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Edward Said, Postcolonialism and Palestine's Contested Spaces

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Abstract

Postcolonialism, profoundly influenced by the Palestinian scholar Edward Said, has until recently been oddly silent on Palestine, a topic that not only preoccupied Said's thinking and writing, but also inspired his theoretical ideas on imperialism, anti-colonial struggle and the worldliness and affiliations of the text and the critic. This theoretical silence on Palestine was, in fact, preceded by a historical, political, geographical, social and cultural contestation of all forms of Palestinian spaces that include not only dispossessing Palestinians of their land, but also building apartheid walls, destroying hundreds of thousands of olive trees, appropriating/stealing traditional Palestinian dishes and clothes, silencing Palestinian narratives and the Muslim call to prayer. This paper will argue that these contested spaces necessarily become sites of Palestinian cultural production, struggle and *sumud*.

Keywords: Edward Said, postcolonialism, Palestine, contested spaces, appropriation, apartheid wall, Banksy, Muslim call to prayer, *sumud*

The contestation of space in Palestine is first and foremost geographical and political, but it is also ideological and theoretical, and this has been played out in full force and variety in the literature and everyday life of Palestine. The Western conception of space, as Bill Ashcroft points out, has traditionally been mostly visual, embedded as it is in the colonialist project (2013: 127); this by necessity means that an anti-colonial project will entail emphasis on various spaces: the landscape and soundscape, visual,

auditory and olfactory images, the literary and theoretical, and real and imagined spaces. The contestatory nature of Palestinian spaces allows for counter discourses that would expose, challenge and resist the systematic destruction of such spaces, enabling the colonised subject to become a 'cultural producer' (Beswick et al 2015: 790) of different kinds of spaces. These postcolonial, or more specifically, anti-colonial interventions within the Palestinian context can reformulate or reconfigure these contested spaces as 'site[s] of cultural production' (Beswick et al 2015: 791), thus helping to construct Palestinian spaces to challenge Zionist attempts to erase various forms of Palestinian space.

A space that has been ironically silent on Palestine is postcolonial studies, which Said profoundly influenced but later disavowed (Young 2014), possibly thinking that it had become too philosophical, too interested in words rather than things, too 'post' the colonial, a fact that cannot apply to Palestine which inspired Said's initial ideas on the interrogation of colonial discourse. When one considers Said's emphasis on the *worldliness* of the text and the critic, one wonders why postcolonial studies as a field did not find in Palestine a worthy subject, especially as Ashcroft and Ahluwalia state, Palestine is the 'key to the prominence of the theme of worldliness in [Said's] thinking and writing. Palestine locates Said's own worldliness in the world' (2001: 117). In his Auerbach example in *The World, the Text and the Critic*, Said writes:

> But to repeat: the critical consciousness is a part of its actual social world and of the literal body that the consciousness inhabits, not by any means an escape from either one or the other. Although as I characterised him, Auerbach was away from Europe, his work is steeped in the reality of Europe, just as the specific circumstances of his exile enabled a concrete critical recovery of Europe. We have in Auerbach an instance both of filiation with his natal culture and, because of exile, *affiliation* with it through critical consciousness and scholarly work. (1983: 16)

In fact, the situation that Said is describing above applies to him most aptly — Said was 'steeped in the reality of' Palestine and 'because of exile', he was affiliated 'with it through critical consciousness and scholarly work'. So did postcolonial studies miss this point in relation to Said and Palestine when, as it seems, Palestine was removed from the postcolonial debate to make room for more convenient topics? Thus, taking postcolonial discourse back to its origins entails interrogating postcolonial discourse itself.

In the introduction to the book *Colonial and Postcolonial Discourses* (1994), Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman write that 'the era of formal colonial control is over, apart from aberrations such as the Falklands/Malvinas' (3–4). On the very next page, the authors state '[it] is perhaps no exaggeration to say that Edward Said's *Orientalism*, published

in 1978, single-handedly inaugurates a new area of academic inquiry: colonial discourse, also referred to as colonial discourse theory or colonial discourse analysis' (5). The irony (no mention of Palestine) of these statements may have gone unnoticed by some practitioners of postcolonial theory at that time and why not, especially as Palestine has been until very recently a blind spot in postcolonial writing, which for historical and ideological reasons, postcolonial criticism preferred not to discuss. The tide, however, seems to be turning as some critics, such as Patrick Williams, who is mentioned in the above example, have become leading critics of postcolonialism's silence on Palestine, as reflected in a 2014 special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* entitled 'Palestine and the Postcolonial', perhaps in a gesture of self-correction. Williams, along with Anna Ball, write in the introduction to this special issue, entitled 'Where is Palestine?': 'In moments of despondency — or, for others no doubt, mere realism — it can be tempting to answer the question 'Where is Palestine?' with 'Nowhere'; nowhere geographically, nowhere politically, nowhere theoretically, nowhere postcolonially' (2014: 127). The above example underscores the fact that contested spaces are not only actual geographical locations, but also political, ideological and theoretical ones. Postcolonial theory has indeed become an arena of contestation, especially when we consider Said's Palestinian background, which, as I noted above, played a fundamental role in the shaping of Said's ideas. Palestine, however, was ignored by postcolonial critics who were nonetheless excited about applying many of Said's ideas to all parts of the globe with the exception of a deafening silence on Palestine.

The fact that postcolonial studies has not recognised in Palestine and the struggle of the Palestinian people, which is now sixty-nine years old, a colonial situation and anti-colonial resistance shows the extent to which postcolonial theory can indeed be hijacked to serve imperialist interests, or at the very least, to be complicit with the silence on Palestine with some spaces being rendered safe for study and others forbidden. This point is emphasised by Ana Miller (2014) in her discussion of Caryl Philips's novel *The Nature of Blood*, which as Miller argues, works at various levels of complicity to silence the historical narrative of Palestinian dispossession, which is mentioned only on the first page of the novel, a thread that is not picked up again in the novel (2014: 511). Miller points out that this hesitation to recognise Israel as a 'colonial formation that enacts unacceptable violence against Palestinians', (2014: 518) on the part of Phillips and many readers and critics of this novel makes them complicit (along with the field of postcolonial writing in general) with this historical, political and ideological silence on Palestine (2014: 519). Miller boldly concludes her paper by saying that this vow of silence creates 'widespread complicity with institutionalised and structural

violence, a problem that implicates us all' (2014: 519). The above example is only one instance of this new trend in criticism, which represents a contestation of postcolonial critical and theoretical space and thus allows for the possibility of reconfiguring postcolonial emphasis in the coming years.

This ideological blind spot concerning Palestine, of which a few critics have spoken recently (Moore-Gilbert 2005; Bernard 2013; Williams 2014; Miller 2014) is particularly disquieting, especially as the main function of postcolonial study is to expose and challenge colonial discourse, colonisation, and the violence perpetrated against colonised people. Said has often argued that geography is the key element in the colonialist enterprise, and '[one] of the first tasks of the culture of resistance was to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit the land' (1994: 273). The contestation of space and place is at the very heart of postcolonial theory. The interest of the field of geography in postcolonial theory is, as Edward Soja states in the introduction to the book *Postcolonial Spaces*, inspired by the ideas of Said who emphasised the 'struggle over geography', (2011: ix) which in the words of Said is 'not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings' (1994: 6).

Thus, considering the emphasis on the contestation of space in geographical, sociological and postcolonial discussions, it is indeed pertinent to note postcolonial studies' silence on Palestine, especially when we take into account that the Palestinian issue, which is obviously about a space denied, is one of the most important (if not the most important) ongoing anti-colonial struggles in our world today. This silence, in fact, reveals how compliant postcolonial studies can be to the basic ideological thought structures of the day, tackling issues that are only mildly contentious, not ones that would challenge or undermine the dominant narrative. Anna Bernard, commenting on Ella Shohat's idea of postcolonial remoteness, states: 'In the case of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it is far more difficult to maintain this fiction of remoteness' (2013: 21). Thus, for mainstream (i.e. safe) postcolonial writing, which has been wholeheartedly adopted by Western institutions, the conflict surrounding Palestine is that it is not a safely 'remote' topic with which Western humanist thought can comfortably engage and sympathise, but a hotly contested issue brought into existence by the very same Zionist/imperialist ideological forces which control the many Western educational institutions in the first place. This postcolonial complicity may have its cause in this overpowering ideological set up that makes criticising Israel taboo due to Zionist influence (and sometimes control) of many media outlets, international organisations, multinational corporations and educational institutions. Williams argues that academics like Said, who were critical of the Zionist state, would face 'direct attacks' on their careers

by Zionist watch groups (2014: 128). Joseph Massad, who like Said, has been targeted by Zionist watch groups, such as Campus Watch, for defending the 'colonised Palestinians', has faced many attempts to silence him and restrict his academic freedom for being a 'bad Palestinian' who lacks the 'key white Protestant traits' of 'civility' that 'good Palestinians' have learned after being properly assimilated into American society. These Protestant traits seem not to have been properly learned by Steven Salaita, a professor who lost his job at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign for criticising the last Israeli assault on Gaza on his twitter account, as Massad sarcastically points out in 'Academic Civility and its Discontents' (2014).

This is not to say, however, that there has been complete silence on Palestine in postcolonial forums; there have, in fact, been some significant contributions made by a few top ranking postcolonial journals, such as *Interventions*' 2012 special issue on the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish, entitled 'In Memoriam Mahmoud Darwish'; to the credit of its founding and current editor, Robert Young, the opening volume and issue of *Interventions: International Journal of Postcolonial Studies* about eighteen years ago also included an article on Palestine, entitled 'Loving Palestine' and an interview with Said. The earlier-mentioned 2014 special issue of the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* is an important contribution to this topic. Palestine has also been a recurrent topic in *Race & Class*, most significantly, the 2011 special issue entitled 'Constructions of Palestine'. Of course, journals such as the *Journal of Palestine Studies*, *Journal of Holy Land and Palestine Studies*, and *Arab Studies Quarterly* regularly feature articles on various Palestinian topics.

One of the earliest discussions on the silencing of the Palestinian narrative is Said's 'Permission to Narrate' in which he states: 'When an attempt is made to speak critically of Israel, the result is frightening — if the attempt succeeds in getting any diffusion at all' (1984: 30). Said believes this to be especially poignant when any 'narrative renderings' of Palestine are attempted (1984: 31). The silence has in many cases been enforced by what may be described as 'vigilante action' and 'deep media compliance' (1984: 30). In other words, in the West, and especially the United States, the only narrative that could be told, authorised and naturalised in every aspect of American culture and cultural production is one similar to that propagated by Golda Meir (a past Israeli Prime Minister) in 1969 'that the Palestinians did not exist historically, had no communal identity, and no national rights' (quoted in Said 1984: 31). While there has been some change as mentioned above, the Salaita case attests to the fact that the change has not been as deep as anticipated. Even some Arab American voices that came to the 'defence' of Salaita have qualified their so-called support with a 'good' Palestinian/Arab

discourse and thus acquired white Protestant civility, as mockingly pointed out by Massad, quoting from the Palestinian American professor Beshara Doumani: 'Salaita's tweets are 'of the kind that I personally would never tweet'' (Doumani quoted in Massad 2014).

Even Bernard's well intentioned work on Palestine as a colonised nation can use an imprecise (at best, vague) terminology that seems to equate the situation of the coloniser with that of the colonised although, ironically, this is precisely what she is arguing against in her book *Rhetorics of Belonging: Nation, Narration, and Israel/Palestine* (2013). Bernard makes an excellent point concerning hegemonic postcolonial studies which privileges the 'non-national' over narratives of national liberation (2013: 8). As Bernard suggests, this trend allows postcolonial studies to dwell upon less politically inflammatory issues, which are eventually contained/absorbed within the main ideological paradigm. Bernard rightly argues that one should clearly distinguish between the settler colonialism of the Zionist state and the anti-colonial struggle of the Palestinian struggle, which 'seeks self-determination for a largely stateless indigenous population displaced by force more than sixty years ago' (2013: 9–10). Bernard's analysis is a welcome approach that seeks to reformulate older postcolonial texts, such as Ashcroft's, Griffith's and Tiffin's categorisation, which recognises the United States as a postcolonial nation (1989: 2), while Palestine, for example, is excluded or simply ignored. Bernard, however, seems to fall prey to an imprecise (and vague) terminology when she endeavours to study both the coloniser and colonised from within the same framework of postcolonial studies as both the title and approach used in her book reveal. One wonders how Bernard can eloquently argue for making a clear distinction between European settler colonialism which can only be understood as colonisation and indigenous national liberation movements. How does Bernard manage to fall prey to the same kind of misrepresentations of Palestinian history (at least in her approach and terminology, especially in her vague use of the term 'Israel/Palestine' as one entity throughout her book), which she vehemently criticises? Is the Israeli national narrative or Israeli literature here 'postcolonial' in the same way that the Palestinian national narrative or Palestinian literature is 'postcolonial' as her approach seems to suggest, but her argument expressly rejects?

It is obvious that postcolonial studies needs to clarify and expand its theoretical boundaries in order to include literatures that not only celebrate hybridity and difference, for example, but also and especially those texts that engage critically with colonial occupation and oppression and anti-colonial resistance, not absurdly to exclude texts and situations that do not adhere to the temporal aspect of the term postcolonial. Postcolonial studies, like feminist and Marxist writing, is a critical

discourse that (in the case of postcolonialism) is involved, not only in celebrating difference, but also in breaking the silence on any kind of injustice, not in being an accomplice to that silence by restricting the boundaries of postcolonial study to certain topics, geographical locations or time frames. This entails freeing postcolonial study from some of its limiting criteria, intentionally or unintentionally set and that have the effect of including some discourses, which are conveniently exotic and safe, while excluding others that are more contentious, less exotic and less convenient for the sensibilities of the main ideological paradigm of thought controlled by powerful imperialistic forces. One wonders, for example, how one top ranking postcolonial journal rejects a paper because its topic on the role of culture in anti-colonial resistance is not, as the editor believes, particularly relevant to the field of postcolonial studies while another top ranking postcolonial journal finds that this same paper is quite appropriate for its forum. Are these mere idiosyncratic differences between postcolonial journals, or does this actually suggest a more general confusion in the postcolonial field that requires reformulations and a broadening of postcolonial borders to include more contentious and previously silenced narratives.

In fact, the contestation of space, which is at the heart of many postcolonial debates, can most effectively be gauged by examining Palestinian and international cultural productions in response to the extreme settler colonialism of the Zionist state, which in essence should claim a central role in postcolonial studies today. Cultural responses to colonialism inevitably involve, as Said argues, a 'socially acceptable narrative to absorb, sustain and circulate them' (1984: 34). However, at the same time, a certain danger lies in the globalisation of the Palestinian issue. Some postcolonial critics and editors of postcolonial journals have started the project of placing Palestine on the postcolonial map. The problem which arises, however, has to do with the outsider's understanding of the actual history and dynamics of the Palestinian tragedy. Young, the editor of the earlier mentioned reputable postcolonial journal *Interventions,* is a case in point. In his noteworthy effort to bring Palestine into the postcolonial debate, Young, in his 2013 Edward Said Memorial keynote address, frames the context by comparing the situation of Leonard Woolf's (Virginia Woolf's husband) London Jews to that of Said. Young opens his comments by reading from Woolf's short story entitled 'Three Jews', which was published in July 1917. Young likens the situation of the London Jews in Woolf's story who repeat 'We belong to Palestine, still' to that of Edward Said. Young affirms that Said, like Woolf's London Jews, also belongs to Palestine, still. The problematic character of the globalisation (and appropriation) of the Palestinian cause or the attempt of postcolonial journals to redress the Palestinian issue has to do with

the issue of representation, a concept with which Said's own work deals in depth. Young, for example, intones that Said, like Woolf's London Jews, belongs to Palestine, still, but, Young suggests, Said perhaps does not believe in the obverse of that statement, which would be 'Palestine belongs to us'. Young assumes that he in 2013 knows what Said as a Palestinian thought, and whatever Said *perhaps* thought can now stand for the whole Palestinian cause. Thus, this Western postcolonial perspective on Palestine can, in my opinion, constitute a kind of appropriation and marginalisation of the Palestinian voice. Young, for example, argues:

> Leonard Woolf's phrase 'We belong to Palestine' seems to envisage a Palestine in which diaspora Jews in London, Mizrahi Jews and Arabs in Palestine can all belong to the same place, be part of a shared space to which they feel they all belong.

The problem with this and similar projects is that here the (postcolonial) Western critic is equating the situation of 'diaspora Jews in London' in 1917 with that of the indigenous Palestinian who was born in Palestine and whose roots are deeply entrenched in this land and go back hundreds (or thousands) of years. Why does Young assume that Said or any Palestinian, for that matter, would gladly accept to belong to Palestine in the same way that Jews in London in 1917 belong to Palestine? In fact, this tension comes out in Said's own writing that Young presumes to represent in 2013. In his memoir *Out of Place*, Said writes:

> It is still hard for me to accept the fact that the very quarters of the city in which I was born, lived, and felt at home were taken over by Polish, German, and American immigrants who conquered the city and have made it the unique symbol of their sovereignty, with no place for Palestinian life. . . (2000: 111)

This does not mean that only Palestinians can speak on behalf of Palestine, but it does mean that a thorough knowledge of the Nakba must be *internalised*; the Nakba is not a mere word that one can gloss over; it is as Young himself states in his keynote address, a thing, explaining Said's interest in things, not merely words or the epistemology of theory. The Nakba, then, is a real happening that cannot be underestimated. Therefore, in the attempt to break the postcolonial silence on Palestine, critics such as Bernard and Young have thrown Palestine deeper and deeper into the throes of oblivion by silencing the Palestinian voice with a deafening finality in their effort to speak on behalf of Palestine and Palestinians. It is a kind of 'we said all there is to say about Palestine and now it is time to move on'. This postcolonial debate on Palestine is related to another contested Palestinian space that seems to be far removed from the theoretical discussion to which we have thus far been considering. Thus, taking the cue from Young, we move from words to things — the

apartheid wall running through the West Bank and the destruction of hundreds of thousands of olive trees.

Israel's apartheid wall is an actual spatial manifestation that brings to light several contestations of space. Significantly and perhaps symbolically (albeit, very real), the Palestinian Minister of the apartheid wall, Ziad Abu-Ein, was killed by the Israeli occupying army on 10 December 2014 for protesting Israel's constant usurpation of more and more of the very little of what is left of Palestinian land. The simple act of planting olive trees in the village of Turmus Aya, near Ramallah in the West Bank, as Abu-Ein and other protesters were trying to do becomes an act of serious contestation, especially as the olive tree has taken on great symbolic meaning for the Palestinian population; it has indeed become the symbol of their and Palestine's survival. Thus, Israel's constant destruction of olive trees is also the real and imagined destruction of Palestine and Palestinians, not only as physical entities, but also as imagined manifestations of that reality. It is perhaps within this context that one can understand why an elderly Palestinian woman named Mahfoza Oude from the village of Salem on the West Bank frantically hugs her olive tree with all the strength that she can muster against Israeli settlers who are bent on destroying that tree and all the history that it represents (Perry 2014). For the person who has thoroughly internalised the Palestinian experience, the contestations of different Palestinian spaces that this woman represents become readily comprehensible. Although Israeli settlers went on to cut down tens of olive trees in Mahfoza's village, Mahfoza's actions and those of her fellow villagers represent their cries of resistance and reaffirmation of their existence, rootedness and *sumud* (steadfastness) in the face of the Zionist settler colony's attempts to uproot Palestinian livelihood and identity. This has been the strategy of the Israeli occupation authority which has uprooted more than one million olive trees on Palestinian lands since 1967. As Sonja Karkar points out, this 'willful destruction has so threatened Palestinian culture, heritage and identity that the olive tree has now become the symbol of Palestinian steadfastness because of its own rootedness and ability to survive in a land where water is perennially scarce' (2007). Thus, for Mahfoza and millions of Palestinians, this olive tree becomes a site of resistance to the systematic destruction of hundreds of thousands of olive trees and fruit trees. This geographical and ecological Israeli violence against Palestinian land is at the same time a historical, social and psychological violence meant not only to disrupt Palestinian livelihood and thus survival, but also to break the will of the Palestinian people. Thus for Mahfoza (and Palestinians in general), the olive tree is, in the terminology of Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soja, a 'lived space' (Soja 1996: 10), incorporating the trialectics of spatiality, historicality and sociality of what Soja refers to as the 'thirdspace' (1996: 71). Mahfoza's

olive tree is simultaneously a geographical, historical and social space — it is indeed the 'lived space' of the Palestinian people; it represents a lost geography with deep roots in a historical past that continues into the present and, at the same time, represents the sociality around which Palestinian life revolves.

The Palestinian poet, Mourid Barghouti, offers a lengthy tribute to the olive tree in his memoir entitled *I Was Born There, I Was Born Here* in which he details the significance of this tree in Palestinian culture:

> Everywhere you look, huge olive trees, uprooted and thrown over under the open sky like dishonored corpses. I think these trees have been murdered, and this plain is their open collective grave. With each olive tree uprooted by the Israeli bulldozers, a family tree of Palestinian peasants falls from the wall. The olive in Palestine is not just agricultural property. It is people's dignity, their news bulletin, the talk of the village guesthouses during evening gatherings, their central bank when profit and loss are reckoned, the star of their dining tables, the companion to every bite they eat. It's the identity card. . . .Olives are people's social status and what they're good at. . . .If anyone falls ill, the oil is his medicine. . . (2011: 10–11)

When so much of Palestinian life revolves around the olive tree, the systematic Zionist strategy of the uprooting of this tree in particular takes on great significance. Keeping the olive tree alive becomes synonymous with keeping the idea of Palestine alive. Perhaps the keen observer can understand why Ziad Abu-Ein was killed as he was trying to plant olive trees in Turmus Aya, Mahfoza Oude was frantically and emotionally hugging her olive tree in the Palestinian village of Salem, Mourid Barghouti provided a detailed celebration of the olive tree in his memoir and Mahmoud Darwish repeatedly spoke of 'an immortal olive tree' ('I Belong There'), which the Palestinian's 'blood will plant' ('Earth Presses Against Us'). These events, as Said would say, are a 'part of the social world, human life, and of course the historical moments' (1983: 4) inhabited by these people, and they (the events) represent the amalgamation of real and imagined spaces, physical and literary spaces, all of which are transformed into sites of contestation and resistance.

Just as the olive tree carries multiple meanings in different spaces that are historical, political, geographical and ecological, psychological, real and imagined, so does the separation/apartheid wall itself. Not only does the separation/apartheid wall constructed by the Zionist state cut through West Bank space, thus allowing Israel to appropriate more and more Palestinian land, but it has itself come to represent a contested space amongst well-meaning international artists such as the British artist Banksy, on the one hand, and Palestinian residents on the other, a sort of art versus reality debate over a space that aims to confine Palestinians in an outdoor prison, almost mirroring the current status of Gaza, which

as Bill Rolston rightly points out, has changed its status from a 'colony to prison' (2014: 41). This apartheid wall, by appropriating more space illegally, has also separated Palestinian residents who live in the area from their agricultural lands, thus facilitating the progress from a confined space to a denied space, which is a repeated Palestinian historical theme and the eventual aim of the Zionist state. The wall has, however, become what Ashley Toenjes calls a 'transnational space' by means of which 'graffiti is used as a tool by Palestinians and others to communicate messages from within Palestine to transnational audiences' (2015: 56). Thus the apartheid wall, which aims to circumscribe and imprison Palestinians, an idea originally envisioned by the Revisionist Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky in 1923 (Toenjes 2015: 55), has become another of Palestine's contested spaces, not limited to the coloniser/colonised debate. Again, however, a danger is involved in globalising and perhaps appropriating Palestine to transnational audiences who, unfortunately, are more interested in the work of foreign artists on the wall, which has become a tourist destination. As we have seen in the previous discussion on belonging to Palestine, the problem of representation rises to the surface within the context of globalising the Palestine issue. Does the wall say what the Palestinians want it to say or what the foreign artists want it to say? Doesn't this Orientalising appropriation of the Palestinian cause by transnational artists further silence the Palestinian story, denying it the permission to be narrated, to use Said's terminology? Summarising Rebecca Gould's comments on this subject, Toenjes writes '[w]hereas the wall is a lived experience for Palestinians, for activists it can never be more than a political symbol' (2015: 64). The problem of representation and appropriation as a result of the globalisation of Palestine can be discerned in the different messages and drawings graffitied on the wall. Julie Peteet (1996), Rebecca Gould (2014), Ashley Toenjes (2015) and Craig Larkin (2015) have all discussed the differences between the messages of foreign artists, which concentrate on peace and human understanding, and Palestinian artists who emphasise resistance, *sumud*, former Palestinian freedom fighters, such as Leila Khaled and hunger strikers, such as Khader Adnan.

A poignant example of the local Palestinian rejection of this international art on the wall is the often quoted story of the British graffiti artist Banksy who, after finishing a drawing, is told by an old Palestinian man: 'You paint the wall, you make it look beautiful'. Banksy thanks the old man only to be told: 'We don't want it to be beautiful, we hate this wall, go home' (Parry 2005). Many of the paintings and graffiti of foreign artists seem to conflate the Palestinian cause with the issue of the wall, comparing it to the Berlin Wall, for example, or, as Banksy's paintings reveal, it becomes an issue of escape or how to get beyond the wall or to imagine a scene with no wall.

Not only does the wall currently measure about 708 kilometres as of 2014 (2015: Larkin 134) and thus devours more and more of the little that remains of historic Palestine and separates families from each other and people from their land and workplace, but similar to the theoretical discussion above, it is also an issue of (mis)representation and appropriation. Such artwork, which has become a tourist destination, presumes to speak on behalf of Palestinians; however, the local inhabitants are careful to reject any hijacking of their voice and story as Craig Larkin points out in his essay, 'Jerusalem's Separation Wall and Global Message Board: Graffiti, Murals, and the Art of *Sumud*': 'Palestinian critics see such interventions as further eroding their sovereignty over their space' (2015: 144). Palestinian work on the wall, however, tells a different story. Rather than focusing on the doves of peace or escape, Palestinian artwork features *sumud* and resistance in all its forms, particularly in clear references to armed struggle.

One mural on the wall by a Palestinian artist not only celebrates armed resistance, but specifically *female* armed resistance in the person of Leila Khaled, a member of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) who was involved in the hijacking of two airplanes in the 1970s. Palestinian society celebrates all women who choose to enter into the more 'manly' world of armed resistance by taking advantage of their supposedly less threatening bodies as Caitlin Ryan points out in her book *Bodies, Power and Resistance in the Middle East* (2015: 113). Another painting by the Palestinian artist Hamza Abu-Ayyash, urges Palestinians to 'Get Angry!' Other paintings feature Palestinian hunger strikers who use their own bodies to resist Israeli injustice; one in particular features the prisoner Khader Adnan, a Palestinian activist who was held in what is called 'administrative detention', by means of which the Zionist state 'detains' Palestinians without charge, and whose hunger strike lasted sixty-eight days in 2012. In this mural, Adnan appears with a lock of silence on his mouth, perhaps representing his *sumud* through hunger, which in essence represents one of the highest forms of *sumud*; at the same time, the lock of silence symbolises the silencing methods imposed upon him and the Palestinian people living under a very oppressive occupation. Since Khader Adnan, other Palestinian administrative detention prisoners have also carried out their own hunger strikes: Mohammed Al-Qiq in 2015–2016 (ninety-four days), Bilal Al-Kayed in 2016 (seventy-one days), Malik Al-Qadi in 2016 (sixty-eight days), Mohammad Balboul in 2016 (seventy-seven days) and Mahmoud Balboul in 2016 (seventy-nine days). All of these young men represent heroic *sumud* in the eyes of the Palestinian population, enabling them to become an integral part of the national narrative of Palestine.

The graffiti on the wall is also radically different. As Larkin has been able to record, graffiti in English by foreign activists emphasises 'human rights discourses and international peace slogans', (2015: 151) such as (all slogans appearing below are from Larkin's essay):

> 'An Eye for an Eye Makes the World Blind' Mahatma Gandhi
> 'Only Free Men Can Negotiate' Nelson Mandela

Other foreign slogans reprimand Israel for its current injustice against the Palestinian population with the assumption being that Israel had been conceived in peace and only veered off the right path with the building of the wall:

> 'Israel, Have You Become the Evil You Deplored?'
> 'Israel Is This What You Want to Be Remembered By?'
> 'Shame on You; Where Is Your Humanity?'
> 'The Oppressed Became the Oppressors'

Palestinian slogans, however, are not mostly addressed to Israel or the outside world and are far more defiant and specifically challenge the occupation. As if in answer to Young's 'We belong to Palestine', Palestinian slogans defiantly announce:

> 'Jerusalem is ours forever'
> 'We are not going to leave you, Jerusalem'
> 'Return'
> 'Free Palestine'

And in place of Mahatma Gandhi's, Martin Luther King's and Nelson Mandela's more peaceful injunctions, Darwish's most defiant poetry appears: 'Take Your Share of Our Blood and Leave' (Larkin 2015: 52). It seems in place of reconciliation and coexistence, Palestinians have chosen defiance and resistance.

It is also interesting to note that Palestinian graffiti artists have used the wall as a palimpsest as Toenjes points out (2015: 67), painting layer upon layer to erase what is underneath, possibly because it offends local sensibilities or because it has become outdated. Examples of such paintings by foreign artists, which have now been erased, include, as Larkin points out, 'rats with slingshots and a donkey producing an ID for an Israeli soldier' (2015: 144). One slogan that was painted over and which was very popular with international media and tourists was President Kennedy's line 'Ich bin ein Berliner', which was graffitied by the Dutch artist Joy van Erven (Toenjes 2015: 67). Such interventions on the wall, for example, may be attractive to international audiences and artists who may not really understand the complexities and nuances of the Palestinian situation on

the ground where Palestinians suffer from *occupation*, and not simply the wall.

The denial of space is realised not only in terms of the landscape and visual manifestations of occupied Palestine, but also its soundscape. Like geography, sound signifies a cultural and geographical space of ownership; the sound of the Islamic *adan* or call to prayer becomes a highly contentious issue for the Zionist state. The Israeli parliamentarian, Anastasia Michaeli, sums up the 'Israeli public discourse on muezzins' (Schwarz 2013: 2034):

> Muslim clerics must find another way to call to prayer or send religious and national messages, not through defiance and demonstration of ownership [at the expense of] life quality as they do today, but in a way that doesn't disrupt the lives of citizens, and takes into consideration that we live in a Western and civilised country. (quoted in Schwarz 2013: 2034)

The above quotation is peculiar on many levels and needs quite a bit of unpacking. The Muslim call to prayer or *adan* has been sounding and resounding in Jerusalem well over 1,300 years as the Dome of the Rock and Al-Aqsa mosques were built in 691 CE and 705 CE respectively. This means that the Muslim call to prayer has dominated the Jerusalem soundscape for over 1,300 years. Michaeli's typically Zionist discourse is not only exclusivist and racist, but also illogical. The geography of which the Israeli parliamentarian speaks is strangely enough located in the heart of what is known as the Middle East region rather than the West as she misleadingly states: 'we live in a Western and civilised country'. The racist assumption is that only 'Western' countries are civilised and that 'Israel' is such a country even if it is ironically geographically located in the 'East', if we are going to regard it within the geographical context of countries with which it shares borders, such as Jordan, Lebanon and Syria. Racism, in fact, is deeply ingrained in the consciousness and imagination of the creators of the Zionist state; this racism does not only target historic Palestine's Arab population, but has targeted (and still targets) Israelis who are not of Ashkenazi ancestry. Israel's first prime minister, otherwise known as the founder of the Israeli state, David Ben-Gurion, labelled the Eastern or Arab Jews, the Mizrahim, as 'rabble' and a 'generation of the desert' (quoted in Cook 2016) and in the early 1950s he stated 'We do not want the Israelis to become Arabs. It is incumbent upon us to struggle against the spirit of the Levant, which corrupts individuals and societies (quoted in Cook 2016). Perhaps this kind of thinking is what led to the abduction of newborn Mizrahi children in hospitals and other Israeli agencies in the early years of the newly established state of Israel in the 1950s and their 'adoption' into European Ashkenazi families who

could bring them up as proper Western citizens in this new 'Western' state (Cook 2016).

Then, how can one understand Zionist attempts to blur intentionally the actual location of this land? Michaeli's description is most probably meant to be a cultural one, and it is based on this 'cultural' descriptor (which is actually political, ideological and cultural at the same time) that Zionist discourse aims to dismantle Jerusalem's one thousand year-old sonic legacy, which in the present context has become a highly contentious space and site of struggle. Michaeli's Zionist discourse, however, self-destructs upon closer analysis. Why would a slice of geography that is located in the 'Middle East' region be considered culturally 'Western' and not 'Eastern'? The only logical explanation is that the 'Western' label is something that is being forcibly imposed upon this geography, and this imposition in reality represents both geographical and linguistic violence. Michaeli's Zionist discourse only draws attention to itself by emphasising its own illogicality and falsity built into its actual structure; thus, instead of pointing out how the Muslim call to prayer should be considered odd or disruptive in a geography that has been its natural home for about 1,300 years, this discourse emphasises its own estrangement in this 'Eastern' region—if anything, it is Michaeli's Zionist discourse that is unnaturally imposed upon this region generally and Occupied Palestine and the old city of Jerusalem specifically. Thus, this Zionist discourse is itself an absurdity and when carefully analysed, it only proves to be a *reductio ad absurdum*.

However the ultimate goal of the Zionist state is obviously to silence and erase all Palestinian spaces, whether these are spatio-visual, or as in this case, sonic, for as Ori Schwarz points out, '[c]ontrol over the sound of a given space symbolises its political ownership/domination' (2013: 2035). This kind of silencing takes on the form of appropriation of the food and folk traditions of the Palestinian people. By means of this appropriation, the Israeli state hopes to create for itself roots in this land. Ali Abunimah, the editor of the *Electronic Intifada*, points out 'these appropriation efforts have targeted hummus, falafel, olive oil and knafeh. Even peasant dancing, or *dabke* has been marketed as 'Israeli folk dancing'' (2015). The traditional Palestinian woman's dress, the intricately embroidered *thobe* and the Palestinian man's headdress called *keffiyeh, shemagh* or *hattah* are undergoing a similar appropriation effort (Sheety 2014). It is within this context that one can understand the Zionist state's systematic policies of silencing the Palestinian narrative in Palestine and beyond. Both Ilan Pappe and Nur Masalha have written copiously and effectively on the topic of the ethnic cleansing of Palestine, which goes beyond land confiscation and the dispossession of the Palestinian people to include the Zionist state's systematic policies of the total erasure of

Palestinian history and culture or what Pappe has called 'memoricide' (2006: 225). Similarly, Masalha effectively argues:

> [t]he de-Arabisation of Palestine, the erasure of Palestinian history and the elimination of the Palestinians' collective memory by the Israeli state are no less violent than the ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians in 1948 and the destruction of historic Palestine: this elimination is central to the construction of a hegemonic collective Israeli-Zionist-Jewish identity in the State of Israel (2012: 89).

In an important article, Masalha argues that the Zionist policy of appropriating and erasing Palestinian place names is a continuous pre- and post-Nakba Zionist policy, which aims at erasing a rich multilayered Palestinian identity and replacing it with an imagined, mythical and exclusivist Israeli one: 'These practices of 're-claiming by re-naming', while displacing the indigenous names, were pivotal to the colonisation of the land of Palestine and as a language of creating an 'authentic' collective Zionist-Hebrew identity rooted in the 'land of the Bible'' (2015: 16). Masalha emphasises a multilayered Palestinian identity that represents a 'continuity of native life and living practices' (2015: 50) and not the 'Israeli hegemonic heritage-style industry and an orthodox Biblical archaeology' (2015: 49) that is based on a supposedly 'authentic' museum-bound dead past (Ibid). Perhaps Masalha's multilayered Palestinian identity is best expressed by the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish:

> The land is mine, with its multiple cultures: Canaanite, Hebraic, Greek, Roman, Persian, Egyptian, Arab, Ottoman, English and French. I want to live all of these cultures. It is my right to identify with all of these voices that have echoed on this land, I am not an intruder, nor a passer-by. (quoted in Ghannam and El-Zein 2009: 17)

The Zionist state's systematic and decades-old policies (both pre and post the 1948 Nakba) aim at erasing every remaining trace of ancient Palestinian history and culture, which is deeply entrenched in this land, from the sound of the *adan* and Palestinian songs to Palestinian place names, dress, food and every form of culture as if to 'prove' that there was never a Palestine or Palestinians. This silencing by means of the appropriation of the Palestinian narrative necessitates multiple sites of struggle and *sumud* (a concept related to determination and rootedness) at different levels and in diverse spaces that are simultaneously visual and sonic. *Sumud* can even be effected by imaginatively reproducing an olfactory image, as Mahmoud Darwish does in his prose poem, *Memory for Forgetfulness* whereby the aroma of coffee becomes a space by means of which the poet hopes to defy the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982: 'I want the aroma of coffee... The aroma of coffee so I can stand my share/of this dawn/up on its feet' (1995). Darwish's actual confined space during the Israeli bombardment of Beirut is a contested space, and the poet's

attempt to get to his sea-facing kitchen to make coffee as bombs rain down on him becomes his site of struggle, and it is precisely the *aroma* of coffee that gives him the will to resist, a kind of *sumud*. For Darwish, coffee becomes geography, not only in spatial terms, but also in temporal terms, connecting Palestine's actual geography with Darwish's no space in his diaspora and at the same time linking his present with his past by means of the poet's consciousness. The aroma of coffee triggers the poet's reflection on the geographical nature of coffee perhaps because in Darwish's consciousness he is denied coffee in the prisons of the Zionist state as a young man for writing rebellious poetry and a second time in Lebanon during the Israeli siege of Beirut in 1982, where Darwish was at the time (Hamdi 2016: 8). Thus for Darwish, coffee becomes a site of struggle and *sumud*; it becomes a force of unity and resistance, allowing his personal narrative (what is inside) to be told and become the Palestinian narrative (what is outside) as he writes in *Memory for Forgetfulness* (1995):

> Coffee is a place. Coffee is pores that let the inside seep through to the outside. A separation that unites what can't be united except through its aroma. . . A morning born of a bitter taste. The milk of manhood. Coffee is geography.

Coffee becomes the space by means of which the past is united with the present, the personal with the national, the Palestinians at home with those in diaspora, occupation with exile and the spatial with the temporal. All of these thoughts and feelings are invoked in the poet's imagination as he struggles to make coffee in his sea-facing kitchen in Beirut in 1982 under heavy Israeli bombardment and at the moment he wrote *Memory for Forgetfulness* to document his experience as part of the greater Palestinian memory. As the title of this long prose poem suggests, Darwish means for this long poem to be the poet's tool of memory against forgetfulness, which represents annihilation, destruction and erasure. It is of the utmost importance to keep this bitter memory alive, here best represented by the bitter taste of coffee, which Darwish calls the 'milk of manhood'. The poet is also effectively uniting at least three senses in his reflection on coffee as a site of struggle — *visual* as in the geographical sense of coffee, *olfactory* as in the aroma of coffee for which he longs and *taste* as in its bitter taste. Thus, the unity of the senses is also invoked, allowing for multiple spaces of struggle, resistance and *sumud*.

It is by means of the *sumud* of the Palestinian fighter, writer, artist, poet, intellectual, mother and child that sites of public contestation become sites of resistance and cultural production. In this way, the Palestinian is involved in a constant activity of reformulations, reconfigurations and resistance to forces of occupation, erasure, (mis)representation and appropriation. As the previous discussion has shown, the theorist, graffiti artist, poet, and the ordinary man and woman going about their everyday

activities, writing and fighting back and constructing different Palestinian spaces, are the cultural producers that will keep the idea of Palestine alive.

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