid and rhizomatic:

> A more significant distinction would be between embroidery, with its central theme or
> motif, and patchwork, with its piece-by-piece construction, its infinite, successive
> additions of fabric. Of course, embroidery's variables and constants, fixed and mobile
> elements, may be of extraordinary complexity. Patchwork, for its part, may display
> equivalents to themes, symmetries, and resonance that approximate it to embroidery.
> But the fact remains that its space is not at all constituted in the same way: there is no
> centre; its basic motif ("block") is composed of a single element; the recurrence of this
> element frees uniquely rhythmic values distinct from the harmonies of embroidery.

In this argument, embroidery sits in contrast to patchwork, as the former is striated through

structured symbolism, while the latter is smooth through its lack of beginning or end. I would

argue however that Deleuze and Guattari did not comprehend the complexity of textile,

embroidery and patchwork production cultures.[11] Rather than separating embroidery from

patchwork in its epistemic form, Palestinian dress demonstrates the intangible knowledge that

can be built into the intersections of one form upon the other; embroidery is used to hold patches

and panels together, as well as to embellish them. Patchwork on Palestinian dresses does not

appear in a repeated motif or single element, but in varying shapes and styles. The notion of

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[11] It merits note that Deleuze understood the colonisation of Palestine to be an active genocide which he likened to North America's Native population, however he too was more focussed on the tools of the coloniser than the lives of those living under occupation.

embroidery having a centre is also reductive when applied to a three-dimensional garment; while chest panels would demonstrate elaborate design, so would the skirt hems, the sleeves, and the head pieces. Additions of blue threads or beads used to break the symmetry of patterns layered on further symbolism in a deliberate disruption of centred design; only God can be perfect, therefore Palestinian dresses were not (Kawar, 2011).

Furthermore, Palestinian dress demonstrates the need to acknowledge embroidery and patchwork's intimate relation to the maker/wearer's subjectivities, and to the maker/wearer's relation to the specificities of their geography and time. To frame Palestinian dresses within Butler's performativity (1990), these dresses indelibly emulate tacit notions of gender in *fellahin* society. Many of these performative symbols re-enforce the construction of a woman's value as indelibly derived from physiology. Each dress was made for a particular individual's body, identity and taste, anticipating the lived realities of child-rearing, breastfeeding, and celebrating fertility, while simultaneously referencing regional symbolisms and the collectivism of the wearer's community; a mother might give their daughter a treasured chest panel, and a crop grown by their community might appear in the embroidered motifs. While the dress comprises an assemblage in its singular form, in its making and wearing it becomes a product of a rhizomatic network of women's craft and bodies, and shared, moving and communal forms of tacit knowledge.

Deleuze and Guattari identify that when a rhizome is ruptured the network is not destroyed but rerouted (1987, pp.9). This can be demonstrated in the development of the New Dress, or Camp Dress, after the Nakba; women from different regions met in refugee camps and their embroidery styles were amalgamated, creating a new, simpler and more homogenous style with cheaper, synthetic fibres (Kawar, 2011; Dedman, 2016). Thus the rhizomatic nature of this liquid knowledge is enacted through lived history. Palestinian dresses must be understood as a

barer of tacit knowledge forms beyond material and aesthetic construction, as a craft developed among a population who were largely non-literate.[12] As Khalidi (2009) argues;

> …the views and exploits of those able to read and write are perhaps naturally more frequently recorded by historians, with their tendency to favour written records, than those of the illiterate.

Palestinian dress making therefore constitutes a non-literary indigenous form of knowledge production.

The multifaceted production of dresses and knowledge in this context demonstrates that Deleuze and Guattari's model can be expanded upon. Palestinian dresses are in themselves and in relation to one another an example of smooth space as they are a product of the people, not the ruling elite, the state, not the war machine. Their design starts with the body of the wearer but does not end there. The dresses exist as assemblage forms within a rhizome, through the continued connection to other dresses and other women. This epistemological framework for dress is transposed into filmic method in *Inti Samida* through the oscillation between assemblage form and collaboratively made Acts; the individual perspectives that each woman has expressed in their personal performances can similarly be contextualised and unpacked through the tracing of rhizomatic knowing across Palestinian community and history. Just as Palestinian dresses demonstrate complex tacit knowledge, these performances similarly signify the performers' specific tacit knowing – epistemologies which can be contextualised and framed through exploration of collectivist Palestinian knowledge production.

Furthermore, if women's dressmaking cultures in pre-Nakba Palestine can be understood as rhizomatic forms of knowledge production and construction, and that rhizome was rerouted with the rupture of the Nakba, then one must question whether this rerouting is mirrored in other gendered actions since the Nakba began. A view of the Nakba as binding experience is heavily

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[12] It is important to acknowledge that many of the forms of knowledge these symbols were designed to convey have been lost with their makers and wearers.

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affirmed in contemporary discourse on Palestinian history and memory (Said, 1986; Sayigh, 1988; Sanbar, 2001; Abu Sitta & Masalha, 2002). Hawari (2018) corresponds, naming the Nakba as a "demarcation line" in Palestinian history, before arguing for a nonlinear view of Palestinian epistemologies and histories. She points to the imposition of clock-time as a colonial and settler colonial tool of oppression against indigenous populations, used to regiment colonised societies and delegitimise indigenous temporal epistemologies, particularly regarding sun-oriented notions of time. Hawari expands the potential of this notion substantially in citing Sayigh's oral histories research into women's memories of the Nakba, through which Sayigh demonstrates the Nakba's temporal continuation – both through the lack of resolution after 1948, and through the ongoing settler occupation.

This understanding of time-through-memory then provides a basis through which Palestinian indigenous time can be understood; uncannily mirroring the knowledge construed in indigenous dress, Palestinian time becomes a rhizomatic assemblage of memories, rooted in the Nakba, but moving in its intersections, evolving understandings and meanings, and kinetically altering with ruptures, as well as the addition of new memories and epistemologies. This, then, can be transposed into a filmmaking method in two forms; the temporal manipulation and repetition of materials, and the use of materials made over a century of colonial history. Through this understanding, Palestinian time is malleably liquid, constructed through epistemological connections and collective imaginaries despite the impositions of linear time and colonisation. Assemblage filmic structure then, allows for narratives and histories to meet, interact and clash in a moving evolution. This not only allows for continued narrative development, but also anticipates the possibility of rupture. Like the patches and panels of familial inherited dress, clips of video and/or sound can be altered, removed, replaced or relocated to respond to new histories, ideas or interventions. Like Palestinian dressmaking culture, this film can redirect with rupture, and even grow in complexity and nuance in response to the community it is based upon.

Anticolonial and feminist history telling

As Al Hardan (2013) notes, anticolonial research on Palestine demands a clear historical basis for knowledge production. In order to recognise the Nakba as a continuing event in the lives of women I collaborate with in the present day, a contextualising history is required within both this thesis and within *Inti Samida*. The impetus for this history however extends beyond an academic basis; its generation was prompted directly by the process of collaborations, with resulting performances that cannot be analysed without deeper epistemological contextualisation. This, is a living and intergenerational women's history that not only explores events, but also phenomenological developments in gendered thought and anti-colonial resistance debates. No anticolonial nor feminist analysis can occur without this context.

Furthermore, this history demonstrates the continuing tension between Palestinian women's movements, and patriarchal control over the national liberation movement, which Islah Jad writes is a dilemma that constitutes "one of the markers of the women's movement from its inception to today" (2018, pp.10). I applied this to the critical selection of materials sourced from across Palestinian culture and creative production, conceptualising this tension as the key debate driving *Inti Samdia's* narrative structure. This text then, identifies and reflects upon some of the pivotal events, ideas, power structures and discussions that inform Palestinian women's perspectives and experiences, and the challenges and counter-narratives that inform my collaborators' politically gendered relationships to their community in the present day.

Women and class in British Mandate Palestine

> The simple, crude, but uncontaminated patriarchal Palestinian atmosphere is fading away and European civilization, more sophisticated but more unnatural, is taking its place.
>
> Tawfik Canaan (1927), in Tamari (2004)

Tawfiq Canaan, a Physician and ethnographer, was deeply concerned with the impact of modernity imported into Palestine with new vigour after the arrival of the British Mandate (1923-1948).[13] Class divides were significant, with *fellahin* culture facing erosion as workers were excluded from the minority urbanite society. As Jad (2018) writes, urban women were educated and literate, while unable to move freely due to social constraints. *Fellahin* on the other hand were non-literate, yet *fellahin* women were far more mobile than city dwellers due to the necessary labour of maintaining liveable conditions. This meant that women's experiences, opportunities and constraints were significantly varied between classes at the time, leading to numerous forms of female participation in anticolonial nationalist movements. As Jad concludes; "gender was thus flexible" (2018, pp.1).

Women were always central to the Palestinian liberation movement from the British Mandate era onwards, participating in demonstrations, supporting revolts and petitioning British authorities. Fleischmann (2003) traces the history of women's participation, from the educated middle and upper-class women who organised and participated in protests against the Balfour Declaration in

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[13] In the 1920s and 30s, with the assistance of his German wife, Margot Eilender and his 'Circle' of colleagues, Tawfik Canaan began to develop a vast ethnographic archive written in English and German. This archive was designed to preserve popular 'living' heritage, which Canaan saw as directly residual of Biblical tribes of the region (Bourmaud, 2019). His legitimate concerns of cultural erasure and corresponding actions directly responded the Zionist hunt for Israelite archaeological traces, sought out to evidence a right to the land. Canaan was highly educated, wealthy, and part of Palestine's elite - famously he was the first person to risk the expense of building a house outside the city walls of Jerusalem, braving the possibility of Bedouin attack (Jawhariyyah et al. 2014).

1917, as well as in protests against Zionist land buys in Jaffa in 1921, and the bloody protests at Jerusalem's Western Wall in 1929. Later that year, on October 26th 1929, the first Women's Conference brought together 300 women to discuss resistance to the British Mandate (Kuttab 1993). These protests omitted *fellahin* women until the Arab Revolt against colonial rule and increasing Zionist emigration between 1936-1939. Women across class lines came out in large numbers to protest, with women on the front line despite many being beaten and arrested by the occupying forces (Fleichmann, 2003). Kuttab denotes how groups of women organised to distribute medicine and food to villages throughout a six-month national strike, as well as smuggling arms through checkpoints and fundraising for the families of martyrs. While this period denoted a remarkable shift in women's autonomy, she qualifies;

> It should be obvious that Palestinian women who lived in a traditional environment governed by patriarchal structures and ideologies would not have been able to enter the public male sphere if it were not for the national struggle.

Necessity enabled transgressions from normative gendered behaviours. Simultaneous to women's movement into political spheres, notions of modernity were transforming women's roles in society worldwide, placing "western" education, lifestyles and fashions as signifiers of the newly modern world. Women and their roles in society became understood as a signifier of a culture's so-called civilization (Towns 2009, Jayawardena 1986), with "western" dress, therefore, gaining social capital among elites.[14]

New Christian missions provided privileged education access to Christian urban women, who then established charitable organisations for the support of poorer women (Jad 2018). The Palestinian Women's Union was established in Jerusalem in 1921, and the Arab Women's Association was founded in 1930, each being organised and funded by women, and becoming central points for women's activism from their inception to responding to the Nakba. While

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[14] Palestinian dress in that moment became a symbol of parochialism to the bourgeoisie, who dressed their children as *fellahin* for 'novelty' studio photographs (Fig.24).

privileging the urban bourgeois widened the class divide, these organisations lead to the establishment of the Arab Women's Union in 1939 (Fleishmann 2003), which to the present day teaches and sells embroidered works as a means to generate income for economically deprived women, and is among the cultural centres and collectors who lent embroidered dresses to the production of *Inti Samida*.

1948-1967

In 1960, Ismail Shammout painted *Al Nakba* (Fig.12), depicting hunched villagers fleeing the ruins of their village as the sun sets. In the stone ruins, a raped and murdered mother lies beside her murdered husband, still with an axe in his hand in his attempt to defend her. Their surviving child places his hand on his mother's face. This was the first Palestinian artwork to acknowledge the gendered and sexual violence that took place in 1948 (Nashef, 2022). The destruction, trauma and horror of the Nakba cannot be overstated. Wealthy Palestinians fled to safety globally, while the poorer fellahin fled to refugee camps in the West Bank, Gaza, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and Syria, notably with the expectation to return home once the fighting had ended. In 1950 the Gaza strip was annexed under Egyptian jurisdiction, while the West Bank was annexed under Jordanian rule.

Numerous underground political groups emerged in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and Egypt, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians had fled. Women from educated classes joined these factions in significant numbers, however they were limited to domestic and family-based roles, with child baring encouraged as a form of "reproducing the nation" (Kanaaneh, 2022). From 1948 onward, small factions of *fedayeen* (guerrilla fighters) continued to resist at the borders with support from various factions, primarily re-entering Palestine to harvest their fields and reclaim belongings from abandoned homes. Israel began holding their host states accountable for the raids, after which both parties turned to more violent methods (Almog, 2003). Significantly,

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in many of these factions, women and men trained, lived and fought alongside one another in their attempts to return to their homeland.[15]

Most women at this time however found themselves caught in a struggle to survive with any remaining kin, many finding themselves separated as they fled or having lost family members in the massacres. In the enormous and numerous refugee camps, those who had fled found themselves estranged from their kinship communities and living in abject poverty. A number of organisations began teaching embroidery in the refugee camps as a means to support women through commerce, emulating the women's charitable organisations of the British Mandate period on a much smaller scale (Kuttab, 1993).[16] The Arab Women's Union mobilised to provide medical care, financial support and orphanages, responding to the immediate need. Women's roles in responding to the Nakba were constrained to domestic and care-based action across classes. This period between the Nakba and early 1960s was characterised by daily survival needs, hindering any political or cultural progress (Jad, 2018).

In 1964, Palestine's various factions were galvanised by The Arab League, which met in Cairo to establish formal leadership for the Palestinian people.[17] Within weeks, the Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) was established with the intention of creating, "one national front working for the retrieval of Palestine and its liberation through armed struggle" (PNC, 1964). A concise document, the National Charter explicitly responds to the attempted erasure of Palestinian identity (viewed then as simultaneous to, and yet distinct within Arab identities);

> The Palestinian identity is a genuine, essential, and inherent characteristic; it is transmitted from parents to children.

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[15] Female *fedayeen* are vividly depicted in Jean Genet's memoirs (1986), and Annemarie Jacir's 2012 feature film *Lamma Shoftak* (When I Saw You).

[16] Including The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) in 1950, and the Arab Refugees Handwork Centre in Jerusalem, 1951

[17] The Arab League was a pan-Arab collective of Arab states which in 1964 included Egypt, Iraq, Lebanon, Syria, Saudi Arabia, Trans-Jordan, Yemen Arab Republic, Libya, Sudan, Morocco, Tunisia, Kuwait and Algeria.

Rashid Khalidi (1997) observes that attributing the emergence of Palestinian national identity to this period is a common fallacy, overlooking the emergence of Palestinian national consciousness during the British Mandate period. This period did however create the foundations of contemporary Palestinian nationalism (Budeiri, 1995) while attempting to reclaim the national movements Palestinians had nurtured prior to the establishment of Israel (Jad, 2018).

Palestinian literature was rooted in Arabic classicism and romanticism, and after the Nakba, these literary structures were applied to writings on loss and trauma (Mir, 2013). Ghassan Kanafani's first novel, *Ijalfi al-Shams* (Men in the Sun) (1962) marked a significant development in Palestinian literary practices, allegorically placing male characters in the role of the militarised fighter and impotent, mourning lover, and Palestine as the feminised, raped and abused lost beloved. This allegory became a staple narrative within Palestinian nationalism and in notions of identity (Zalman, 2002), offering language that could be understood by those born in exile as well as those who survived the Nakba. Another prolific example of such writing, this time connecting gendered loss to the fellahin, Mahmoud Darwish wrote, in *A Lover from Palestine* (1967);

> ...
>
> Her eyes and the tattoo on her hands are Palestinian,
> Her name, Palestinian,
> Her dreams, and sorrow, Palestinian,
> Her Kerchief, her feet and body, Palestinian,
> Her words and her silence, Palestinian,
> Her voice, Palestinian,
> Her birth and her death, Palestinian,
>
> ...

Like Khanafani, Darwish treated female sexuality as synonymous with land and nation. Darwish deployed and reinforced gender tropes as a literary device that could be dispersed widely through pamphlets and public speaking. His readings were famously politically charged in his claim of Palestinian identity and defiance of censorship, earning him the title *Al-Munadil* (The Freedom

Fighter). His heavily gendered poem *On This Land* (written during the 1960s) directly connects women's bodies to the Palestinian land. As both a relatively early and extremely popular example of the gendering of the Palestinian nation, this poem appears in the title sequence of *Inti Samida*, orientating the audience towards its two core themes of Palestinian identity and gender.

The Six-Day War, and the emergence of The Embroidered Woman

In 1967 the devastating Six-Day War between Israel and Jordan, Syria and Egypt left the West Bank, Gaza, Sinai, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights under Israeli military occupation. Thousands more faced a new wave of displacement, some for a second time, and illegal Israeli settlements were rapidly established in the newly occupied territories. Israeli financial policies decimated Palestinian economies, thereby ensuring Palestinians were entirely dependent on Israeli commerce and forcing economically deprived classes to work for Israeli farms (Kuttab, 1993). These developments devastated Palestinian social and political infrastructure, rendering an independent market an impossibility and constructing the residents of the occupied territories as a new consumer group within the Israeli market.

The enormous losses of 1967 were unforeseen, galvanising a new generation of thinkers and makers who responded with a wave of unity. Palestinian cultural production became a revitalised front line in Palestinian resistance, leading to huge developments in artistic, literary and theatrical production. Swedenburg (1990) observes that after 1967 *fellahin* rapidly became a symbol invoked by the PLO and a "crucial ideological weapon in the Palestinian confrontation with Israeli colonial policies". Vilified by Zionists, who made copious use of Orientalist notions that Arabs are brutal, cultureless and illogical (Said, 1978), the *fellahin* stood in contrast, demonstrating indigenous cultural roots and "closeness to the soil" (Swedenberg 1990); thereby evidencing and legitimising Palestinian connection to the land. This neatly corresponded with Marxist narratives of the worker of (and therefore fighter for) the land (Farah, 2009); imagery of

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militarised men in *keffiyeh* headscarves and "authentic" women in embroidered dress became icons of the people's revolution, epitomising recognisable national identity. The creative output between the 1970s and 80s became referred to as the Palestinian Folklore Movement; theatres were established to revisit folk tales and *dubke* dancing (de Cesari, 2010) alongside musicians returning to poetry and *fellahin* instruments, and renewed demand for glass work, wood carvings and ceramics. The boundaries between heritage and politics were consistently, and intentionally, blurred and intertwined into political folklore.

Exiled artists in Beirut such as Ibrahim Hazima and Ibrahim Ghannam had confronted the loss of Palestine with practices depicting rural scenery, while Ismail Shammout depicted scenes of refugees fleeing the Nakba, and Juliana Seraphim famously wove bridal iconography into land and seascapes, creating surreal and dreamy reflections on her lost home in Jaffa. After 1967, painter Suleiman Mansour drew together these tropes and cemented them within PLO nationalism, iconising the *fellahin* as not just the bearers of loss, but as aspirational figures, reimagined to define the character of the nation. His painting *Camel of Hardships* (1970) (Fig.13) became an icon of the liberation movement, depicting a male *fellah* in a surreal dreamscape carrying the weight of Jerusalem on his back. Women painted in embroidered dress stand with their heads held high in his work, gazing at the viewer in poses reminiscent of the Virgin Mary in Orthodox iconography; a trope this thesis will refer to as the Embroidered Woman. This icon was not a mere romantic indulgence; Mansour and many of his contemporaries faced arrest for exercising their nationalist politics in their art. His paintings rapidly gained huge popularity, distributed as posters and postcards throughout the territories at a time when the PLO was criminalised, as was the support of nationalist liberation (Sherwell 1996). Israeli law dramatically limited communication possibilities and artworks became an alternative political language. The poster movement became a mainstay in nationalist propaganda between 1967 and the establishment of the Palestinian government at the Oslo Accords, 1994. Mansour writes that;

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> …people rushed to purchase them, treating them with the same protectiveness as valuable museum pieces. (1990)

The practice of *sumud* (resistance through steadfastness) dates back to 10th Century Arab scholarship (Marie et. al. 2018) and has proliferated in Arab anti-colonial resistance tactics since (Meari, 2011). This resistance practice is integral to Palestinian resistance and Mansour's work, with the iconography of the body's place in, or interchangeability with the land demonstrating embodied steadfastness. *Sumud* is not a strictly gendered practice, however, enactments can be understood to be performed in gendered work such as childbearing, domestic labour, and support of the male fighter; it is therefore a concept that is clearly delineated within *Inti Samida*. While the trope of the Embroidered Woman was not unique to Mansour's art, his work located fertility of both land and women at the centre of his iconography, which Sherwell (1996) observes reflected broader nationalist discourse, defining "'Palestinian woman' in terms of her reproductive capacity thereby making of women's sexuality and fertility a patriotic and explicitly political issue."

While the PLO at large showed little interest in gender relations, immediately after its formal establishment founding member Samiha Khalil launched *Ina'ash Al Usra* (Revival of the Family) in Ramallah; a volunteer-lead women's cooperative teaching and producing embroidery, as well as domestic labour such as catering, for the purposes of generating incomes for refugees. This was followed by the establishment of *In'ash al-Mukhayam al Filistini* (Revival of the Palestinian Camp) in Beirut which served largely the same function from 1969, and SAMED (Palestine Workers Martyrs Works Society) in 1969, the PLOs economic and cultural body which, in turn, promoted domestic labour and child baring as key to women's resistance (Jad 2018).

Militarism is enacted by women worldwide despite being socially designated as a male endeavour, in which the "just warrior" fights to protect the "pure woman" (Sjoberg et al. 2010). The women who enact militarism are often overlooked in history or reified as a sexualised curiosity, both rendered dangerously masculine and hyper-feminine in their transgression of designated gendered behaviour. In 1969 Leila Khaled hijacked flight TWA 840 from Rome to

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Athens, ordering the plane to fly over Haifa, the home she had fled in 1948 as a child (Irving 2012). Landing in Damascus, Khaled and fellow members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) blew up the nose of the plane. At the airport, Khaled demonstrated an acute understanding of gender performativity, famously wearing large sunglasses, a white designer suit and a sunhat, disguising herself as an elegantly dressed tourist in order to smuggle arms onto the plane. In stark contrast, an image of Khaled wearing a *keffiyeh* and holding a rifle was disseminated worldwide. While the press labelled her the "Audrey Hepburn Terrorist", her choice to wear a traditionally male *keffiyeh* made her a clear challenge to gendered notions of nation and resistance fighter. Her malleable and single-purposed body politic was then taken into new realms, with Khaled undergoing six plastic surgery operations to obscure her identity before her second hijacking in 1970. Augmenting her body created a radical disguise, demonstrating her militarism in her willingness to forfeit her body in the name of the national cause.

Sarah Irving (2012) observes that Khaled has been written about minimally given her actions as the first woman to hijack an aeroplane, and the corresponding fame this attracted. She notes that Khaled's militarism, while enacting the fight for the nation, simultaneously publicly enacted a perceived 'masculinity' on a global stage, disrupting gendered nationalist norms to an extreme. Khaled herself tells Irving (2012);

> I had the idea that women in our society are looked upon as second-class citizens. Those who joined the revolution, including myself, wanted to prove that we can be equal in missions and in practice with men. The highest rank for us was to bear arms, so we just wanted to prove ourselves in their field like this.

Indeed, for most women, adopting masculine-designated behaviours in exchange for a semblance of equality was not an option, and thousands of women instead enacted resistance through domestic action, supporting the home and the family. This minimising of women's roles was very much socially enforced across generations; Jad (2019) cites Salwa Al 'Amad (1981), who wrote from her lived experience, that;

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> …male fighters tended to reduce women's liberation to sexual liberation, yet remained faithful to prevailing gender divisions of labour when it came to marriage.

Embroidery was encouraged as a form of gendered labour that could be conducted within the home and alongside domestic responsibility, particularly for women living in refugee camps or from working-class families with limited access to education and employment. Indeed, Dedman (2016) identifies a PLO bulletin published in 1975, in which embroidery is referred to as the "embryo" of the Palestinian public sector. Demand grew rapidly, with Beirut's *In'ash al-Mukhayam al Filistini* popularising embroidered cushion covers featuring dress motifs (Fig.14), moving the tradition from women's bodies into domestic interiors. Designs for men's ties and contemporary fashions were also produced (Fig.15), and exhibitions of antique dresses were toured globally. In 1980 Israeli airline El Al proposed a new air hostess uniform appropriating Palestinian dress design and embroidery in the Jerusalem Post (Halaby, 2001), an act that compounded the continued appropriation of Palestinian land and culture, further incentivising cultural preservation within Palestinian nationalism. Collectors in the wealthy diaspora had begun preserving surviving dresses in enormous collections from the 1950s, and by the end of the 80s, curator Shelagh Weir had established the world's largest collection at the British Museum, London. Her 1989 publication *Palestinian Costume* was developed through extensive research under the oversight of prolific and uniquely knowledgeable collector Widad Kawar and is the cumulation of two decades of prior research and publications.[18] Widad Kawar's Tiraz Center in Amman was generous enough to lend dresses from her collection to the production of *Inti Samida*.

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[18] Sheilagh Weir's publications are also the earliest I have been able to source in which young women are staged in performative photographs wearing Palestinian dress, identifying an ethnographic root to this trope.

The Era of Women's Power

Acclaimed novelist Sahar Khalifeh wrote the first distinctly feminist Palestinian novel, *We Are No Longer Your Slaves*, in 1974.[19] Producing a remarkable cannon of literature fore-fronting class and gender, she believed that;

> In order to reverse Arab defeats and achieve collective self-determination and individual self-realization, social values and power structures needed to be reformulated. Both women's oppression and class exploitation had to end. Palestinian society thus had to be turned inside out for it to be capable of freeing itself from conquest and foreign yoke. (Abu Manneh, 2016)

Informed by both the working conditions in refugee camps and her own fight for financial independence in the wake of her divorce (Khalifeh, 1980), her novels query the PLO's emphasis on national struggle ahead of class struggle. Her working class, female protagonists including a bookshop owner (*Wild Thorns,* 1976,) a sex worker (*Gate of the Courtyard,* 1994), and a seamstress (*Sunflower,* 1980); Khalifeh discusses gender and labour through a Marxist lens, reflecting a concern at the heart of women's movement debates (Abu Manneh, 2016). Excerpts from her critiques of gendered and class labour discussed in Michel Khleifi's documentary *Fertile Memory* (1980) appear in *Inti Samida*.

Jad (2018) identifies the period between 1978-93 as "the era of women's power". This is in notable correspondence with the Lebanese Civil War, with which PLO leadership was then preoccupied. The Six-Day War exposed the cracks in gender and class equality, leaving Palestinian society fragmented and therefore unable to meet the new demands of life under occupation (Kuttab, 1993). Leftist women, particularly members of the PFLP, the Communist Party, DFLP and Fatah had been blocked from membership in Samiha Khalil's General Union of Palestinian Women (GUPW) as Khalil was concerned that their perceived militancy might

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[19] Khalifeh's early works have been notedly underappreciated, with many yet to be translated to English.

impact the charitable appearance of the PLO's *Ina'ash Al Usra*. On International Women's Day 1978 the Women's Work Committee (*lajnet al-'amal al-nissa'i*) was formed to provide an alternative to existing women's spaces within the PLO, simultaneously centring gender, class and nation in their debates. Jad (2018) attributes this moment to an undoing of perceived unity among Palestinian women, and numerous women's organisations have followed since in a challenge to the GUPW's authority, creating new spaces for women to develop networks beyond kinship relations. Palestinian leadership came under pressure to clarify their position on gender, sparking a period of debate, writing, workshops and conferences. In a workshop in 1981 Mai Sayigh, the head of the GUPW, defined gender oppression as "the enslavement of women to men, to the society, and to the Occupation" (Al Ghounimi, 1981, in Jad, 2018), concisely linking the intersectional experiences of occupation, gender and society. Jad identifies the Marxist ideology at the lynchpin of this disregard for gender equality:

> …women are oppressed, but the national and class struggle must first rid the people of colonialism and then of capitalist exploitation.

The Palestinian Federation of Women's Action Committees (PFWAC) formed a significant offshoot of this new drive for women's rights, arguing that women's oppression should be tackled in the public sphere, and demanding equal access to work, education and equal pay for equal labour. In particular, they focussed on campaigning for nurseries to assist in childcare, which they believed was the primary reason women were prevented from participating in the public sphere. They campaigned using bazaars and cultural festivals, as well as writing and protesting, and had gained significant influence by the time the Oslo Accord negotiation began. They, like the WWC before them, continued to discuss the oppression of women through the Marxist paradigm of class, gender and nation, however, struggled to move the conversation from theory to practice as they were caught constantly responding to new developments in the occupation and national struggle, which invariably took precedent (Jad, 2019).

Set in a Palestinian *fellahin* village, the navigation of class, nation and gender come together in Michel Khleifi's 1987 seminal feature film, *Wedding in Galilee* (*Urs al-Jalil*); foundational to

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Palestinian cinematic gender narratives, and heavily drawing from the Folklore Movement, the music and imagery in this film is referenced repeatedly throughout *Inti Samida*. The story follows village *mukhtar* Abu Adel, who intends to throw his son an extravagant wedding despite Israeli curfews, and asks the local Governor for permission. The Governor permits the celebrations on the condition that he and his colleagues are invited to attend as guests of honour. The film dreamily slips between private and public, with Abu Adel trying to manage his community in the public sphere, as his brother refuses to attend the wedding and the young men plot violent retaliation.

The private sphere is orchestrated by the *mukhtar's* wife and mother of the groom, who mediates family relations and prepares fresh food. The gregarious younger women taunt and flirt with the Israeli soldiers, and discuss their hopes for a less constrained life beyond the village. The wedding proceeds in constant reference to the allegory of the beloved feminine land and the Embroidered Woman, with a full *fellahin* wedding ceremony merging Muslim and Christian practices, showcasing songs, embroidered dresses and foods made from crops. The groom is outraged at his father's compromise and is so emasculated that he is unable to consummate the marriage.[20] His new wife prevents him from stabbing his own father, before breaking her hymen and delivering their bloodied bed sheets to her mother-in-law as evidence of consummation.

Inti Samida references *Wedding* through the use of its soundtrack, using its enigmatically parochial folk music and wedding chants to drive the assemblage narrative. It also references an early scene depicting the pre-wedding ritual washing of the bride, in which we watch through the door of the hamam as the bride stands nude in the midst of her busy female relatives. This beautiful and tender depiction of female intimacy then sees the bride face the camera and stand upright with her arms raised, drawing direct attention to the camera's gaze on her body. In a beautiful and erotic yet also othering depiction, the male gaze is acutely conscious, presenting a

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[20] A narrative detail Khleifi attributes to a true story heard from a "quack doctor" (Dabashi 2006).

nod to French Orientalist hammam paintings critiqued by Said in *Orientalism* (1978). I amplify this discomfort by interweaving the scene with a sound and then a clip from Jacir's *Salt of this Sea* (2008) in which poet Suheir Hammad's character Soraya is scanned at airport security in Tel Aviv, her pose directly emulating Khleifi's bride. The orientation of each woman's body to each power structure and gaze is paralleled and thus compounded.

While films had been made in and about Palestine before *Wedding*, this was the first feature film made by a Palestinian director under Israeli rule.[21] In 1982 Israeli forces drove the PLO out of Beirut and looted enormous archives of films, images, artworks and documents, that remain in Israeli archives today and represent an enormous theft of history and culture (Sela, 2017). Some feature films had been made prior, however, as Shohat et. al. (1988) observe, they represented Palestinians as purely good and Israelis as purely evil, while Khleifi develops a more nuanced narrative. Khleifi since reflected that this was a story in which two "gods" confronted one another; Israeli military power, confronting the patriarchal traditionalism of the *mukhtar* (2006). Shohat et. al. (1988) theorise that, in stark contrast to the Israeli feminist notion that militarised women are free from oppression (while in fact participating in the oppression of others), Khleifi centres feminine gentleness, dialogue and creativity in mediation and protection of their community. Wedding in Galilee was first screened at Cannes six months before the first Intifada, demonstrating notable foresight in highlighting the profound roles women play in organising and caring for their community.

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[21] Previously, documentary films had been made under the British Mandate and then extensively by the PLO after 1967.

The First Intifada

In December 1987, twenty years after the Six Day War, four workmen were killed and six injured in a traffic accident at a Gaza checkpoint. Rumours that it was a deliberate killing spread quickly, and Palestinian anger at decades of abuse, killings and the restrictions of occupation came to the surface in a spontaneous and collective rejection of the occupation of Palestine (Nasser-Najjab, 2020). The Palestinian population took to the streets on mass, including women and children, surprising Israeli and Palestinian leadership alike.[22] Palestinians organised strikes, protests and boycotts, popularising home homegrown produce and withholding taxes in a refusal to continue participating in the mechanisms of their own oppression. The Unified National Leadership of the Uprising (UNLU) was quickly established; popularly understood to be an agent of the exiled (and therefore somewhat excluded) PLO leadership. The UNLU created monthly underground leaflet campaigns to covertly direct and coordinate the population (Nasser-Najjab, 2020), and with the capacity to pass checkpoints with less scrutiny than men, women once again took leading roles in smuggling and distribution.

An icon of this era was the young *keffiyeh*-clad stone throwers, who enacted the defender of the beloved land by countering Israeli arms with stone-throwing, mimicking David and Goliath in a symbol of masculinity, *sumud* and militarism (Hasian & Flores, 1997). While this trope gained great traction in local and international press, it by no means summarises the actions of Palestinian mobilisation at that time. Civil disobedience was far more concerning to the Israeli occupiers, who responded with mass punishment including closure of public facilities, lengthy

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[22] A generation of Palestinians knew nothing but life under occupation, which rendered them financially dependent on Israel whilst having limited access to work, health care and education, with no legal rights, no recognition of Palestinian leadership, restricted movement and arbitrary arrests, as well as enforced poverty and statelessness. Furthermore the severe poverty experienced in village communities and refugee camps - now concrete mazes four decades after their haphazard establishment - meant that huge swathes of the Palestinian population felt they had no further options; a popular uprising was essential to many (Kuttab 1993).

curfews, unpredictable demolitions of homes and crops, restricted access to water, and thousands of arrests (Kuttab 1993). Palestinian communities, largely cut off from one another, formed local Popular Committees to organise and coordinate the resistance effort under the UNLU. The cultural revolution of the past decades came to the surface, defying Israeli censorship. This included a challenge to the ban on the use of colours of the Palestinian flag, introduced in 1967, and the subsequent expansion in 1981 to include any creative output that could be seen to hold political intent. Watermelons became a symbol of the flag and of civil disobedience, with slices carried by protestors, and embroiderers quickly took on the mantle, creating what is now recognized as the "Intifada dress" (Kawar, 2011). Incorporating cross stitch onto a white dress in colours of the Palestinian flag, women stitched PLO iconography and symbols of landmarks such as the Dome of the Rock into their *thobes* (Fig.16), which were then worn to protests as objects that could not be confiscated without leaving the wearer naked and thereby exposing Israel to the international press. Building on a long tradition of women's embodied performativity of protest and gender, the Intifada dress referenced Leila Khaled's consciously performative turn in white, while representing the *fellahin*, and the nation both lost and anticipated.

Inspiring the first of *Inti Samida's* collaborative performances, in 1990, dress collector Maha Saca built on women's bodily performances in protest, and created a new postcard initiative (Moors, 2000). Building on the popular dissemination of postcards and posters as political narrative devices, Saca took a troupe of dress-wearing young women to historically significant sites across Palestine, this time using staged photographs instead of paintings, texts or illustrations. Using sites including the Al Aqsa Mosque, the ports at Jaffa and Acca, and the ruins of Jericho, she commissioned photographs of the women donning elaborately embroidered antique thobes in dramatic, saturated tableaus. Often posing with tools of gendered domestic labour such as water jugs, coffee grinders or Singer sewing machines, Saca envisaged a reclamation of the land and its history through the performative presence of the immaculately presented women and their indigeneity.

Unlike the homogenous faces portrayed in the nationalist paintings that inspire these images, the lens centres on identifiable, individual young women in these performances. It is perhaps not the intention, but it is unfortunate that the resulting postcards reference limited conceptions of women's labour roles through the props, and perpetuate a purely domestic notion of women's roles in *fellahin* society (Fig.17). The postcards and poster series went on to gain significant popularity, donning the walls of hotels and restaurants throughout the 90s, and are still to be found today.

In contrast, during the First Intifada women were taking on new and substantial leadership roles in their communities, in an unprecedented turn. The Intifada brought Israeli soldiers into urban and domestic spaces, meaning that the private sphere became a significant frontier in the encounter with the oppressor; women no longer had the option of distance and came out in huge numbers to protest. Israeli curfews had closed all public institutions and women organised to offer their communities provisions such as underground home-schooling, medical care and training, and keeping watch at night for incoming settler attacks, all in a collective effort to maintain their society (Jad, 2018). While women significantly contributed throughout Palestinian society, as in the past, it was urban-educated women who gained the most autonomy in their communities, while women in the more socially conservative villages were prevented from the same level of contribution. Women throughout the territories were shot, arrested, tortured, held in administrative detention, and in some cases even beaten to death while trying to protect others (Kuttab, 1993). In the First Intifada, 1070 men, women and children were killed with a further 54 killed by Israeli civilians (B'tselem). Arrests were used to round up Palestinians on a massive scale, particularly targeting men, who were perceived as more likely to be involved in leadership; women quickly stepped up to replace them.

Women were instrumental in leading Palestinian society during the Intifada, and as Kuttab (1993) asserts, it was women and poorer village and refugee populations who kept the uprising's momentum going. It was however not without cost; Jad (2018) observes that the abolition of schools lead to many women marrying young, while the growing popularity of Islamism that

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occurred in Muslim populations globally at that time led to enforced veiling for many women under the guise of supporting national solidarity.[23] This moment in women's participation has become the subject of Brazilian director Julia Bacha's *Naila and the Uprising* (2017), a documentary comprised of interviews and archival footage subsidised with animation to tell the story of the uprising from the perspective of Gazan activist Naila Ayesh. After imprisonment, torture and a consequential miscarriage, Ayesh worked with an underground network of women to distribute leaflets hidden in loaves of bread - with her child strapped to her back, and her husband in exile. In the film, Ayesh stresses that her role was as one of many, demonstrating the collectivism inherent to Palestinian activism. Bacha observes that women's roles in political activism are frequently forgotten and erased;

> Women often are the backbone of movements, and then are either written out of history or never written into history in the first place. If we knew our history, women would be able to incorporate these learnings into their activism and their decisions today, so that we can move forward towards a pluralistic future. (Hankir, 2018)

Bacha's film is a rare testament to this moment in the history of women in Palestine, which, as Ayesh demonstrates, was not without risk of gendered violence. In 1995, veteran poet Fadwa Tuqan wrote her seminal poem *Face Lost in the Wilderness*, drawing on the linguistic tropes of nationalist poetry. The following excerpt demonstrates the displacement of unspoken experiences of sexual violence into allegorical metaphor;

> …
> They imposed a curfew; now nothing beats in the
> heart of the City but their bloodied heels
> under which Jerusalem trembles
> like a raped girl.
> …

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[23] This thesis takes a secular approach and therefore does not examine religious intersections in detail. Jad (2018) writes extensively on women and Islamism in Palestine, and numerous texts are available on the histories of all faiths in the region.

With rape used as a strategy of oppression against Palestinian women, the topic appears in *Inti Samida's* fourth assemblage 'panel', within the context of addressing violences against women. Rape is a deeply controversial topic in Palestinian society; a fatwa was issued against filmmaker Maysaloun Hamoud for her 2016 debut *Bar Bahar*, in which a socially conservative and religious young woman is raped by her fiancé (Iqbal, 2017). Nevertheless, sexual violence is a strategy of oppression used against women worldwide, and to omit Palestinian experiences from this research would be negligent. Hania Nashef (2022) suggests that the shame of rape in Palestinian society has led to a displacement of memories of rape into allegories such as in Tuqan's poetry, citing Susan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015) as the first Palestinian literary narrative to address rape directly. Israel had long utilised a policy of weaponizing Palestinian social conservatism with respect to familial honour and notions of female sexuality and virginity, using gender and sexuality against Palestinians in moments of encounter and interrogation (Al Issa & Beck, 2021). While repeatedly denied by the state, this includes frequent use of, and threats of, sexual violence; a practice established in the rapes committed during the Nakba (Pappe, 2006, pp 228), and continued in encounters and interrogations. Kuttab (1993) writes that while in custody, pregnant women have been beaten to the point of miscarriage and threats of sexual violence are used against detainees' mothers, sisters and wives. She also notes that during the First Intifada two women were given forced abortions while in custody. Prior to the First Intifada, women who had faced arrest had been assumed to be rape victims, and therefore lacking in 'virginity' and 'family honour', significantly deterring women from active roles in political spheres (Hasso 1998). During the First Intifada, however, political prisoners were taken in such vast numbers that the women imprisoned became celebrated as heroic resistance fighters.

The Oslo Accords and the Second Intifada

Through the 1980s, international opinion on Israel's actions had begun to shift. The international community at large condemned Israel's enabling of the massacres in Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, Beirut, marking a shift towards increased sympathies with Palestinians (Alin et al. 1994).[24] During the First Intifada, the genesis of this new attention was compounded by the intensity of violence against Palestinian protestors, who were unarmed and yet met with brutal force; a particularly notable example being the events of October 1990 in which Jewish extremists broke into the Palestinian-controlled Al Aqsa mosque compound in Jerusalem, prompting a riot in which 20 Palestinians were shot dead by the IDF (Inbari, 2009). The PLO had officially recognised the State of Israel in 1988, and the Israeli government was struggling to maintain their premise that it was in fact the Palestinians who would not negotiate.

The Oslo Accord negotiations began in 1991 with the Madrid Conference, in which Israel bypassed the Palestinian delegation, instead working with Norwegian mediators to operate a second covert negotiation with the exiled PLO (Waage, 2013). This period has been dissected and discussed extensively by numerous academics (Bauk & Omer, 2013; Brown, 2003; Said, 1995; Chomsky, 2013). While the 1993 Whitehouse lawn handshake between Arafat and Rabin was celebrated as a momentous development at the time, it quickly became apparent that the Accords were in fact a normalisation of the pre-existing occupation, with Palestinian leadership only gaining pseudo-governmental jurisdiction over a small portion of Palestinian territory. Chomsky (2013) provides a concise summary of proceedings and their consequences, arguing that the failure to prevent further settlements sits at the crux of the PLO's error in agreement. Exiled in Tunisia, Arafat and the PLO leadership had watched the Intifada at a distance, and

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[24] In 1982 Israeli troops had shot flares into the sky surrounding Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, Beirut, and blocked civilians from exiting the camps. They then allowed right-wing Christian Phalangist militias to spend two days raping and massacring Palestinian refugees (al Hout 2015).

were rapidly losing relevance to internal Palestinian society; it was in the PLO's interest to agree to any proposal that allowed them to return and solidify their precarious power base. Chomsky argues that the Accords merely permitted the PLO to gain control of local services in Palestinian society, while Israel could continue their encroachment into Palestinian land unchecked. Furthermore, he observes that to view the Accords as a feasible route to peace would have required "intentional ignorance" from scores of political commentators.

It was the process of the Oslo Accords, and the return of PLO leadership, that lead to the further ousting of women from Palestinian political life. Dr Hanan Ashrawi served as a member of the Leadership Committee and as an official spokesperson of the Palestinian delegation to the Middle East peace process. She is the current head of the PLO Department of Culture and Information and is widely acknowledged as the most powerful woman in Palestinian leadership. When interviewed for this thesis in 2017 Ashrawi explained;

> Before [Oslo], when we had NGOs and popular committees and so on, women were included and active in leadership positions. Now that we had official positions and we were setting up a system of government, there was a mad scramble for men to take over these positions and push women back. In many ways, the women's movement became more and more depoliticised, and women were excluded from places of decision-making on the whole.

Kuttab (1993), attributes this erasure of women's roles to a combination of the lack of social agenda in the Intifada, the tension between national and gender liberation, the Israeli oppression of popular committees and the rise of reactionary fundamentalist politics during the Intifada.

After the Oslo Accords, in violation of Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, Israeli settlement building escalated and movement between the Palestinian territories in Israel was rapidly constrained with checkpoints. Israel's government became increasingly right-wing with the election of Benyamin Netanyahu, and abuses of Palestinian civilians remained the status quo under the Israeli maintenance of "specified military locations" (Oslo II) throughout the occupied territories, as agreed in Oslo Accord II. The post-Oslo period did however see some small easing

of constraints on Palestinian narratives; Israeli laws banning creative political representations of Palestinian nationalism were repealed. [25]

This period saw a rapid increase in regional scholarship, with particular attention given to women's oral histories. Building Rosemary Sayigh's extensive research (1977, 1981, 1983, 1985, 2007, 2010, 2018), women's oral histories became a significant site for investigation into Palestinian memory, with particular attention to memory of the Nakba (Kawar, 1996; Najjar & Warnock,1992; Abdo-Zubi & Masalha, 2018; Sabbagh 1998; Kassem, 2011). Kassem (2011) pertinently argues for women's oral histories as a means to address patriarchal domination over dominant historical narratives. Her writing however does not attempt to mediate the essentialising nationalist notion of women as "bearers of authenticity" (Richter-Devroe, 2018). The trope of women's oral histories as national memory is utilised in Carol Mansour's 2017 documentary, *Stitching Palestine*, which sees twelve women narrate their "memories, lives and identities" through embroidered panels representing towns across Palestine, conceived by Malak Al-Husseini Abdul Rahim and executed by embroiderers from the Lebanese NGO Inaash.[26] This oral history documentary tells intimate histories, predominantly through the eyes of wealthier, educated and professional women. While this film incorporates valuable histories through a clear aesthetic and historical relation to the Embroidered Woman – many of the women in this film had direct involvement in the Folklore Movement - Mansour does not contextualise the class bias in her protagonists, thereby limiting relevance to lower-income women.

Following the Oslo Accords, a completed peace agreement was due to be signed in 1999 but became an impossibility under such forcefully maintained colonial conditions. By 2000 the Palestinian population had entirely lost faith in the Palestinian Authority and the peace process,

[25] On a visit to Birzeit University's archives in 2016, Collections Custodian Ayman Al Shweiki informed me that their extensive dress collection, donated by a Jerusalem family in 1994, had previously been hidden from occupiers in a basement in the old city.

[26] Mona Hatoum also collaborated in the use of these embroidered panels in her installation *Twelve Windows*, 2012-2013, which alongside Carol Mansour's documentary demonstrates collectivist sharing in women's embroidery practices within a contemporary art context.

and a Second Intifada broke out after Israeli opposition leader Ariel Sharon - an infamously brutal former defence minister - visited the Al Aqsa compound. Israeli responses to the uprising were severe and violent, leading to numerous deaths early on, with the IDF violating the terms of the Oslo Accords and entering Palestinian jurisdiction to re-occupy Palestinian cities. For the first time, Israel conducted air strikes against Palestinian cities, and the killing of children was treated as collateral damage (Sait, 2004). In response, sectors of Palestinian society also incorporated more violent methods, including the use of arms, kidnapping and suicide bombings.[27]

The 1994 Women's Charter had asserted a list of demands for women such as equal citizenship and freedom of movement, however by the Second Intifada it was apparent that these rights were not permitted for any Palestinian, and the national cause again took precedence (Johnson & Kuttab, 2001). Men were prohibited from driving between towns without women present in their vehicles, as they were deemed to be militant when alone. The extreme violence of Israeli retaliation lead to primarily male resistance fighters – including children and teenagers - taking to the street in reactionary encounters, with high mortality rates and enormous numbers injured to the point of permanent disability. With this came increased responsibility for the large

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[27] As academia has since paid significant attention to the involvement of women in suicide bombings, it is a field which requires addressing (Aran & Green, 2018; Brym & Araj, 2006; Kirk, 2020; Sayre, 2009; Erez & Laster, 2020; Hasso, 2005). Suicide bombings proliferated the Second Intifada, a phenomenon that El Sarraj (2002) argues resulted from individual traumas experienced in the First Intifada, and the hopelessness experienced with the rise of occupier violences and poverty since. A total of seven women conducted suicide bombings during the Second Intifada; a tiny minority in relation to alternate women's resistance practices. No writer has yet found substantive evidence that these women's actions differed in motivations to male suicide bombers, and as established thus far, Palestinian female participation in resistance practices, violent or otherwise, is not new. Furthermore, as Brunner (2005) concludes, women's involvements in suicide bombings did not impact women's social and political roles in Palestine to any measure, and did not aim to. Despite the proliferation of scholarship on this topic, gendered views of suicide bombings hold little relevance to constructions of gender explored in this thesis.

numbers of women who had become carers, lost family members, or were caught trying to prevent young male family members from taking the risk of attending the violent checkpoint protests. This caused what Johnson and Kuttab call a "crisis in maternity" (2001, pp 31), relegating many women to the immediate demands of family and domestic space. Some women publicly celebrated the heroism of their martyred offspring, and this drew extensive media coverage. Johnson and Kuttab argue that this was a minority, and that, "the real dilemma of mothers is much more agonizing and that maternal blessings are also a way of coming to terms with terrible grief and unsolvable contradiction." (2001)

This in turn was compounded by a corresponding crisis of masculinity, in which young men were faced with limited future prospects and widespread unemployment, while those who had endured imprisonment were celebrated by their society and gained social capital, often leading to more influential positions in society (Irving 2016). Symbolic militarism through attending protests becomes a performance of male gender in this regard, in addition to resistance;

> In the confrontations of the second intifada, the community is not a sustaining and protecting environment, but rather, eerily, an audience, both literally at the checkpoint and virtually whereby national and satellite television bring live minute-by-minute coverage into the home. (Johnson & Kuttab, 2001)

The encounter with occupying forces at the checkpoint became a flashpoint for violence and visibility, both within and outside of Palestine. This came about in part due to a global shift in attention to Palestine, and in part due to the rapid expansion of internet communications and the digital image world. These developments in technology were a double-edged sword; visibility was key to evidencing Palestinian existence, however the ways in which new forms of visibility – particularly lens based - were exercised were hard to control and open to media manipulations, as well as being a tool for Israeli intelligence gathering (Hochberg, 2015).

Palestinian society and the arts from the Second Intifada to the present

> Find the fruit on the trees
> Send it off to wherever you please
> Make sure that the money comes back home
> Back to the peasants to the *fellaheen* born
>
> - Lyrics from *Intro to Shamstep*, 47 Soul, 2015

Elia Suleiman's seminal feature film *Divine Intervention* (2002) uses black humour and absurdist fantasy to address the encroaching divisions perpetuated by the increasingly violent occupation. His self-performed protagonist ES lives in Jerusalem, and has to cross through an Israeli checkpoint to reach his unnamed lover who lives in Ramallah; a romance enacted beside the place of direct encounter with the colonising force. ES' lover leaves him after she witnesses his neighbour's arrest in his Jerusalem suburb, unchallenged by the local Palestinians, who watch from behind their curtains. Her body a metaphor for 'authentic' Palestinian resistance, ES envisages his lover striding through a checkpoint in a pink mini dress, soldiers dumbfounded by her beauty and the checkpoint crumbling in her wake. At the end of the film, we see her in a keffiyeh-clad black ninja outfit, catapulting herself into the sky and deflecting bullets with a Palestine-shaped metal shield before downing an Israeli helicopter; a modernised fantasy of the beloved woman as symbol of the land. Drawing on the masculinity crisis touched on by Khleifi's groom in *Wedding in Galilee*, Suleiman reworks canonical tropes of male-centric desire into the continuum of experiences of occupation, with the comedic absurdism of his fantasies attempting to remedy growing hopelessness. These visually striking scenes are of seminal importance to Palestinian cinema and gender narratives (Hochberg, 2015; Fieni, 2014; Stutesman, 2004), and both appear in *Inti Samida*; The checkpoint scene is juxtaposed with Sahar Khalifeh's words in *Bab as-Saha* (*Gate of the Courtyard*) (1991), challenging the scene by critiquing the notion of woman-as-symbol, while the ninja scene is paired with a collaborator's words as she remembers

her mother as a teacher during the second Intifada, using Suleiman's iconography in recognition of education as a form of resistance.

The Second Intifada ended in a series of choppy negotiations after the sudden death of Yasser Arafat, and the landslide election of Mahmoud Abbas. Israel withdrew 15,000 settlers from Gaza and the north of the West Bank, and troops withdrew from Gaza, however, continued to control the border. Israel rapidly began construction of their apartheid separation wall in 2002; an eight-meter-high concrete wall surrounding and encroaching on the occupied territories, grabbing and partitioning Palestinian farmland, and further ghettoising the population (Karam, 2017). New settler roads further fragment the West Bank, illegal settlements today housing an estimated 630,000 Israeli citizens, with 61% of the West Bank off-limit to Palestinians (UN). In Gaza, there have been four wars in just thirteen years, with airstrikes and shootings of civilians a frequent occurrence in between, and thousands killed in bombings of private homes in a region where an estimated 48% are children (PCBS, 2018).

With each violent assault on Palestinian civilians, international press has slowly increased attention to the impact of the occupation, bringing with it an increase in aid and donors. The 1990s saw a global boom in NGOs, creating issue-specific interventions in developing and economically deprived communities with neoliberal donor-driven funding models (Choudry, 2010). In numerous global contexts, NGOs have subsidised governmental civil services to the point where NGOs have often replaced or deterred governmental service provisions. NGOs existed under the oversight of the PLO until the First Intifada when they took a primary role in providing aid and therefore gained new power and agency over and above political groups (Jad, 2007). After Oslo, NGOs were free to construct value systems of their choosing, often reproducing patriarchal kinship relations that Palestinian women had been working to challenge. Furthermore, NGOs are and were answerable to funders, who frequently offer financial support on the condition that recipients are not affiliated with political groups (Jad, 2011). Consequently, many women have had to choose between the fight for their nation, and access to basic civil society services. Jad (2011, 2018), Johnson (2001) and Kuttab (2001, 2008) unanimously

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conclude that this process has divided and depoliticised the women's movement in Palestine, divorcing it from the national cause and from the Palestinian governmental sphere.

Jil Oslo, the current post-Oslo young generation of Palestinians, was born into a very different world from their predecessors (Maira, 2013). Palestinian society is now so fragmented and constrained that the national movement and its collectivism is in many aspects, dormant. While the post-Oslo introduction of a debt-based economy gives the urban façade of a relatively prosperous community, villages remain deeply impoverished and class divides have never been greater. The women's movement is significantly reduced, and violence against women within Palestinian society is increasing. The PCBS's 2020 youth report states that 22% of the population were youth (aged 18-29). 23% of women and 13% of men in that age bracket hold a bachelor's degree or above. 14% of women were married before age 18, and 37% of those who have been married have experienced violence from their husbands. 33% of men and 68% of women are not in employment, education or training.

Further quantitative data is largely outdated, demonstrating concerning neglect of Palestinian youth. The 2013 Sharek Youth Forum report *The Status of Youth in Palestine* surveyed 1851 people aged 15-29. The report established that;

> The majority of young people (73%) have stated that they do not belong to any political factions. They have expressed their disappointment and loss of confidence in these factions, especially for their inability to end the state of division, put aside their narrow self-interests, and allow sectors of society, especially youth, a priority in their programs... The majority of young people have also expressed their support for resistance in all its forms, especially popular resistance, as a strategy for freedom from the occupation.

While much is outdated, these statistics indicate an image of *jil Oslo* that is very much synonymous with current research. Disappointment with the PA has led to a lack of belief in a constructive future. Ageing and corrupt PA ministers sit in stark contrast to the increasingly youthful population, who face a life far more constrained by the occupation than previous generations (Maira, 2013). Unemployment is increasing, and those fortunate enough to find work are regularly constrained to dominant industries including construction, retail and catering

irrespective of their educational backgrounds. No youth movements are permitted by the PA's authoritarian rule and opposing political movements are all but banned. With no clear successor to the ageing President Abbas, Palestine's political future is ambiguous. This is further compounded by Donald Trump's interventions, the Covid-19 pandemic, the 2014 and 2021 Gaza wars, and the rise in violent incursions in 2022.

In contemporary Palestinian arts, however, female agency is moving to the fore in a manner not seen before. In cinema, directors such as Annemarie Jacir (*The Salt of This Sea,* 2008; *When I Saw You,* 2012; *Wajib,* 2017), Mai Masri (*3000 Nights,* 2015) and Maysaloun Hammoud (*In Between,* 2016) offer female protagonists who enact their own agencies within and despite the occupation, fighting the loss of identity while claiming their own nuanced subjectivities – notably with no heed to male-gaze constructs of woman-as-symbol seen in films by their male contemporaries such as Elia Suleiman and Hany Abu Assad. The same applies to literature, with the writing of Susan Abulhawa (*Mornings in Jenin,* 2006; *The Blue Between Sky and Water,* 2015) notably acknowledging female sexuality in the vein of Sahar Khalifeh's influential works. In arts and crafts, the Embroidered Woman is appearing in new and evolving forms. Jordan Nassar has taken his embroidery into abstract expressionist works for white-walled galleries, while Malak Mattar reworks canonical paintings of Palestinian women to incorporate female intimacy, her figurative work depicting women's faces pressed against one another in kinship and love, counter to the isolation of the lone woman or mother/wife in Mansour and Anani's works. Sisters Nermeen and Nisreen Abudail use laser-cut olive wood to replicate embroidery designs on intricately beautiful furniture. Likewise, fashion collectives such as Nol Collective, and designers Dar Noora and Suzy Tamimi collaborate with embroiderers to rework classical motifs into contemporary fashion design, while Anat International and Omar Joseph Nasser develop from *Ina'ash Al Usra's* 1970s embroidered ties in their application of embroidery to menswear design.

Many of these developments were touched upon in The Palestinian Museum's exhibitions on embroidery.[28] The satellite exhibition at Dar El Nimer, Beirut, *At the Seams: A Political History of Palestinian Embroidery*, was curated by English curator Rachel Dedman, and "…cast a critical look at the role of embroidery in shaping historic and contemporary Palestinian politics and culture". (Palestinian Museum, 2016) Centred on modes of making and embroidery as women's labour, the show was later reworked by Dedman into *Labour of Love: New Approaches to Palestinian Embroidery*, an exhibition at the Palestinian Museum itself in 2018 that focused on "gender, labour, symbol, commodity and class" (Palestinian Museum, 2018). Both exhibitions connected dress to the current generation through the works of contemporary designers, however, identified limited connections beyond those to artisanal workers. This project therefore asks; if the dress was always fundamental to constructions of Palestinian womanhood, then how can this relationship be understood with respect to the current generation?

Women's histories: Action, icon and perlocutionary potential

This historical thread has demonstrated a history of women's prolific, yet marginalised participation and activity within Palestinian society, evidencing the influence of generations of women's activism from the early 20th century, and malignment by both governmental and international agents. Correspondingly this history maps the development of gendered nationalism in Palestinian culture, initially inspired by classical Arab literary romanticism, and developing into the construction of the Embroidered Woman under PLO narration. Within these histories, women have demonstrated agency beyond this valuable, yet limited icon, including but not limited to Sahar Khalifeh's writing, the use of the Intifada dress in public protest, Hanan

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[28] This non-governmental project begun in 1997, opened in 2016 as the first national museum for Palestine - infamously with no exhibit (Cobbing, 2016).

Ashrawi and Samiha Khalil's leadership, female *fedayeen*, and the current resurgence in female collectives. These women are among many who have performed nuanced enactions of indigenous womanhood-in-resistance that exceed the bounds of the nation's mother/lover.

Through this lens, Palestinian dress can be seen as a women's form of knowledge production that, after the Nakba, became a symbol of a nationalism which did not afford women the same representational autonomy in political spheres that the original dress culture had afforded women in public spheres. Through both the icon and real lived actions runs the common thread of bodily performance within public and political spheres - spheres that consistently constrain women's rights. While the icon performatively conforms to those spheres, actual lived actions since the Nakba renegotiate and even subvert and challenge them, building from a rich tradition of indigenous performativity through dress into the performance of concepts, collectives, actions and movements through space, with or without the endorsement of Palestinian leadership. Performative audio, visual and textual materials are essential records of feminist resistance, as well as an impetus for research which incorporates and investigates these.

Theorists such as Tina Sherwell (1996) have expressed concerns that the Embroidered Woman and dresses in resistance present an outdated icon. This project does not intend to denigrate the role it has played in the representation of a dispossessed community, but to separate women's histories from the patriarchal co-option of women's cultures. This cannot be a clean separation given the collectivism of Palestinian society, the messiness of narrative evolutions through the history of a dispossessed community and the inherent flaws in notions of a gender binary. However, this understanding through intertwined histories does demonstrate the tensions at play between feminism and the national struggle, demanding that the notion of filmic knowledge production modelled on dressmaking cultures be further developed to incorporate this knowledge.

In 2010, Butler responded to developments in her notion of performativity in *Performative Agency*; a paper locating the political potential of performative acts. Turning to Austin's

illocutionary and perlocutionary performatives (1975), Butler outlines performative acts in the political sphere by dividing them into the illocutionary – politically performed speech acts, and the perlocutionary – utterances from which effects follow. It is in the effect of the illocutionary performative that the perlocutionary comes into being. She writes;

> A politician may claim that 'a new day has arrived' but that new day only has a chance of arriving if people take up the utterance and endeavour to make that happen. The utterance alone does not bring about the day, and yet it can set into motion a set of actions that can, under certain felicitous circumstances, bring the day around.

Through Butler then, Palestinian epistemologies of womanhood prior to 1948 can be understood as performatively illocuted through the language of dress; these epistemologies were uttered through knowledge production in the craftsmanship of dress. The utterances of Palestinian dress were then rendered perlocutionary after 1948, in their ontological challenge to ethnic cleansing and erasure. It was through embodied movement in organisation, leadership, protest, smuggling and militarism that women's actions demonstrated perlocutionary effect as political agents; acts with the effect of enabling an entire society's resistance to last for decades, as it is clear that without women's participation within the political sphere and across class lines "the day" would have long been lost for good. These acts precede but were later referenced in early nationalist reification of the *fellahin*.

Through this model, both post-'48 iconography and the enaction of womanhood in Palestine can be seen to perlocute effect in their proven capacity for driving socio-political mobilisation. However, perlocution of constructions of womanhood under nationalism and the actual actions of women must be disentangled. One can look to male creative producers to exemplify the former, in the artistry of Suleiman Mansour, Ismail Shammout, Nabil Anani and Mahmoud Darwish, the gendered PLO narratives, and the cinema of Elia Suleiman, who all construct female characters as the heroic object of desire and a painful reminder of emasculation, whilst affording those characters few subjectivities. The latter is alternatively exemplified in the actions of individual female politicians and activists, women's unions, women's leadership in the First

Intifada, and the work of creative producers such as writers Susan Abduhawa and Sahar Khalifeh, as well as filmmakers Annemarie Jacir, Mai Masri and Maysaloun Hamoud, who centre women's embodied subjectivities under occupation *and* within a society torn between celebration and condemnation of women with political agency. While male creative producers have been privileged in Palestinian canonical thought (as in all cultures) the extent to which each creative producer's illocutions have become perlocuted is both subjective and temporally open-ended; as *Inti Samida* intends to demonstrate, in centring female narratives, illocutions offer greater nuance and perlocutionary potential is broadened.

This feminist reading of the dress' position in the rhizome of Palestinian epistemologies, therefore, places it as an indigenous object connecting women across time and space. While it is popularly read as an icon of the Embroidered Woman and the nationalist project between 1967 and the Oslo Accords, this chapter demonstrates that it is in fact a signifier of substantially older, broader and more complex women's histories. These histories speak directly to women's lives today, through family inheritance as much as through socialisation and the collective trauma of the ongoing Nakba. The current generation lacks leadership and direction, and yet the women who took an active part in past Palestinian resistance - many of them mothers or grandparents to the current generation - have been forgotten or maligned. *Inti Samida* seeks to reorient this history in order to view it as a continuum of actions and strategies, informing the powerful actions of women in resistance today.

The *fellahin* women who once wore these dresses carried them into political spheres and used them in performative acts to political ends; the second chapter of this thesis will examine the construction of collaborations with local young women, in performances carrying Palestinian dress into current-day storytelling. Using Palestinian theatre as inspiration, the women in *Inti Samida* physically orientate Palestinian dress towards the current generation as a means to celebrate implicit connections to the extraordinary legacy of Palestinian women's embodied actions.

"Yarns are fleeing the exhibition halls"

Collaboration, Reflexivity and Messiness

Messiness in fieldwork methodologies is a concept increasingly discussed in scholarship (Salovaara, 2018, Adkins, 2001, Naveed et al. 2017), in recognition of the complex subjectivities of perspective, communication and interaction between researcher and participants. Within the messiness of human interaction under frameworks of academia, comes an increasing demand for researcher reflexivity (Mosselson 2010); a repeated and ongoing cycle of self-evaluation in order to identify the impact and role of one's own identity, presuppositions, relationships with participants, and methodological design. In the context of this research, this can be understood as a call for subjectivities and power relations to be identified and addressed in a continuous process of evaluation throughout recruitment and filmmaking, and within the final narrative itself; the former is addressed in this chapter, and the latter is addressed in the third chapter.

While discussions of messiness in research focus on the researcher-participant relationship, the first chapter has delineated the corresponding messiness of Palestinian histories and narration under both colonial and patriarchal control. In this research, the messiness of my relationships with individual collaborators is exacerbated by a cultural and political history in which the right to self-determination is denied on the basis of gender as well as ethnicity. Conversations in opposition to this are undermined by significant structural pressure, including the lack of civil society infrastructure, the threat of sexual violence, and both the colonial and patriarchal opposition to the right to speak. Messiness, therefore, sits at the centre of this project.

Campbell and Farrier's paper *Queer Practice as Research* (2015) asserts that queer bodies occupy spaces outside of the hierarchical and institutional. This state of being also applies to the

majority of Palestinian women; people excluded from normative patriarchal hierarchies exist in marginal spaces. This is not to designate Palestinian women as queer, but to recognise that the Palestinian political sphere excludes bodies that might challenge the patriarchal status quo. This includes those of queer people, and of the majority of women - be there significant disparities in the means and depths of these exclusions.[29] Campbell and Farrier's thesis advocates for embracing the messiness of embodiment as resistance to normativity, thereby becoming its own means of knowledge production:

> …it is the unruly and leaky body that presents the possibility of knowledge as somewhere beyond the apparent stability of theory's abstractions, and often beyond the notionally clean lines of academic disciplines.

This, then, sets a precedent for identifying, addressing and *incorporating* embodied messiness into filmmaking, allowing that very messiness to not just appear, but to drive the narrative itself. Nelson (2013) observes that PaR has become a means by which material knowing can expand the process of knowledge production in academia. As the demands of anticolonial feminist research require that the academy be decolonised (Al Hardan, 2013), this then becomes a means to challenge the boundaries of knowledge production. Patriarchal control over Palestinian women is institutionalised in both Palestinian and Israeli society and governance, meaning that executing this project in collaborative enactments offers space for a female-driven, one-to-one collaboration, outside of both localised institutional control and a pre-determined process. This work, therefore, locates the "doing" of film PaR as a process that centres on the messiness of the "unruly and leaky body", whilst minimising exterior colonial and patriarchal influence.

In order to subsequently take steps to decolonise my own role in the film, this PaR must also correspond with a cyclical process of self-reflexivity. Reflexivity and embracing messiness thus

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[29] The LGBT+ movement in Palestine was established as an extension of the values and strategies of the Women's Movement, in particular, adopting their assertion that social equality must correspond with national liberation. (Atshan, 2020)

become a filtering process and a cyclical process within contextual research and practising collaboration;
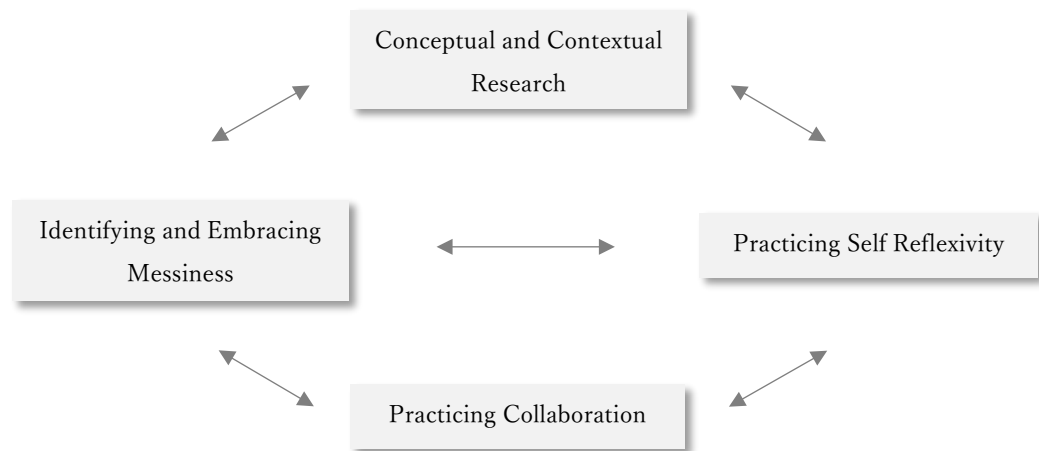
Within this paradigm, a decolonial praxis can operate in the following means:

Embracing messiness

If messiness is to be embraced, it has to be anticipated, identified and incorporated at every step in the investigation, with methodology adjusted according to the messiness found through each stage of video making. The following questions guided this:

- How have Palestinian thinkers identified and worked with messiness?

- What pre-existing messiness am I aware of, and how am I addressing it?

- Am I and my collaborators allowing for unexpected messiness to arise?

- How is the messiness I have discovered through filmmaking informing the continuation of this project?

- How can I best represent messiness through a filmic edit?

Practising self-reflexivity

The process of creating collaborative practice is continuously assessed to decolonise the basis for knowledge production in a self-reflexive moment entailing an assessment of past work, an analysis of planned work, and the necessary research to inform future plans. Questions include;

- Are Palestinian women and local forms of women's dress guiding the research?
- How can lens-based media be most effectively used in the context of collaborations?
- How can I address the colonial legacy of lens-based representations, and centre Palestinian gazes and viewpoints over alternate gazes?
- How am I "speaking alongside" Palestinians?
- What actions am I taking to reduce my power and control and centre my collaborators?
- What measures am I taking to protect my collaborators?
- Am I facilitating or constructing?
- Am I working within Palestinian understandings of anticolonial and/or feminist struggle?
- Are collaborators being offered broad agency whilst receiving adequate support?

Collaborator recruitment and early experimentation

The following text documents the early lens experiments that informed the structuring of the five core collaborations. I arrived on my first field trip with the intention to creatively experiment with small performative collaborations, thereby allowing space for messiness and collaborator-led thought. The question then became one of recruitment. Due to corruption in the governmental

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sector, a history of colonial research interventions in the region, and international interference in the NGO sector, conventional approaches such as call-outs or recruitment through an institution would not translate well into the Palestinian community. Trust is fundamental to the ethics of this research, the structure of which cannot decolonise academic knowledge without collaborator agency over the ways in which I work with them and represent them and their culture. It is for this reason that my past work had been conducted through friendships and friendly introductions.

Friendships with those who take part in research are heavily debated within feminist anthropological scholarship (Cotterill, 1992; Gorelick, 1991; Moore, 1988). In the 1980s-1990s feminist ethnographers widely condemned friendships with research participants on the grounds that blurred relationships and divergent motivations for conversations could lead to participant disappointment, marginalisation and exploitation, particularly in the context of White feminist academics researching women in colonised and/or economically deprived communities (Addison and McGee, 1999; Mohanty, 1991). This concern centres on the imbalance in power between researcher and participant, and the potential this creates for friendship to mask that imbalance. There is potential however for this approach to entrench a deeper level of othering in which the researcher is not able to share meaningful trust with their participants, cementing the relationship in a terminally hierarchical form. Alternatively, Hedstrom and Phyo (2020) assert;

> …friendships open up possibilities for other ways of knowing but also of belonging. Empathy, with all its pitfalls and paradoxes, is crucial for enabling these connections to be made, which can foster solidarity and spur action. But empathy, like ethics, needs to be contextualized – we cannot generalize.

Their focus on empathy identifies a means by which one can locate personal subjectivities towards friendship. In the development of trust and friendship, one facet of my subjectivities has played an unexpectedly important role in trust building. As a teenager, prior to my early visits to Palestine, I was a member of a close-knit Evangelical Christian community, meaning that I have direct experience of living within a socially conservative, religious and patriarchal community

that extended invasive influence and control over women's socialisation, sexuality and agency. I include this facet of my personal identity not to centre myself, but to locate a point of loosely shared experience with many of the women I have befriended and worked with in Palestine.[30] I was initially unwilling to consider such a personal detail as part of this methodology, due to both its sensitivity and my concern for decentring myself. I did however find that when questioned by friends and collaborators on my motivations for this research, honesty on this matter significantly contributed to building trust, as I could evidence a basis for empathy and a reason for my personal concern for women's equality. Whitaker (2011) argues for a friendship in which power imbalance is recognised and negotiated with the evolution of the friendship itself - on a basis of understanding that all friendships are political on some level. My sharing of personal experience does not address the power imbalance between myself and those included in this research. This imbalance risks the masking of inequalities through friendship itself, and it is therefore essential that these friendships are premised on open communication and consent. For this reason, each step in the development of Inti Samida was discussed and reviewed with each woman who took part, offering the chance to alter or withdraw their participation at each juncture in order to ensure transparency of process and continued consent.[31]

Having established a basis for recruitment through friendship, I used word of mouth to recruit both friends, and friends of friends. With respect to recruitment criteria, I chose to focus on women between the age of 18-29 (defined as 'youth' by PCBS), ensuring generational representation, and using my own position - then in that age demographic - to my advantage. A significant limitation must be noted as a consequence of my lack of Arabic language. This meant

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[30] My experience is not equivalent to any other women's experiences of religious-patriarchal societies, particularly in that I could choose to leave that community and corresponding value system in early adulthood; a privilege the majority of women cannot afford.

[31] One collaborator, Aisha, decided at a late stage to redact her performance. With her consent, this project is submitted with her original scene, with names changed and faces obscured for her privacy. The film will then be embargoed. A reworked version of the film will be used publicly and made available online after this thesis is submitted.

that recruitment was limited to those who speak English and are willing to speak with an English researcher. While this is restrictive, it is the only option that allows this work to operate with clear sharing of ideas. For this reason alone, I focussed on recruiting urban, English-speaking women, be it those descended from *fellahin* and not from wealthier families. This then presents an important boundary to the scope of this research, which can only be seen to discuss women from urban classes. Information sheets were provided, and permissions were recorded in audio files due to cultural sensitivity to written contracts.

I began recruitment with Agnes Handal, with whom I have a long-term friendship through her family. Together, we created a performance that would prompt a medium shift from photography to film. In 2016, two simple, sun-faded *thobes* had hung at the entrance of her family's souvenir shop. I had long been drawn to a Bethlehem day dress, with faded vegetable dyes and frayed elbows from the dress' wearer. The Handal family had recently bulldozed a large portion of their garden to make space for their sons to build their future homes. After discussing the relationship between the dress and the land its wearer worked on, Agnes and I decided that this scarred landscape was an opportune setting for a simple staged photograph. We intended to emulate the canonical paintings of the Embroidered Woman, whilst symbolically relocating the trope into a critique of violences against both the land and women. Agnes was adamant that she should be portrayed in a stance of strength despite the destruction inherent to the landscape; a clear, instinctive reference to *sumud.* In the garden space, we found the best angle for aesthetic framing, and Agnes' brother Issa buried her feet in the ground to symbolise embodied connection. After some test shots with different poses, Agnes chose to stand in a Christ-like position, looking directly out of the camera in defiance (Fig.18).

Having explored a preliminary collaboration, I turned next to self-reflexivity. While the image is clear in meaning and was a spontaneous, collaborative event, it did not go to the lengths of questioning hegemonic notions of women's bodies directly; its implicit nature left significant scope for imposed meanings, whilst Agnes' performance to the camera was demanding, but ambiguous and even mailable in its silence. This silence felt fundamentally inappropriate to a

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culture denied the right to narrate (Said, 1984). Furthermore, Agnes stood frozen in time, meaning her image was separated from the conversation, temporality and movement that created the performance. Finally, Issa's involvement and invisibility as he stood outside of the frame created a final layer of erasure, missing an opportunity to reflect on the siblings' interactions. As Barthes (1982) succinctly observes, the reduction of a moment to a framed two-dimensional photograph becomes a death of sorts. My own comfort with photographic practice over film had led to a choice of medium in the moment, and this required revaluation and a removal of my desire and capacity for control. Through this process I quickly came to understand that voice, time and gesture would be essential to the form in which I collaborate if my collaborations were to enable women's actions to move freely.

I later discussed this performance and the question of voice, movement and temporality with Hanin Tarabay, a friend and an actress from Haifa. Our subsequent collaboration now appears in the opening and closing sequences of *Inti Samida,* as well as in a segment filmed on my phone inside a checkpoint. Hanin often performs in Palestinian dress, primarily in storytelling performances for children and in cultural festivals, and collaborates with Palestinian theatres across the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Israel. Hanin acknowledged the complexities and contradictions inherent to the Embroidered Woman however, to her mind, thobes are complex and malleable in relation to the wearer's subjectivity. Excitingly, Hanin understood women's subjectivities to take precedence over nationalist iconographies. We met in Jerusalem to discuss a concept I had been toying with: the loose idea of exploring the act of dressing in a *thobe* near a checkpoint, suspending the object and action in the intrinsically messy space between the protagonist accessing women's embodied histories, and the politicised space of encounter with the occupier that rendered dress a resistance object. Hanin was open to the concept and wanted to give her characterisation an identity of its own. Speaking to a method actress, it became clear that a considered narrative and transparent direction would be needed; as Hanin asked; "Who is she?" The conversation was underpinned by Hanin's feeling that we needed to define who the protagonist was in order to designate her actions; the dress should follow the body. She was also

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keen to include multiple dresses in the performance, as Palestinian identity and female experience are not singular fixed notions, and a number of *thobes* from different cities and villages would allude to this multiplicity of subjectivities.

We agreed that the protagonist would be a young woman who is about to walk through the checkpoint to Jerusalem. Before she leaves she decides to try on dresses, attempting to connect to other women's bodies and histories, in order to claim her own identity in occupied space. Being unable to reconcile herself with both a specific identity and the safety risk of wearing the dresses in a place of encounter with Israeli military, she instead carries them in a zipped bag out of the West Bank and to Jerusalem. We filmed this performance near the Bethlehem checkpoint, and by pure fortune found a quiet (therefore safer) area of the checkpoint walls that had been painted with an icon of the Virgin Mary in the Greek Orthodox style that itself influenced the icon of the Embroidered Woman; this scene would eventually be paired with an original poem by Asma'a Azeizeh to close *Inti Samida*. We filmed her process of dressing in this space (Fig.19), and on Hanin's suggestion, spontaneously created a short scene in which the character imagines she might be able to walk through the wall, approaching it face-on (Fig.20). In a move to recognise familial heritage and its value under occupation, Hanin recorded corresponding Arabic audio to overlay this approach to the wall;

> When the wall was first built, I used to dream that if I was wearing my mother's thobe, then I could walk straight through and Palestine would still be there.
>
> (Translated from Arabic)

Scripted through discussion, this short performance saw Hanin walk towards the wall as though able to pass through, and would become the opening sequence to the finished film - an entrance into the narrative through a personally motivated movement, and into a problematised space. I then filmed her passage through the checkpoint, on a mobile phone to avoid detection, with Hanin's assurance that this was safe as long as I appeared to be a tourist texting on my phone (Fig.21). With so little footage of the checkpoint interiors available in the public domain, this temporal movement through a key meeting space with occupying forces emulated the actions of

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other women who used their gender to move through militarised space for subversive purposes. Indeed, the Israeli soldier who checked Hanin's ID made unwanted advances, and when a soldier began to watch my phone use with suspicion, we were able to easily deflect their concern by posing for a selfie; both their perceptions of our femaleness and the enactment of my otherness operated as a precarious form of distraction from our filming activity. The footage collected from this act appears in a segment on checkpoints in *Inti Samida*.

Hanin's part in this collaboration prompted an entirely different way of working from any performance I had created before. It was not enough to explain a conceptual circumstance; she believed I also needed to create a character. Through our conversation, she challenged me to discuss the character's motives, whilst correcting my own misconceptions and controlling her own narrative basis. Through her spontaneous action of walking 'through' the wall, her embodiment, desire and subjectivity took the fore. This was a performance and character built out of our conversation, in which Hanin brought her own perspective to my initial framework. Furthermore, this methodological process had been developed through embracing messiness; the messiness of collaboration had been identified and negotiated with clear power relationships agreed upon, resulting in Hanin's spontaneity, while the messiness of the politicised space we moved through became the basis for performative responses. The use of a fictional character performed in real-life space allows collaborators to claim agency through their imagination, enabling a remarkably fluid exchange between collaborators and myself.

In Hanin's performances and in her perspectives, dress had been placed in relation to her body before and above nationalist iconography. The icon of the Virgin Mary on the Bethlehem checkpoint spoke to a much older reification of womanhood, while Hanin's presence and performance with jeans under her thobes and the presence of the checkpoint connected a much more recent history to that context. Hanin had connected dress to women's collective histories, however, the numerous cultural workers I interviewed on my first trip saw the dress as rooted in

nationalist values alone.[32] In 2016, Tina Sherwell was Director of Academic Programmes at The

International Academy of Art Palestine. A Palestinian-British art historian, Sherwell has

published on Palestinian art, iconography and dress (1996, 2006, 2009, 2012). I asked what had

changed since writing her art history thesis exploring the icon of the *fellahin* and dress in 2003.

Sherwell responded;

> A lot of the costume - particularly in manifestations of dance - it has almost
> been exhausted. It's just been used so much in the vocabulary of national
> identity that it's like, oh no, not another exhibition of Palestinian embroidery.

This view was compounded later that week when I met with the Director of the Qattan

Foundation, Omar Al Qattan.[33] After a tour of the part-finished Palestinian Museum and

gardens, we discussed my research. While encouraging of my starting point, Qattan understood

Palestinian identity to be in crisis. Concerned that Palestinian dresses were more representative

of a failed national project in the 1970s and 80s, he concurred with my fear of replicating

canonical tropes and recommended that I focused instead on the "truths and mythologies"

perpetuated in Palestinian cultural endeavours.

While these conversations re-enforce the assertion that Palestinian dress has been relegated to

sign of the nationalist project, the subjective messiness of cultural narratives was acutely

apparent; these interviewees were of the First Intifada generation, and held institutional

positions in which status quo narratives would be hard to reframe without being seen to criticise

the national project; independent workers have greater creative freedom. Perhaps an indication

of Qattan's "truths and contradictions", institutionalised and now outdated nationalist narratives

can be seen to side-line women's own perspectives on their inherited craft. This fundamentally

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[32] In an interview with the Head of Marketing at the Palestinian Authority's Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities
(MoTA) I established that the department selected photographs for advertising Palestinian tourism based on the number
of 'likes' they received when posted to personal Facebook accounts; a stark illustration of the PA's contemporary lack of
strategy.

[33] A mainstay of Palestinian culture, Qattan began his career as a filmmaker before co-founding the A. M. Qattan
Foundation supporting the development of arts and education in Palestine.

contradicts Agnes' indigenous connection between body and land, and Hanin's gendered connection to women's bodies in colonised space through history, thereby indicating that a more nuanced perspective on Palestinian dress does exist within its community.

Palestinian theatre as a basis for creating collaborative performances

Through my collaboration with Hanin, I had established that any future collaborations could require a structural indication of whom the women being enacted might be, while simultaneously allowing space for intersectional identities, so as not to essentialise the embodied experiences of all women. To draw this together, I returned to the question of knowledge production, asking which structures for performative making and knowledge exist in Palestinian society today.

Theatre in Palestine is a common pastime among youth, with the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics (PCBS, 2020) listing a recorded 90,123 attendees of theatre performances in 2019, prior to the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Theatres such as The Freedom Theatre, Jenin, and ASHTAR Theatre, Ramallah, have garnered critical academic attention (Wilson, 2015; Nassar, 2008; Mee, 2012; Varghese, 2020) for their role as agents of social and political change, primarily among youth, and often incorporating *fellahin* culture through dress, music and dance. Bolstered by new creative freedoms after the Oslo Accords, theatre became a mainstay of Palestinian cultural production and identity debate from the 1990s. Varghese (2020) explains;

> By recalling Palestinian stories to the centre of social life, in defiance of Zionism's attempts to make Palestine disappear, and by repeatedly asserting their 'human face', theatre-makers attempt to unravel the colonial schema by which Palestinians are epidermalized as human waste to be expelled to unliveable zones.

To examine a particular case in point I looked to Diyar Dance Theatre (DDT) in Dheisha refugee camp, Bethlehem, where Hanin had trained and acted in the past. Rather than scripting performances, the company work alongside young people to enact a story developed from their

own experiences and perceptions. To exemplify, at their graduate performances in 2017 - televised across the West Bank – performers created a satirical storyline in which women sit in a cafe in loud conversation; one character was wearing towering stilettos and was repeatedly filing her nails. Her husband calls her angrily over a dispute, and she pretends to her friends that instead, it was a romantic phone call. This performance critiqued the impact of social pressures for perceived domestic normalcy and gender roles in an act rendered acceptable through its semi-fiction. Director of DDT, Rami Khatib observed that enactments made through this process can hold perlocutionary potential;

> One of our students told me after a performance that this [performance message] is the exact thing I've been trying to tell my family, but my family would never listen to me. Today they clapped once we'd finished with the play, and I'd told them the same thing I've been trying to tell them for years.

It is important to acknowledge that I am not a trained theatre facilitator. As a foreign national, I cannot claim to be capable of replicating the full creative potential of a Palestinian theatre company. This does however indicate a localised mode of making that can inspire and inform methodology, with the intent of referencing this practice and its potential. The emerging protagonist(s) in this PaR could thus be formed in collaborations that utilise semi-fictional performance to discuss gendered experience while protecting the performer from social scrutiny through the blurred space between performance and the performative. This method provides a means to engage in personal or sensitive subjects through a local mode of production and epistemological sharing.

Returning to Hanin's request for a character, I had to question how much of this protagonist I could viably construct within anticolonial praxis myself whilst leaving space for my collaborator's creative freedom and control. Essentially, I would need to construct a hollow structure through which collaborators could develop their individual performances. This would need to be an avatar of sorts, constructed as a vehicle through which collaborators could create and explore their own stories. I began with a common name that did not delineate class or religion; Rana, meaning 'to

watch' or 'to gaze', and therefore appropriate to a woman performing on camera whilst reflecting on embodied subjectivities. She remained without a family name, in order to prevent labelling her by a community, tribe or religion. To explain Rana's motivations, I suggested that Rana began wearing a *thobe* in a response to being denied a permit to cross into Jerusalem; an experience understood in every family in the West Bank, as Israel routinely denies at least one if not all family members a permit. Through the use of a circumstance endured by many and a dress that speaks to generations of women's resistance, a simple structure was created without prescribing any more of her identity than her traditional dress.

To address and diffuse the power relation between the image-maker and subject, whilst maintaining the support of collaborator's narratives, further measures would need to be taken. In an embrace of subjective messiness, I utilised my lacking Arabic skills to reduce my power. All performances would be in Arabic, privileging the collaborator's first language, while limiting the scope of my own control. I would encourage all collaborators to speak freely and improvise while filming, welcoming any divergences, additions and critiques that might appear. This offered the collaborators a means to directly challenge or subvert the collaborative structure and/or my role if they chose to. I was clear from the offset that all changes, disruptions or divergences in the performances would be incorporated into the final work, including challenges of the collaboration itself.

We would begin developing narratives with the women taking part each asked how they thought Rana might feel. Their answer would create the basis for their Acts and allow each collaborator to choose their narrative line. I returned to the West Bank in September 2016 and February 2017 to trial this new methodology and quickly recruited women from different towns and cities. I chose to limit the new round of collaborators to five, given the significant time commitment involved in producing any performance. Each Act would be limited to a final running time of two to three minutes. I did not record our planning conversations, to ensure that the women I worked with felt free to speak their minds in confidence. I met with each woman to discuss the project, in cafes and in their homes and followed up with conversations in person, as well as on the phone

and instant messaging in preparation for the shoots. I also factored in the logistical needs for availability within my time frames, the collaborator's clear understanding and engagement with the basis and context of the collaboration, and a clear self-initiated concept from which to construct a narrative.

This selection process entailed conversations with nine women, of which five met the criteria. Collaborative scenes were filmed with the following women:

- Mariam Handal, a teaching assistant and music therapist from Bethlehem. The older sister to Agnes, Mariam is a family friend whom I have known since 2010.
- Su'ad Elyan, a business studies graduate and mother living in Hebron. Su'ad is a personal friend, and we met in 2014 in a taxi from Bethlehem to Ramallah.
- Aisha, ███████████████████████████████████ ████████████████████.
- Fadwa Qamhia, a double bass player with the Edward Said Conservatory, from Nablus. I met Fadwa through her mother Lina Qadri, a feminist painter based in Ramallah, and the star of Jen Heck's 2016 documentary *The Promised Band*.
- Yara Ra'fat, Yara was introduced to me by mutual friend Diala Isid, a founding member of the Right to Movement marathon runners. Yara works at the British Council. She is a painter and a leading Right to Movement runner in Ramallah.

The ambition of this project had begun to exceed my logistical capacity, with sole responsibility for the direction, collaboration and filming dividing my attention. I secured a funding extension to hire Tamara Abu Laban, a filmmaker and friend born in Dheisha refugee camp. She has worked with numerous media outlets and teaches film at Al Quds University. Tamara is a passionate advocate for women's and children's stories and skilled at working with people unused to the camera; skills which would prove to be invaluable to the process of collaboration. We have known each other since we met at HLT in 2014. *Thobes* for the shoots were chosen by the women in the collaborations, from a selection lent to me by the Tiraz Center, Amman, The Arab

Women's Union in Bethlehem, Maha Saca's Palestinian Heritage Center, Bethlehem, and the Handal and Muamar families.

These research trips were also a chance to gather more visual content, and everywhere I travelled I stopped at roadsides and accessed rooftops to shoot establishing landscapes and cityscapes. I conducted numerous interviews with creative producers and artists on and off camera, filmed in museums and cultural centres. I was consistently offered generous time and support from those I spoke to. While visiting friends at the Arab Women's Union in Bethlehem, for example, I was offered a performance of a *fellahin* wedding song by Mary Anastas, a long-standing member of the Union as well as Sumud Story House, a women's cooperative preserving folk culture. I filmed her sitting at home in her thobe, surrounded by photographs of her family. Mary's song celebrated the honour of marriage and instructed those who "don't rejoice" to not attend. In *Inti Samida* I paired this performance in a split screen with a video of a staged wedding-as-protest beside the apartheid wall in Al Masara, in which IDF soldiers violently break apart the celebrating dancers. In this juxtaposition, a *fellahin* song can be seen to rebuke the intrusion of the soldiers, whilst drawing out the significance of marriage rituals in Palestinian social and national identities.

The following sections account for the development of each individual collaboration.

Mariam – *Memory* - Filmed at the Palestinian Cultural Centre, Bethlehem

Mariam felt that Palestinian dress is beautiful, and its history is important, but that this is not particularly relevant to the lived experiences of her generation; Rana might therefore be

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exploring this tension.[34] Maha Saca's Palestinian Heritage Centre is a ten-minute walk from Mariam's home, and she has fond memories of visiting as a child. We visited together, and the conversation quickly turned to the posing of young women in the Intifada postcards. Mariam was keen to use the uncanniness of the postcard poses, and we agreed that we would create a scene in which Rana visits the centre and reflects in much the same way Mariam had done.

The fixed-frame cinema of Elia Suleiman constructs scenes as static space through which his characters move in and out of shot, often with absurdly placed props such as a gun that when fired is merely a cigarette lighter, in *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996). This framing choice and slowing of gaze places the actions of the performers at the centre of Sulieman's narrative, creating a gently uncanny space with extended periods of silence (Mavroudi, 2013) that resemble the staged performativity of the Intifada postcards (Figs.16 & 17).

Based on this correspondence, we agreed on a storyline in which Mariam wears her own clothes in a café, reflecting on childhood memories of embroidery, before visiting the centre and modelling a dress. There she would endeavour to connect to women across time and memory in a series of shots in which Mariam would emulate the poses in the postcards. A spoken narrative would be written for the cut and inserted as a voice-over – this then allowed for the stillness of the postcards to be emulated, whilst Mariam preferred not to speak to the camera directly. Shooting in the space of the Heritage Centre lent itself to this entirely; mannequins, faceless posters and the Bedouin tent provided an uncannily theatrical means to show the beauty and diversity of Palestinian dress, and the postcards themselves became our reference for each new shot. Mariam's own dry sense of humour lent itself to her dead-pan gaze from the lens, and Maha Saca kindly lent us a stunning Bethlehem-style antique wedding thobe for the shoot.

[34] In return for her participation, Mariam requested a photoshoot in the Church of the Nativity for her mother, in which she would wear a newly embroidered *thobe*.

Loosely based on her own thoughts, Mariam was then to write a monologue; a plan that would prove a little too ambitious. I would go on to break down our conversation into bullet points to build and adapt prose around, based on her own visit with me prior, to offer Mariam some structure. This narrative built on the reflection on traces of women's bodies and lives that began in Hanin's scene;

> I loved the way I felt wearing the thobe, it made me think of the way women lived in the past.

In post-production the 'postcard' shots were then arranged to correspond with the narration; for example, the edit cuts from Mariam sitting in a cafe to a shot inside a Bedouin tent as the voice-over contemplates what nomadic life might have felt like.

Fadwa – *Anger* - Filmed at her home and the hills of Nablus

Fadwa is a passionate and fast-thinking woman, who immediately told me she thinks Rana must be extremely angry. While the occupation was at the top of Fadwa's list of reasons to be angry, it was closely followed by women's marginalisation, gender-based violence, and lack of opportunity within Palestine leading to ambitious young people having to move abroad. We agreed that her performance would be in response to violence. Fadwa and I quickly developed a strong rapport and having learnt from my previous collaborations, I wished to provide a more substantial framework. I took this opportunity to suggest a particular angle after assuring Fadwa that she was welcome to object, alter or disregard.

I was interested in addressing the rapid increase in femicides, or so-called 'honour killings', which receive minimal punishment under the Palestinian Authority. While domestic violence and femicide is by no means unique to Palestine, Palestinian law allows numerous loopholes to murders committed in the name of 'honour' or 'passion', and little has been done to hold

murderers to account. [35] In discussing violence against women, it is essential to acknowledge that "western" narratives hinge on the notion of a progressive "west" and backwards "east" (Said, 1979) in which, as discussed in the first chapter, women's rights can be seen to demark civility. Given the pervasiveness of Orientalist and racist narratives, Palestinian society is rightly sensitive to the discussion of internal gender violence. It was therefore crucial to avoid overly violent imagery, situating domestic violence and public harassment as a global concern while clarifying this particular context in its relation to the violence of the occupation.

In a past visit, female friends had quietly told me the harrowing story of a mother of six whose bruised body had been found hanging from an olive tree in the centre of a village in the northern West Bank. It happened that this village was not far from Fadwa's home, and she remembered waking up to the news of her death. I suggested we centred the idea of anger on that event, as it could be unpacked in order to understand the dual abuses of the occupation and of gender based violence. Fadwa agreed to this idea, and we structured her performance to begin with a monologue about her feelings, as though this were a story she had just woken up to. She would then walk up through the local hills to overlook her city as she contemplated her grief, fear and anger. Fadwa was keen to avoid directly naming the woman behind this conversation, as this would protect both her own safety, and the dignity of the woman's family. Fadwa believed that the word "honour" is used too frequently to wash over femicide, and the reason the woman's

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[35] Failings in the PA's judicial procedure are further complicated by localized uses of tribal law overseen by community elders (Khalil, 2009), as well as shared jurisdiction with Israeli military in West Bank area B, and total Israeli jurisdiction in Area C. The PCBS reported that in 2020 37% of currently or previously married women in the youth demographic (18-29) have experienced marital violence. Growth in domestic violence intersects with the increase in violence in the occupation and Shalhoub-Kervorkian & Daher-Nashif (2013) argue that femicide is a crime empowered by colonial domination over a segregated population. Gibbs et al. (2020) found through an interview-led study that exposure to events related to the occupation impacts family dynamics within the home, likely through its impact on both women's and men's mental health and self-esteem, increased poverty, and the emotional impact of support structures being separated, and greatly increasing women's risk of experiencing partner violence.

family murdered her was a distraction; there is no justification for familial femicide and therefore the reason is irrelevant.[36]

This was Fadwa's first time wearing a Palestinian dress, and she selected a purple velvet, camp-style dress mimicking traditional Bethlehem designs. Once wearing the dress, her language adopted many of the tropes of nationalist language in her verbal rejection of femicide; she suggested we use olive pits from the ground of her garden, and held them in her hand as she walked purposefully up the hill, spontaneously stating, "They killed the olive tree", when she reached the summit overlooking Nablus. Exploring the hills near Fadwa's home, I became aware of the enormous wingless carcass of an Israel Boeing 707 passenger plane, bizarrely abandoned in a valley littered with parts from old fairground rides, home to circling pigeons and packs of stray dogs.[37] Its skeletal appearance, wasteland setting and loss of wings and identifying narrative felt appropriate to the rage Fadwa's Rana was expressing, and brought to mind the shells of the three empty aeroplanes that male and female PFLP *fedayeen* had blown up in Dawson's Field, Jordan, 1970. This comparative can be found in *Inti Samida*, in which I have used the destruction of flightless aeroplanes as allegory for female rage in the face of multiple violences under patriarchal control; a concept I expand upon in the third chapter.

Aisha – ███████████████████████

███████████████████████████████████████

███████████████████████████████████████

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[36] After the familial murder of 21 year old Israa Ghrayeb in August 2019 a new and potentially substantial women's movement has emerged with a distinct message and language that has greatly informed the language in this thesis, and the closing debates in *Inti Samida's* last 'panel'.

[37] The plane was brought to the West Bank in 1999 by 60-year-old twin brothers Ata and Khamis al-Sairafi, whose restaurant plans were scuppered by the First Intifada; the restaurant opened as the Palestinian-Jordanian Airline Restaurant and Coffee Shop in 2021.

[REDACTED]

Su'ad – *Family* – Filmed at the Muamar family home, Battir

Su'ad and I met to plan her scene shortly after her marriage to a businessman from Hebron. Our conversation circled around comparisons of wedding and marriage cultures. In particular, Su'ad had faced questions over when she would have children from the day she arrived home from her

honeymoon – an extremely common experience for women in Arab cultures. I suggested that perhaps we could build this dynamic into her character, using the pressures of marriage and family as a point of humour. Su'ad was herself a recent business graduate and is passionate about women having an active role in Palestinian society and commerce. She suggested that we include Palestinian embroidery as a form of women's work in our narrative. We agreed on a scene in which Rana learns embroidery from an older woman, and through their conversation, we could explore the pressures on women to marry and establish a family, and the tension Su'ad found between this and continuing a professional life.

For Su'ad, as in Aisha's scene, education is fundamental to Palestinian women's liberation. Education is highly valued in Palestinian society and has been utilised as a form of resistance and anticolonialism since the Nakba (Sayigh, 1985; Taraki 2020). Remarkably, 60% of university students in the West Bank and Gaza are women (El Far et al, 2021). By the age of 15, 7% of girls have dropped out of school compared to 25% of boys (UNICEF, 2018). [38] As Su'ad identified, this pressure to excel in education can be seen to sit at odds with the similar pressure on young women to marry and have children at a young age; as has been discussed in Chapter One, marriage and reproduction are also seen as a form of resistance.

Su'ad asked me to put together a storyline based on our conversation, while she contacted a friend from University, Iman, whose mother Nawal embroiders for a living. I created a narrative line in which I provided direction and structure, but not precise scripting, for example;

> Nawal tells Rana that if she moves away she will make her mother unhappy and she should get married and have children while she is still young. Has Rana thought about marrying Omar Nabil? He comes from a good family, and Nawal thinks he might like Rana.

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[38] The abnormally high pressure on young Palestinians to succeed in education is demonstrated by announcements of *Tawjihi* (High School Diplomas), which are broadcast on local radio annually. The pressure infamously leads to numerous annual student suicides (Haaretz 2020). This phenomenon is yet to be analysed and understood within academia.

The storyline wove between embroidery instruction and discussion of the two women's lives, with the tension between marriage and independence continuing throughout. Su'ad then took my notes and translated them into Arabic with full autonomy to amend and alter the contents. These notes would be used by Su'ad and Nawal to base an improvised script upon, while I encouraged them to amend, disrupt or discard the contents as they pleased. The Muamar family live in the UNESCO-protected village of Battir, and after Tamara explained the project to the family patriarch Khalid over coffee, we were permitted to begin filming in their living room. The room itself was packed with Palestinian heritage artefacts including coins, cooking utensils and ceramics. Throughout the filming, Khalid sat in the corner of the room with his parrot on his shoulder to monitor the proceedings.

I decided to emulate the immensely popular Syrian and Turkish soaps constantly broadcast through homes across the West Bank when filming the two women's conversation in a domestic space. This would mean filming the dialogue in a residential site with simple lighting designed to be adaptable to character movements without repeat takes, and cutaways used to create a sense of a broader setting. Frames would oscillate between headshots of the women and a pulled-back frame showing both sat together. Close-ups would be used to observe the embroidery, and narrative direction would be driven by the dialogue. Filming took place with an audience of family and children coming and going, and the family kindly lent Su'ad a black embroidered thobe of their own – large enough to disguise her newly showing pregnancy.

The humour of the conversation appeared to be understood by everyone present, and Nawal embraced her role with confidence. At the end of shooting, Nawal took an opportunity to break the planned storyline and share her own story, whilst the cameras continued to roll;

> RANA/SU'AD
>
> How did you get married, aunty?
>
> NAWAL
>
> Oh my dear, my mother and his met at the souk where they were selling parsley and mint. My mother told her his mother that she should get her son a wife to

help her with house work. But his mother told her that her sons were still too young. My mother asked; "How young are they?" They were 19 and 20 years old, and my mother said that she must get them wives anyway. The woman told my mother; "We saw your daughter in the wedding, will you accept if we ask for her hand?" My mom said that she would give her a response on Thursday.

> RANA/SU'AD

Hahaha! Too soon!

> NAWAL

My mother told me that she wanted to marry me off. I asked her; "To whom?" She said that she would marry me off to his brother. I told her that I wouldn't marry him, and my mother was furious. When his mother came on Thursday, she told us that she didn't want to marry off her eldest son yet. She said she wanted me to marry the youngest son, Khalid. So I said yes.

In an unexpected turn, Nawal directly claimed the opportunity to alter filming, and in doing so gave us a remarkable opportunity to demonstrate generational and class differences in familial relations.

Yara – *Change* – Filmed at her home in Ramallah

Yara is a lead runner and organiser for the Right To Movement's (RMT) Ramallah running team. This running initiative was formed in Bethlehem in 2012, and operates in nine different cities in the West Bank, running in youth-led groups through landscapes controlled by both the PA and IDF, using their numbers to stay safe and make a political statement by claiming space with their bodies. As an organisation, they strongly advocate for women's rights to sports, community leadership and public space. Yara is an energetic and highly ambitious woman with a career currently at the British Council, and aspirations in politics. Yara is passionate about women's freedoms and is an influential leader among Ramallah runners. She wears Palestinian embroidery detailed on contemporary clothing as a political statement when she attends work meetings with attendees from other countries, and found Rana immediately relatable. A painter of figurative

women, she believed Rana would be a creative, and wanted to contrast the skillsets of running and painting in her character.

We agreed upon a storyline in which Rana is painting at home before receiving a phone call from a friend stuck at a checkpoint and therefore unable to run with her. Despite the knockback, Rana would nevertheless head out for a run past the separation wall alone, enacting the principles of RTM, before spray painting a woman onto the wall. I denoted the storyline without scripting it, in the same manner I had with Su'ad;

> Rana then calls her friend Diala and asks her how soon she will arrive. Diala is stuck at a checkpoint, the soldiers have held her service for over an hour without telling her anything and she doesn't know when they will be able to leave. She tells Rana to go running without her, and that they can train for the marathon together later in the week.

We would use her home as the first location, and the wall beside the checkpoint at Qalandiya (between Ramallah and Jerusalem) as our second set. The latter location was chosen for its famous graffiti and surrounding burnt-out tyres from recent protests, as well as for the heavy footfall on the road beside the wall, which would reduce our chances of experiencing serious harassment. As with the previous filming, we were on a tight schedule, so simple lighting and a documentary style were used in Yara's home, while natural light in the late afternoon was used for the street scene. Yara wore a blue thobe from Widad Kawar's collection and changed into sports clothing with an RTM t-shirt for the running scene. Her painting on the wall followed her first use of spray paint, and while a little uncertain at first, resulting in a clear motif to close the scene.

Collaborative Acts in summary

The five Acts created in collaboration with Mariam, Su'ad, Nawal, Aisha, Reem, Fadwa and Yara covered a broad breadth of gendered experiences within West Bank society, which in my third chapter will be broken down to establish underlying narrative connections. Each woman constructed a clear performance with very little difficulty, albeit with some direction, which given their varying professional backgrounds is a testament to the impact and tacit understanding of Palestinian theatre among youth. The role of dress in these performances was variable. For Mariam and Su'ad it impacted the course of their narrative, directly engaging with the meaning of its materiality and their relation to the craft. Conversely, for Fadwa and Aisha it was incorporated but unacknowledged, representing their culture on their bodies but tangential to their lived concerns with education, work and experiences of violence. For Yara, the dress related to her concern with art and female form, yet was discarded for the sake of practicality when she ran, replaced instead with an RTM t-shirt - displaying an alternate symbol of Palestinian identity.

Affection for the dresses was very clear in the responses of each woman to their wearing of a thobe; for most of the women this was their first time wearing one, and all five women have since discussed their increased interest in and enjoyment of Palestinian dress. The value of using Arabic in these performances, working with Tamara on camera, and encouraging diversions from agreed narratives have also been evidenced; working in Arabic with Tamara secured a clear process and structure whilst diffusing my power through my temporary ignorance at the nuances that unfolded in front of me. Aisha's full script and Nawal's improvised monologue on her marriage were a particularly significant outcomes, demonstrating the value of encouraging collaborators to take control, and the richness of interventions made when collaborators are comfortable in their autonomy.

Each woman demonstrated a direct relation between dress and their own lived experience, and each used the dress to mirror women's actions through Palestinian history, challenging the

bounds of their gendered existences in contemporary society without disconnecting from their heritage. While the perlocutionary potential of those performances can only be speculated upon, what each woman has achieved is a mirroring of past perlocutions. These Acts can be likened to the Intifada Dress, or to fellahin women joining protests; in relocating Palestinian dress to meet the demands of a current society in-resistance, illocutions are reoriented and therefore new perlocutionary potential can be found. Where these narratives differ however, is in their address to *both* the occupation and Palestinian social conservatisms. The means by which this tension and sensitivity is addressed from a position of solidarity is fundamental to the development of *Inti Samida*, and will be discussed in the third chapter.

"Hiding as a thread in a sash or a collar"

Unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression

> Since the main features of our present existence are dispossession, dispersion, and yet also a kind of power incommensurate with our stateless exile, I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us.

> Edward Said (1986, pp.6)

Having made five collaborative Acts, I next considered the means through which they could be used, connected to one another, critically reflected upon and contextualised. This chapter analyses the process of engaging with these questions, informed by an early failed attempt to do so, before turning again to dress cultures and Palestinian makers to inspire a mode of making that can represent women's diverse narratives within a collectivist community.

In choosing a structural form in which to address these questions, I eschewed institution-dependent options such as gallery installations. I chose instead to use a single self-contained film intended for online streaming and screenings', with Palestinian audiences as the primary priority. This choice offered the most convenient form of production to distribute across borderlines and without reliance on external support. The resulting assemblage film explores the social contexts, cultural histories, violences, liberation movements and actions that frame women's lives in Palestine. Inspired by Palestinian dressmaking cultures, *Inti Samida* is constructed in an assemblage form referencing dress panels, applique patches, embroidery, symbolic jewellery and imported materials. Turning to assemblage anticolonial narratives in

Palestinian creative production, this form is conceptually and aesthetically influenced by Edward Said and Jean Mohr's photographic and textual publication *After the Last Sky* (1986) and Elia Suleiman and Jace Salloum's assemblage film *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (1990).

The failure of neat narratives

With all this work's creative decisions rooted in dress and women's actions, I returned to the model of the dress to create a conceptual filmic structure. At this early stage, I envisaged the collaborative performances to function as dress panels from which to structure the final outcome, using patches and embroidery as metaphors for the detail needed to situate the performances within complex gendered epistemologies. Continuing with theatrical performances, I developed a central scripted dialogue scene between two women in a café, in which the collaborative Acts could be framed as Rana's flashbacks, underpinning the narrative. I conceived of the disparities between the performances as pointing to an assemblage of subjective lived experience, multi-layered and divergent, much in the manner of panels passed through women's kinships and incorporated into newer dresses. The dialogue would then be used to unpack the tacit knowledge at play in each collaboration. While driven by a conceptual basis in Palestinian dress, this idea was deeply flawed in its reliance on the narrow representational space of a conversation between two people.

When writing about the messiness inherent to fieldwork, Naveed et al (2017) observe that financial and career pressures can influence the quality of doctoral research. My intent to finish this work within the timeframe of my scholarship funding presented a structural dilemma which I allowed to infringe on this research. This plan unintentionally became an attempt to tie the messiness of the performances together far too neatly, within a rapid resolution that did not adequately address the complexities and nuances of the research subject itself.

In November 2017 I returned to film the central scene after sending the script to numerous friends and colleagues for feedback. The story followed Rana at work in a café, where she would meet Amira, a Californian-Palestinian member of the diaspora on her first visit to Palestine. The script would be in English to signify Amira's loss of indigenous dialect, and whose desire for knowledge and understanding could acknowledge the impact of loss of heritage on individuals. Their conversation would serve to unpack who Rana in her *thobe* might be, and I, therefore, recruited Hanin Tarabay to return and take the role. Amira would be played by Neda Mustafa, a postgraduate researcher on children's development in the West Bank.

The script opened with Rana working in a café, in the same black and red thobe used in our experimental work at the beginning of this research. Amira enters, new to Ramallah, and asks about the dress. They strike up a conversation, and Rana joins Amira for coffee after her shift. The script was sent to both women three months prior to shooting, and during rehearsals and shooting the messiness of fieldwork and subjectivity came into stark relief. In scripting a dialogue between just two women, Rana had become a vessel through which a whole history and society were supposedly represented in some capacity through a singular explanation to Amira, compounding the gendered burden of authenticity. To exemplify;

> AMIRA
>
> Do many people make them anymore?

> RANA
>
> Yes, quite a lot of women earn an income from their *tatriz*. It's good that you're asking a lot about traditions, but are you also learning more about the rest of life here?

> AMIRA
>
> Yes of course. I'm just trying to learn more about where my family came from.

Yani I understand, our heritage is important. But life has changed a lot and the present is also important if you want to better understand Palestine. And you know that if your family were from a big city then the women probably dressed like Europeans and didn't wear these dresses? The past is important but life has continued and there is a lot you're not learning if you only look back.

This attempt to unite the collaborative Acts in the limited space of a dialogue attempted to connect diverse experiences within the ongoing Nakba far too neatly, resulting in a characterisation of Rana that demanded too much information be conveyed by an individual, with Amira's character operating as little more than a spectator. The discomforting tension between these characters was thus drawn to the fore. These flaws in my scripting choices were further constrained by the limitations of the short-form dialogue format. Conversely, the five collaborative scenes demonstrated a wide exploration of the meeting space between women's indigenous craft and women's lives in the current day, intermingling one and the other in narratives rooted in real women's perceptions and concerns.

The failures of this script highlighted the need to continue embracing messiness, and the value of working through non-linear forms to dissect and contextualise the layers of tacit and spoken knowledge displayed in the five Acts. The resolution of this project would require a dispersal of the burden of representation that I had created for Rana's finite character; if one cannot understand Palestinian dressmaking through one thobe alone, then one person or character cannot speak to the experiences of many.

Edward Said (1986) similarly problematises the space between the narration of an individual and a community experience, again rooting commonality in the Nakba;

To be sure, no single Palestinian can be said to feel what most other Palestinians feel: Ours has been too various and scattered a fate for that sort of correspondence. But there

is no doubt that we do in fact form a community, if at heart a community built on suffering and exile.

Evidencing the limitations of linear narrative created by a non-Palestinian maker, this experience raised the question of how one could incorporate the messiness of multi-layered history into *Inti Samida*, centring a plethora of voices in order to more deeply engage with the nuances of the collaborative scenes.

Sourcing and sampling alternate filmic materials

I had previously found methodological merit in utilising pre-existing methods of Palestinian production through theatre to create collaborative Acts. Inspired by this, I began renewed experiments in narrative form by exploring the use of fragments of pre-existing video, audio and visual materials produced by or featuring Palestinians, with a particular emphasis on women. Edward Said and Jean Mohr's publication *After the Last Sky* (1986) sets a precedent for this approach. This book tells a story of Palestinian community through the juxtaposition of Jean Mohr's photographs of geographically dispersed Palestinians and Said's personal responses to the images, told through non-linear vignette texts ruminating on memories and thoughts evoked by them. Together, they create a narrative structure that accommodates the complexity of dispersed lives under numerous political and colonial powers. Said problematises the countering of colonial erasure through reductive representations of Palestinians as a clearly defined community. In his introduction, he argues that Palestinian narrative and memory should amount to some form of assemblage; "I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid and fragmentary forms of expression should be used to represent us." (pp.6)

Their publication points to a means by which assemblage film could function in a research film; vignette voice, text, sound and visual materials became a means to connect the Acts through a

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rhizomatic exploration of Palestinian histories, narratives and creative works. As discussed, conventional sources of such materials such as film archives are limited in the Palestinian context due to Israeli confiscation. Permission from Israeli institutions would be required to access these archives, rendering them inaccessible to anyone whose viewpoints differ from the values held by those institutions. The internet, therefore, became an obvious alternative material source, both in its role in Palestinian resistance and in its accessibility.

Itself a vast, liquid and precarious epistemological rhizome, the ways in which internet communications have transformed Palestinian culture, society and resistance are remarkably underexplored in academia; an immense oversight given the fragmented nature of Palestinian community and the prevalence of Israeli surveillance technologies. Khoury-Machool (2007) documents the rapid rise of the internet in Palestine in the 2000s - at that time the internet was more popularly used than in any other Arab country. He attributes this to the need to provide educational materials to students during curfews, and to the use of internet communications to alert civilians to Israeli military killings and unfolding events that may impact the navigation of public space. Sunaina Maria (2013) notes that internet communication and distribution impacted the development of cultural resistance significantly, with musicians using their online presence to share Palestinian narratives beyond borders and commercial constraints from the 00s onwards. She cites hip-hop band DAM, whose 2001 YouTube single and music video *Who's the Terrorist?* was a pivotal success in the dissemination of anti-occupation narratives. That same year Electronic Intifada was launched, documenting abuses of Palestinians on their news website, following the lead of the WAFA news agency and The Palestine Chronicle, which both appeared online in 1999. The Palestine News Network was then launched in 2002, and Ma'an News in 2005.

The rise in internet resistance practices was soon followed by social media use, on which there is no academic writing in the Palestinian context. On my first visit in 2010, Facebook was treated as a 'safe' platform to share news and information, while activists advised me against the use of

email due to Israeli intelligence hacking. Since, Israel has begun arresting Palestinians on the basis of their Facebook posts (Middle East Monitor, 2017). Facebook has since been superseded by platforms such as WhatsApp and TikTok. These have gained significant popularity, with the former used to share encrypted information on events from unfolding violences to illegal raves. TikTok is conversely used performatively, and displays of nationalism can be seen enacted through films with tags including #tatriz (embroidery) and #dubke (folk dance). Notably, Palestinian dresses are used prolifically on this platform, with 'reveal' videos seeing dozens of women modelling their dresses (Fig.22).

In its many facets, much of which is beyond the remit of this text, the internet has become a space within which Palestinians can share ideas, support, information, news and culture across borders and with a global audience, with the younger generations holding the advantage of naturalised digital fluency. This however is not a safe space; Israeli and Palestinian Authority surveillance is an active threat. Nevertheless, the internet remains a space in which information is disseminated and consumed to great political effect, a precedent set by the Arab Uprisings of 2011, and demonstrated in Palestine more recently in the galvanising of the Tala'at women's rights marches in 2019 reacting to the familial murder of 21-year-old Israa Ghreyeb, and the anti-corruption protests of 2021, responding to the political murder of Fatah critic Nizar Banat. The internet is therefore a site through which Palestinian epistemologies are being developed and grown, and resistance is being informed and organised. It is arguably an organically rhizomatic, informal archive in its own right, containing decades of video, image and sound materials in an unstructured form.

In the development of *Inti Samida*, the use of internet-based materials offered an opportunity to explore the breadth of this epistemological space within Palestinian community, whilst highlighting the destruction and confiscation of alternative archives, and acting to acknowledge erased histories with available materials despite this. Attention is drawn to this through the digital distortion that is clear in materials lifted from the internet. Footage containing digital

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noise can be seen to hold an indexical trace of the layers of interventions that knowledge can encounter under mass dissemination and treatment of visual histories as owned artefacts; much of the archival material in the film had to be sourced from YouTube samples owned by commercial video banks. Be it in their placement online, sampling towards sales, or degradation through reproduction, the very quality of the materials themselves can be seen to evidence the capitalist degradation of histories and access constraints regarding artefacts which are not protected by institutions accepted within imperialist status quos.[39]

Converse to the use of 'found' materials, Said and Mohr generated their own materials for *After the Last Sky* under the editorial eye of Said. I cannot conduct my authorship in the same manner. Instead, I endeavour to use pre-existing Palestinian-made materials towards the same ends, locating my authorship in the editing, not the narration. In editorially curating Palestinian voices and creative production in line with Palestinian thought, I have endeavoured to centre Palestinian experience through a process of sampling, narrating through controlled evidencing, and owning my subjectivity without indulging in it. In an acknowledgement of the significant influence Said's work has had on approaching this practice, I reworked a segment of his writing into an introductory text at the beginning of *Inti Samida*, locating my presence as editor without centring that position:

> Since the main features of Palestinian women's present existence are dispossession, marginalisation, and yet also a kind of power incommensurate with lives lived under settler colonial occupation and global patriarchal oppression, I believe that essentially unconventional, hybrid, and fragmentary forms of expression should be used in their representation.

Lifting materials from the internet is a legal grey area, however, under UK law's fair use policy copyrighted materials can be used if altered, critiqued, reviewed or quoted with full credits in a

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[39] This can be likened to the treatment of the National Museum of Iraq in Baghdad, looted during the US invasion in 2003; as with Israeli looting of Palestinian video archives, some of historical artefacts looted by US allies have been found, but many were damaged and more were lost. In both contexts but to differing degrees, the degradation and removal of access to these artefacts occurred at the intersection of capitalist control and colonial erasure/devaluation.

non-commercial context.[40] Regarding materials made by Palestinian makers, to avoid compounding the colonial appropriation of culture all Palestinian creatives whose work appears in *Inti Samida* have been contacted for permission and are fully credited at the end of the film. All requests that materials be removed have been respected.[41]

Over a three-year period, I accumulated a catalogue of over 1000 videos, as well as incorporating a shortlist of literary references to contribute to narrative building. Using music from Palestinian films such as Khleifi's *Wedding in Galilee* and Jacir's *Salt of This Sea* to guide the pace of the edits, I began mapping sets of thematically connected clips from creative and media works towards the generation of a narrative. The following sources were considered:

- Palestinian arts – cinema, theatre, dance, fine art, video art, poetry, music, literature

- Materials referencing Palestinian dress and culture

- Materials referencing Palestinian histories and pivotal events

- Materials of women in Palestine in any context, but particularly footage of influential Palestinian women, women in public and private space, women in education and resistance.

- News footage discussing Palestine – to be identified as such

- Materials collected on my fieldwork surplus to the collaborative scenes

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[40] Copyright, Designs and Patents Act, 1988. Available at https://tinyurl.com/8h6bve4h

[41] All Palestinian makers/thinkers/organisations and allies were contacted with full information. Of 71 people/organisations approached, 5 declined on the basis that they prefer to keep their art within its original context. 1 agent asked for a fee I could not afford. 8 have not responded after at least 4 attempts at contact over a six-month period. I will endeavour to reach them directly whilst test-screening in Palestine, and if this fails I will remove them from the film prior to any public release. All materials without permission at the time of submission were publicly available to view online. The version of the film submitted for my doctorate will be embargoed. All test screenings and future releases will be not-for-profit. I have confirmed consent from the remaining 57 people and organisations.

Assemblage filmic process through the model of Palestinian dressmaking cultures

In my scripted scene, I had viewed the collaborative performances to function as dress panels from which to build a narrative around, with details in the scripted performances creating metaphorical patches and embroidery. Having established that women's voices - particularly those of my collaborators - should be centred in my narrative form, the relegation of the Acts to structural panels in a dress was inadequate to the centrality of their roles. In revisiting this model with assemblage materials in mind I relocated the collaborative performances towards a new model, viewing them instead as the 'makers' of their own dresses, or, forms of knowledge production. Through this relocation, their agency both literally and metaphorically becomes central, as does their participation in a craft passed through the collective. Following this re-centring, assemblage narratives would then bridge each collaborative Act to the next, emulating the 'panels' that form the tailored body of Palestinian dress.

In Palestinian dress, the panelled dress body is then adorned with silk patches and sleeves from multiple spaces of production, before being embellished with intricate symbolic embroidery. The clips of footage and audio that make up those panels thus operate as selected, cut and recontextualised applique patches. The signs and symbols within these cuttings can then be seen to then act as embroidery. Aspirational/status-driven jewellery and accessories adorning the dress can then be seen as narrative points of view - such as protesting gendered violence against Palestinian women. Lastly, cuttings from international press materials can be likened to imported cotton linings – cheap, available, and incorporated into the structure, but holding no deeper epistemological symbolism.

Within this model, as in dress production before the Nakba, the dress is connected to both subjective bodies and to collective epistemologies; the structure of the dress is tailored to the 'makers' and endowed with collectivist meaning through embellishment. Each panel could then

weave a narrative comprised of materials from a broad range of sources and mediums, creating new meaning in the cut between one material with the next.

Laura Marks (2015) points to the influence of Sergei Eisenstein's Soviet-era montage theory (1937) on Arab film – epistemologically connected to communist and leftist ideologies in Palestinian and pan-Arab nationalisms. Eisenstein argued for meaning to be found in the "collision of shots", opposing his colleague Vsevolod Pudovkin's assertion that montages form a chain. Instead, he argues that each shot within a montage is cellular and creates new meanings in collision with the next cell, driving the narrative forwards "By the conflict of two pieces in opposition to each other. By conflict. By collision." Within *Inti Samida*, sampled patches can therefore be understood to emulate this cellular form, with my edit process creating collisions with adjoining patchwork pieces to create new meaning. This offers a space for my authorship to operate through the editing room, avoiding direct narration which so often centres the filmmaker. The music sampled from Eisenstein's seminal 1925 silent feature film *Battleship Potemkin* consequently appears in the first assemblage panel of Inti Samida; the only music in the soundtrack from a source that is not directly related to Palestine.

Narrative themes and structure

With a model through Palestinian dress defined, I identified the following underlying themes that would form structural 'panels' between the collaborative Acts. These were defined through a process of rewatching the scenes, further reading on Palestinian feminist thought, and experimenting with found materials. Many of these themes overlap, and all are framed within the occupation, resistance, and Palestinian society.

- Dressmaking and women's bodies
- Palestinian arts, embroidery and performance

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- Memory, loss and family history

- Gender roles, domesticity, hospitality

- Marriage and family expectation

- Women's spaces, friendship and inter-generational intimacies

- The tension between education and child rearing

- Education, opportunity and nepotism

- Youth culture, music and media

- Gendered resistance, female leadership, and *sumud*

- Violences against women and their loved ones

- Female anger and lived trauma

- Female bodies in public space and right to movement

- Sexual harassment, abuse and threats

- Acting to elevate the nation as a form of female agency

Through lengthy experimentation with materials from the internet, as well as those generated through my fieldwork, and in reference to the themes in each collaborative Act, the following narrative structure to the film emerged:

Opening Sequence

Panel 1

- History of indigenous dress

- Disruption of the Nakba

- Dress and the Embroidered Woman as resistance to ethnic cleansing

- Women as memory of family and nation

Mariam: Memory (Heritage, memory and temporal disconnect)

Panel 2

- Problematising exoticism and orientalism in representation

- Problematising woman-as-symbol

- *Sumud* as a leading principle of gendered resistance

- The bride and motherhood as politicised symbols of *sumud*

Su'ad and Nawal: Family (Marriage, gendered labour and independence)

Panel 3

- Gendered and domestic labour in resistance

- Women in the workforce and patriarchal oppression

- Education and employability

- Financial crisis under settler colonial occupation

Aisha: ███████████████████████████████████

Panel 4

- Women in Palestinian public space and spaces of encounter with occupation

- Women under multiple violent occupations – occupation/patriarchy

- Arrest, Israeli prisons and sexual violence under occupation

- Female anger

Fadwa: Anger (Violence against women, female anger)

Panel 5

- The inability to narrate entrapping lives today

- Contemporary gendered resistance narratives – feminisms and anticolonialism

- The First Intifada and women's resistance practices in shifting political

  landscapes

- Evolving resistance practices in Palestinian youth cultures

Yara: Change (Women's bodies as a frontline in youth-led resistance)

Within this structure, if the narrative lines between the collaborative scenes form the structure, then the five collaborative Acts can be seen to centre women as agents, underpinning collective gender narration and concerns with real women's subjectivities. Addressing a need for women's agency to the benefit of both the individual and the collective, this model relays between the individual subjective body and epistemologies informing collectivism; this emulates both the

structural form of Palestinian dress and the liquid knowledge shared within a collectivist community that is conveyed in that construction.

A return to my collaborators

While the collaborative Acts operate as structural guides to the filmic narrative, they were disconnected from the assemblage narrative, creating a divide between the individual and collective. I therefore reflexively returned to the five performers, opening an opportunity to discuss the film's themes further. Speaking to each woman offered further opportunities to discuss issues which I could not fully address through the materials I had gathered online. This included discussion on subjective experiences of education, employment, family and memory, gender-based violence and hopes for the future, none of which are discussed in great variation or detail by young women in non-textual, digitally disseminated materials, with the one exception of Palestinian cinematic narratives.

I proposed a new round of conversations to Mariam, Su'ad, Aisha, Fadwa and Yara – by then, confined by Covid-19 travel restrictions – and re-interviewed them on a recorded Zoom call. The following questions were used in a semi-structured conversation.

1. Can you tell me what the *thobe* symbolizes to you?
2. What do Palestinian women represent in art and culture?
3. How do you feel when you wear a *thobe*?
4. What do you think when you see other women wearing *thobes*?
5. How do you feel about the importance of the symbolism of the bride in Palestine?
6. How do women resist occupation in Palestine?
7. How do women resist patriarchy in Palestine?

8. How do you feel about women being a symbol of the land in Palestinian art?

9. Can you tell me about how women experience education?

10. Can you tell me about how women experience employment?

11. Can you tell me about how women's experiences of urban culture in Palestine are changing?

12. Can you tell me about your feelings about motherhood?

13. What is it like for women travelling around Palestine, or walking in the street? How is it different to men?

14. What kinds of violence do women experience in Palestine?

15. Do you think there is a relationship between the violence of the occupation and violence against women?

16. How do women resist gender-based violence in Palestine?

17. Do you think the woman in the thobe is relevant to the experiences of young women today?

18. How do you see the future for Palestinian Women?

19. Can the woman in the thobe be a useful idea in building women in the future?

20. What is the best future for Palestinian women?

The resulting interviews were substantial and provided rich materials, benefitting from the time that had passed since filming. With the economic hardships of the pandemic, Mariam was seeking a scholarship as a means to a future, while Su'ad was quick to discuss the pressures of motherhood under occupation. Aisha ███████████████████████████████ ███████████████████████████████████████ highlighted the diversity of lived perspectives and understood *sumud* to be the only unifying experience. Unlike the writers who emphasise the Nakba as a point of commonality, Aisha understood resistance through steadfastness to supersede this. Yara, as a Ramallah local, was in closest proximity to the emerging Tala'at feminist movement and was quick to define the ways in which Palestinian society has improved with respect to gender rights. Fadwa was unique in having relocated to

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France and then Germany, and with her new experiences informing her perspective, her critiques of social conservatisms were strongly framed with the benefit of hindsight. Each was markedly experiencing greater challenges than when I had first met them, and yet each was constructive in their critiques and held clear ambitions for a more positive future, reflecting perhaps Aisha's optimism and *sumud* in the face of rapid change. Indeed, the final assemblage panel in *Inti Samida* ends with Aisha's words, which allude to a future time and therefore do not end the narrative; [42]

> I see a lot of potential, actually, for Palestinian women. I even talked to women who work in organisations where they support other women, and when you connect this to a larger movement, you start to see that the scene is changing.

These interviews resulted in a temporal relay of thought and subjective voice that brought the women's perspectives back into the assemblage, enriching it and interacting with themes found in the collaborative scenes more directly. These interviews informed and affirmed my narrative line, realigning my creative process with my collaborator's viewpoints.

Narrative voice and crediting narrators

With my collaborator's voices now incorporated more fully into my range of materials, as well as a narrative line designed between each assemblage panel, the exact means of narration demanded attention. I returned then to Hawari and Sleiman's (2017) call to "speak alongside" Palestinian voices, using my role in the editing room as a means to spotlight Palestinian voices through the assemblage. With materials sourced from video, audio and text, as well as sources including Palestinian women from across society, some male Palestinian thinkers, international

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[42] Aisha's words are attributed here on the understanding that these words are not in any way contentious.

press clippings and my collaborators, a clear means by which to structure and identify those voices is essential to the context and credibility of those words.

In consideration of assemblage narrative voice, I turned to Elia Suleiman and Jace Salloum's 1990 45-minute film, *Introduction to the End of an Argument: (Intifada) Speaking For Oneself...Speaking For Others...* (*Muqaddimah Li-Nihayat Jidal*). Through collage film combining clippings from news broadcasts, cinema and documentaries from the US, Europe and Israel, Suleiman and Salloum examine the prolific production of filmic material denying and silencing Palestinian voices. Made during the First Intifada and four years after Said's advocacy for fragmented form, the artists use repetition, contrasting cuts, and an acutely dry sense of humour to demonstrate revisionist histories, Orientalisms and racisms. Hollywood's denigration of Arab and Palestinian right to speak comes to the fore, through excerpts from cinema including *The Battle of Algiers* (1966), Elvis Presley's *Harem Scarum* (1965), and *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom* (1985).

The directors use textual overlays to repeatedly announce the start of "Part 1" without ever moving further. The film announces "The End" and "To be continued" when neither appears to occur. Structurally, *Introduction's* textual narrative interventions can be seen to epistemologically correspond with Hawari's identification of Palestinian indigenous time (2018); time is rooted in the shared trauma of the Nakba, repeated and compounded in the looped audio, and continues to evolve and move in a non-linear structure with no clear ending. The film rapidly moves into a layered montage after the introductory sequence in a swiftly emitted series. A flickering TV screen is filmed with a title sequence reading "Today" and "Tonight" in animated 3D graphics, before abruptly cutting to a flash of colonial film title stating "ZERO HOUR IN THE HOLY LAND!" while an American newsreader announces "first rumblings of a major battle for Jerusalem", the screen cuts to a 3D animated title over a video of a camel sat in front of the landscape of Jerusalem "IN THE HOLY LAND", and a second news reader rapidly overcuts his predecessor "...see Jerusalem, Nightline continues, once again [sound loops] once again".

The title sequence from "IN THE HOLY LAND" reloads, this time against a film of a boy on a donkey, while a third newsreader loops in "We are back once again, live from Jerusalem". Mid-sentence, the screen cuts to a heavily cropped black and white hammer horror-style movie title reading "Murder By Television".

This entire sequence is packed into 13 seconds, increasing the film's pace in a controlled yet subjective critique of the normalisation of violences faced by Palestinians. In the context of *Introduction*, the directors intersect textual and audio materials in their narration through the editorial process, as well as periodical textual overlays, providing momentum to the narrative voice. It is the collisions themselves that identify and draw out the nuances in the materials used, and in the edit that we understand the filmmakers' point of view.

Introduction works with voice and text to build narration, using language (English/Arabic) to differentiate between Orientalist voice and Palestinian voice. *Inti Samida's* narration demanded differentiation between a broad variety of sources, broken down as follows. Textual narration sampled from Palestinian writers appears in textual form, overlaying video footage in freeze frame. Words spoken by Palestinians and a small number of significant ally commentators are then accompanied by footage of the speaker, in order to ensure the speaker is identified and credited clearly. Voices from the international press are disembodied from their speaker, whose identity is irrelevant to the narrative, and distorted with the sound of an analogue audio recording device clicking in and out to identify those materials as cheapened and disposable. My collaborator's voices, disembodied from their image in order to offer a layer of authorship blurring, are central to the filmic narrative and therefore their status as such is emphasised by their words appearing across the screen over video footage, with large font appearing simultaneous to their speech. The English font was chosen for its similarity to fonts used in PLO pamphlets, and the Arabic title appears with a two-tone drop shadow, referencing typographic styles popularly used in Arabic television (Studio Safar, 2020), as exemplified in the title sequence of Khleifi's *Wedding in Galilee*. Words throughout the film appear in colours found in

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embroidery, often emulating the tones worn by women in the footage that the text overlays. The closing title sequence then samples stills from each speaker, performer, film or artwork in the assemblage, crediting each clearly, and thereby clarifying the voices that comprise the narrative.

To exemplify this demarcation of voice within *Inti Samida*, in the twelfth minute a segment on *sumud* follows Hanan Ashrawi's commentary on the representative qualities held by Palestinian women, in which she is seen directly addressing my camera. The assemblage then cuts to one of my five collaborators' words on differences between women;

> It's different from a woman to another. We all have voices, I think that's what's difficult – to have one voice, which is the voice of *sumud*.

The backdrop image then depicts women in varying Palestinian dresses dancing, demonstrating a variety of dress styles and individual women, while textual replications of the speaker's words appear across the centre of the screen one line at a time, giving special status to her words. The frame then cuts to domestic family video footage by Ray Hanania, with the smiling faces in their home, before a freeze frame is overlaid with a full credited quotation;

> "*Sumud* is continuing living in Palestine, laughing, enjoying life, falling in love, getting married, having children ... Building a house, a beautiful one and thinking that we are here to stay, even when the Israelis are demolishing this house, and then build a new and even more beautiful one than before – that is also *sumud*."

> Abdel Fatah Abu Srour

These words were spoken by the director of Alrowwad cultural centre, Aida refugee camp, and published in Sunaina Maira's *Jil Oslo* (2013). Both forms of textual intervention, overlaying patches of video material, can be understood to function in a similar manner to liquid knowledge represented in embroidery.

Having established childbearing as a form of *sumud*, later in that same assemblage panel comedian Amer Zaher is seen discussing Palestinian birth rates – "They drop bombs, we drop babies" – before the bridge cuts to visual footage from a 1948 refugee camp overlaid with an Al

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Jazeera reporter's audio commentary describing Palestinian population growth as a form of resistance through demographics. Clunky cassette clicks leading in and out of her segment situate her words as a media bite, while footage of children living in tents in a sparse and unpopulated landscape lends historical perspective and context to their words through an emphasis on loss and ethnic cleansing through the Nakba. The audio narrative's oversimplified understanding of the politics of childbearing in Palestine is thus identified.

Anticolonial approaches to editorial voice

Within anticolonial praxis, consideration had to be given to the point of view expressed through assembling and arranging voices into themes. In addition to this, within a visual medium, a diverse audience's means of seeing must be considered. Writers such as Ariella Azoulay (2008, 2011, 2012) and Gil Hochberg (2015) have built on Foucault's visual politics to extensively examine the means by which Israeli colonial gazes, including extensive testing of surveillance technologies, are used to control and constrain Palestinians, emulating the gendered control found in Mulvey's male gaze (1975). *Inti Samida* needed to anticipate diverse interior and exterior gazes, be they sympathetic, oppressive, or otherwise, whilst actively contending colonial gazes. Lastly, within a temporally moving medium, the notion of Palestinian indigenous time (Hawari, 2019) demands that all histories and narratives be consciously rooted in the Nakba. I, therefore, integrated anticolonial politics of gazes, temporalities and point-of-view as guiding principles in the editing process. The following text dissects and exemplifies the devices developed to achieve this.

Split screen: Rhizomatic collisions of histories and gazes

In Suleiman and Salloum's *Introduction*, collisions had been created through cuts between different footage and through repetition of materials, in order to dissect reductive, linear colonial and Orientalist gazes on Palestine. However, materials made by Palestinian makers belong to a far more complex and broad-reaching indigenous epistemology in non-linear time. This basis led to my choice to incorporate oscillation between single and split screens in my stitching together of materials. In doing so, I allow for a kinetic model that can accommodate patchwork collisions within the same frame, as well as between cuts, highlighting interrelated histories and events, and connecting their rhizomatic relationships across time; thus temporal representations can be consciously collapsed within the Nakba.

Marks (2015) observes that this concern with messy and complex non-linear histories is fundamental within Arab film. She locates non-linear temporalities as a product of historical distortion, rather than as an indigenous epistemological structure:

> In the Arab world in the late twentieth century, political pressures, fraught histories, divergent narratives, and competing notions of where the truth is founded and can be found (in memory? in the archive? in the body?) created a crucible that practically demanded experimentation. (pp.4)

Marks then goes on to write that new growth from this apparent impasse can be exercised in cinematic applications of Deleuze's affection-image (1989). This theory argues that affection drives cinematic narrative, often expressed through facial close-ups, to delineate the transition from perception to consequential action within the film.

Deleuze's affection-image addresses the same space as Butler's illocution/perlocution process; in order for an illocution to amount to perlocution, it must be perceived, affect must take place, and then action will follow in order to reach a perlocution. The course of this perlocution relies heavily on the nature of this perception, its affect, and deduced course of consequential action.

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For Marks, however, the culmination of colonial abuses, wars, occupations, civil wars and displacements in the broader Arab region, and the consequential universal sense of powerlessness that follow, leads to a representational impossibility; in Butler's terms, an inability to move beyond illocution. In this argument, Arab film exists in an entrapped state of affect;

> …when action cannot be taken, the affection-image dilates; affection becomes passion, an agitated state of passive activity or active passivity. This moment of suspension can give rise to what Deleuze calls the time-image, images produced in creatively widened circuits of perception, memory, dream, and imagination. The affection-image suspends qualities that might become the basis for reactive acts and instead makes them vibrate with the potential for new kinds of acts, feelings, or perceptions. The time-image elevates the incapacity to act to a high creative principle that allows any image to connect with any other.

Deleuze's time-image argues for a cinematic image which is infused with time and memory – future and past; an invaluable notion in the reading of split screen frames, which can be understood to create their own time and affect in their stitching together of narratives and histories. In Marks' reading, however, she argues that the time-image exists in the imaginary, built from memory and past time, offering the metaphysical as an alternate to future events and potentialities. Conversely, Hawari's temporally subjective embodied concept of indigenous time and memory suggests that, rather than wrestling with lost pasts, the time-image could be instead understood as a means to delineate embodied experience of continuing temporalities; the time-image cannot be finite if it is to represent Palestinian experience. Time, therefore, is not beholden to past loss or history itself, but to the bodies of those who bare the continuing affect. Within this mode of thought, it is not the imaginary that offers new potentiality, but the real lived bodies of those both in mourning for and in anticipation of Palestine. Hawari's model of indigenous time and memory offers a smooth space framework in her accreditation of continuing human memory and subjectivity, thus permitting significantly more agency and scope for growth. Read in this light, the time-image and affection-image bare significant potential within cinema exploring generations of dispossessed embodiments – provided one does not resign, as Marks does, to the impossibility of perlocution in future time, which rather abruptly dismisses

Palestinian and broader Arab liberation movements that continue into future time, however overwhelmingly opposed their causes may appear.[43]

The use of affection-image addresses the bridging space between perception and action, offering a framing of indigenous time and memory in Palestine. Likewise, the time-image holds the potential to relay these memories as non-linear and continuing temporalities bearing traces of affect. The boundaries between each image are blurred by the lack of Nakba resolution: time and affect become bound by ongoing trauma. Any filmic representation that operates within this argument must therefore be open-ended, alluding to memories and affect that are yet to happen.

While Hawari's notion of indigenous time informs my conceptualisation of the constructed split screen time-image as continuing and open-ended, Butler's writing on performativity informs my notion of the split screen affect-image as demand for perlocution – each specifically within the context of Palestine – concepts which opened broader potentialities to create narrative meaning. Namely, these enabled me to identify symbolisms of Palestinian time-image and affect-image within my cut 'patches' and their collisions, informing my selections, and giving me licence to distort temporalities within those 'patches' as an anticolonial act. Both time-image and affection-image can therefore be understood as signs and symbols within embroidery, layered over patches and communicating meaning and knowledge through aesthetic choice.

To coin a clear example of these devices from my earliest uses in the first assemblage panel, in the film's sixth minute, a conversation between Edward Said and Salman Rushdie at the ICA London, 1986, discusses *After The Last Sky,* and an incident in which an American journalist disregards Palestinian dress as "terrorist couture". As the erasure of Palestinian culture through historical revisionism and the need to go "right back to the beginning" to qualify Palestinian

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[43] This perhaps is a product of Marks' amalgamation of Lebanese and Palestinian film under the same critical structure; this reading would appear to relate more to Lebanese film's engagement with the history and losses of the Lebanese civil war (prior to the book's release in 2015, as much has changed since) than to Palestinians discussions of the continuing Nakba.

narratives are discussed, I pair this frame in a split screen with a long-form shot of an elderly Palestinian woman in an embroidered *thobe*, ploughing a field with a pick axe in a landscape surrounded by rusting waste metal. This clip was sourced from Benny Brunner and Alexandra Jansse's 1997 documentary *Al Nakba: The Palestinian Catastrophe*. Much like the patches on Palestinian dress, each clip was born of a different maker and a different moment in time - and yet in the aligning of one beside the other, they point to a new meaning, with the elderly women's juxtaposition constituting an affect-image in its perlocutionary demand for recognition despite attempted erasure. In this manner, the false accusations of dress' affiliation with terrorism and bourgeoise power are discussed beside an image evidencing their objections through the split screen, while the destruction of Palestinian narratives is emulated in a shot documenting poverty and abused land.

To further demonstrate the potentiality of the use of split screens, the introduction sequence uses this as a means to further draw out the impact of the Nakba through split screen time-image, in which an appearance of Darwish and Trio Joubran becomes the first occasion that split screens are used in *Inti Samida*; using headshots to credit the poet and the musicians' performance of Darwish's poem *On This Land* whilst introducing the filmic language of the content to come. Using the music as my narrative lead, I began with a single frame shot from the sea, moving inland, before splitting into two landscape frames: one depicting a montage of historical Palestine, and the other a montage of Palestinian land in its present day. Using Trio Joubran's crescendo and cheer of the crowd, the montage then moves to split-screen footage of people fleeing the Nakba, addressing the loss of that land. Images of refugees fleeing in 1948 and 1967 become paired in split screens with footage of contemporary demolitions, and the striking smoke-screened landscape in Gaza during the 2018 Great March of Return. Images of documentary clapperboards are then paired with footage of refugees in tents, and thus the continuation of the Nakba as an ongoing, cinematically evidenced disaster comes to the fore. In this manner, time becomes interrelated and non-linear, speaking to open-ended indigenous time with every split frame's constructed time-image.

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Finally, the split screen device offers an opportunity to consciously acknowledge the role of gazes at play in performances of resistance. In the third minute of the film, the split screen creates a mirroring of footage, first played forwards and then reversed. The shot shows a young woman in an elaborately embroidered dress at a celebration of Palestinian dress in Ramallah, 2019. She lifts her phone to take a selfie, notices the camera filming her, and lowers her arm with a shy smile. I mirrored the frame into a second symmetrically positioned shot, and on her arm lowering, I looped the shot into reversed speed. This creates an effect where the young woman focuses her camera's gaze on herself, removes it, then lifts her arm again to take a shot. The mirroring duplicates this action and places her figure as central to a series of gazes – from the two mobile phones raised at the outer sides of each shot pointing inwards, to the camera following her actions and leading our gaze to her. Much like embroidery motifs, mirroring of form, such as that found on a chest panel, becomes a device through which meaning can be compounded, grown, and centred on women's bodies. This mirroring and reversal is paired with a narrative voice discussing dress as resistance and introduces the concept of performed identity as a political act.

Inti Samida then cuts to a split screen with a shift in gaze structures, locating a Palestinian gaze on its own community as veteran embroiderer Feryal Abbasi-Ghnaim is seen introducing the social history of embroidery in a split screen with a Palestinian audience in a theatre space. Her image cuts out as her voice continues, replaced with footage of young women on a stage, showing their dresses, as though to the audience, in the second frame. The narration ends in identifying the dress' connection to the land, with the interplay of the audience and performers indicating the perlocutionary potential of these garments. The edit then cuts to single-screen footage of a Palestinian refugee telling the cameraman, "I don't want you to take my picture here - wait until I return to my land – then you can take my picture." Her direct address to the camera offers an affection-image of a refugee woman in a visceral and rare piece of surviving footage from this time, offering a woman's address to an outside audience as she defends her right to self-determination. From the early stages of the film then, the audience is required to consider who is

looking from behind the camera, and the relation between those gazes and women's bodies-in-dress.

Distorting time: stutter, speed and direction

While Palestinian indigenous time could be seen to be referenced in the assemblage process, it holds significantly broader potential as a conceptual basis for filmmaking. Namely, under this model, the speed and direction of time could be seen to be perception-driven and therefore liquid. Moments in time could be seen to echo and intersect with numerous other events simultaneously, with each event in Palestinian experience altering and impacting further histories and memories. In this, I propose an understanding of the time-image as a filmic event that can be constructed consciously through manipulations of time itself; in endeavouring to decolonise temporalities, one can actively alter them. To exemplify this potential, as in *Introduction*, time is looped into a stutter to draw out the inability to move beyond time and place. The stuttering technique is used at three specific points in the film. At the end of *Inti Samida's* opening sequence, this stuttering is used with footage of a young refugee mother and her baby, donned in an embroidered dress and a white headscarf while scowling at the implicitly invasive camera crew, out of frame. Following a montage of clapper boards, this affection-image – in this instance found, rather than constructed - acts as an introduction to the problematics of lens-based representation of those facing political erasure, and the tension behind being seen to exist, and being subjected to a gaze. Alongside the visuals, I loop the final notes and then milliseconds of Trio Joubran into a frayed and juddering end, jarringly dwelling on her slowed facial anger. Likewise, in the twenty-second minute, footage of students at Bethlehem University performing the chaotic 2013 internet dance meme to The Harlem Shake appears sped up, looped and replayed while audio from numerous international commentators discussing the impact of

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the occupation on the Palestinian financial crisis as radio noise rises to obliterate those voices, ending in a loud single tone ringing. In the twenty seventh minute, a theatre performer at Diyar Dance Theatre discusses her new production;

I would like to call this piece, women under multiple occupations.

The final four words then loop and are woven into a techno track by Sama Abdulhadi, originally performed at The Boiler Room, Ramallah, turning the young actress' words into the underlying soundtrack to women discussing gendered violence. Each of these three points in the narrative identifies the settler-colonial occupation, capitalism and patriarchy as the powers which stall constructive change and prevent women from free agency.

Simpler adaptations of time exist elsewhere in the film, with time slowing, speeding up, and reversing. Footage of women in refugee camps is played in reverse, delineating the Nakba as a step backwards in Palestinian history. Likewise, in the fourth minute, early footage of a Bedouin woman from the Jordan valley demonstrating how to wear her enormously long dress is sped up to amplify the uncanniness of a smiling woman getting dressed in the street for a camera, while her footage is split into two frames as appear in stereoscopes, seen used by men at the roadside in Khalil Raad's Ottoman-era photography of Palestine; a subtle reference to historical lens-based gazes on women's bodies (Fig.23). In other, subtler instances, these tools are used less literally; in a split screen in the twenty-first minute, women in an 80s era workshop are mirrored while the camera exits the room through reverse-speed. Through this action, one can be seen to be squeezed out of the room, itself a domain for Palestinian women to learn, not perform to an audience. Through this model then, manipulation of the speed, direction and mirroring of time become kinetic forces to direct the ways in which the audience is being asked to see.

Point-of-view and Palestinian feminist thought

I have demonstrated how the structure of *Inti Samida* has been guided by Palestinian anticolonial, indigenous thought, while the narrative themes and flow are inspired by social and historical contexts that similarly inform the collaborative Acts. With dressmaking cultures used as a model for this, I have defined allegorical applications of panels, patches, embroidery and imported linings. What remains, is the aspirational and status-driven meaning in adornments including jewellery and accessories, which I have likened to point-of-view. This consideration in *Inti Samida's* narrative form addresses how the film's themes are critically engaged with and resolved; a task that must be addressed through Palestinian feminist thought, and within anticolonial praxis. This final section explores the way my film uses Palestinian feminism to address issues of gendered violence, labour, political participation and collectivist action. These are responded to through a rejection of the colonial and male gaze, problematising the intense gendered labour of resistance practices such as *sumud*, domestic work and child baring, challenging all violence against women, and celebrating Palestinian feminisms and its under-recognised power and impact in the work for Palestinian self-determination.

I have discussed gazes in relation to colonising and indigenous viewpoints, however, the colonial and male gaze also requires an address. Throughout *Inti Samida* then, I consciously raise examples of these impositions in order to challenge them with Palestinian women's own words. This device is introduced at the start of the second bridge, in which nationalist values imposed on the Embroidered Woman are brought into question. The sequence follows Mariam's Act with a clip from the Palestinian Ministry of Tourism and Antiquities' *Travel Palestine* YouTube campaign, in which two women stand in the very same heritage centre wearing embroidered thobes, produced with a voice-over in an American accent;

> Embroidered work for men and women, displaying the traditional stitches of the culture, are alluring, and your hands cannot help but touch the scarves, dresses, traditional clothes and handimade artefacts of different kinds.

While objectifying in its own right, I reversed the direction of the video footage independently of the audio in order to further draw out the problematics of this oddly Orientalist video, creating an uncomfortable and slow gaze down the bodies of the two women. I then further emphasise this objectification, cutting to audio from a dating advice website describing Palestinian women as "natural beauties with welcoming demeanours", identified in its flimsiness with cassette clicks in and out. The objectifying narratives are then directly challenged with a cut to Suheir Hamad's performance on the U.S. T.V. show Def Poetry Jam, in which she recites from *Exotic* (1996);

> …
> Don't wanna be your exotic
> like some dark, fragile, colorful bird,
> imprisoned, caged
> in a land foreign to the stretch of her wings.
> …

Challenging the prior objectification directly, this recital appears on a split screen with a repeated loop of a woman in Palestinian dress dancing on a catwalk, curling her arms out like the wings of a bird and trapped in a repeat temporality and constructed affect-image. The sequence later returns to feminist thought, against the backdrop of the aforementioned scene from Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2002) in which a young woman walks through a checkpoint, past the soldiers, and reduces the watchtower to rubble with the strength of her beauty and little pink dress. Here I overlay Sahar Khalifeh's writing;

> Wake up, clever boy. I'm not the mother of the land or the symbol. I am a person, I eat, drink, dream, make mistakes, get lost, get agitated, suffer, and talk to the wind. I'm not a symbol, I'm a woman. (1991)

Through this method, I am able to demonstrate the words and reasoning of Palestinian feminist thinkers, attributing their actions whilst supporting them with evidence of need.

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Next, I identify and problematise the intense gendered labour in resistance practices. This narrative begins with an exploration of *sumud*, an epistemological framework for resistance which has had significant success in Palestine, however, it is not an infallible device and often entails gendered labour. Susan Abulhawa (2019) identifies *sumud* as a practice that demands a remarkable level of endurance and performed 'deserving' on the part of an already marginalised community. She argues that this is the undoing of its own purpose, opening the population to further heightened levels of abuse. In gendered terms, this can be exemplified by narratives of *sumud* that view fertility and child baring to be acts of resistance-in-*sumud*, thereby co-opting women's bodies as functioning for the nation and excluding alternate resistance possibilities. Malaka Shwiekh (2020) expands on these concerns in her research on *sumud* practices among Palestinian prisoners:

> We should not expect women at risk to be resilient. We should not expect women to bear colonial and patriarchal state violence and stay resilient. Rather, we should change the conditions that force them to have to be resilient. We should expect them to decide for themselves what works best for them. And if they choose to not exercise *sumud* or resilience, this should not be painted as a disadvantage or quantified as a weakness. They know better what their conditions and limits are.

This critique of resilience as a euphemism for *sumud*, is included in a textual panel in the fifth and final panel of *Inti Samida.* This inherent contradiction between national resistance and women's subjective agencies characterises Palestinian feminist debates, and Shwiekh outlines the extreme psychological demands that resistance practices make of already vulnerable individuals. This unresolvable messiness speaks to the problematics of feminist and anticolonial resistance while indicating respect to those enacting the labour this entails, and inspired my chosen title; *Inti Samida* (you [feminine] in *sumud*), which for English-speaking audiences and gazes I have titled *She the Steadfast.*

I introduce *sumud* in the second panel as described earlier in this chapter. Mention of this labour repeats throughout the film, with domestic gendered labour clearly located in relation to this practice. To exemplify, the second panel of this film begins with a transitional frame depicting an

Israeli checkpoint between Battir and Beit Jala, before Egyptian wedding drums open a montage of archival footage documenting women at work – domestic, professional and parental. A collaborator's voice begins to speak with her words layered over the footage;

> Here, they say that the woman, she's everything, because nowadays she works, she studies, she does the housework, and she takes care of her children. So because of that, they say that the woman is better than ten men.

As the final sentence is spoken, a frame in which three *fellahin* women carry large wooden furniture on their heads jumps in an analogue error that punctuates the speaker's words. The edit then rapidly cuts to a clip from Hany Abu Assad's *Omar* (2013), in which the characters Omar and his girlfriend Nadia are reunited after his imprisonment. Omar asks Nadia what she did when he was gone, to which she replies, "Nothing." I then dramatically slowed Nadia's facial expression and speaking voice, creating an abstracted echo sound that undermines her delivery, in an affect-image demanding disbelief.

The sequence then continues through a segment on female labour and food, before music from Jacir's credit sequence in *Lamma Shoftak* creates an upbeat rhythm, and news readers enter, discussing social conservatisms between cassette clicks and hums to indicate their 'imported' status. A rapid edit of cuttings sees single-frame footage of women's cooperatives making raisins (Julia Bacha's *Naila and the Uprising*, 2017) and a tomato farmer walking through a field with her spade over her shoulder, mirrored to draw attention to the Marxist visual language in her pose, emulating revolutionary poster art. Each demonstrates powerful women's agencies within and outside of accepted norms. The sequence cuts back to a split screen in which *fellahin* women harvesting olives are paired with footage of Israeli soldiers destroying olive trees, while Birzeit University Economics Professor Samia Al Botmeh discusses gendered economic pressures and destruction caused by the occupation. In the latter half, I show her face in order to credit her words and pair her in split screen with a close examination of the characters that appear in Suleiman Mansour's painting *The Village Awakens* (1988), in which a crowd of *fellahin* emerge into the land to tend the crops from between the legs of an enormous Embroidered Woman.

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Thus, I connect and contrast the real and lived economy of the land to constructions of nationalist economies.

The music cuts dramatically as the sequence cuts to a clip from Maysaloun Hamoud's *Bar Bahar* (2016), from a scene in which engaged couple Noor and Wissam eat dinner and discuss employment. Wissam tells Noor; "Even though as far as I'm concerned, it would be better if you stayed at home". The music cuts back in as Noor then looks at Wissam with wide eyes and tips her hand forwards in a silently questioning gesture, which I have slowed down to draw out Hamoud's affection-image. In this manner, I endeavour to respectfully balance the value placed on kinships under settler-occupation, with the real lived impact of domestic constraints on women's lives in Palestinian community. This narrative is then compounded with a cut to Sahar Khalifeh's words spoken in Khleifi's *Fertile Memory* (1980); "When a woman stays cooped up at home, her mind becomes calcified…"

The next theme to be explored is localised experiences of violence against women; the sensitivity of which is discussed in my second chapter. Within this, it is essential to recognise that gendered violence in Palestine is directly compounded by the violence of the occupation. The fourth bridge is thematically structured around these issues, beginning with textual overlays discussing women's bodies in public space and the lack of legal protections in Palestinian law. Footage, audio and textual commentary introduces the danger of the street and the greater danger of military checkpoints, before cutting to the aforementioned footage from Diyar Dance Theatre's promotion of their play *Women* (2017), in which a young woman speaks to the camera –"I would like to call this piece, women under multiple occupations." These words then stutter in a loop, merging with DJ Samaa' Abdulhadi's techno music to form the backdrop of a sequence in which my collaborator's voices come together to discuss their concerns with domestic violence in Palestine, the Orientalist notion that this is specific to Arab culture, and the correlation between the violence of the occupation and their torture methods, and gendered violence. In this segment, I use Palestinian women's voices alone to discuss gendered violence, thereby situating

the debate within real women's experiences, perspectives and words, with no interruptions from alternate sources.

The music then pitters out, and the voice of former political prisoner Shireen Essawi cuts in, discussing Shin Bet's interrogation techniques and their use of rape threats against her. The audio plays alongside The Dresden Symphony Orchestra's performance of *Symphony for Palestine,* composed by Kayhan Kalhor (2013). This sound is matched with a mirrored screen, showing footage from the inside of an Israeli prison for Palestinian women, reflected inwards to construct a claustrophobic effect. Towards the end of the narration, Shireen Essawi's face replaces the footage of the prison, crediting her words as her own whilst putting a human identity to the story. Thus the trauma of incarceration and gendered violence is jarringly brought to the fore, without reliance on violent or sensitised materials.

The collision between this section and the next then points to the rooting of Palestinian time in the Nakba, as the symphony continues while the left frame shows fellahin women discussing the use of rape against children in the Nakba, found in David Koff's 1981 documentary *Occupied Palestine.* This footage is paired with a second frame on the right, showing slow-motion footage of aeroplanes in the Jordanian desert in 1970, flightless, empty and blown up by Leila Khaled's PFLP comrades. The move from present-day sexual violence under occupation is thus compounded by women in the 1980s discussing rapes that occurred in the 1940s; a constructed time-image. The exploding planes operate as a symbolic allegory for the inability to spread one's wings, billowing with thick black smoke at a slowed pace; a reflection on the subjective experience of time during a moment of violence. At the end of this segment, the left frame slows on the disgusted face of an elderly woman as she listens to her friend's memory of the rapes, drawing out her response into a temporally exaggerated affect-image.

Finally, the sequence moves to footage from Maysaloun Hamoud's 2015 feature film *Bar Bahar*, in which Shaden Kamboura's character Noor walks into the sea in a thin cotton dress as she endeavours to process her rape by her fiancé. Knocked about by the waves, this operates both as

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a time-image collision with the previous split screen, and as affect-image in its emotive

depiction. This is simultaneously a reference to the *fatwa* issued against director Maysaloun

Hamoud for her depiction of rape in *Bar Bahar* – the *fatwa* itself being an act of violence in its

attempt to suppress acknowledgement of rape culture. The music behind the assemblage

continues into Fadwa's performance on femicide, itself titled *Anger*, with the sound distorted as

though heard underwater from the moment Noor is submerged in the sea. In this short sequence,

the point of view acknowledges the breadth, scale and sources of sexual violence against

Palestinian women, while expressing clear gendered anger at the abuses.

Having woven Palestinian feminisms through the entire narrative form, and having covered the

cultural and political factors that inform gender debates in Palestine, I then address Palestinian

feminist action directly in my fifth and final panel, both identifying it as a rich history to be

celebrated, and as a vanguard to be learnt from. This panel is launched through the anger

expressed in Rafeef Ziadah's poem *We Teach Life Sir* (2011), which begins over the tail end of

Fadwa's performance – "But today, my body was a TV'd massacre made to fit into sound-bites

and word limits." This performance is paired with footage of the IDF suppression of the funeral

of Shireen Abu Akleh; a Palestinian Al Jazeera reporter extrajudicially killed by the IDF in Jenin,

May 2022. Together, the violence inherent to transnational media narratives collides with the

Israeli violence towards internal journalists – the Palestinian Ministry of Information list 45

journalists killed by Israeli forces since 2000 (Al Jazeera, 2002). The sequence continues to build

on the desperation experienced in the face of unending violences, leading to Malaka Shweikh's

aforementioned critique of expectations of resilience in the face of these violences. I then bring

in a statement by activist Riya Al-Sanah, in conversation with Adalah Justice Network. In her

statement, Al-Sanah takes a position that my first chapter demonstrates sits at the heart of

Palestinian feminism;

> [Feminist activism in Palestine] has to include anticolonial politics, it has to include a
> politics that goes beyond an analysis of just narrow gender based violence

This is followed by Islah Jad's (2018) textual assertion that combining feminist and nationalist goals is a concern at the heart of the Palestinian Women's Movement. In doubling down on this, I clearly affirm a key tenet in anticolonial feminist discussion on Palestine. This panel then turns to the Women's Movement and the history of women's actions and leadership in the First Intifada, using one of my collaborator's memories of their mother teaching while schools were closed during the Second Intifada to locate this narrative on women's achievements as a form of gendered epistemological inheritance that emulates dress cultures.

This panel then moves into the politics of the current young generation, using words spoken by prominent activist Mariam Barghouti to emphasise the plethora of challenges the younger generation faces within an increasingly hostile and complex occupation. As my first chapter establishes, this includes governmental corruption, increased violence, reduced freedom of movement, and an increase in settler land grabs. The narrative then responds to this problematic by launching into a segment on contemporary youth politics and counter-cultures, using Sunaina Maira's (2013) assertion that:

> Among youth there is not necessarily a withdrawal from politics, but a reshaping of the political, and a reinvestment in other informal, grass roots, autonomous or new forms of politics.

Through strategically presenting the film's point of view through the values presented in Palestinian feminism, as well as the Women's Movement and contemporary youth movements, the panels, patches and embroidered symbolisms come together to communicate the gendered problematics, counter actions, histories and aspirations expressed by Palestinian speakers, thinkers and writers. In this, I return to the notion of the dress as liquid knowing, communicating the maker's values whilst connecting them to the collective. Through the generation of a rhizomatic and assemblage filmic process, I have been able to centre real women, their lives, values and experiences, in a model of the dress that does not completely disregard nationalist gender narratives, but views these narratives as of less value than the bodies that they impact.

Rhizomatic narratives and open endings

This film is rooted in the Nakba and collective experience, through an opening sequence that does not address a moment in history but an ongoing temporal event. The ending also addresses the continuing lives and agency of women in Palestine today and in the future. In my Zoom interview with Yara, she discussed the means by which her leadership as a female runner had successfully challenged both the constraints of occupation and patriarchy;

> I remember when I started running it was very, very criticised. And actually we face a lot of - I'm not going to call it like harassment, but yeah it was a kind of verbal harassment. …The only thing that they mention now, and it makes me so happy, and so proud, is 'here come the marathoners, here come the Palestinian marathoners, the ones that represent Palestine abroad in international marathons.'

In this action, Yara can be seen to be performing the fight for the nation and thereby achieving greater agency; not unlike the women who participated in the First Intifada, and the Arab Revolts under the British Mandate, as discussed in my first chapter. Furthermore, the fight for the nation is enacted in her fight for free movement across Palestinian land and is thereby an act of *sumud* – one which challenged both the settler colonial occupation *and* gender inequality in Palestinian society. For this reason, this particularly articulate interview extract was layered over her collaborative performance, using the final collaboration in the running order to point to a contemporary example of female perlocutionary agency, which I titled *Change*.

While Yara's constructive interview provided a means to suggest an optimistic end to the film, as Al Hardan (2013) identifies, I am not in a position to resolve these contradictions with any claim to findings of truths. During my fieldwork, I had the pleasure of discussing these concerns and the precarity of embroidered dress as a symbol with performance poet Asmaa Azaizeh. A remarkable talent and feminist thinker, she had encouraged me early on to focus on these latent contradictions in the Embroidered Woman as an icon of *sumud*, and felt that this icon is a tool that is increasingly outdated in its structural constraints. She kindly built on these conversations

and concerns, penning an original Arabic poem for the film and recording original audio (Appendix 1). Her words delicately personify the Embroidered Woman, positioning her as a transient entity with no finite end or meaning, directing her exhausted gaze back at imposed epistemologies of her being; indeed, I found deeper clarity in the nuances of her words as my film and research developed. I chose to close the film with Asmaa's words played over Hanin's original performance in which she tries on different dresses below the icon of the Virgin Mary on the separation wall, attempting to find herself in a problematised but intimate past, as I discussed in Chapter Two. In this manner, I avoid absolute truths and acknowledge the problematised precarity of Palestinian gender constructs, whilst crediting women who have found complex routes to their own agency through performing actions towards a nation.

This chapter has built on the contextual feminist and anticolonial analysis of Palestinian women's histories in my first chapter, to generate an assemblage filmic method based on indigenous women's dressmaking. Responding to the successes of the collaborative performances in my second chapter, and building into this with further interviews, this chapter has delineated a filmic language that relays between the individual body and the epistemologies informing a community, allowing the individual to exist within and alongside the collective. Responding to the themes and contexts that inform the five performances, I have demonstrated the interplay of video, image, audio and text patches into assemblage panels, and anticolonial attention to temporalities, voice and gazes. Through the allegory of embroidery as signs and symbols, I have identified the signs and symbols at play in distorted temporalities and collisions of materials towards the assemblage, editorial construction of the time-image and affect image; the former of these symbolising indigenous temporalities within the Nakba, and the latter symbolising affect towards emulation of past perlocutions. Finally, I have used jewellery and accessories as a metaphor for aspiration and values, translating into a filmic point-of-view. Informed by Palestinian feminist writing, these points-of-view appear through assemblage voice/text with particular attention to those of Palestinian women. The following chapter will conclude this thesis while discussing *Inti Samida's* future rhizomatic evolutions and perlocutionary potentials.

Conclusion

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This PaR project began as a feminist and anticolonial investigation into embroidered Palestinian dress, asking how this gendered heritage object relates to young women in contemporary urban society, as they negotiate the problematics of nationalism and gender under settler colonial occupation and global patriarchy. Using Palestinian dress' liquid assemblage form as an epistemological model for filmmaking, *Inti Samida* (*She the Steadfast*) centres women's bodies in this research through theatre-inspired Acts made in collaboration with young women in the West Bank. These disparate collaborative performances are premised on the notion of dressing in an object that rhizomatically connects women's lives and performativities across time and space, and are correspondingly 'dressed' in assemblage narrative, using a broad selection of Palestinian narrations to contextualise the epistemologies and histories informing the collaborations.

Connecting the history of dressmaking to Palestinian women's histories and feminisms, gendered nationalism, and gendered experiences of settler colonial occupation, *Inti Samida* demonstrates a continuum of women's subjective agency and activism through neglected Palestinian histories, as well as in culture and resistance, rooted in indigenous collectivist society. Challenging Israeli settler colonial occupation, global patriarchy and capitalist class divides, Palestinian women exist at an intersection of myriad violences and human rights abuses, and like the process of dressmaking itself, work in collectives, sharing of epistemologies to create evolving means of resistance across generations and continuing today.

Al Hardan (2013) requires that research on Palestine be decolonised at the "before, during and after". This thesis has addressed the "before" of decolonising the academy through research based on Palestinian women's histories and centring on Palestinian modes of making. The first

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chapter of this thesis outlines a history of women's cultures, gendered resistance, and gendered nationalism, arguing for a privileging of lived women's agency over and above the male-construct icon of the Embroidered Woman. The practice element of this research uses Palestinian theatre methodologies, film and literature to develop a narrative form structured around Palestinian dress, and centring the voices and perspectives of Palestinian women.

Al Hardan's "during" refutes the dichotomy of outsider/insider, and the notion that decolonial research can pertain to absolute truths. Regarding my role in the field, I have used friendship to recruit, with a strategy of working directly with subjective messiness in collaborations, narratives and modes of making. This included allowing for collaborators' agency to control their narratives in the making, exploring contradictory themes in Palestinian nationalism such as the tension between women's rights and Palestinian rights, and using assemblage modes of making as a means to locate and discuss this messiness. With respect to my own messy subjectivity, I have located my entrance to this research, used self-reflexivity as a filtering process leading to the re-evaluation of my scripted café scene, and I have taken measures such as filming in Arabic to dilute my power relationship with collaborators. With respect to absolute truths, I have avoided claim to these, instead using assemblage form to demonstrate pre-existing conversations that depict the means by which Palestinian women are oppressed and operate within that space of oppression. This is not absolute or finite, in correspondence with the continuum of the Nakba, and exists in evolving relation to expressions of rhizomatically connected experience and history. This film then seeks to view the visible elements of that rhizome through a gendered lens, structuring it into a non-linear narrative after the dress in order to "speak alongside Palestinians" (Hawari and Sleiman 2017).

Finally, Al Hardan's "after" requires that research into a community be for that community first and foremost. Throughout the process of conducting this research, I have repeatedly discussed the process with collaborators and Palestinian friends and colleagues, feeding in feedback on film cuts, texts and developing thoughts. A total of 71 Palestinian organisations, makers, writers and allies were sent this film for permission to use materials, leading to numerous further

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conversations and amendments. Furthermore, following the submission of this thesis, I will be taking the full edit to Palestine in November 2022 to screen it to its intended primary audience for discussion, with a willingness to further develop the assemblage in line with feedback. In Deleuze and Guattari's analysis of rhizomatic forms, they write that when a rhizome is ruptured it re-routes and continues to grow elsewhere; thus it can have no end. If this research follows Palestinian rhizomatic epistemologies, then one can view it as likely to undergo its own ruptures and redirections, in relation to evolving histories, the use of assemblage materials, and in relation to a narrative line that is yet to be discussed within the community that it is intended for. This film then is designed in its assemblage form to absorb disruptions and redirections; patches can be moved and amended, new materials can be incorporated, content can be redacted and replaced, and narratives can alter and bend with community feedback and moving events. This work has no clear beginning and no clear end. While a reflection of a rhizome, this research outcome can function in much the same manner, thereby further tailoring it to Palestinian cultures in line with that community. In the foreseeable future, it is my intention that full Arabic subtitles will also be incorporated to increase accessibility, and now that the film's concept and narrative line are clearly demonstrated, there is hope that new materials might be more easily sourced in order to improve the film's quality, content and copyright status.

While this research project is set to further evolve and grow indeterminately, further scope for new research is to be found in the exploration of performative masculinities, queer embodiments of Palestinian identity, the identity politics of ethnic minority groups within Palestinian community including Armenian, Aramaic, Syriac and Afro-Palestinian communities, and the precarity of exiled/diaspora identities.

Afterword

While not my intention at the start, this research project took place over the course of seven

years due to family illness. As discussed in my second chapter, there is significant pressure

placed on doctoral researchers to complete their work within the allotted timeframe. At the close

of this thesis, I believe that without the expanded timeframe, this work could not have been

completed as effectively. Two reasons inform this opinion, the first of which is the commitment

to anticolonial feminist thought. The work of undoing socialised colonial and patriarchal norms is

substantial and ongoing, requiring researchers to commit time, energy and thought as thoroughly

as can be managed. Personally, it has required a significant process of reorientation that I intend

to continue pursuing through the rest of my career; to be clear, this is neither an attribute nor an

achievement, but a minimum requirement in confronting global white supremacy and patriarchy.

This is not work that can be improved with speed, nor finished prematurely, and which requires

participation from researchers who are prepared to take the lead from the communities they

intend to represent.

The second of these reasons is to be found in the rapid development of Palestinian society over

the past years. When this project began, no meaningful feminist movement was to be found, and

anticolonial English language texts towards research and allyship in Palestine were thin. The

Tala'at feminist protests of 2019 and their corresponding conversations, as well as numerous

texts by writers such as Yara Hawari (2017, 2018, 2019) Anaheed Al Hardan (2014), Steven

Salaita (2016), Malaka Shwaikh (2018, 2019, 2020), and organisations such as Al Shabaka

Palestinian Policy Network and the Adalah Justice Project, are generating new anticolonial and

feminist language, beginning to bridge the disparity between women's rights movements and

Palestinian resistance. While the conditions of the occupation have visibly escalated, responses to

the 2021 bombing of Gaza have galvanised a deeper level of global solidarity than has been seen

before. The young, highly educated generation of Palestinians, while suppressed by the PA and Israel, are culturally and intellectually sophisticated and interconnected, interacting with global anticolonial, antiracist, queer and feminist movements, offering a glimpse of a future that will be extremely different.

It is astounding that Palestinians continue to live, love, celebrate and resist under such extraordinary conditions; it is my hope that this research will be received as a tribute to Palestinian tenacity of spirit. To close with words from poet Rafeef Ziadah (2012);

> We teach life, sir.
> We Palestinians teach life after they have occupied the last sky.
> We teach life after they have built their settlements and apartheid walls, after the last skies.
> We teach life, sir.

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Who U R. (2015). DAM [Music Video].

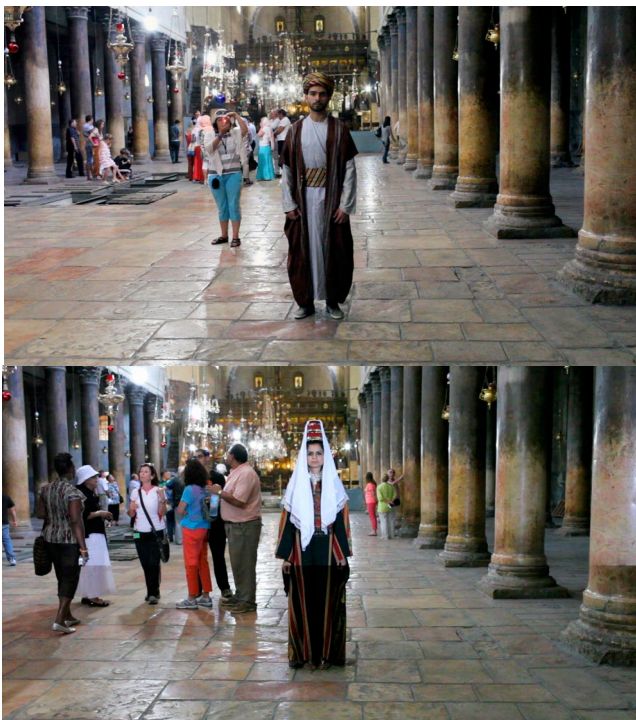*Who's the terrorist?* (2001). DAM [Music Video].

Fig.1

Bet'lahem Live branded promotional flier, The Holy Land Trust, 2013. Photography by Elias Halabi.

Fig.2

The Tourist, 2013, Joy Stacey. 12:00mins, 2 films projected on opposing walls.

Fig.3

Bethlehem 'Malak' (Angel) wedding dress made of cloth (silk, cotton), metal coloured thread embroidery. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Fig.4

Ramallah summer dress with cross-stitch embroidery on the front, back and sleeves in red and black cotton. © The Trustees of the British Museum

Fig.5

Jaffa dress. © The Trustees of the
British Museum

Fig.6

Northern reversible coat with elbow-length sleeves,
known as jillayeh, made of indigo-dyed cotton with taffeta
(heremzi) appliqué patches in red, yellow and green as
well as ikat and 'atlas' satin appliqué patches along the
front and on the sleeves. © The Trustees of the British
Museum

Fig.7

Dress from the Jordan Valley. Courtesy of the Palestinian Museum, exhibited at *At the Seams: A political history of Palestinian embroidery,* Dar El Nimer, Beirut, 2016.

Fig.8

Gaza dress. Courtesy of the Palestinian Museum, exhibited at *At the Seams: A political history of Palestinian embroidery,* Dar El Nimer, Beirut, 2016.
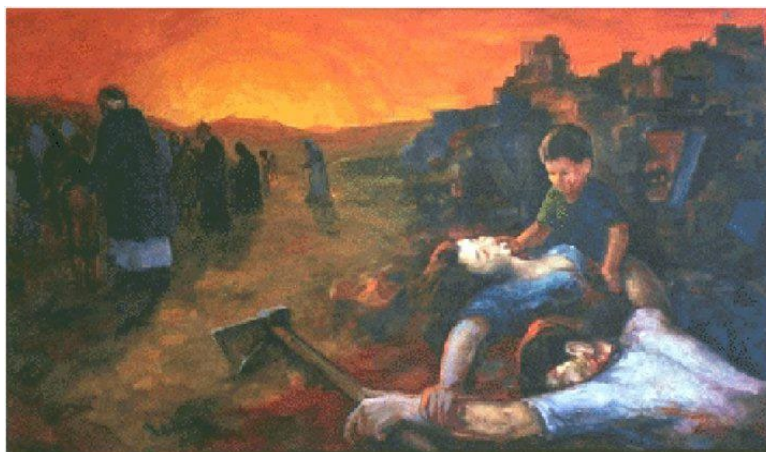
Fig.9

Bedouin dresses. Courtesy of Tiraz Centre, Amman.

Fig.10

Beit Dajan wedding dress (embroidered; with tassels) known in Arabic as a 'jillayeh', made of textile (silk, linen, velvet), sequins, beads, thread. © The Trustees of the British Museum.

Fig.12

Ismail Shammout, *Al Nakba*, 1960. Courtesy of the Shammout family.

Fig.13

Suleiman Mansour, *Camel of Hardships*, 1973. Courtesy of Suleiman Mansour.

Fig.14

Cushions on display at the Palestinian Cultural Heritage Centre, Bethlehem.

Fig.15

1970s embroidery designs. Courtesy of the Ina'ash Archive, Beirut.

Fig.16

Intifada Dress. Courtesy of the Palestinian Museum, exhibited at *At the Seams: A political history of Palestinian embroidery,* Dar El Nimer, Beirut, 2016.

Fig.17

Intifada Postcard. Palestinian women practicing traditional Palestinian activities. 1990-1991. Courtesy of Maha Saca.

Fig.18
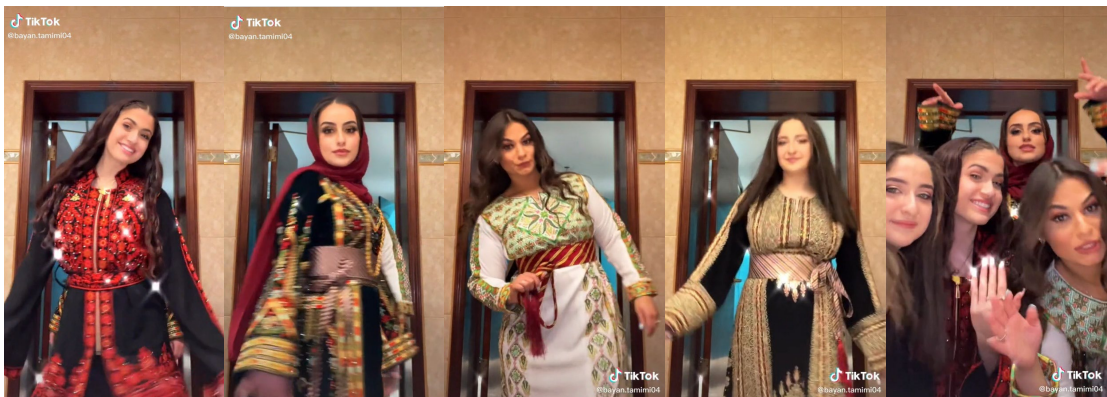

Agnes, 2016.

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Fig.19

Hanin, 2016.

Fig.20

Hanin, 2016.

161

Fig.21

Hanin, 2016

Fig.22

TikTok reveal video. Available at https://tinyurl.com/2aa4u8n7 (Accessed 06/10/2022)

Post reads:

> bayan.tamimi04
>
> urfav.palestyrian
>
> 1-30
>
> pali thobes 😍 PS. #fyp #3rab #arab #arabtiktok #middleeastern #syrian #palestinian
>
> #palestinianthobes #hennanight #urfavSYPS
>
> dammi falastini by mohammad assaf – nora

Fig.23

Khalil Raad, *Raree-show (show-box / Sunduq Al Ferja),* 1933.

Fig.24

Khalil Raad, family studio photograph, Jerusalem, early 1900s.

Original film poem written and performed by Asmaa' Azaizeh

Me?

I am being followed by "the deviators"?

I am not followed by anyone

I merely slipped out of your cacophonous party

I slipped like a thin, invisible, thread from the dresses you hung in your museums

I stopped half way down the road to examine the new white hair on my head,

to examine my aching joints from the long, merciless, run

to examine my womb that is calling out like a dazed future

I stopped so the women could tighten me into a knot after the last stitch

so that I am not left astray as a stray bullet

so I become the colour of hills

where women with round bellies tread

so that I can become the colour of stars

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watching them rupturing themselves

before being hit by the marksman's shot

I escaped being caught by the party, hiding as a thread in a sash or a collar

and having sacrificial songs about your graceful death, sung repeatedly over

my body and ululations being emitted from my mouth without my even knowing

The road is paved with gravel

And I am barefoot

Behind my shoulders, yarns are fleeing the exhibition halls

as strands of your assonant slogans drop from their sides

and your lips are cracked by repetition

I have not even arrived for there to be anyone to follow me

And all there is to it is a happy song I heard

In a faraway corner where I traced its sound

My sides crumbled like dry bread

The northern stitch, the coastal stitch, the wasteland stitch

A study of the northern stitch, a theorem of the coastal stitch

and a considered research of the wasteland stitch

Me?

I have become a symbol?

I have no courage to look backwards

Lest there be a follower

A symbol is understood from one look

yet I have not left one corner of darkness I did not stoop into

A symbol says things with no words

yet I have ran after every song I could find

listen...

here is some joyous music

calling out for your words like a dazed future

say the words

say a lot of words

May the road have mercy on me and on you