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COUNTER-NARRATIVES OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN

The construction of Her-story and the politics of fear

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Introduction

This chapter explores the effects of colonial and Orientalist ideology—as manifested in the Zionist "politics of fear of the Other"—on constructions of history in the case of Israel/Palestine. Specifically, it examines the way in which history, constructed from fear of the Palestinian Other, affects gender relations within Palestinian society. It poses questions such as how the "politics of fear" reproduces and reconstructs patriarchy, and what role historical constructions of national identity play in the daily lives of Palestinian women. It invites the reader to analyze the role played by the construction of history and the "politics of fear" in holding women's rights to safety, education, and a home under siege.

Employing the "politics of fear" argument, in this case fear of the Palestinian Other, I bring to light the way in which fear—and the policies of oppression, draconian emergency laws, distorted and negative media coverage, ideology and scholarship that stem from it—produces, promotes, and propagates the consumption of its psycho-political reactions. I further demonstrate how fear is transformed into a political problem that profoundly affects the historical constructions and present lives of those who are feared, and is used to justify violations of human rights. Exploring the constructions of the past and how they marry with the Israeli settler-colonial project will reveal how these constructions infiltrate the present-day

realities of Palestinian women, and racialize and dehumanize the Other. The process of "Otherizing" the Palestinian exposes both the way in which the Israeli colonial project reinforces and reinvents a patriarchal structure—under the banner of preserving "tradition" and "culture"—as a means of undermining radical resistance, and how repressive practices generated by the industry of fear serve to emasculate colonized men, adding a further layer of complexity to patriarchal relations. Thus, while the daily lives of women (and children) are most blighted by poverty and violence, Palestinian men are discursively neutered. Indeed, colonizers/occupiers have frequently positioned themselves as the guardians of colonized women.

The paper aims to show that the construction of the Palestinians as a people to be feared leads to the construction and reinforcement of a network of gendered controls within Palestinian society and to the further exclusion and marginalization of the Palestinian woman. These controls govern her daily existence, and overshadow her life choices, family structure, childbirth, employment, and education. It will be further argued that the historical construction of Jewish Israelis as people who face a constant threat from the Palestinian Other has created a political economy of fear, and a new "security theology" that reproduces and reconstructs patriarchy, further excluding women and imposing a new strain of colonial racism. Such an analysis leads us to questions of who should be protected and how, and to the very discourses of race and racism that feed global conflicts, local violence, and genocide. Thus, I argue, in order to conceive of Israel's identity in the global sphere, we must first historicize its involvement in constructing and producing fear, and promoting racist violence. Hence, the chapter engages directly with MELSS's theme this year, *The Demands of History,* as well as its interests in rethinking the ethical responsibilities of academic research in challenging such demands, while invoking gender.[1]

In the introduction to Albert Memmi's *The Colonizer and the Colonized,* Jean-Paul Sartre stated, "Thus oppression justifies itself through oppression: the oppressors produce and maintain by force the evils that render the oppressed, in their eyes, more and more like what they would have to be like to deserve their fate". My current research takes this theory as a point of departure. It draws on earlier theorists of colonial violence, including Franz Fanon and Albert Memmi, to inform an investigation into the ways in which the politics of fear and fear of the colonized—depicted in the above-cited quotation from Sartre—not only influences the politics of representation, but also produces and maintains the oppressed in new spaces of subjectivity, while contributing to the normalization of violence in both the private and the public spheres.

After setting forth the methodological considerations that lie behind my invocation of women's voices and narratives in the attempt to understand the operation and applicability of the politics of fear in women's everyday lives, I provide a brief historical overview of the behaviour and perceptions of the colonizer

that are inherent to its role as colonizer. The chapter will then address the issue of colonialism and the production of the Palestinian Other, before moving on to the issues of women, history, colonization, and the politics of fear. In the final two sections, I jump from the historical constructions of Palestinians as people to be feared, to the ways in which such constructions violate the rights of Palestinian women today. To this end, I examine two case studies, the first of which addresses the issue of gender and education, and the second addresses the issue of gender and Israeli attack on the Palestinian home. In discussing these two cases, the chapter argues that in the context of the politics of fear, patriarchy is not simply re-reproduced; rather, it is reconstructed along new lines and in mutually contradictory ways, as emasculated men become additional agents in the process of gender oppression. The chapter concludes by stressing that listening to the voices of women living under military occupation and sharing their ordeals can bring to light the intersection between the colonizer's construction of history—shaped by Orientalism, Colonialism, and Zionism and embodied in the politics of fear—gender roles within Palestinian society, and the ongoing violation of Palestinian women's rights.

Methodological considerations: a feminist analysis

Critical feminist scholarship, and in particular that addresses colonial contexts, has challenged academic work that places the male hegemonic subject at a privileged standpoint. Such work, feminists argue, universalizes women's experiences into totalizing theories and reduces the production of knowledge to the activity of males, thereby driving women's voices to the "Otherized" margin (Mohanty *et al.*, 1991; Narayan, 1997; Hooks, 2000; Shohat, 2001; Mohanty, 2003). For Trmh, the notions of gender, culture, and cultural difference must always remain unsettled and unsettling (1989: 113) in order to avoid the trap of alterity and de-essentialize metanarratives. By proceeding thus, Trinh seeks to displace and disrupt marginalization that is conditioned on difference, race, culture, ethnicity, gender, etc., in order to destabilize fixity and/or subjectivity. Trinh's approach challenges scholars, particularly feminist scholars, to seek alternative frameworks for understanding human survival, and more specifically women's lives and experiences, an approach that does not reproduce notions of "Otherness". Trinh not only gives new meaning to the category of difference, but also constructs that category as a meaning in and of itself. Does a female child in Rwanda face challenges in her pursuit of education similar to those faced by a female child in Palestine? Do these female children attach similar meanings and aspirations to education? Do they internalize conflicts and strategies in similar ways in the two different contexts? Trinh's approach is important to our contextualization of the human (hu-woman), history and

Her-story, experiences and narratives, especially when we come to frame answers to such questions.

Furthermore, in discussing methodologies that aim to help us to understand and research women in colonial contexts—including that discussed herein—one must look at the colonized not only as the mere object of the acts and discourses of the colonizer, but also as an agent in a conflict-ridden history that has transformed a complex, gendered social and cultural world. The challenge in this chapter is not to see Palestinian women as merely framed by the context, but rather as agents that structure and are structured by the broad gendered geo-political, bio-political, economic, and social relations that envelop them. Introducing such a methodology requires, as I explain below, the recentring of the marginalized and silenced voices of women survivors of colonization and militarization. To that end, I give space in this chapter to a number of narratives voiced by Palestinian women living under occupation.

It is only in recent times that academic study has recognized this silencing. Chela Sandoval, for example, explains how the critical theory and interdisciplinary thought that emerged in the twentieth century, "are the result of transformative effects of oppressed speech upon dominant forms of perception" (Sandoval, 2000: 6—7). She goes on to explain the importance of naming the nameless and of learning from and thinking with those who have experienced subjugation, domination, Diaspora, and displacement; indeed, of learning from the entire history of injustice. The purpose of this method is to unseat dominant forms of repression and reveal the strength of the vulnerable (Lorde, 1982).

Lentin argues for the consideration of "women's own accounts of their lives as primary documents for interpreting their lives" (1997: 5). We must comprehend that women are never passive recipients of their conditions. Even where gender ideologies have gained the upper hand in restricting women's voices, freedom of expression, participation, and mobility, women have employed various strategies to combat those limitations. In addition, women's lives and experiences can never truly be understood without listening to their own voices, voices that often tell of lives of horror, lives of courage, lives of resistance, and lives of hope. By giving centre stage to women's voices, "we [feminists] not only enhance and deepen our knowledge, we also put women's claims to be heard… firmly on the feminist political agenda" (Lentin, 1997: 14).

The use of methodologies that refuse to depoliticize colonial rule allows us both to hear the silenced voices of Palestinian women, and to enlighten and deepen our understanding of the way in which colonized woman become agents of a complex and conflict-ridden history. By foregrounding gender as the primary focus, I emphasize the collusion between the patriarchal norms of the colonizers and the colonized alike, in order to show how many patriarchal practices were invented as a

direct result of this collusion, how inequalities have been created, manipulated, and maintained, and how to identify whose interests they serve.

Historical overview

Both the legacy of the international political system and the Palestinian *Nakba* influence and mirror the current military, socio-economic, geo-political, and bio-political situation in historic Palestine, and play a part in shaping gender relations within Palestinian society. The tragedy of Palestine and the Palestinians, the continuing occupation of Palestinian land and the resulting oppression, was best described by the late Edward Said in his account of how the Palestinians were rendered voiceless (1984). As they are a group of people who are constantly being "summarized" or "nullified", I am generally resistant to providing "brief histories" of the Palestinians. However, an overview is necessary for purposes of clarity and to set the scene for the main arguments.

In 1917, the British Government, in secret and without regard for the existing native majority, transmitted a promise to the Zionist Federation concerning the creation of a Jewish "homeland" in Palestine. As Rashid Khalidi has argued (2004: 118):

> The outlines of the problem can be simply stated: with the Balfour Declaration of November 2, 1917, Britain threw the weight of the greatest power of the age, one that was at that moment in the process of conquering Palestine, behind the creation of a Jewish state in what was then an overwhelmingly Arab country. Everything that has followed in that conflict-riven land has flowed inevitably from this decision.

(Khalidi, 2004: 118)

Prior to, during, and following 1948, the Jewish colonial movement and thereafter its state massacred thousands of Palestinians, demolished towns and villages in their entirety, and forced their inhabitants to flee or be killed. By the end of the fighting in 1949, almost a million Palestinians had been forced off their land. Between 400 and 500 Arab villages in Palestine were captured by the Jewish state, which left their inhabitants refugees, denied the right to return to their homes (for more on the Palestinian refugees, see e.g. Ilan Pappé, 2007 and Nur Masalha, 1992). Past crimes against the Palestinians have taken various forms, including massacres of villagers (including the massacres perpetrated at the villages of Doueimah, Qibya, and Kafr Qasim), population expulsions (e.g. the expulsion of 70,000 Palestinian residents from the towns of Lydda and Ramle), and mass displacements (including the

displacement of tens of thousands of Bedouins) (Said and Hitchens, 2001). I n the Palestinian village of Safsaf, 4 women were raped, 4 were killed, and 52 men were tied up with rope, dropped into a well and then shot, while an additional 10 men killed in separate incidents. In Sa'Sa, another Palestinian village, over 100 people were murdered and the remaining population of the village expelled. Israeli state crimes since the *Nakba* have included—among other punitive policies pursued against Palestinians—deportation, assassinations, the collective punishments of civilians, the demolition of homes and torture, and during the conflict the annual Palestinian fatality rate has remained stable at an average of 50—100 Palestinian dead for every single Jewish fatality.

A number of Jewish Israeli historians have discussed the abuses inflicted upon Palestinians by the Jewish state, describing the *Nakba,* the Palestinian catastrophe of 1948–1949, as "ethnic cleansing" or "crimes against humanity" (Kimmerling, 1994; Kimmerling and Migdal, 2003; Morris, 2001; Pappé, 1994, 2007). Other historians, such as Norman Finkelstein (1995) and Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (2001) have argued that Israel offered two stark options to the indigenous Palestinian people: eviction and expulsion, or semi-imprisonment within a quasi-Apartheid state. However, despite the undeniable injustices that Palestine and the Palestinians have endured, global political powers, including the US, have lent their support to the Zionist state for political reasons, disdaining the human disaster created by its establishment. Unable to marshal a powerful lobbying group, the Palestinians have consistently failed to win a fair hearing. Hence, the terrible memories of the Holocaust, together with the vivid biblical narrative used to justify the Jewish "right" to Palestinian land—underpinned by the familiar narrative of a US that leans towards Israel—have combined to hamper the efforts of both Arabs and Palestinians to have a significant positive bearing on the political system of Empire. As Rashid Khalidi explains:

> In the wake of the murderous, suicide attacks of September 11, 2001, on New York and Washington, the convergence between the policies of the Bush administration and the government of Prime Minister Ariel Sharon has reached the point that they are virtually indistinguishable in a number of realms, notably as regards what has become their shared rhetoric on the topic of "terrorism". Nowadays, Palestinian militant groups like Hamas and Islamic Jihad are lumped together with al-Qai'da in the statements of the Bush administration and the Israeli government, and increasingly appear to be the object of the similar attention in US law and as a target of law enforcement agencies.

> *(Khalidi, 2004: 122)*

During the British occupation of Palestine (1918–1948), Palestinians, primarily

peasants, who in 1920 constituted approximately 80 per cent of the indigenous population, contributed more than any other class to the national resistance movement; yet, due to their lack of economic means, they never led it (Sayigh, 1979). The Palestinian peasants' exclusion from knowledge and decision-making was further entrenched during the British occupation. Their exclusion compounded their vulnerability and in many cases led to their eviction, displacement, and Diaspora during the catastrophe of 1948. However, popular Arab resistance to Zionism prior to the founding of the Israeli state was overt and explicit. Between 1936 and 1940, Palestinians conducted a nationalist revolt against the British Mandate that expressed an explicit resistance to Zionism that was apparent to many Zionist leaders, including David Ben-Gurion. In his book *The Fateful Triangle,* Noam Chomsky (1984) illustrates the way in which Palestinians viewed the Zionists as aggressors who sought to seize their land. In May 1948, the creation of the State of Israel led approximately 700,000 Palestinians either to flee the area or be expelled.

The story of the Palestinian catastrophe is the story of people who are paying for "the sins of Europe and America". As Chomsky summarizes:

> The Jews of Europe suffered a disaster on a scale and of a character unknown in human history, following upon centuries of persecution and terror. Their growing national movement turned back to a homeland that had not been abandoned in memory of tradition. The author of the Balfour Declaration expressed widely-held sentiments in the industrial West when he wrote, in 1919, that 'Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long tradition, in present needs, in future hopes, of far profound import than the desires and prejudices of 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land'… Somehow the Palestinian peasants mired in their prejudice, were never able to appreciate their moral responsibility to expiate the sins of Christian Europe. Whatever one may think of the conflicting claims to national and human rights in the former Palestine, it is difficult not to be appalled when Western politicians and intellectuals explain their backing for Israel's policies in terms of 'moral obligation', as if the sins of the Nazis and their predecessors, or of the Americans who closed the doors to refugees from Hitler's horrors, require the sacrifice of the Palestinians—on moral grounds. How easy it is to meet one's moral obligations by sacrificing someone else's life.

(Chomsky, 1991: 3)

Moreover, as Hanna Arendt states:

After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the

only insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely, by means of a colonised and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of the 20th century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people. And what happened in Palestine within the smallest territory and in terms of hundreds of thousands was then repeated in India on a large scale involving many millions of people.

(Arendt, 1951: 290)

Arendt's insight shows us that Hitlerian politics should not be seen as the exception, but rather as exemplary of a certain way of managing vulnerable populations. Such policies produced the ordeal of many Palestinians, the pain of expulsion and loss of family, land, and home. It rationalized the expulsion of the Palestinians as stateless people across the borders of the nascent state, and gathering them together in cramped enclaves and camps to render them largely invisible to the outside world.[2]

Understanding the relationship between the colonized and colonizer within the context of colonialism requires, as Memmi would suggest, that we understand the behaviour inherent in the role of the colonizer (brutality, oppression, exploitation, bigotry, etc.) and the colonizer's actions and fears. Memmi's assertion that economic power and gain is the fundamental force driving colonialism helps us to comprehend the colonizer's need for sustained exploitation, supported by the production of a politics of fear that allows him to win the sympathy of the world. Palestinians' own fear, generated by the aforementioned brutal acts committed by the colonizer against them, is transformed by the colonizer into a fear *of* them, the victims of colonial violence. Furthermore, and as Memmi explains, portraits of the colonized, as viewed through the eyes of the colonizer, incorporate negative traits like violence, laziness, corruption, lack of civility when compared to the colonized, and in turn justify violence. Understanding fear and violence is thus central to the issue of racism, which Memmi defines as, "the substantive expression, to the accuser's benefit, of a real or imaginary trait of the accused" (Memmi, 1991: 81).

Applying Memmi's analysis to the Palestine/Israel context allows us to see the processes of colonization at work. Settler colonization in historic Palestine was supported, and arguably encouraged, by the world's denial of the ongoing suffering of the Palestinians, as the history of the *Nakba* reveals. This denial allowed for the further objectification of the colonized and was used to serve the needs of the colonizers, a process common to all colonial contexts described by Aimé Césaire in his exposition of his concept of "Thingification" (Césaire, 1972: 42). This transformation, realized through the industry of fear, is central not only to

understanding the conduct of the colonizer, but also to comprehending the context that shapes the processes of producing and processing knowledge of the colonized, since all social institutions are founded upon the colonizer's ideology of domination and demonization. This ideology is produced, controlled, and regulated by the "politics of fear", used by the colonizer to control the scale, manner, reflections, and functioning of fear in specific times (during war, peace negotiations, etc.), spaces (homes, workplaces, schools, hospitals, streets, etc.), and places (e.g. the US, Europe, Jordan). The industry of the production, control, and regulation of fear is also employed to direct the way in which racial discrimination, Otherization, and gender oppression functions to "Thingify" the colonized, in Césaire's terminology. As Memmi argues, colonialism serves not only to brutalize the colonized, but to instill in them inferiority and submission complexes.

Colonialism and the production of the Palestinian other

> Zionism, be it right or wrong, good or bad, is rooted in age-long traditions, in present needs, in future hopes, of far greater import than the desires and prejudices of the 700,000 Arabs who now inhabit that ancient land.
>
> *(Arthur James Balfour, 11 August 1919)*

> The Palestinians must be made to understand in the deepest recesses of their consciousness that they are a defeated people.
>
> *(Moshe Yaalon, Israeli Army Chief of Staff, August 2002)*

Israel has been portrayed by many scholars as a colonial state—see, for example, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin (2002), Elia Zureik (1979), Yehuda Shanhav (1999, 2002, 2003), Nira Youval Davis (1987), Ilan Pappé (1997), Oren Yiftachel (2000), Ronen Shamir (2000), and Baruch Kimmerling (2001). The project and system ofcolonization, as defined by Fanon and Césaire, not only create a system of oppression that barbarizes the colonized, but also produce two conflicting societies: the colonizing and the colonized. Césaire's psychological analysis suggests that the process of colonization generates a racist system that, as he explains, uses fear to instill an abiding feeling of inferiority in the colonized, and a sense of powerlessness and defencelessness. Moreover, as Albert Memmi stated in his discussion of recently assimilated colonizers:

> The recently assimilated place themselves in a considerably superior position to the average colonizer. They push a colonial mentality to excess, display proud

disdain for the colonized and continually show off their borrowed rank, which often belies a vulgar brutality and avidity. Still too impressed by their privileges, they avor them and defend them with fear and harshness; and when colonization is imperilled, they provide it with its most dynamic defenders, its shock troops, and sometimes its instigators.

(Memmi, 1991: 16)

The nullification of the Other that has gone hand in glove with Israeli colonialism has been manifested in various ways, and was clearly evident, for instance, in the widely propagated slogan, "A land without a people for a people without a land". As Anita Shapira has demonstrated, this slogan was popular among Zionists in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It aimed, she argues, at legitimizing Jewish claims to the land, while denying those of others. Various scholars have described the way in which it was used to construct the Palestinians as people that ought to be erased, denied the right to land, a people that should be feared, displaced, transferred, and ethnically cleansed.

Edward Said believed that this slogan reflected the expression of the Zionist vision and hopes "to cancel and transcend an actual reality" (1979). Said drew parallels between the treatment of the Palestinians and the British concept of *terra nullius,* as applied in Australia. Historian Nur Masalha analyzes this phrase as evidence of the Zionist intention to implement a campaign of ethnic cleansing against the Palestinian Arab population (Masalha, 2007; Makdisi, 2005). Furthermore, Ghada Karmi and Eugene Cotran have interpreted the employment of the phrase *terra nullius* as an act of deliberate disregard for the existence of Palestinian Arabs (Karmi and Cotran, 1999). Other historians, including Gudrun Krämer, have contended that the phrase refers to a political argument that does not claim that there were literally no people in Palestine, but rather that the people living in Palestine were not, in his words, "a people with history, culture, and legitimate claim to national self-determination… Palestine contained people, but not a people" (Krämer, 2008). Despite the discrepancy in interpretations, invoking the phrase *terra nullius* to support my argument regarding the construction of the Palestinian as someone who is to be feared suggests two analytical propositions. The first of these propositions is that Jews who immigrated to the land of Palestine—before even seeing, meeting, or interacting with the indigenous Palestinian population—brought with them demonized beliefs about the Orient and its colonized population (see e.g. Gil, 2006). The second proposition is that the phrase *terra nullius,* with the political and psychological impact it left in its wake, was just a single example of the many stereotypes, acts, policies, and politics of language, representations, and namings that constructed Palestinians as a non-existent, nullified group, and that included the aforementioned slogan "A land without a people for a people without a land".

However, fear of those who do not exist (as either people or individuals) because they exist (as people and individuals) is a repercussion of this nullification, and a force that is challenging, even threatening, to the colonizer.

In support of my second proposition, one could cite many further examples of portrayals of Palestinians as people who are to be feared and/or nullified or demonized, as discussed by Israeli researchers such as Avi Shlaim, in his book *The Iron Wall* (named after Jabotinsky's essay), Efrat Ben-Ze'ev, and Eyal Gil in his detailed book, *The Disenchantment of the Orient: Expertise in Arab Affairs and the Israeli State* (2006). Gil's book discusses the history of the Orientalist cultural lens through which Zionists have viewed Arabs. He discusses the complex knowledge and practices that mediate their encounter with the reality around them, while demonstrating how they eventually constituted a relationship that was far more massive, intricate, and meaningful than a simple separation between colonized and colonizers, inferior and superior. Gil explains that early Zionism was not just organized and mobilized to achieve political and economic ends, but was to become what I define in my writings as a "security" theology that seeks to disseminate a certain truth and variously instructed individuals (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2009).

Efrat Ben-Ze'ev conducted an anthropological study of the memories of Jewish veterans who fought during the *Nakba* in 1948. She attempted to understand what the Jews who participated in the 1948 war thought of the Palestinians and how they spoke of their experiences half a century later. Her study unearths incidents including a comrade killing an old Arab woman as troops entered a semi-deserted Arab village in the Eastern Galilee, the killing of a man hiding underneath a bed, and the cry of a baby silenced by a grenade exploding in the house. She discusses the looting, expulsions, and long rows of fleeing refugees. Her interviews reveal that the officers she interviewed portrayed narratives that differ starkly from the official Israeli version of purity of arms and do not offer a simple justification of the Jewish historical narrative. In a recent lecture delivered at Sabeel's seventh international conference, Ben-Ze'ev attempted to explain why former soldiers chose to share the chronicle of the *Nakba,* suggesting that as they grow older they increasingly look back and reflect on the past, perhaps seeking understanding or even forgiveness. She commented that Israel is increasingly exposed to Palestinian memories of the *Nakba* and the scale of the disaster that was visited upon the Palestinians, and referred to the work being published by growing numbers of Israeli academics that does not conform to the old guard's version of the *Nakba.*

In addition, Avi Shlaim discusses in detail Ze'ev Jabotinsky's "Iron Wall" policy, which was encapsulated in the following quotation from Jabotinsky:

A Jewish hand won't harm our right to the whole of the Land of Israel, an eternal, complete right, of which there will be no relinquishment… The only

way to reach an agreement with the Arabs is an iron wall, that is to say, strength in the Land of Israel.

The preceding quotation supports my previous argument regarding fear of the unknown, but feared, Other by suggesting that Zionism firstly harboured Orientalist ideologies; second, enforced settler-colonial policies and violence while separating, fearing, and demonizing; and third, adopted—as Jabotinsky's famous article proposed—an "Iron Wall" policy towards the Palestinians.

Women, history, and the politics of fear

Colonial states have installed regimes that, in different ways, and for different reasons, denigrate native peoples for "oppressing" women, at the same time as they themselves reinforce patriarchy. The Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a case in point. One of the raced and gendered dimensions of the Israeli colonial project was articulated by David Remnick as follows:

> The situation between us, *[Moshe] Dayan creepily informed the Palestinian poet Fadwa Tuqan,* is like the complex relationship between a Bedouin man and the young girl he has taken against her wishes. But when their children are born, they will see the man as their father and the woman as their mother. The initial act will mean nothing to them. You, the Palestinians, as a nation, do not want us today, but we will change your attitude by imposing our presence upon you.
>
> *(Remnick, 2007)*

Dayan's statement clearly illustrates the manner in which colonial violence is calculated, planned, and thoroughly gendered. Colonial settler violence creates exceedingly violent contexts wherein instances of violence are not only endorsed, but also advanced "silently" with the tacit support of Empire. The main questions I seek to address in this section are what role such historical constructions of identity play in the everyday lives of Palestinian women, and how they nurture, support, and empower the "politics of fear". In order to answer these questions, there will be a discussion of the connection between the political structure, historical constructions, and constructions of the Other, and its effect on gender relations. We will also look closely at the way in which women experience colonial practices to reveal the multifaceted effect of colonial practices on women's—and men's—daily lives.

Generally speaking, women can be studied as individuals, collectives, cultural constructs, and representatives; however, women in colonial contexts should also be studied as a strategic site of analysis. Hence, there is a need to revisit, remap, and

rethink how Palestinian women are affected by colonial military occupation. Women in Palestine are frequently invoked, but are rarely historicized in ways that connect their present conditions to the past. Women are commonly used to express ideological positions about societies. In some scholarly writings, a pervasive notion is that the status of women in the Middle East delays the "modernization" and "liberation" of societies. Middle Eastern women in general and Palestinian women in particular are also a primary concern for sociologists, economists, demographers, donors, political scientists, and political leaders anxious for the future of Palestinian — Israeli conflict. This is a phenomenon that obtains in other colonized areas, and is evident in Indian and South African studies, for instance. I would like to argue that any study of women in the Palestinian colonial context must take into consideration the shifting status of and changing meanings associated with women as icons of nations, oppressed entities, breadwinners, frontline activists, fighters, carers, mothers of martyrs, etc.

Women living in colonial contexts in the global South, and who face political violence and displacement, are negotiated on a constant basis; their spaces, places, locations, bodies, sexualities, lives, and futures are continually being negotiated, turning women into boundary-markers (Kandiyoti, 1992: 246). The use of the language of "rights" and of "modernization" and "liberation" turns out to be problematic, not because it is a facade or a lie, but because one's rights and liberty are defined by those who are in power: the state, the occupiers, etc. As Abu-Lughod states in her book *Remaking Women*:

> With regard to remaking women, discussion revolved around the roles as mothers, as managers of the domestic realm, as wives of men, and as citizens of nation. with a critical eye for the way in which they might not have been purely liberatory.

(Abu-Lughod, 1998: 8).

This need to "remake" and "liberate" women turns women's voices—and feminist discussions around these voices, which wrestle between Orientalism and fundamentalism—into what Abu-Lughod terms "minefields", in reference to the current imperialist obsession with "the plight of Muslim women", that require close scrutiny (Abu-Lughod, 2002: 783). In her discussion of the project of "modernization", Mervat Hatem posed the question of whether such a project has exacerbated class and gender inequality and jeopardized working class, rural—and I would add women's—statuses in terms of violence against women in conflict areas and war zones (1993: 117—22). The fact that such feminist analyses are considered to be part of the global economy of fear, and are also affected by the manifold-violent contexts in conflict zones and within the global structure of power, further

obfuscates the analysis.

Thus, positioned at the junction of women's history in the context of colonization and Israeli militarism, the chapter investigates at which moments, in what contexts, at what times, in what spaces, at what places, and under what conditions the meanings of Palestinian women are constructed. Hence, the chapter will move backwards through time in historicizing the present constructs of women, conducting a detailed inquiry into the daily experiences of Palestinian women, who continue to live the repercussions of the *Nakba* in the present. Women's rights to education, freedom of movement, freedom from violence, resistance, and other rights are perceived as part of the general ideological war between the haves and the have-nots, the West and the non-West, the "civilized" and the "Otherized", the Occidental, and the Oriental. Looking at Palestinian women requires us to analyze their situation as colonized Arab women from the South who belong to a Muslim culture that has subsisted under the yoke of occupation and militarization for over 60 years.

The complex, multilayered suffering and the unpredictable political, social, and spatial context in which Palestinian women live—in the form of relentless land grabbing, restrictions on movement, military checkpoints, a racist separation wall, etc.—has altered, hindered, and in some cases sharpened their actions and activism. This complexity has not only reconstructed patriarchy and consolidated patriarchal control over women, but has also allowed women to revisit their historical legacies and to challenge their social and political roles, which has in some cases helped them better to endure their objectification and subordination.

Historically, activism by Palestinian women began in the early 1920s. The Palestinian Women's Union led demonstrations against the Balfour Declaration and organized the first General Palestinian Women's Congress in Jerusalem in 1929 (Al-Khalili, 1977: 77). Palestinian women also played a very active role in the revolt against the British Mandate between 1936 and 1939. In addition to caring for the injured, they participated in demonstrations, gave refuge and other assistance to rebels, signed petitions, and took up arms to defend their land (Abu Ali, 1974: 30–2). In 1948, Palestinian women were not only displaced, forcibly evicted, and exiled, but shouldered the responsibility for their children, their families, and the nation, and adjusted their social roles in order to contend with the devastating effects of the Palestinian *Nakba.* During and after the *Nakba,* Palestinian women fought on two fronts: the internal, domestic front, where they strove to help their families and nation to survive the *Nakba* and its consequences, and the external, political front, where large numbers of them joined, for example, the various political movements, including Fatah (The Palestinian National Liberation Movement), the Arab National Movement, the Ba'ath party, and the Jordanian Communist Party (Al-Khalili, 1977). Although not usually made visible by historians and other researchers, Palestinian women were active in three locations: in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, inside Israel,

and in exile, where they joined the nationalist movement, playing a part in both the armed and unarmed resistance (Abdulhadi, 2006; Moghannam, 1937).

The crushing defeat of the Arab regimes in 1967 and the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and East Jerusalem represented a turning point in Palestinian women's activism and resistance. The defeat of the Arab nations in 1967 led to an increase in women's power and participation within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and to the establishment of Palestinian guerrilla groups that called for and at times practiced armed struggle for the liberation of Palestine. Women's resistance took place on two fronts: the political front, including membership in guerrilla groups, and the less visible domestic front. Such acts of resistance altered the balance of power between women and men and disrupted gender roles. Women became militants and activists (Abdulhadi, 1998: 655), but were also glorified icons of nation, which constituted in part a response to the Israeli demographic war being waged for the production of a larger Jewish population (Abdo, 1991: 24). Additionally, women were signifiers of national honour (Warnock, 1990)—in spite of the sexual harassment and abuse to which Palestinian women were regularly subjected at the hands of Israel during imprisonment and interrogation, for example—and were expected to give precedence to the homeland even over their own personal honour. The nationalist slogan *al-ard qabl al-'ird* ("land before honour") was popularized and formed part of a (male!) trajectory within the nationalist discourse that had begun after the *Nakba* and that aimed to recast gender relations. The goal was to engender a shift in consciousness, so that people would not flee their land out of fear of sexual violence against women (Hasso, 2000), and thereby defy Israel's policy of violent landgrab. However, in *its effect* it indicated to women that they were not to fear the militarized sexual abuse that burgeoned under the Israeli occupation because national liberation was and remained of greater importance than women's "honour" (Thorhill, 1992: 24, 31–2).

The context of political despair and the hegemonic silencing of both the Palestinian voice and cause have had an impact on women's resistance, including through the development of an organized women's movement. Political activism by Palestinian women, be it on the personal level or the public level of social and political associations, was deeply affected by developments at the national Palestinian level, mainly in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Reema Nazal (2005), for example, has emphasized that the national cause and the political parties formed the base for the establishment of various developmental, social, and civil women's organizations in the 1967 occupied Palestinian territories. Indeed, she explained that the main problem associated with Palestinian women's activism was its promotion of national liberation, while delaying social liberation and the emancipation of women to a later stage.

In his extensive analysis of the development of the Palestinian women's

movement, Aziz Daragmmi (1991) stated that after 1978 it became clear that the women's and feminist movements began to realize that they could not advocate national liberation divorced from social liberation, and they therefore began to redirect their energies towards raising social and women's issues while resisting Israeli military occupation. Ebba Augustin has argued, *contra* Daragmmi, that the first Palestinian *Intifada* of 1987 motivated women and the Palestinian feminist movement to reorganize and fully embrace feminist liberation ideology (1994), while Eileen Kuttab and Nida' Abu Awwad (2004) have argued that feminist resistance to domination grew following the Oslo Agreement of 1993. In my view, the Oslo Agreement was deployed as a lethal weapon against Palestinian women's resistance and feminist frontline activism, and further entrenched the power of the politics of fear. The refusal of the Israeli military authorities to prevent additional acts of colonization of the land, water, and other resources, coupled with the refusal of Western powers to bring an end to the suffering of the Palestinians and address the plight of the refugees and the failure of the young Palestinian quasi-state to organize itself, have all served to encourage the commission of internal, local patriarchal acts aimed at "protecting" women. In turn, these acts have contributed to the further deterioration of the status of Palestinian women.

The marking of the Palestinian women's body and space to define nation and honour during the early period of the construction of the Israeli state, the 1967 military occupation and in the later stages of the first and second *Intifadas,* together with the militarized inscriptions of women's bodies, land, and lives, formed an integral part of the operation of the military occupation, and hence also part of Palestinian women's resistance, philosophy, and activism. Despite the severe impact of militarization and violence on women's everyday lives, their bodies and survival strategies, documentation of Palestinian women's history, and frontline activities in war and conflict zones is limited. Still, the history of the powerless and the process of knowledge production should not be based solely on what has been written but, crucially, also on the accounts of those who have so far been denied a voice and a place in the history books. As Fleischmann (2003) explains, in contrast to the dismissal by most historians of Palestinian women's activities during the British Mandate period—in part through their portrayal as "bourgeois", "passive", or "politically unaware"—in the early 1900s, Palestinian women launched movements that were actively involved in social, political, and national affairs. Despite the ongoing marginalization of the narratives and voices of Palestinian women, Palestinian women's ordeals, activism, and frontline agency have survived (for more details see e.g., Sayigh, 1981; Najjar and Warnock, 1992).

My demand to her-storicize the ordeals of women—suggested in the previous review and reflected in the following section—is supported by Memmi's argument that one should understand the brutality, exploitation, "fears", and actions of the

colonizer as fundamental forces that drive colonialism, and hence the ways in which it intersects with the gendered roles, victimization, and agency of Palestinian women.

Colonization, militarization, and the gendered body

The intensification of Israeli violence, the deterioration of the political situation, the daily humiliation of Palestinian men and women, and the repeated public humiliation of the figure of the Palestinian male through attempts to challenge his masculinity and virility by the Israeli occupation forces, have combined to deepen gender conflicts in the domestic sphere, and within Palestinian society more generally.

The Palestinian *Nakba* of 1948 profoundly disrupted the nexus of issues that allowed for the conceptualization of "family honour". The Zionists employed various methods to effect the eviction and displacement of Palestinian populations, including the infliction of sustained abuse on women's bodies. This abuse in turn created symbolic attachments to those bodies, turning them into avatars of purity and "family honour". Researchers have indicated that women's sexuality and bodies were targets selected to hasten the Palestinian expulsion in 1948 (Nazzal, 1978; Sayigh, 1981; Pappé, 2007). Writing on the massacres of Tantura and Qula, Pappé (2001) and Slyomovics (2007) have documented the use of different forms of sexual harassment, molestation, and rape against women and girls. The testimony of my own mother, who left Palestine in 1948 with her three children, supports the argument that, upon hearing stories of the rape and sexual abuse of women in the city of Haifa, Palestinian families elsewhere quickly abandoned their towns and villages. In her words, "The invocation of the proverb *al-ard qabl al-'ird* ["land before honour"] was meant to encourage people to stay rather than to leave, despite the stories of sexual abuse that were spread".

In her discussion of how gender norms became nationalized, Rosemary Sayigh stated:

> As to honour, I say that if our Palestinian society has managed to preserve its unity, it was on this basis: Migration and refugee status usually lead to unemployment, and to girls going out to seek work, whatever it may be. As for us—and I consider this something to be proud of—the Palestinian family has preserved its tradition in spite of social liberation.
>
> *(Sayigh, 1998: 169)*

Sayigh (ibid.) foregrounds the manner in which displacement and exile created social, gender, and economic insecurity against the backdrop of persistent political hardship. Such adversity disturbed the material and metaphoric aspects of the sexual

culture and rituals of Palestinians, in particular attacks on the physical bodies of citizens, and specifically women, in addition to attacks on the national body engaged in political struggle. The fact that Palestinian families resorted to traditional means of preventing sexual abuse against women, such as limiting women's mobility, allowed for, indeed resulted in, strengthened, nationalized forms of patriarchal control.

In the West Bank and Gaza, this continuous humiliation and emasculation was reflected in the importance that Palestinians attached to the issue of female sexual abuse by the Israelis, which came to be referred to as *Isqat*—literally, the "downfall" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1995). *Isqat* refers to the use of the politics of sexuality—as reflected in the violation of societal codes of women's purity, honour, integrity, and social respectability—for the purpose of soliciting "security information" for the Israeli military and the *Shabak* (the Israeli secret service). Such solicitation is conducted in breach of human rights law and of Palestinian moral codes of privacy and intimacy. It sometimes occurs through the sexual solicitation of female minors and young women, for example by placing hidden cameras and photographing women in clothing changing rooms, by sexually harassing and abusing women political prisoners, by encouraging young women to become involved in socially disadvantageous relationships in order to blackmail them into collaborating in the gathering of information on political activists, etc. The use of the term *Isqat* refers to the way in which the military powers have used patriarchal perceptions of sexuality and honour to *Tusqet*, to put down and "defeat", individual Palestinian women and their families personally, socially, and politically. Fear of *Isqat* rendered any discussion of sexual crimes and abuse extremely sensitive and heavily loaded, and made officials, and indeed society at large, increasingly reluctant to address the issue and assist victims of such abuse.

During and after the First *Intifada* (primarily between 1988 and 1995), I was involved in establishing the first hotline for abused Palestinian women, and the Women's Center for Legal Aid and Counselling, where I worked during the same period, dealt with 12 cases of sexual abuse against women as a result of *Isqat* (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1994, 1998a). *Isqat* created moral and social panic alongside the increase in Israeli violence. Panic intensified following Oslo Agreement, and the creation of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) in the West Bank and Gaza Strip in 1994 increased people's uncertainty and fear of the unknown. Despite the establishment of new emergency hotlines and NGOs between 1993 and 1995 that tackled female sexual abuse for the first time, and did so openly, the new PNA leadership, while it was willing to consult women activists and NGOs over the drafting of reforms, was hesitant to address sexual crimes at such an early stage of the nation-building process (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2002). This reluctance accompanied the increase in political violence in 1998—1999 and the outbreak of the

Second *Intifada* in 2000, which in turn consolidated religious, conservative, and patriarchal modes of resistance. When cases of sexual abuse came to light—as, for example, in the cases of a 3-year-old child in Hebron (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 1998b), and a young 5-year-old girl from Nablus in February 2000, in which the offender was sentenced to life imprisonment—both officials and society at large dealt with them as "national security" matters rather than as criminal offenses. The newly established PNA failed to reign in political violence and began flexing its muscles in the Palestinian streets, thus requiring the help and support of informal (family and tribal), religious, patriarchal power-holders in order to preserve its own limited power. The patriarchalization of the formal (state) system and incessant violent attacks on the nation's body not only empowered masculinist social codes, but also led to the further sidelining of certain issues, including crimes against women.

The continuation of Israeli colonization and the increasing patriarchalization of the Palestinian leadership, both formal and informal, and of social practices that marginalized women's roles and voices, raised questions over the actions of women activists, and introduced additional restrictions in women's lives, activism, and mobility. Simultaneously, organizations such as Hamas (the Islamic Resistance Movement) and paramilitary bands of young men became frustrated with both the international failure and the failure of the PNA to prevent violence against the Palestinians. They grew increasingly desperate and cynical about "Western-oriented" solutions that inflicted greater human, political, and economic losses on the Palestinians. Such groups sought religious and local means of expanding their politico-economic power. They therefore opposed any legal reforms pertaining to crimes against women (or what are legally termed "crimes against morality and the public order", including sexual crimes), supported the imposition of the *hijab* (the veil), initially in Gaza and thereafter in the remainder of the occupied Palestinian territories (Hammami, 1990), and generally out-Islamized and out-nationalized their opponents.

The threat of *Isqat* added to the threat of non-compliance with the local diktats of both the extremist religious, nationalist, and secular power-holders. It limited the sphere of action of women, and led them to devise new defence mechanisms to help them to survive and cope with the resulting marginalization. Most women were either unable or unwilling to challenge threats to their honour and social integrity, and many adopted culturally grounded methods of coping to ensure their survival, freedom, and ongoing activism. The survival tactics that appeared most prominently in my own studies included acquiring a higher education, working outside the home in order to achieve economic independence, and marrying at an early age to ensure economic and social survival, often before resuming education or pursuing domestic employment opportunities such as making pastries, clothing, shoes, etc. (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005a, c).

Whether fear of *Isqat* constituted an additional means of protecting or controlling women—or both—women's bodies and lifestyles were transformed into new sites of struggle, marking the boundaries between Palestinians and non-Palestinians and between male and female frontline activists, as well as reconstructing gender roles. The further marking of women's bodies, homes, lives, and spaces grew with the onset of the Second *Intifada* in September 2000. Significantly, it increased formal and informal control and gendered injustice and inequality, resulting not only in further violence against women and gender subordination, but also in the increased pursuit by women of activism and resistance. Their activism, including the establishment of new women's organizations and new NGOs, focused on tracking violations of women's rights and violence against women, the establishment of new shelters for abused women, efforts to combat so-called "honour crimes", and other political and social forms of struggle. It also opened new windows of opportunity for resistance to all forms of oppression. However, it coincided with international and regional transformations, in particular following the 9/11 attacks on the US and the associated rise of Islamo-fascism and Islamo-phobia, in addition to local events, most notably the 1987 and 2000 *Intifada*s, which contributed to the pervasive violence. These developments simultaneously signalled the emergence of new opportunities for women and imposed new constraints on them. An example is the construction of the Israeli Separation Wall and erection of additional military checkpoints throughout the West Bank. These spatial constrictions limited women's mobility; they also increased the feminization of poverty, restricted access to education, and caused harm to women's physical and mental health. At the same time, however, such spatial violence provoked an increase in women's participation in the labour force and promoted their activism and agency in opposing house demolitions, restrictions on freedom of movement, etc.

The failure of the international community to put an end to the violence and the Western attack on Muslims and Islamic movements, especially following the events of 9/11, acted to bolster the power and credibility of Islamic forces in Palestine and elsewhere. Islamists offered a "safe" space and a new discourse, one that was presented as "authentic" and grounded in local cultural and religious norms. The discourse was hostile to many existing programmes and activities targeted at women. For instance, vicious criticism was levelled at a request for the revision of Palestinian laws to make them sensitive to gender made by the Palestinian Model Parliament (PMP) project. I myself was a member of this collective effort on the part of legislators, local NGOs, activists, feminists, and members of human rights organizations. Our language of equality and use of the discourse of "rights" was criticized by some political and Islamist activists who felt they represented the hegemonic power of the West, and thus bore the mark of occupation and invasion.

Social and political gender relations were likewise affected by the decline in the

power of the PLO following the conclusion of the Oslo Agreement, and by the outbreak of the Second *Intifada,* which combined to heap yet more pressure on the "woman issue".

Furthermore, the worsening economic conditions, the breakdown of political negotiations between the PNA and Israel, and the serious military confrontations with the Israeli military empowered the *Shabab* (young men) and strengthened the hand of the paramilitaries. Between 1994 and 2000, feminist activists, including myself, working at the Al-Aman hotline for abused women observed that in parallel to the rise in masculinized resistance, the *Shabab* had launched a campaign to establish a "proper code of morality". They created new strategies and bureaucracies that imposed new codes of dress and behaviour for the sole purpose of controlling women. Abdulhadi (1998) quotes a feminist professor from Birzeit University stating as follows:

> As the [First] Intifada declined, an emerging laid-off army of Shabab, or young men, launched a campaign of 'social violence' against their own people… Self-assigned the role of morality police that operated in the streets of the West Bank and Gaza, the Shabab embarked on 'rooting out' what they viewed as moral decay…

(Abdulhadi,1998: 660)

The Second *Intifada* gave a further boost to such groups, primarily due to the impotence of formal mechanisms of social control, including those associated with the criminal justice and legal systems. The militancy of the *Shabab* sowed the seeds of moral panic and social fear, particularly in the aftermath of several high-profile incidents in which women standing accused of collaboration, misbehaviour, and dishonouring their society were killed. The unrelenting Israeli attacks and ongoing policy of displacement added to the failure, reluctance, or refusal of the official Palestinian system to prosecute criminals, which combined to construct an insecure space for women.

Nevertheless, the socio-political changes that were underway, in conjunction with the deteriorating economic situation, led to a further proliferation of women's activism and modes of struggle. In spite of the plethora of obstacles facing them, Palestinian women, including those who were killed, injured, or imprisoned, attempted to promote the resistance commensurate with their abilities and the resources available to them. They include Aisheh Odeh, who has just published a book in which she shares with the reader her ordeals in prison, which included sexual abuse. Others include Rula Abu Daho, Khawla al-Azrak, and Rabiha Diad, young women who enrolled in my classes at Bethlehem University and resisted humiliation and oppression by offering a new way of reconstructing gender roles and promoting

women's resistance. The main challenge they have faced is how, as the dominated and oppressed, to create an oppositional worldview, a consciousness, an identity, and a standpoint to counter dehumanization and military occupation, and also create a movement which enables resourceful self-actualization. The acts of resistance by women frontline activists—for example, Samiha Khalil, whose activism did not divorce the social from the national, the personal from the political, or the economic from the geo-political—and the acts of the many other women who spoke truth to power, served to carve out new spaces in which resistance to domination in all its modalities persists. However, despite such agency, individuals have lacked the power to surmount the daily hardships facing Palestinian women. However, their lack of power did not prevent them from acquiring education, finding a job, getting married, giving birth, and building their futures, albeit in a militarized context.

The ability of members of Palestinian society to manage their daily lives, including the management of death, destruction, and violence, has affected gender relations in a spiral, "knock-on" manner, for their inability to access their universities influences their chances of finding lucrative, rewarding jobs, attaining economic independence, marrying at an early age, and so forth. It similarly affects their health, mobility, and social status, transgressing their power or powerlessness in a cumulative manner. An example was relayed in the following report in *Ha'aretz* entitled, "Twilight Zone: Birth and Death at the Checkpoint", in which author Gideon Levy details:

> Rula was in the last stages of labour. Daoud says the soldiers at the checkpoint wouldn't let them through, so his wife hid behind a concrete block and gave birth on the ground. A few minutes later, the baby girl died… They wanted to call her Mira. All their children have names that begin with M, from Mohammed to Meida, their youngest daughter. They borrowed baby clothes from Rula's sister—their financial situation after three years of unemployment made buying new clothes out of the question—and they packed a bag to be ready for the birth. Now they are beside themselves with grief. Rula doesn't say a word and Daoud can't keep the words from pouring out.

(Levy, 2003)

Rula's narrative, a narrative of the power and victimization of women, combined with the thanato-power of the newborn's lifeless body, is but one example of how gender powers and women's conditions are deeply embedded in the violent context. It gives an indication of how the combination of such agency with victimization affects women's bodies and lives. Ella Shohat theorizes the complexity of the situation in which women like Rula live as follows.

> In a world of transnational communication the central problem becomes one of tension between cultural homogenization and cultural heterogenization, in which hegemonic tendencies are simultaneously 'indigenized' within a complex disjunctive global cultural economy.

(Alexander and Mohanty, 1997: xxi)

Thus, the need to shed light on the ongoing interplay between the cultural, the political, and the economic in the context of the interaction between the local and global is central. The theoretical anchor of my analysis is the legacy of historical colonization and its persistence in the new image of the politics of imperialism and occupation, and the veiled politics of "freedom" and "homeland security". Allowing the everyday experiences of the colonized woman to emerge and to be articulated—not just to those within the conflict zone, but more importantly to those outside—and enabling them to acknowledge the horrifying impact of violence perpetrated against them in the context of colonization and militarization is, in my view, nothing short of a political imperative. It is a means of assigning "meaning" in order to create viable narratives from shattered lives. The significance of initiating a dialogue that can be used to revisit History requires the invocation of a spiral, transgressive analysis that examines the Palestinian Her-story of current conditions, constructed by past injustices.

In the following two sections, I illustrate the importance of building a Her-story from the daily experiences of Palestinian women, in the cases of women whose access to education has been restricted and women who have lost their homes, due, among other factors, to the "politics of fear" and the Zionist security theology that operates in the OPT.

Colonization, gendered education, and the "politics of fear"

Military occupation affects educational spaces and places, politicizing, sexing, gendering, and racializing them; it intersects with the ongoing colonization of Palestine to shape the gendered nature of education. This section is based on a study conducted over the years 2004—2007 that examines the effects of Israeli spatial politics, including the construction of the Israeli Separation Wall, house demolitions, and the establishment of military checkpoints, on gender and education in the OPT (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2008). It reveals the impossibility of divorcing the covert and overt acts of political violence that have transformed Palestinian gender relations in the present day in complex, contradictory, and diverse ways.

Let me first stress that the educational front is closely related to the historical roots of the political conflict, and thus to the conflict front itself. Moreover,

colonized spaces influence gender roles and transform women's lives—including their education—by creating them as vulnerable spheres involving negotiated manoeuvers with political powers and controls. What, then, does education mean to girls living under military occupation, and how does the need to acquire education in conflict zones (re-)define our conceptualizations of gender and education? To answer this question, I will now share with the reader a series of positions, experiences, and voices of young Palestinian women collected in the aforementioned study (for more details, see Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2008).

> I really want to continue going to school, but the soldiers and the Mishmar Hagvul [border patrol] keep on harassing me and my family. As you see, we live very close—one minute away—from the racist separation wall and the soldiers do not bother me on my way to school, but do not allow me to come back home after I am done. I am now sneaking around and reaching home from school through the sewage pipes that are still open. Every time they refuse to allow me to come back home, they know that I will reach home either by walking more than five kilometres, or by sneaking through the sewage pipes. All I wish for is that my schoolmates won't discover this, for they always hurt me when they ask me whether I use those pipes … and sometimes I end up walking long hours in the rain or in the heat, either fearing being caught by the soldiers, laughed at by my school friends and teachers, or hit by my father for being late. But. What would happen to me if they used those pipes, or decided to close all the roads?

(Reem, 13 years old, Bethlehem area, December 2006)

The foregoing quotation, taken from a narrative shared by Reem, a seventh grader, reveals how her educational space and her path to that space are violated on a daily basis by military, patriarchal, and other forms of power. Reem's story is one of many that uncover the various ways in which political occupation and violence have militarized the educational domain. However, despite the deep sorrow reflected in her words, she challenged the infringement of her educational rights by employing the innovative—and extremely painful—strategy of turning the sewage pipes into a new route home from school.

The militarization of education in the studied areas was apparent in all discussions and in all the narratives gathered. Young women stated that the political occupation and constant uncertainty surrounding their continued education and the violence committed against it impinge upon not only their education, but also their personal relationships with family and siblings, their freedom of movement, their gender roles, and their life choices. They explained how the ongoing killing and injury of members of their people and attacks on their schools, universities, homes, workplaces, hospitals, and roads have deprived them of the education they had hoped

and planned for. Their inability to move freely to and from educational institutions resulted, first, in a greatly diminished prospect of qualifying for the best schools and universities. Second, it served to convince their parents and other family members that acquiring an education in a militarized space such as occupied Palestine was an unsafe undertaking for their younger, and in particular female, kin. Third, they themselves often lost interest in challenging the hardships they encountered, and consequently either dropped out of school or university, or amended their original educational plans, for example opting to study education instead of law, or medicine instead of engineering. Fourth, women—indeed, often girls—sought out additional coping strategies to regain at least a minimal sense of safety. These strategies included making decisions to marry at an early age to allay their fears for their future security or concerning the possible loss of loved ones, and decisions to abandon their education, or both of the above. A fifth, and related, result was that many feared that the pursuit of their education might cause them to become an economic burden on their families, and left school to allow their families to use the money to fulfil more basic purposes, such as purchasing food, paying for medical treatment for the sick and needy, etc.

Generally speaking, the narratives show that one cannot examine women's gender roles in isolation from their own life choices. Participants stated that their education and educational choices were constantly swayed by the uncertainty and insecurity endemic to the OPT. Some stated that the fact that they had achieved very high grades did not induce them to plan for further study, and nor did their grades encourage their family members to support them in doing so. Others stated that even if they had wished to follow their original plans for future studies, notwithstanding the political violence enveloping them, Israel's ongoing attacks and the fear of violence had caused them to relinquish these plans. Some, however, refused to forgo their education and decided to challenge the external militarized violence— and in some cases internal patriarchal objections. However, many of those determined to continue the effort to fulfil their aspirations encountered economic, psychological, political, or social hardships that ultimately settled their final decisions. Some young women stated that, despite their initial willingness to tackle the daily hardships, the constant threats, hazards, and fears and the fact that they missed many classes, the loss of friends, and the economic burdens they placed on their families finally eroded their determination and caused them to change their minds.

Yet others decided to fight to acquire an education with all available means, including resorting to making threats of suicide or refusing to eat for a number of days in response to attempts by family members to prevent them from continuing their education. Some women fought internal figures of patriarchal power who invoked justifications such as purported issues of "women's safety" and women's sexualized "vulnerability". The women reported instances of cousins or other male

family members who used their power as males to intervene in their lives and in the lives and education of other women on the grounds of safeguarding them from potential external abuses. Young women resisted such interference, for example, by arguing their case and urging other male family members to support them.

Some of the women who continued their studies described months of arguing with soldiers at the checkpoints, or the discovery of new routes to enable them to reach school on time, some of which were dangerous. Some slept away from their homes during exam periods to avoid missing examinations, and even related how they had illegally used relatives' military permits to pass through checkpoints to reach their universities (Palestinians require special military permits in order to cross certain barriers and checkpoints, and generally to remain mobile). Respondents described being subjected to intense, sustained psychological attack from Israeli soldiers, who use public humiliation as a weapon against Palestinian women in general. The humiliation of women in turn has the effect of mobilizing patriarchal entities within Palestinian society to exercise their power, thereby compounding the difficulties faced by women in obtaining an education. Those women who reacted by defying the humiliation sometimes suffered from a diminished ability to concentrate on their studies to the point that they decided either to change their subjects, drop out, or accept other undesirable options in order to survive, or as 19-year-old Majd put it, "to breathe".

Israeli military attacks against Palestinians, their spaces, places, including their schools, and their homes and loved ones, have had a profound effect on younger women. Nora, a 15-year-old girl from Rafah, Gaza, voiced her dismay at the demolition of her school:

> When they demolished my school, I felt that I lost my own home. Maybe the world can't understand, but for Palestinian girls like me the school is all we have. Girls in the world can go places, visit each other, find the books they want to read, organize field trips with their school and teachers, but Palestinian children have nothing. We, the Palestinian girls, feel that our schools are the only place we can meet friends, share books, meet, talk, play, sing, write, love. and now they demolished my school.

Her friend Naemeh spoke while wiping away tears, clearly distraught:

> When I pass by our school (or what used to be our school) and see all the rubble, I feel so upset, depressed and angry. On Tuesday, I went there with my friend and we both sat on the rubble and started crying. I told my friend that I feel that nothing is left for me in this world. if our schools are demolished how will we girls survive? How?

Hidaya, who was listening on tearfully, said:

> The problem is that first my house was demolished and we all moved to live in the school. Then the school was demolished, and I do not know where we should move to and when. Why can't my house be my house, my school be my school, and I live a normal life with an undemolished house and undemolished school?

Feminist theorizing on the gendered nature of educational spaces lays stress on the importance of the intersection of schooling, home, and the community environment (Arnot, 2002). The quotations cited above from Palestinian students contribute to such theorization and reveal that the homes, community, and schools of Palestinian girls are simultaneously sites of empowerment, resistance, and victimization. They are all moulded by political violence, cultural repression, psychological trauma, and economic stagnation, and intersect to shape the gendered nature of education under siege.

To conclude this section, I argue that education can serve as one of the most critical sites for repression and empowerment. Furthermore, the narratives revealed in the aforementioned study suggest that the daily terror facing young Palestinian women on their way to school, the systematic denial of school permits, and other acts that impede their right to obtain an education, necessitates a closer examination of how the gendered nature of education under siege is deeply rooted in the history of dispossession, displacement, and the *Nakba* ,

The politics of fear and the attack on the Palestinian "homeplace"

> The harshest part of losing my home was facing the children's faces, questions, worries, and sense of loss. The children arrived back from school when the entire home was demolished and the soldiers, the police, and the bulldozers were all still here. They were traumatized. The children couldn't look down at the ruins and they cried, screamed, and were wailing, wailing. It was hard and even the soldiers and the policemen were crying following this scene. I was standing in the middle of the rubbles empty handed, lost for words, and feeling such pain, such emptiness—totally drained with no voice and no answers. This is Hukm Il Awwi al Daiif (translated into the authority of the powerful over the weak and powerless).
>
> *(May, 45 years old, from a village in Jerusalem)*

After they demolished my house, I felt as if someone died in the family. People

used to come visit us in my parent's house and pay their condolences, but nothing and no one made me regain the sense of life. The smell of my house's ruins was like the odor of death. A smell that never left me—a smell of loss, of pain, of displacement. It is true that my parent's home is my home, but I feel displaced in my home.

(Nora, 33 years old from Jerusalem)

These two voices represent a minute sample of the voices of Palestinian women who are living with the consequences of Israel's home demolition policy, a policy that has made these women homeless even at home, or as Nora puts it, "displaced" in her home. Women like Nora and May experience the trauma not simply of losing their homes, but also their sense of safety, security, and belonging.

The voices shared in this section are based on a study that I conducted into the impact of house demolitions on women, and that demonstrated the limits of international humanitarian law in preventing such violations of rights. To gain a deep understanding of the toll that house demolitions take on women, a series of one-on-one and group interviews were held with Palestinian women living in the OPT. In addition to the interviews, qualitative observations were made through group discussions and site visits accompanied by the women to the locations of their former domiciles, in order to determine the significance of the home for the Palestinian women I worked with (see also Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005, 2007, 2009).

The data collected in the study clearly reveal the significance of the home to women in the context of militaristic oppression, and the far-reaching psychological, emotional, and physical harm inflicted by the policy of house demolitions. The women interviewed frequently expressed fear for their own bodily safety; many of them reported that they slept fully dressed, fearing abuse or harassment if the bulldozers arrived to demolish the house. As Manar recounted:

> For the past three years, after washing myself at night, I have gone to bed with all of my clothes on. I am afraid even to wear pajamas to sleep because one never knows what might happen… just ask what happened to Hoda when they demolished their house and you'll understand why we sleep with all of our clothes on.

Hoda describes the demolition of her house as follows:

> When they demolished the house, I was still in my training suit… I only realized that when I saw the pictures in the newspaper… I was without my veil, and only in my training suit! I will never forgive them for violating my privacy and my right to safety in my own house. Because of that, even today, I refuse to

take off my veil and my dishdasheh [long dress] when I'm at home in my rented place. Since the demolition last year, I do not know what sleeping means. I feel that they even deprived me from the right to sleep and to sleep safely.

Nawal and Salma tell similar stories of loss and fear. In Nawal's words:

> We lost everything—every sense of safety. We can't get water without a struggle, we can't meet our parents without a struggle, we can't sleep, and we can't scream or cry out. And even if we do, no one listens. Even though both my husband and I are Jersusalemites, our children are not, and they do not have I.D. cards and no numbers. They are all under constant threat. We have lost all sense of safety and security. Sometimes, I feel that being a dog or a cat is safer than being a Palestinian.

According to Salma:

> Safety is our main problem. Our children are facing sexual harassment on their way to school each and every day. Three months ago, someone attempted to kidnap my 6-year-old daughter, and I had no one to ask for help. They refuse to safeguard the streets and there is no public transportation. Thus, we end up walking in insecure areas and our children end up walking to school on insecure roads.

Hoda added:

> I was fondled twice by three young men. I know they have no work, and they can't find a job… but why can't the world see what occupation did to us… and to the younger generation? Occupation has caused us to hurt, steal, abuse, kidnap, rape, kill and more. Our bodies are no longer safe, not even in our own homes. There is no police and no security system, which is intended to scare us and make us surrender and leave for other areas. This is exactly what happened with my sister who ended up leaving Silwan for a safer place in the West Bank beside Qalqilia because she couldn't take it any more. I have even lost my sister's support and help.

The effect of the Israeli "politics of fear", as translated in the attack on the Palestinian home, body, and life, has been to take women back to their history of displacement, to the lack of safety in their homes and their homeland. It has made clear to them the interconnected nature of home, the family, and the homeland, and cloaked them in uncertainty. As 58-year-old Samar stated:

My home was the family home; it was the place that we gathered the entire family members on Fridays, the place that most of our relatives came to ask for help when they were in trouble…it was a place that we gathered in happy and sad moments…during weddings, during birth, when we lost someone, when someone was released from prison,.it was the place I felt happy…in control, loved, appreciated, respected…a place to talk, cry, share, meet, relax, fight. I was so proud of my home, so strong and energetic…Now…it looks like a burrier…they buried all our energies and solidarity…now…we are divided and very lost…

Within the colonized context of Palestine, the home is one of the few spaces where women can find solace from the constraints and demands of a domineering government. Often a woman's only place of refuge, the home is a place for personal growth and community-building. As such, the home is an oppositional site within a military-state patriarchy and a place where Palestinian women can find safety away from the "dual spheres of racism and sexism". In her essay *Homeplace,* Bell Hooks (1990) traces the importance of the home as a site of resistance for African-Americans over the long history of oppression in a white society. She observes:

Throughout our history, African-Americans have recognized the subversive value of homeplace, of having access to private space where we do not directly encounter white racist aggression. Whatever the shape and direction of black liberation struggle. domestic space has been a crucial site for organizing, for forming political solidarity.

Homeplace has been a site of resistance. Its structure was defined less by whether or not black women and men were conforming to sexist behavior norms and more by our struggle to uplift ourselves as a people, our struggle to resist racist domination and oppression.

(Hooks, 1990: 47)

According to Hooks (ibid.), "homeplace" was less about black women serving their community and more about creating a safe space in which they could affirm and nurture one another as they grew and developed within the home as a "community of resistance" (1990: 42). It is within this context that for Palestinian women the home becomes not just a site of personal growth, but a space of political resistance and in which to confront the dehumanizing forces of racist and sexist oppression and make demands for historical justice, and, as the above narratives reveal, a source of empowerment. Palestinian women's conception of home is to be distinguished from conventional feminist theories of the home that have traditionally conceived of homeplace as a site of oppression, subordination, and the abuse of women (MacKinnon, 1991; MacKinnon, 2000; Schneider, 2002). By contrast, Palestinian

women view the home as a site for the cultivation of personhood within a wider context that is hostile to the affirmation of their Palestinian identity.

As the women's voices revealed, racism and sexism delegated the domestic sphere of the Palestinian home to women, and turned the home into a space for nurturing, caring, and empowerment. Palestinian women's actions and activism allowed them to turn their homes into pieces of homeland, safe spaces in which to confront both everyday and historical processes of dehumanization and objectification. While the "home as homeland" was also one of the sites in which masculinity and patriarchy were reconstructed, for women it also constituted the main site of resistance, empowerment, the preservation of dignity, and cultivation of identity and love (see Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2005). In our context, the preservation of the demolished and actual home holds great importance for women, since the "home as homeland" plays a significant role in community-building and the preservation of the gendered self and national belonging—alongside providing a space for patriarchal power games— within the oppressive and violent environment of occupation.

Conclusion

By invoking the voices of Palestinian women, this chapter has demonstrated how the ideologies of Orientalism, Colonialism, and Zionism have constructed the Palestinians as a people to be feared. Moreover, the construction of fear of the Palestinian has in turn allowed the ahistoricization of the Palestinian Other's narratives of the *Nakba*. The chapter has further clarified that any attempt to understand gender relations and women's status in Palestinian society today must explore the discursive location of women, given that women's lives and status are not ahistorical or apolitical, and nor are women merely victims, universal dependents, or passive objects in the process of political change.

Sharing the voices and ordeals of Palestinian women who are faced with violations of their right to education or to a home, aimed to foreground the way in which the politics of fear, be it based on Orientalist, Colonialist, or Zionist ideology, has obscured their historical demands, decontextualized their gender roles, and apoliticized their political struggle against race, class, gender, and colonial ideologies. The purpose of giving voice to the personal narratives of Palestinian women was to emphasize their shared history (whether denied or recognized) and other agency, as opposed to their common status as objects.

The problematic of looking at Palestinian women in an Orientalist and universalizing manner denies them the right to claim a Her-story, and to put forth an analysis that underlines the colonizer's use of fear, an analysis that is devoid of context, structural analysis, or any politics of representation. Juxtaposing the politics

of fear with women's lives in Palestine has clearly shown that Palestinian women have needs and problems, but also that their Her-stories, choices, and freedom to act are deeply constrained by commodifying generalizations and ideologies of fear and Otherization. As the voices of Palestinian women victims of home demolitions reveal, for example, the house represents humanity at its deepest core, and the colonial violation of this space, I argue, should never be divorced from the process of historicizing the inhumanity of the attack. Invoking the violation and demolition of the Palestinian home and/or homeland as another site of historicity is central to bringing the Palestinian Her-story to the fore.

Sharing Palestinian women's voices and Her-stories has also aimed to challenge Western perceptions that culturalize and depoliticize analysis of Arab/Palestinian women, along with many other groups of minority women, women from the South, and women of colour. Razack's analysis of the portrayal of the "Other" woman by Western feminists—and, I would add, by Israeli colonial settler projects and occupation forces—as burdened by culture and impeded by their community from participating in modernity ensures that the Otherized woman remains "squarely within the framework of patriarchy understood as abstracted from all other systems" (Razack, 2007: 3). Razack's insightful writings and theorization also bring to light the way in which women's bodies are made present to mark the backwardness of society. The voices and ordeals of women living under military occupation have been presented in the hope of revealing the intersection between race and gender. The chapter has shown how present conditions are closely tied to the past, and how the disruption of everyday life—be it through preventing women from reaching their educational institutions, depriving them of their sense of safety at home, or other means—can never be stripped of the surrounding context of colonization and occupation.

Furthermore, I have argued that the disruption of the everyday lives of the Palestinian woman, man, and family became a primary tool in the hands of the colonizer, not only in perpetuating colonial domination and empowering the industry of fear, but also in reproducing patriarchy and reconstructing gender relations. Consequently, analyzing the ways in which the systematic unleashing of the industry of fear and organized violence by Israel, reveals how Palestinian women's bodies, education, sexuality, and life are literally placed under siege. This siege "racializes" Palestinians endlessly in a spiral manner by constructing them as people to be "feared". Thus, the industry of fear—that is, colonial mechanisms of racialization—sustains modes of racism that ultimately subordinate the right to demand historical justice to "fear" and "security considerations". Such racialized ideology has been instrumental in the transformation of Palestinian women into an essentialist, totalizing category of "terrorist", "suicide bombers", "mothers of martyrs", and "backward" Others, a category that is unified and static, and one that is to be feared.

In order to challenge the construction of a unified perception of Palestinians in general, and Palestinian women in particular, we must reject an essentialist approach to understanding gender roles, and to positioning gender relations beyond the boundaries of power and knowledge. Historicizing and politicizing the Palestinian context, for instance by listening to the voices of women deprived of education or harmed by house demolitions and other oppressive spatial politics, produces multiple positions and constructions of gender roles and the status of women that challenge the ideology behind the politics of fear. As my book *Militarization and Violence against Women in Conflict Zones* suggests, women from different backgrounds, despite the various hardships and obstacles they face, have been keenly attentive to each and every opportunity, however small, that presented the possibility of a new strategy of combating oppression. In exploiting these opportunities, they have rewritten their Her-stories and transcended boundaries, overcoming local, regional, and international socio-political and economic obstacles to do so.

We cannot proceed as scholars unless we examine not only the workings of power, but also our own complicity in the failure to question our understanding beyond the justifications of "fear" and "security". Hence, there is a need to urge scholars to listen carefully to the daily experiences of those living in the shadow of violent conflicts to capture the effects of military occupation, and understand the way in which its historicity is raced, classed, and gendered. Only then can we begin to interrogate the prevailing politics of fear and break down the system of colonial racism it sustains.

Notes

[1] Invoking gender as a significant historical consideration in understanding the relations between the colonizer and the colonized—as reflected in the politics of fear—by no means presupposes that experiences of colonial practices were common to all women and men. I use gender as an analytical tool in the hope of signifying the multiple contested and contradictory meanings that are attached to sexual difference. I further hope to show how these multiplicities shape and influence the way men and women live their daily lives, and the way they perceive the world around them. For more details, see Levine (2007) and Sayigh (1981).

[2] These moves were part of the process designated by Ilan Pappé and others as "the ethnic cleansing of Palestine". Pappé investigates the fate suffered by the indigenous population of Palestine in the 1940s at the hands of the Zionist political and military leadership. He offers a detailed account of the events of 1947–1948 that eventually spawned the largest and most intractable refugee problem in modern history. Pappé argues persuasively that the consequent dispossession of a million native Palestinians of their homeland and the continued denial of their right of return constitute a violation of internationally recognized human rights. He then links these events to contemporary Middle Eastern politics and the prospects for an enduring peace in the country, and consequently the region (2007).