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## The Violence of Representation: The (Un) Narration of Palestine in Public Discursive Space in Canada

Peige Desjarlais, *The University of Western Ontario*

Supervisor: Dr. Randa Farah, *The University of Western Ontario*

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts degree in Anthropology

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THE VIOLENCE OF REPRESENTATION: THE (UN) NARRATION OF PALESTINE  
IN PUBLIC DISCURSIVE SPACE IN CANADA

Monograph

by

Peige Desjarlais

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies  
The University of Western Ontario  
London, Ontario, Canada

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## Abstract

The thesis examines representations of Palestine and Palestinians in Canada by drawing on the historical literature, statements from Canadian officials, media items, and through interviews conducted with Palestinian exiles in London and Toronto. Based on this research, I argue that the colonization of Palestine went, and still goes, hand in hand with a particular narrative construction in North America. I propose that the pervasiveness of Zionist discourse in Canada is sustained by drawing on three main ideas or sources: a long colonial and Orientalist tradition (which sees Arabs and Muslims as the uncivilized and inferior others of Europeans), the instrumentalization of particular Biblical stories, and a narrative of eternal Jewish and Israeli victimhood. These powerful and pervasive narratives have displayed remarkable historical continuity, as they are reproduced in ways which appeal to Canadian national mythologies at given historical moments.

**Keywords:** Palestine-Israel, Palestinians in Canada, discourse, representation, narrative, Orientalism, colonialism, Zionism, nationalism, history

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## Chapter 1

### 1 Introduction: Displacing Bodies, Erasing Narratives

In a 1984 poetry anthology entitled “Victims of a Map” world-renowned Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish asked:

... Where should we go after the last frontiers?  
 Where should the birds fly after the last sky?  
 Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air? (Darwish 1984, 13)

Darwish, the most well-known and beloved national poet of the Palestinians, was born in 1941 in Birweh, a Palestinian village which was destroyed and depopulated in 1948, the year Israel was established. Until 1970 he wrote poetry from within his homeland, where he was often imprisoned and placed under house arrest by the Israeli authorities. His poetry expresses and asserts Palestinian rootedness in their historical land, their suffering, resistance, and their longing to return. The verses above express in poetic form the Palestinian experience of exile, and of multiple and ongoing violent evictions. The first exile is the Nakba (or catastrophe), the expulsion of 750- 900,000 Palestinians in 1948 (Takkenberg 1998, 13) to make way for the creation of a Jewish state on 78% of historic Palestine (Masalha 2008, 124).

The creation of this state was the objective of a late 19<sup>th</sup> century European-based political movement called Zionism, which presented itself as concurrently a refuge from anti-Semitism and as “a bulwark of civilization against barbarism” in the Middle East (in Masalha 2012, 34-7). This “civilizing” discourse was viewed favorably by imperial Britain which ruled in Palestine under the colonial Mandate System from 1917 to 1947 (Jones 1979). When the state of Israel was created in 1948, the landscape was radically transformed with over 500 Palestinian villages razed to the ground, and the expelled Indigenous Arab population barred from ever returning (Qumsiyeh 2004). It was a traumatic rupture of all the worlds – economic, social, political, cultural and familial - that Palestinians had formerly lived in (Sa’di and Abu-Lughod 2007). Some 400,000 Palestinians were expelled from the West Bank and Gaza when Israel occupied the

remainder of historic Palestine in 1967, approximately half of them for the second time in less than two decades (Masalha 2012). The number of ongoing displacements since 1948 are too many to list and no redress has ever come for the refugees who still live in exile, mostly in neighboring Arab countries, or for those displaced within what had been known as the (British) Mandate of Palestine prior to 1948. This continuity of trauma prompts Palestinians scholars to insist that the Nakba is not a past event but a “history of the present” or a “wound that won’t heal” (Sa’di ad Abu-Lughod 2007, 18; Masalha 2012, 12; Al-Hardan 2014).

However, the Palestinian Nakba is poorly known outside of the Middle East, where it has never been officially or publicly acknowledged. In a manner of speaking, it is not just Palestinian bodies that have suffered ongoing displacement but their narratives of national belonging, displacement and exile, as well. Important works on Palestinian history/memory by scholars such as Edward Said (1979, 1986, 1995), Lila Abu-Lughod and Ahmad Sa’di (2007), Ted Swedenburg (1991), and Nur Masalha (1991, 2001, 2008, 2009, 2012) have explored how Palestinians make their narratives heard in a context where their landscape, place names, archives, and material culture have been systematically destroyed or appropriated and where a powerful state controls the means of historical production. They point out that in a context where Palestinian narratives are threatened with erasure; memory and its transmission become urgent. This urgency is also felt outside of Palestine, where Palestinians living in exile, especially in North America, find that their dispossession, occupation, and expulsion is reduced in dichotomous popular representations of the conflict between Israel and Palestine to “a battle of civilization against terror, of democracy against hatred, of the West against Islam” (Mitchell, Prakash and Shohat 2003, 1). As Mitchell, Prakash and Shohat (2003) and Said (1978) point out, the dispossession of the Palestinians has always been a transnational process involving the active support of European, and later North American governments.

Historically, the Canadian government, as well as Canadian non-governmental organizations and institutions, have contributed to, and supported the Zionist project (Azrieli 2008; Engler 2010), whose history and discourse in some ways dovetails with

that of Canada, which is itself a settler state established through colonial expansion and displacement of Indigenous people. Given the continuity of this support, it is no wonder that a Palestinian man I met in the northern Galilee advised that instead of doing research on Palestinian citizens of -Israel in the Galilee, as I had originally intended, I would be better suited to find out why so many people in Canada “take Israel’s side.” Upon reflection I realized that he was right, that there is in fact a vast disconnect between the lived experiences of the Palestinians I met during my six month stay in the West Bank (as well as my own experiences during that time), and the dominant images and historical narratives of Palestine circulating in Canada – highlighting the need for an understanding of the development, impact and contestation of these images. Thus, I have chosen to focus on how the Palestinian narrative circulates in Canada, with specific attention to issues of power, narrative authority (how it is established and maintained), and access to public space. My research is therefore aimed at asking the following questions: *how, where, and by whom, are ideas of Palestine-Israel reproduced and circulated in Canadian public discourse? What obstacles do Palestinians face in narrating their stories? And how do Palestinians make these narratives legible to the Canadian public?*

## 1.1 Justification and objectives

I intend to build on a body of literature that deals with issues of historical production, memory, and power in colonial and post-colonial contexts. Anthropological literature has explored the preservation of Palestinian memory/history among refugees in the West Bank, Gaza and neighboring Arab countries (Ted Swedenburg 1991; Rosemary Sayigh 2007; Randa Farah 2004, 2006, 2009a, 2009b) in the context of Israeli silencing and the official national histories of the Palestinian leadership (Swedenburg 1995, Farah 2007; Masalha 2012). One notable example is an edited volume entitled “Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and Claims of Memory” (Sa’adi and Abu-Lughod 2007), where contributors explore how Palestinians experience and remember the traumas of a past that has never passed, but which continues in the present in the form of displacement, oppression and occupation. Palestinian narratives, history and memory are largely absent from public discourse in the Canadian context despite the almost daily reporting on the Middle East "conflict"

In light of the above, it is important to ask how Palestine is imagined in Canada, what ideas about the place and its inhabitants dominate the public sphere? As Edward Said (1979) has pointed out, the West developed the “*idea of Palestine*” (my emphasis) in large part outside of Palestine itself. In Europe and North America, ideas about the nature of “the Orient” (everything east of an imaginary line drawn somewhere west of Turkey) were inseparable from the strategic interests and military interventions of western countries in the region, and have largely shaped the way Palestine came to be imaged in the west. These images - combined with what Ted Swedenburg (1995) refers to as the “narrative absence” of Palestinians in the West - play an important role in determining the framework in which Palestine and Palestinians are understood and imaged.

In the last decades there has been a growing academic literature examining the public and media discourse about Palestine/Israel, mostly focused on the United States, particularly the American-Israeli political, military, and economic alliance (Berrigan 2009), media bias (Chomsky 1983), and the influence of the Israeli lobby on Capitol Hill (Mearsheimer and Walt 2008). Scholars examining the strong identification with Israel among the American public (Mead 2008) have identified perceptions of a common biblical heritage (Christison 1999), and Israel as a “western-style democracy” (Christison 1999; Pintack 2006; Ibrahim 2009) with similar “pioneer beginnings” (Christison 1999) as decisive factors. Edward Said’s extensive works (1978; 1979; 1981; 1995) have provided an integrated analysis of these and other factors that contribute to an American identification with Israel.

Academic literature focusing on the Canadian context, however, is fairly scarce. This literature has examined the role of Canadian volunteers in Zionist militias during the 1948 war (Bercuson 1983), the role of members of the Canadian government in the partition of Palestine at the United Nations (Bercuson 1986), and the historical relationship between Canada and Palestine-Israel through the lens of policy-making in Ottawa (Taras and Goldberg 1989). More recent literature has examined the relationship between Palestine-Israel and Canada using Mills concept of an “international racial contract” (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008), problematized Israel’s liberal representation in Canada (Freeman-Maloy 2011), provided a detailed historical examination of the

Canada-Israel relationship (Engler 2010), and addressed the role of accusations of anti-Semitism in public debate (Keefer 2010). With the notable exception of Said (1999), and Christison (2001), who focus on the American context, virtually none of this literature has examined the “idea of Palestine in the West” from the perspective of exiled Palestinians themselves, a perspective which this thesis will integrate into its themes and analysis.

## 1.2 Thesis statement and methodology

My research examines the narratives about Palestine and the Palestinians in Canada by drawing on the historical literature, statements from Canadian officials, events related to the Palestinian issue, media items, and through interviews conducted with Palestinian exiles in London and Toronto. Based on this research, I argue that the colonization of Palestine went, and still goes, hand in hand with a particular narrative construction in imperial Europe, and North America. Zionism positioned itself simultaneously as part of a larger European civilizing/colonizing project involving British settler states like Canada, and as a liberal project of emancipation in which a “nation” was “re-born” in an act of restitution for the horrors of Nazi genocide. This narrative construction adapted to the particularities of Canadian colonial nationalism, and has become highly institutionalized in the public sphere. As a result, when Palestinians attempt to make their stories public in Canada they must contend with this dominant and pervasive discourse. I propose that the pervasiveness of Zionist discourse is sustained by drawing on three main ideas or sources: a long colonial and Orientalist tradition (which sees Arabs and Muslims as the uncivilized and inferior others of Europeans), the instrumentalization of particular Biblical stories, and a narrative of eternal Jewish and Israeli victimhood. These powerful and pervasive narratives have displayed remarkable historical continuity, as they are reproduced in ways which appeal to Canadian national mythologies at given historical moments. As a result, and notwithstanding a recent, though still minor, shift in awareness about Palestine, Palestinian histories and experiences survive mostly at the margins and the interstices of society.

What does this struggle to be heard in public space mean for Palestinians and what does it tell us about Canadian state ideology? Said (1986, 61) describes the obstacles

Palestinians encounter telling their stories as “a cluttered wall” which is crowded with the “traces and claims of other people” and forces Palestinians to “work within an already dense and worked over space.” The idea of Palestine in Canada is much like this, so crowded with biblical claims and narratives about the civilization of the backward Orient that there is little room left for Palestinian histories and experiences, which directly contradict these highly institutionalized narratives and cannot be assimilated into such an interpretive framework. In this context it is not surprising that many Palestinians I interviewed felt they had to defend themselves against largely internalized ideas about them, having to establish their right to narrate before even beginning to talk about their experiences. My intent is to critique the larger discursive framework here in Canada within which Palestinians often face immense difficulties when publicly voicing their histories and asserting their presence as a national group.

This research is based on several different sources. Fieldwork involved 23 interviews in London and Toronto in the summer of 2014 with Palestinian-Canadian exiles, and several non-Palestinians, who are involved in efforts to make public the Palestinian ongoing Nakba (catastrophe). Participants were located using both my own contacts formed through years of activism within the Palestinian community, as well as through various events concerning the Palestinian issue. Though these interviews were conducted in two cities in southern Ontario, the mainstream public representations that Palestinians in Canada encounter enjoy national, and often even wider, circulation. The interviews focused on the experience of narrating Palestine in Canada, drawing on Abu-Lughod and Sa'di's (2007) work by paying particular attention to what is made public, in what spaces, under what conditions, and with what form of receptivity by those listening. The interviewees range in age from eighteen to ninety-two and were roughly split between males and females. Some of the interviewees were related, including an 80 year old man, his daughter, and grandson who were interviewed together. Both this particular interview and the interviews more generally offer insight into generational differences within Palestinians living in exile in Canada. I also attended/volunteered at/participated in many events (like film screenings, demonstrations, workshops, cultural days and commemorations, etc) which revealed not only how Palestinians represent themselves but

how their representations are received in the public sphere. I also draw on my experience volunteering for six months in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in 2011/2012. In addition to fieldwork, I draw on historical and archival texts, as well as news media items about Palestine-Israel, parliamentary speeches, and controversies over narratives of Palestine-Israel in public space. This thesis is about representations; both the way Palestine and Palestinians are represented in Canada, and what Palestinian-Canadians think of these representations. Drawing on Farah's (2009b) warning that we should not treat Palestinians as simply "archive[s] of memory" but also as actors and subjects, my thesis seeks to, as Farah urges, pay attention to what Palestinians think, and not just what they remember – how they explain, circumvent, and refute representations of themselves over which they have little control.

### 1.3 Theoretical framework

The relationship between knowledge and power, particularly the production of historical narratives in colonial contexts, is central to my main argument about the hegemony of the Israeli narrative, and the consequent marginalization of Palestinian voices in the Canadian public sphere. I draw mostly from post-colonial scholars, particularly those who write about colonial forms of knowledge, like Albert Memmi (1965), Bernard Cohn (1996), Edward Said (1978, 1993), Taiiike Alfred (2009) and Bonita Lawrence (2011). These scholars stress that colonial states exercise power not only through physical violence and the control of territory, but also through controlling the production and dissemination of knowledge, including the historical narrative. It is my contention that narratives of Palestine in Canada are enmeshed at the intersection of two settler national projects, Zionist and Canadian. The experiences of the Palestinian-Canadians I interviewed must therefore be contextualized within the specificity of settler national discourse and praxis in Palestine-Israel and Canada, where post-coloniality is, in the words of Indigenous scholar Marie Battiste (2000, xix) "a symbolic strategy for shaping a desirable future, not an existing reality."

This contextualization, both historically and within larger power structures, is important in order to substantiate the claim that the Zionist project, which operates both

in discourse and practice as a form of settler colonialism, should be analyzed as such. This contextualization also points to the importance of analyzing Palestine as a transnational issue (both historical and contemporary), involving several nation-states, diverse populations, multiple migrations/displacements between and within state borders, and the geopolitical designs of major imperial powers (Mitchel et al 2003). This kind of analysis locates Palestine-Israel within broader historical movements, projects and discourses; pointing to the way Zionism, like other colonial projects, aligns itself with the “universal forces” of science, progress, rationality and modernity (Dirks 1992, 7). It also highlights the way that colonial violence (and resistance to it) crosses national boundaries.

Some of the most important contributions to thinking about the relationship between knowledge and power come from Marxist intellectual Antonio Gramsci’s “Prison Notebooks”, which he wrote while imprisoned by the fascist regime in Italy from 1926 – 1934 (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci stressed the dialectical and mutually reinforcing relationship between the exercise of power at the “superstructural” levels, which he calls political and civil society, and the economic structure, or base. Gramsci argues that the power of the state is enacted both in political society, as direct domination administered by bodies like the judiciary and police, and through the mobilization of consent in civil society. In the realm of civil society the positive, civilizing activities of the state operate in parallel to the repressive and negative power enacted in political society in order to achieve hegemony. Hegemony, which is a process rather than a constant state, includes the sets of beliefs, morality, values and attitudes which are diffused throughout society through educational institutions, the church, the media, permeating everyday life in a way that supports the status quo and structures of power. Thus, the values and ideology of the ruling class are internalized by people of all classes so that they are seen as natural, fixed and as “common sense.” The implications of this process are that Subaltern groups (those excluded from state power) cannot achieve revolution or substantive change merely through an overthrow of the instruments of political domination, but must also radically restructure the hegemonic apparatuses of civil society (Gramsci 1971). Gramsci’s concepts pertaining to hegemony and the “subaltern” were influential in the development of post-colonial studies.



Another important theorist whose work addresses the relationship between knowledge and power is Michel Foucault, whose collective works (1963; 1966; 1969; 1975; 1984) problematized both the supremacy of the state, and consequently the separation of civil and political society into distinct, though interconnected, realms of thought and action. He proposes instead that power operates along a continuum between consensus and domination, and that power relations, and therefore analysis of them should necessarily extend beyond the state. Foucault's proposes that we "need to cut off the King's head" and end the obsession with the power of the sovereign, as modern power is not principally punitive, repressive and centralized, but instead dispersed, de-centered and productive. It does not emanate from a central source, but operates through individual bodies, which are its vehicles instead of its points of application. Foucault insists that power is exercised through institutions that are seemingly separate from political power (like psychiatry, the education system, and institutions and discourses of justice), but in reality work to reinforce and mask its application (Foucault 1980).

Foucault's claim that power is productive, that it "induces pleasures, forms knowledges, [and] produces discourses" (Foucault 1980, 119) provides an analytic frame for working through the mutually constitutive relationship between knowledge and power. Foucault sees the concepts as so indivisible, so mutually reinforcing, that he coined the term *pouvoir-savoir* (power-knowledge) to capture the way that power produces bodies of knowledge (or discourses) and constitutes them as truth, while these bodies of knowledge induce "regular effects of power." Discourse in the Foucauldian sense is defined as "frameworks that encompass particular combinations of narratives, concepts, ideologies and signifying practices, each relevant to a particular realm of social action," and which take part in the production of everyday life, the creation of subjects, and the construction of the taken-for-granted (Barnes and Duncan 1992,8). A "regime of truth" governs which types of knowledge, or ways of knowing, are sanctioned at a particular historical moment. Modern truth regimes privilege dominant scientific discourses, while what Foucault calls "subjugated knowledges" are disqualified, marginalized or excluded (Foucault 1980). His elaboration of the mechanisms of power, primarily the way knowledge acts as both its by-product and its method, had an important influence on scholars analyzing the modalities of imperial rule. Many post-colonial

scholars have engaged with his concepts in some way - whether employing them for their own analysis (for example Said 1979) or pointing to the implication of Western scholarship in imperial projects (Spivak 1987).

In *Orientalism*, often considered to be one of the foundational texts of post-colonial studies, Edward Said (1978) draws on both Foucault and Gramsci in his analyses of the historical constitution and internal consistency of Western modes of thought for interpreting and representing the “Orient.” He calls these modes of thought Orientalism, which he defines as “a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having ultimate authority over the Orient” which takes as its basis the fundamental distinction between the “Occident” (West) and the “Orient” (East) (Said 1978, 2-3). As his insistence on the interdependence of these three processes suggests, culture and ideas cannot be understood without also studying their “configurations of power” (Said 1978, 50). During the British, French, and later the American Empire this power meant political, military and economic domination in the Orient, which existed in a dynamic exchange with hegemonic cultural forms. Thus, knowledge of the Orient meant power over it, the power to define and represent it, and this knowledge was inevitably shaped by the fact that those who wrote about or studied the Orient were “aware of empire” – aware of the material interest of their country in the Orient. It was the privileged positions of these writers within European imperial structures which gave them the power and authority to speak about the Orient in the first place (Said 1978).

The dismantling of the political structures of colonial domination necessitated a similar deconstruction of the structures of colonial knowledge on which direct domination was dependent. The recognition that colonialism is at once a historical era and “a trope for domination and violation” (Dirks 1992, 5) led to scholarly interrogations of cultural legacies of colonialism which survived the end of direct European rule and settlement. Frantz Fanon, in both “the Wretched of the Earth” (1961) and “Black Skin, White Masks” (1952) analyzed the psycho-social effects of European colonial domination (which he himself had experienced as a native of Martinique), and the importance for the colonized of reclaiming a repressed identity and sense of selfhood in the process of decolonization. In a similar vein, Alfred Memmi (1967) described the way

that colonial processes work to create the categories of colonizer and colonized, roles which are assigned apriori and inherited at birth based on an individual's position within colonial power structures. The selfhood of the colonized is determined in large part by inherited ideas about himself or herself developed by the colonizer, resulting in a form of mental damage in which the colonized accepts the valorization of the history, culture, and language of the colonizer and the denigration of his own (Memmi 1967).

It is not just individual subjectivities which are dependent on and in large part determined by the "conquest of knowledge." As Nicolas Dirks (1992, 3) insists in the introduction to the edited book *Colonialism and Culture*, this commingling of coercion and hegemony is central to the very nature of colonial rule. He describes colonialism as "a cultural project of domination" in which colonial knowledge both "enabled colonial rule and was produced by it." He assures readers that this focus on the cultural domain of colonialism does not efface the violence of colonial domination, but brings "expanded domains of violence" in to the purview of academic critique and struggles for decolonization (1992, 4). This expansion of the domain of violence was made possible, and masked by, the European preoccupation with the universal ideals of discovery, reason, science, progress and rationality. In this "age of discovery" colonies became the "grand laboratories" which both necessitated and facilitated the application of the new sciences of categorizing land and bodies. Power was enacted through new technologies of classification like cartography (for marking boundaries, routes, and imposed place names), botany, geography, and anthropology – the latter for marking bodies, "cultures," and separating the civilized from the "savages" in need of European intervention (Dirks 1992, 6).

Bernard Cohn (1996) called these new forms of domination "modalities" of colonial rule in which conquered lands and bodies were transformed into usable forms and put into the service of colonial rulers. In this way the "conquering of epistemological space" was an inseparable part of the conquest of territory (Cohn 1996, 4). Cohn describes the modalities of British rule in India as historiographic (in which Britain constructed an essentialized Indian civilization and a history of the colonists themselves), observational or travel (which identified sites for colonial and tourist consumption),

survey (which included mapping, archaeology, and botanical collection), enumerative (census-taking and lists of products, customs, prices, measurements, etc), museological, and surveillance - the latter in which native groups were classified by their “nature”, ‘temperament’, and level of compliance to colonial rule. Modalities of rule which involved the classification of human groups were predicated on the development of scientific racism, or social Darwinism, in Europe. The marking off of certain groups as fundamentally and inherently different based on essentialized fusing of race, geography, language and culture (Dirks 1992, 3), was central to both the development of the “imagined community” of the nation (Anderson 1991) and European colonial expansion, which often acted in concert with each other.

The nation and its political expression, the nation-state, are modern historical constructs (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawm 1990, 1996) which are produced not only through the physical marking of boundaries in acts of war and conquest, but also, importantly, through a number of myths, symbols, and other acts of nationhood that marked the boundaries between inclusion and exclusion. The technologies of nation-making include the creation of a national culture, the invention of national traditions (Hobsbawm 1996), the development of a shared history, and a myth of origin which establishes the nation as a unified subject of history (Coakley 2004). In Western Europe, according to Anderson (1991), the rise of print capitalism and the invention of a monoglot press was a way to cultivate a sense of shared community and people-hood that established the boundaries and scope of the nation-state. On the other hand, the romantic nationalism of central and eastern Europe, (associated with German nationalist Johann Gottfried Herder) was centered on the ideas of blood and soil, historical roots, biology, and racial purity (Masalha 2012, 20). The encounters with the “natives” of the newly “discovered” territories of the Americas, Africa, and Asia provided the quintessential Other, the radical alterity against which the national self could be defined and brought into being. This Otherness was a product of the classification of the world’s population into a hierarchy of “races” imbued with innate characteristics.

Colonial domination was not only presented as a natural and inevitable sorting of these “races” but as a process carried out on behalf of the colonized, the White Man’s

burden as the custodian of the values of civilization and progress (Memmi 1967, 75). The categories of a rational, enlightened European self and a variety of 'savage' others, the very categories of metropole and colony, were developed in a dialectical process which "created Europe and its others through histories of conquest and rule" (Dirks 1992, 3). As Memmi (1967) points out, this process was fraught with contradictions, and inconsistencies, as those who possessed victory over conquered territories tried to absolve themselves of the means by which those territories became European colonies.

Memmi (1967: 52) describes the length the colonizer would go to in order to secure his position: "he would endeavour to falsify history, he rewrites laws; he would extinguish memories – anything to succeed in transforming his usurpation into legitimacy." This particular modality of rule, where control is exercised over the production and dissemination of the historical narrative, is particularly important in settler-nations (like Israel, Canada, Australia and the United States), where the production of the nation and colonial expansion are conflated into one project of domination. When the Natives cannot be obliterated physically, they must be written out of time and history, and defined only by a series of negations in which they are seen to exist only in relation to what they are not – not Christian, not European, not subjects of history (Memmi 1967), and therefore undeserving of nationhood. The erasure of the past is a complement to the obliteration of the traces of this history on the landscape, achieved through radical restructurings of the physical terrain, the re-organization of space, and the imposition of foreign place names.

Colonial powers also retain control over state apparatuses and institutions vital to the production of official histories; histories enshrined in monuments, history textbooks, and archives, and which achieve a hegemonic status that marginalize alternative histories and alternative ways of relating to and presenting the past. As Memmi (1967) points out, memory is subject to the same process of erasure, as the memory of a people is not inherently self-sustaining but also rests on the strength of institutions that were often decimated by the colonial process. It is not just the content of history, but certain ways of knowing and remembering that are marginalized. In his study of the oral tradition of tribal groups in India, Rudolph Heredia (2000) remarked that colonial powers used

writing as a measure to separate the “civilized” from the “savages”, discounting oral narrative and history altogether (1552). These negations are part of the “expanded domain of violence” (Dirks 1992, 4) which leaves no visible scars.

This thesis draws on theorists mentioned in the section above to show how Palestine’s history and landscape have been subject to a form of colonial erasure. Much like in the classical colonial discourse described above, Palestinians have been represented as politically and historically absent and therefore unworthy of territorial and national rights. Concurrently, both Palestine’s history and landscape have been reinscribed as exclusively Jewish.

## 1.4 Chapter summaries

The next chapter (Chapter Two) will apply this post-colonial theory to a historical examination of the intersection of Zionist and Canadian settler nationalism, rooted in a common grid for classifying and relating to racialized Others. Moreover, the chapter will examine the historical trajectory of representations of Palestine-Israel in Canada, and, drawing on interviews conducted with Palestinian-Canadians, it will outline the way these representations work to silence and exclude Palestinian voices. The third chapter argues that a narrative which assumes a fundamental difference between the Israeli-Canadian “us” (seen to embody “western” cultural and democratic values) and the Arab-Muslim-Palestinian “them” is rooted in a long colonial and Orientalist tradition in Canada. Drawing on the interviews I conducted, particularly the thoughts and experiences of 80 year old Nadir, his daughter Rana, and recent immigrant Hala, as well as media items, events, statements by political leaders, and critical race theorists, I will argue that these ideas work to racialize and marginalize Palestinians, and reproduce national narratives, both Zionist and Canadian. Needless to say, national narratives are always challenged; in Israel by the Israeli “New Historians” who challenge the national myth, and in Canada by Indigenous activists and by scholars who deconstruct the “pioneer” and “discovery” stories. By national narratives I mean those that are espoused by the state and by institutions closely linked to the state, and in formal educational institutions.

Chapter four addresses how the instrumentalization of Biblical stories of a Jewish homeland work to assert Jewish indigeneity and ownership of the land, both erasing Palestinian history, denying the legitimacy of Palestine as a mode of national identity, and associating Israel with Canada's proclaimed "Judeo-Christian heritage." In this chapter I focus mostly on a Palestinian Anglican priest named Rashid, his wife Nawal and their family, examining their thoughts about, and experiences of, speaking about Palestine in Christian communities in Europe and Canada. Drawing on both interviews conducted with Palestinian – Canadians and a number of conflicts over access to public space (in both the literal and figurative sense), Chapter 5 will explore how the strategic invocation of the history of Jewish suffering in Europe works to circumscribe the kind of speech which is allowed to circulate in the Canadian public sphere (Butler 2004) and negate Palestinian suffering, particularly the Nakba of 1948. I will argue that this discourse which conflates anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, is maintained by a silencing campaign (Nadeau and Sears 2010) that is particularly focused on university campuses. I will also argue, drawing on both Palestinian experiences and Butler's concept of "grievable lives" (2004), that this kind of speech aligns with the selective (and highly racialized) way that suffering and loss is publicly acknowledged and commemorated in Canada. Though separated for analytical clarity, these narratives are complementary and often overlap.

Throughout these chapters I will examine how these narratives have adapted over time to fit what Salaita (2006, 53) refers to as "the necessity of socialization, public relations, and domestic and foreign policy" aligning with popular discourses and projects at given historical moments. However, hegemonic discourses can never be fully imposed, and those with power over the means of historical and narrative production can never completely erase those nagging counter-narratives which continually call into question the status quo. In the process of the constant reproduction of certain hegemonic narratives, there are always gaps and silences, or as Kraucer (1995, 8) so eloquently puts it, "holes in the wall for us to evade, and the improbable to slip in." As the proceeding chapters will show, the improbable does slip into the public sphere, sometimes engaging with the dominant discourse, challenging some of its premises while leaving the underlying structure intact, while other times calling for a whole new discourse, a radical

restructuring of the way Palestinian-Israel is imaged, talked about, and written about in Canada.

## 1.5 Writing Palestine: Politically committed and morally engaged anthropology

It is important at this point for me to note my own positionality, which is deeply rooted in a commitment to what Scheper-Hughes (1995) refers to as a “politically committed and morally engaged anthropology.” One of the ways this commitment is manifested is in my use of terminology. Throughout this paper I use the term “Palestine-Israel” to refer to the geographic region between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River. Taking a cue from geographer Joanna Long (2007), I employ this term to recognize both the existence of overlapping geographies, and a refusal to reduce Palestine to the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) of the West Bank and Gaza, which would erase both the existence of historical Palestine and Palestinian longing (and right under international law) to return to places that are now located inside what is often referred to as “Israel proper.” The choice of which name goes first is, as Long (2011) insists, not a matter of being “for” or “against”, “pro” or “anti”, but is “to assert the historical and contemporary existence of Palestine as a place and as a mode of identity that is of equal validity to Israel” (262) – especially given the absence of even the word Palestine in most western discourses on the region.

Writing about Palestine in a way that is critical of Israeli policies often elicits charges of being subjective, biased or one-sided (Roy 2007). But as Roy (2007) points out in her response to these kinds of attempts to discredit her own work:

Every individual involved with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, to whatever extent, has a position. Any claim to neutrality, or, for that matter, objectivity, is in my experience nothing more than calculated indifference. In any case, the concern should not be with the position but with how it was formed, how it evolved, and on what it is based (58).

Roy argues that an insistence on some kind of utopian objectivity ignores the “criticizing function of the intellectual” - that “critical sense of inquiry” vital to the deconstructing prevailing orthodoxies and unsettling the taken-for-granted (2007, 56). She argues instead



for a commitment to accuracy, which in the face of greatly unequal power relations and “the broad moral and political dramas of life and death” (Scheper-Hughes 1995, 411) is the most intellectually honest course of action. Accuracy implies an active engagement with facts, narratives, evidence as well as questions of power, ethics and morality.

Roy (2007) insists on the specific importance of this kind of commitment to accuracy when writing scholarly work about Palestine-Israel, given the disproportionate power of the Israeli narrative in North America and the consequent way that “objectivity” can often become little more than an affirmation of the status quo. She argues that:

The disinterested pursuit of knowledge – that is objectivity – in writing about Palestinian-Israeli conflict aims, among other things to create balance or equity where none in fact exists. Consequently, not only does the process of inquiry become severed from the local realities it is called upon to examine, it has the effect of displacing sustained attention to those realities and their damaging impact, blinding us to what is taking place in front of our eyes. Instead, the “need” to be objective results in ideological warfare and political gamesmanship where the stronger party, Israel, pre-dominates (Roy 2007, 57).

This insistence is not just about accuracy, but about a kind of scholarly inquiry that is politically relevant and grounded in the very realities it seeks to examine.

Problematizing the idea of objectivity and positionality has a long history in Anthropology, especially since what is commonly labeled the “post-modern turn” in the 1970’s (Abu-Luhod 1991; Starn 1991; Scheper-Hughes 1995; Clifford and Marcus 1996; Borgois 2009) which offered an important challenge to the idea of objectivity grounded in anthropology’s early connection with the natural sciences. Orin Starn’s (1991) experiences of fieldwork in Peru during the era of U.S sponsored “anti-communist” violence, and Nancy Scheper-Hughes’ (1995) fieldwork in Brazil and in South African townships during the breakdown of apartheid, brought to the forefront issues of violence, power and ethics in anthropology. They both insist, though in different ways, that in the face of violence, abject poverty, and other forms of structural oppression, there is no neutral vantage point from which to conduct ethnographical research or write ethnography. As such, taking no position is taking a position; it is in itself a moral and ethical statement. Scheper-Hughes (1992; 1995) insists that moral relativism is neither

appropriate nor useful for the world we live in, and that consequently anthropology must be ethically grounded for it to have any value or relevance. She argues instead for what she calls a “politically committed and morally engaged anthropology” (1995) which takes into account anthropologists’ obligation to those they study and the implications of their work.

It is this same commitment which guides both my scholarly work and my participation in various grassroots activist and solidarity movements, including those movements which work towards achieving justice for Palestinians and Indigenous peoples in North America. Having lived for six months in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, including three months spent in al-Khalil (Hebron), a city which is experiencing a particularly brutal form of colonial violence, I have become acutely aware of the importance of engaging in anthropology which is ethically and politically committed. This participation grounds my analysis in the everyday realities of those I write about, forcing me to confront the possible implications of anthropological work on these same people, and to strive towards an approach that not only contributes to relevant academic debate, but is also relevant outside of the academy. It is my belief that this commitment to accuracy is strengthened, not weakened, by an anthropology that involves engaged participation - in fact it is within this context that accuracy takes on a crucial importance.

## Chapter 2

### 2 An Historical Examination of Zionism and the Palestinians in Canadian Discourse

Canada and Israel enjoy close diplomatic, economic, cultural, military, and intelligence ties – the CSIS works with its Israeli counterpart the Mossad, Canadian weapons manufacturers regularly do business with Israel, and the two countries have signed both a free trade agreement, and a research and development agreement (Engler 2010). Private charitable organizations send millions of dollars in tax-deductible donations to Israeli institutions that participate in the occupation of Palestinian territory – most notably the Jewish National Fund (Engler 2010). Canada’s voting record at the U.N. has increasingly placed it in a minority (with the United States) by voting against or abstaining on resolutions that criticize Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians or recognize Palestinian rights. This includes a 1968 abstention on a resolution condemning the acquisition of territory through military conquest, and a vote against the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) gaining observer status at the UN in 1974. Another notable decision was a 2004 abstention (under the previous Liberal government) on the International Court ruling that Israel’s wall in the Palestinian West Bank was illegal (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2009).

Since the election of the Conservative Harper government in 2006, Canada’s policies on Palestine-Israel have become increasingly unbalanced, leading to the characterization of Canada (by critics and proponents of these policies) as “the most pro-Israel country in the world” (Engler 2010). In 2008 the Canadian and Israeli governments signed a “Memorandum of Understanding” on public security “to prioritize and manage cooperation” in areas such as border management, correctional services, law enforcement cooperation and “terrorist financing” (FATDC 2014). Also in 2008, the Conservative government refused to condemn new Israeli construction in the occupied West Bank, which even the U.S., Israel’s staunchest ally, has strongly and repeatedly condemned (Engler 2010). In 2009 when Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez expelled Israeli diplomats in protest of the bombing of Gaza during Operation Cast Lead, the

Harper government announced the Canadian embassy in Venezuela would represent Israel and provide consular services to Israelis (CIJA 2009).

As this chapter will show, the Canada-Israel relationship is rooted in a shared taproot of colonial discourse and practice (Salaita 2006) which made both Turtle Island<sup>1</sup> (North America) and Palestine into European settler states. Drawing on Edward's Said's article "the Idea of Palestine in the West," (1978) I will provide an historical overview of the way that Palestine has been imaged in Canada, and in the West more generally; a history marked by a remarkable continuity and reproduction of particular narratives. As Nadeau and Sears (2010) point out, examining narratives of Palestine in Canada requires recognizing that "parallel histories of settler colonization" based on an "eviction-driven" model of Indigenous displacement and national expansion have shaped both spaces, while also acknowledging the specificity of Zionist and Canadian settler nationalism, which emerged as distinct moments of colonization and nation-making (20). While in many ways analytically distinct, Canadians settlers and Zionists shared (and still share) in that "community of language and ideology" (Said 1978) that exists between Zionism and the West, and from which Indigenous peoples, both in Canada and in Palestine, are systematically excluded. The reproduction of Zionist narratives in Canada depends on erasing the colonial nature of the Zionist project (and Canadian support for it) from the public sphere and is therefore vital to contextualizing and deconstructing what Ahmad Sa'di (2002, 288) calls the "un-narration" of the Palestinians.

## 2.1 Palestine in the imperial imagination

Edward Said (1986) describes Palestine as a "cluttered wall" which is "crowded with the traces of other peoples." This description is true in two senses – Palestine as lived geography and Palestine as an idea – as an empty backdrop for the religious, national and imperial claims and visions of what can be broadly termed "the West." In the first sense, Palestine is part of a region referred to as the "fertile crescent" due to the early cultivation

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<sup>1</sup> Turtle Island is a term used by Indigenous people to refer to the North American continent, and is related to the Haudnosuane creation story.

of crops and domestication of animals; a place located at the crossroads of many diverse civilizations (among them the Canaanites, Phoenicians, Nabateans, Hebrews, Philistines, Assyrians, Persians, Greeks and Romans) who at one time lived in and/or ruled in Palestine, and a place sacred to the three major monotheistic religions - Judaism, Christianity and Islam (Qumsiyeh 2004). An important point to take from this history is that the natives of Palestine, whether Muslim, Christian or Jewish, are the descendants of these various groups which peopled the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean, and who by the 7<sup>th</sup> century, became a predominately Arab Muslim population (Qumsiyeh 2004).

Palestine has also played an important role in the imagination and political will of European powers (Said 1978), as a site of religious importance (particularly during the Crusades), as a strategically and geopolitically sensitive piece of land, and as a part of Europe's "thirst for the Orient" (Atran 1989, 720). The colonial expansions of the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, the so-called "age of discovery," facilitated European, and later North American, travel and religious pilgrimages to Palestine, awakening for these travelers biblical geographies often seen as more real than the actual landscape. Chateaubriand wrote that in Judea "extraordinary things are disclosed from all parts of an earth worked over by miracles...all of poetry, all the scenes from the Scripture are present here" (in Said 1979, 173). Lamartine admits that he prefers the imaginative geographies of Poussin and Lorraine to the landscapes he saw when he travelled to Palestine in 1933 (Said 1979, 178)

Interpreted not only through Biblical fantasies, but also through the lens of Orientalism, and the grid of European scientific racism – all exported to the Americas - Palestinians were portrayed in European and North American travel writings as a backward, ignorant, and mostly nomadic "Oriental" population, whose presence had laid ruin to the fertile landscape of the Bible (Said 1979). In Mariam Rosen's collection of typical British attitudes on Palestinians, based mostly on British colonial surveys, the fellahin (peasants ) were described by British travellers as, variously, "the worst type of humanity ... in the east...totally destitute of all moral sense," and "brutally ignorant, fanatical and above all inveterate liars" - characteristics deemed typical of "the Oriental"

(Said 1980, 78-9). The entire population was explicitly compared to the colonized peoples of other British colonies, characterized as “disgustingly incapable as ... the Red Indians or Maoris”, and as a people who “do not appear to have made a single contribution of any kind whatsoever to material civilization,” (in Said 1980, 80-81). These ideas were reproduced largely unchanged throughout the British mandate. In 1937 Winston Churchill’s displayed a blatantly racist and patently colonial logic for supporting Zionism in Palestine when he declared:

I do not agree that the dog in a manger has the final right to the manger, even though he may have lain there for a very long time. .. I do not admit, for instance, that a great wrong has been done to the Red Indians of America, or the black people of Australia. I do not admit that a wrong has been done to these people by the fact that a stronger race, a higher grade race, a more worldly-wide race, to put it that way, has come in and taken their place (in Roy 2003, 58).

Churchill’s characterization of Zionism as part of a larger project of European expansion, in which stronger” and “higher grade” “races” displaced Indigenous people reflected the very essence of (secular) political Zionism, a movement aimed at the creation of a Jewish state in Palestine, and which was born and developed in imperial Europe in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Said (1980, 60) points out that “it would be totally unjust to neglect the power of Zionism as idea for Jews” in the face of their suffering in Europe, and the fact that in contrast to other colonial projects, Jews were already living in Palestine - although as a small minority among an overwhelmingly Palestinian Arab population. However, it is important to recognize that Zionism was also explicitly imagined and enacted as a colonial civilizing project allied with, and requiring the ongoing support of European imperial powers (Masalha 2012, 34).

Nur Masalha (2012, 20) describes Zionism as “an anachronistic form of Eastern European Romantic nationalism” with its emphasis on blood, soil, racial purity and historical roots. Like other nationalist movements, Zionism sought to construct a shared (Jewish) history, develop a myth of origin which traces the roots of the Jewish Diaspora to noble forbearers, and describe the development of the nation’s history in terms of a “golden age” and a “dark age” when the nation was ruled by foreigners (Coakley 2004, 546-8). Coakley (2004) identifies a specific kind of nationalism of which Israel is a prime

example: the myth of destiny of the national territory, the idea that the nation is entitled to re-establish the greatness of the golden age by re-conquering territory it once held. This “re-establishment” was justified as the re-birth of the Israelite kingdom of David which would be established through the dynamics of settler-colonialism, aligning Zionism with European (and North American) Christian imperialism.

Zionist methods for conceptually dealing with the fact that the land was populated by another people, brought it squarely into alliance with a larger European civilization project, which employed similar strategies of negation and denial to impose their own visions on Palestine’s landscape (Masalha 2012, 34). The idea of the unconquered frontier was integrated with Zionist national dreams to form the core slogan of the Zionist movement: “a land without a people, for a people without a land” (Said 1978:4). Palestine was described by early Zionist leaders as “empty” or “naked” land that “the Jews alone are capable of rebuilding” (Said 1978:5). When the presence of Palestinian Arabs was acknowledged, they were characterized, in a fashion typical of European colonial representation, as backward Orientals with no legitimate national claims to the land they had tilled for centuries (Said 1978).

The way the Zionist movement aligned itself with both European “civilizing missions” to the Orient, and the “universal” enlightenment forces of science, rationality, and progress is evident in the work of Theodor Herzl, an Austrian Jewish journalist whose ideas, especially in his book “*Der Judenstaat*” (the Jewish State), played a pivotal role in the development of political Zionism (Bowman 2002: 457). In *Der Judenstaat* (Herzl 1972, 30) Herzl courts an imperial benefactor by expressing his desire that Zionism would contribute to the European civilizational project:

If his majesty the Sultan were to give us Palestine...we should form there a wall of defense for Europe in Asia, an outpost of civilization against barbarism. We should as a neutral state remain in contact with all of Europe, which would have to guarantee our existence.

This civilization of the Orient was to be accomplished “by means of every modern expedient,” which would include an “accurate scientific investigation” of all natural

resources, the organization of a central administration, and the distribution of land (Herzl 1972, 30).

In order to have a state that was Jewish in the sense of a demographic majority, Herzl foresaw that the displacement of the native population would have to be part of Zionist plans, as he noted in his diary that: “we shall have to spirit the penniless population across the border by procuring employment for it in transit countries, while denying any employment in our own country. Both the process of expropriation of the removal of the poor must be carried out discreetly and circumspectly” (in Said 1979, 13). Zionist settler-nationalism, like settler or “pioneer” nationalism in British colonies sought to eliminate and exclude the natives instead of exploiting them for labour (Ahmed 1984: 5). From the outset it was clear that this proposed state was intended for the benefit of the Jewish population only as “the ‘natives’ of Palestine were not to be included in the ‘redemptive mission civilisatrice’, rather they were to be pushed out, excluded, ignored” (Long 2008, 66). These ideas found a very receptive audience in Britain, which recognized in Herzl and other European Zionists its own conceptions of enlightenment rationality, progress and ethnic and cultural superiority, and where Christian Zionism, with its support for the “transport of Israel’s sons and daughters...to the land promised to their forefathers” had laid the groundwork for religious support for the Zionist project (Engler 2010, 11). The British also saw Palestine as a strategically important piece of land –too important in fact to be ruled by its native inhabitants who were, according to British imperial officer T.E. Lawrence (known as Lawrence of Arabia), backward Orientals “full of dark depressions and exaltation...unstable as water” (in Atran 2005, 720).

Canada, as a loyal British dominion, inherited many of these images of Palestine and Arab Palestinians. The idea of a Jewish homeland in Palestine as both the fulfillment of biblical prophecy and a civilizing mission to the Orient played an important role in the discourses of Britain’s, and as a result, on Canada’s Christian communities beginning in mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, before the advent of modern political Zionism (Brown 1982). During confederation Canada’s most prominent Zionist was Henry Wentworth Monk who founded the Palestine Restoration Fund in 1875 in an attempt to start Zionist agricultural



settlement in Palestine. Monk was part of the Anglo-Israel movement in the Britain, the United States and Canada which thought of Anglo-Saxons as the descendents of the 10 lost tribes of Israel. He employed biblical justification and pro-Empire rationale to call for the establishment of a Bank of Israel, a Jewish National fund, and for the British Empire to establish a “Dominion of Israel” that was similar to the Dominion of Canada (Brown 1982). Biblical discourses of Jewish “restoration” to the Holy Land were also circulated through the fictional novels by Canadian authors George Eliot and Mary Ellen Ross, and in the sermons and statements of prominent clergy members (Brown 1982).

Canada’s support for Zionism was also predicated on the idea that Jewish colonization in Palestine would act as a civilizing force in the “backward” Orient (Said 1979). Central to most European settler colonialism is a particular “doxology about land” (Said 1978, 75) which separates the civilized from the uncivilized and confers exclusive rights to land ownership to the latter (Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995; Doxater 2011; Youngblood Henderson 2000). Canadian identification with Zionist settlers was rooted in this shared “doxology” in which land slated for colonization was seen as terra nullius, “empty” or “uninhabited” of people deserving of legal and national rights (Pratt 2004). In both projects this colonization was justified through biblical narratives (Greenwell 2002), and claims of the superiority of pioneering settlers over native inhabitants (Engler 2010). Palestine, in Orientalist discourse, was seen as “an empty desert waiting to burst into bloom; such inhabitants as it had were supposed to be inconsequential nomads possessing no real claim on the land and therefore no cultural and national reality” (Said 1978, 286).

Besides a shared language of European superiority, Zionist narratives of Palestine enjoyed wide diffusion in Canada due to a number of other factors. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century there was large-scale immigration of Eastern European Jews to Canada; a population comparatively more politically Zionist than the more diverse Jewish population in the United States (Bercuson 1985; Sasley and Jacoby 2007). Canada’s “racial contract” at that time, based as it was in white Anglo-Saxon superiority, included both Orientalism and Anti-Semitism (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008). However, as mentioned in the previous paragraph, Zionism aligned itself with more general European

imperial narratives of the civilization of backwards peoples, and a European tradition of enmity towards Islam and the Orient in particular (Said 1978) - a tradition which Canada inherited as a British colony. Jewish Zionists in Canada propagated this vision of Zionism as a Western European project, stressing its connection to the British Empire in order to appeal to Canada's particular brand of imperial nationalism. Canadian Zionist Rabbi De Sola informed Canada's Minister of Militia and Defence that "the Jews would like to see Palestine under the suzerainty of the British government, forming thus an outlying and buffer state of the British Empire" (in Engler 2010, 16). Another Canadian Rabbi, Herman Abramowitz, expressed similar sentiments when he claimed that supporting Zionism would:

Be good for Great Britain because it would put in Palestine a friendly people who would act as a buffer state, protecting the Suez Canal, India, Egypt and trade to those countries. The cultural value of having an oriental people, who though their dispersion, had also become a western people, to mediate and create an understanding between the East and West, is of highest value (in Engler 2010; 16).

The participation of Canada in Britain's imperial "Boer War" in South Africa roused Anglo-Saxon nationalist sentiments, and gave Canadian Jews a chance to ally themselves with British imperial interests, both discursively and through participation in the "Jewish lads" brigade (Brown 1982). Unlike in the United States, Zionism in Canada appealed to all social strata and religious groups, and there was consequently proportionally high membership in the chapters of the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada in major Canadian cities (Brown 1982; Goldberg and Taras 1989).

## 2.2 Zionism and the Palestinians under the British Mandate

With the collapse of the Ottoman Empire imminent at the end of the Second World War, the French and British simultaneously encouraged Arab revolt against the Turks in exchange for guarantees of self-determination, while secretly divvying up Ottoman territories among themselves (with Britain laying claim to Palestine) in the Sykes-Picot agreement - a example of blatant imperial double-dealing (Engler 2010: 15). After Britain made its policy towards Jewish nationhood in Palestine public through the 1917

Balfour Declaration (which promised the creation of a “Jewish national home in Palestine”) Jewish legions under British auspices were organized in major Canadian cities for both general support for British war efforts and in the conquest of Ottoman Palestine by Britain (Kay 1967). Zionist organizations in Canada, particularly the Zionist Organization of Canada (named the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada until 1920), began to raise funds to contribute to future Jewish settlement schemes in Palestine (Taras 1989, 14-15).

When WWI ended the imperial division of the Middle East was formalized through the League of Nations mandate system, in which Britain was to “administer” Palestine, Transjordan, and Mesopotamia, while the French would rule over greater Syria (including what is now Lebanon). Britain’s commitment to a Jewish state was made official by the inclusion of the Balfour Declaration in the articles of the Mandate (Atran 2005). Palestine thus came under the rule of the British Empire, which saw in the Zionist movement the possibility for the surrogate colonization of a strategically important piece of land by a people who were unwanted in Europe but “stepped in European civilization”, and who would be dependent on imperial benefactors (Atran 2005, 72). Chaim Weizmann’s letter to Balfour in 1918, the same year the British occupation began, appealed to this narrative of European superiority:

I am attempting to write to you about the situation here and about the problems which confront the Zionist Commission...the Arabs, who are superficially clever and quick-witted, worship one thing, and one thing only – power and success...he [the Arab] screams as often as he can and blackmails as often as he can. The first scream was heard when your Declaration was announced (in Said 1978, 5).

The Arabs only advantage, he claims, is their “relative numerical strength,” a fact which would imply the creation of an Arab state. He warns British officials, however, that this would be a disaster, as the Arabs in Palestine, who do not constitute a people in any real sense, are “at least four centuries behind the times...dishonest, uneducated, greedy” (in Said 1978, 5-6).

These visions of Palestine and Arab Palestinians were shared by many non-Jewish clergyman, politicians and journalists who regularly attended the Federation of Zionist

Societies conventions in Canada, as Zionism had a relative public respectability among Canadian Gentiles that was lacking at that time in the United States (Brown 1982). As David Bercuson (1985) details in his book *Canada and the Birth of Israel*, Canadian Jews were also involved in early leftist groups like the Socialist Party and enjoyed widespread support for the Zionist causes among the Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), the precursor to the current New Democratic Party (NDP). When the Canadian Federation of Zionist Societies held a convention in Toronto in 1906 it was addressed by the mayor, prominent academics and a member of federal parliament, with the lieutenant-governor of Canada proclaiming that Zionism “is a cause which must prevail, for the gift of Palestine to your nation by the Almighty is absolute” (in Brown 1982,157). Solicitor General (and soon to be Prime Minister) Arthur Meighan proclaimed in 1915 that “I can speak for those of the Christian faith when I express the wish that God speed the day when the land of your forefathers shall be yours again. The task I hope will be performed by that champion of liberty the world over - the British Empire” (in Engler 2010, 4). Mackenzie-King declared the ideals of Zionism to be “in consonance” with that of “Englishmen,” expressing his hope that the “Hebrew people” would again “make their contributions to the world’s literature and civilization” (in Bercuson 1985, 13).

These narratives of Palestine as a Jewish homeland rightly restored under Zionist colonization, constituted an erasure of both Palestinian Arab history and the demographic realities of Palestine under the British mandate. Palestinian scholar Sami Hadawi (1991) provides a statistical overview of Palestine’s land ownership and demography, based on three censuses carried out by the British Mandatory government, which illustrates how inherently undemocratic the idea of a Jewish state in Palestine was both in 1918 and at the end of the mandate. In 1918, the total population was 700,000 people, including 570,000 Muslims, 70,000 Christians, and 56,000 Jews, with the latter owning less than 3% of the total land area. Due to large scale immigration the Jewish population increased from 8% in 1918, to about 17% in 1931, and 31% by mid - May of 1948. (Hadawi 1991, 49-50).

Both British colonial officials and Zionist leaders sought to render these realities – namely that Arab Palestinians constituted the majority of the population and owned over

90% of the land throughout the entire Mandate – inconsequential. Britain in many ways brought Palestine into the mould of its other colonies, carrying out the aforementioned censuses, re-organizing land distribution according to European ‘scientific principles’, and implementing economic and education programs (Atran 2005, 724). These British policies led to a slow destruction of traditional landholding practices, making it easier for Zionists to acquire land (Atran 2005), and crushed nationalist expression and institutions among the Arab population, who were disarmed – not only of weapons, but of leaders and political organization – after Britain crushed the 1936-9 Arab revolt (Swedenburg 1995). Concurrently, Zionist leaders carefully laid down the institutions for the maintenance of the Yishuv (the Jewish community in Palestine) and for the establishment of a future state. With what Said (1978) refers to as a “discipline of detail,” Yishuv leaders developed a governing structure, organized militias, a labour union (the *Histadrut*), organizations dedicated to both land acquisition (such as the Jewish National Fund and the Jewish Agency) and encouraging Jewish immigration to Palestine.

As the Jewish population in Palestine increased, due in large part to waves of immigration following the growth of Nazism in Europe and culminating in the Nazi genocide of European Jews, Zionist leaders began to discuss making this conceptual creation of a Jewish landscape free of Arabs a concrete reality. During the late 1930’s Yishuv leaders and prominent Zionists like Ben Gurion, Jabotinsky, Weizmann, and Weitz advocated and/or created a number of “transfer committees” dedicated to creating a Jewish demographic majority through the expulsion of Palestinian Arabs to neighboring Arab countries (Masalha 2012, 63). Following the Second World War, Britain turned the “question of Palestine” over to the United Nations, which decided on a partition that was categorically unfavourable to the Palestinians, who, as aforementioned, collectively owned over 90% of the land (Engler 2010, 26).

Canada played a key role in the creation of Israel through its role on the United Nations Special Committee on Palestine (UNSCOP) and the UN sub-committee which authored the Partition Plan voted on in the General Assembly (Husseini 2008). Supreme Court Justice Ivan C. Rand played an important role in promoting partition as a solution to the committee when committee members travelled to Palestine in 1947, while Lester

Pearson, as a top diplomat and later Under-Secretary of State, was an important figure in securing a partition in his role on the U.N's special subcommittee on Palestine and at the General Assembly (Bercuson 1984). Their efforts were so appreciated that Pearson was dubbed by Zionists as "the Balfour of Canada" while the Israeli state later established an Ivan C. Rand Chair of Law at the Hebrew University in Jerusalem (Husseini 2008, 41). Hassan Husseini (2008, 48) contributes to and challenges previous works on the subject of Canada's role in the Partition Plan for Palestine by Bercuson (1985), Kay (1978) and Tauber (2002) who largely maintain that Canada's position was based on pragmatic and legal considerations, which in his view "is oversimplifying and legitimizing Canada's position." Husseini (2008) instead points to a mix of personal, internal, and external factors - including Anglo-American discord (as Britain tried to disentangle itself from the 'Palestine problem'), Cold War rivalries, guilt over the Holocaust, domestic lobby groups, the "Judeo-Christian values" and Orientalist outlook of major decision-makers. His work is important in challenging the mythology of Canada as a neutral middle power that most writing on the partition (and Lester B. Pearson in general) perpetuates, pointing instead to the way Canada's position was shaped by Cold War considerations and on the idea of a Jewish state as a "western outpost" in the strategically important Orient.

Examining the way the "question of Palestine" was characterized at the time of discussion of a partition illustrates the continuity of religious and civilizational narratives of Palestine-Israel among Canadian political elite. It was Lester B. Pearson who played the most important role in directing Canada's position on the "question of Palestine" and helping to bridge the gap between the American and British positions. In the post-war world British power was waning while the United States was poised to become the world's next "great power." Pearson, unlike his predecessors, promoted moving away from Britain in favor of a closer relationship with Canada's southern neighbor (Bercuson 1985; Husseini 2008, 44). As with Canada's pre-war policy, the post-war policy was greatly influenced by Canada's position as a "junior dominion" of a more powerful state and the colonial logic of creating western outpost states. Pearson espoused this neo-imperialist logic when he described a future Jewish state as "an outpost, if you will, of the West in the Middle East" which could act as a buffer against Soviet influence in the region (in Husseini 2008, 48). Pearson's principal advisor, Riddell, argued that partition

would give “the Western powers the opportunity to establish a dependant, progressive Jewish state in the Eastern Mediterranean with close ties...to the West and America particularly” (in Bercuson 1985, 127).

Ivan C. Rand’s statements on Palestine-Israel reveal a blatantly ethnocentric and Orientalist framework for interpreting Israel’s role in the Middle East, which he described as “a ‘beacon of light’ in an otherwise darkened section of humanity...an anchorage in the Middle East for ethical values and civilizing influence of the West” (in Husseini 2008, 51). Organized Gentile support for Zionist aspirations of a state in Palestine was funneled through the Canadian Palestine Committee (CPC), which was founded near the end of the British Mandate in 1942 (Tauber 1999). In 1945, two years before partition, the organization’s executive director, Herbert Mowat, in a letter read aloud in the House of Commons, called Palestinians a “primitive people” who must adjust themselves to the fate decided for them by the United States and Great Britain (Engler 2010). Rand’s speech on the occasion of Israel’s 4th anniversary of “independence” in Winnipeg largely echoes hegemonic Israeli narratives of the states founding: “it is a land already beginning to blossom like a rose. These men and women are draining and cleansing and transforming poisonous swamps into fertile fields...they are terracing and reclaiming stony hills, they have multiplied the abundance of the coastal plains where the Philistines once lived...” (in Husseini 2008, 51). That Canada’s role in partition is recorded as a pragmatic consideration of the law, or a decision made “with heavy hearts” (Bercuson 1985, 130) speaks to the way that Zionist narratives and the consequent “sheer blotting out from history” (Said 1978) of the Arab inhabitants of Palestine has become so normalized in the Canadian public sphere that upholding this status quo could be seen as “neutral.”

## 2.3 1948: The destruction of Arab Palestine

After the British had announced their decision to withdraw from Palestine by May 14, 1948 Zionist militias (many trained by the British) began to implement earlier plans for what is euphemistically referred to as “transfer.” The Israeli Plan Dalet of 1947-8 involved the systematic expulsion of up to two thirds of the Palestinian population (750,0000 people), nearly half prior to the British withdrawal and the official declaration

of Israeli statehood on May 15, 1948 (Falah 1996, 258-260; Takkenberg 1998, 13). Ilan Pappé's study of Israeli military archives reveals a deliberate and systematic plan by these militias to ethnically cleanse the Arab population of Palestine by occupying villages and major city centres and driving out the population through either the threat of military force or the commission of massacres (Pappé 2006). Canadians Jews, and some Christians, were among those who sent funds, weapons, and volunteers to participate in the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Bercuson 1983; Azrieli 2008; Freeman-Maloy 2011). Hundreds of Canadians, according to Azrieli (2008, 250), were among the international volunteers (mostly World War II veterans) who made up the Mahal (in Hebrew "volunteers from abroad") division of the Israeli army (Freeman-Maloy). Canadian World War II veteran Ben Dunkleman was the highest ranking Canadian in the Mahal, serving as commander of the Seventh Brigade (Azrieli 2008, 110) responsible for ethnically cleansing much of the lower Galilee (Freeman-Maloy 2008; Pappé 2006). Pappé (2006) notes in his *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* that though few brigade names appear in Palestinian oral histories of the Nakba, Brigade Seven "is mentioned again and again, together with such adjectives as 'terrorists' and 'barbarous'" (158).

Several of the Palestinians I interviewed witnessed the ethnic cleansing and its aftermath, including a 92 year old Rashid who arrived in Haifa as its inhabitants were fleeing Jewish troops:

I went on 13 of March I think, on the last train to Haifa, I probably was the only one on the train. The place was completely in chaos, fighting... when I arrived I found shooting in Haifa for nearly two hours. I had to take refuge in a place opposite the station... On 9<sup>th</sup> of April there was the massacre of Deir Yassin. The Palestine radio station was still on and the man was announcing the massacre, he made the impression on the people that the Jews are going to massacre everybody in Arab Palestine, so this made a great impact on people, they were scared ... I found doors of houses open, nobody in, I saw furniture, I saw only cats and dogs in the streets, nothing.

The creation of the state of Israel on the land of Mandatory Palestine in 1948 had profound and long-lasting effects not just on Haifa, but for all Arab Palestinians, who call this rupture of Palestinian society the Nakba, or "Catastrophe." Palestinian scholar Elias Sanbar (2001) captured the violent totality of the Nakba when he wrote: "That year a



country and its people disappeared from both maps and dictionaries... ‘the Palestinian people does not exist’ said the new local masters, and henceforth the Palestinians would be referred to by general, conveniently vague terms, as either ‘refugees,’ or in the case of the small minority that had managed to escape the generalized expulsion, ‘Israeli Arabs’. A long absence was beginning” (87). This absence was produced through a massive restructuring of both land and bodies, a twin conquest of knowledge and territory in which Palestine’s landscape and history were de-signified as Arab and re-signified as a Jewish geography.

This de-signification was accomplished when the nascent Israeli government destroyed over 500 Palestinian villages, passed laws barring the return of those expelled, and the Jewish National Fund (JNF) planted forests over the surviving traces of pre-Nakba Arab Palestine. A small though significant population of Palestinians, the remnants of an incomplete process of ethnic cleansing who managed to stay inside the borders of the nascent Israeli state, were subject to various mechanisms of colonial control such as the imposition of military law (from 1948-1966), and the forced displacement of Arab citizens of mixed cities into designated neighborhoods or “martial law” zones surrounded by barbed wire and marked by checkpoints. Eighty year old Nadir lived for 20 years under this form of military government, as did all Palestinian citizens of Israel, where checkpoints, curfew, permits and searches were a daily occurrence. He described to me the indignity of those years:

We used to be rounded up and put in an open field together with those elderly people, very notables... we would be ordered to sit in the ground in a field under the sun, July sun, burning sun for hours on end, in order to increase the humiliation of those men. These are images that I still remember... the treatment was humiliating all in all, they wanted you to feel that you’re a sub-human.

This barbed wire landscape through which the native inhabitants were no longer free to move was further re-signified into an alien geography through the imposition of Hebrew place-names by a government naming society, the construction of Jewish settlements, and the re-zoning of the entire landscape through the Planning and Building law of 1965. The renaming process served to validate the ‘unbroken link’ between the Jewish people of modern Israel and the biblical Israelites, and to invalidate the Palestinian history of

occupancy and expulsion (Masalha 2008, 131). With the occupation of the rest of historic Palestine (Gaza and the West Bank) in 1967, Israel continued its fragmenting of Arab population centers in a policy Edward Said (1986) describes as “continuity for them, the dominant population; discontinuity for us, the dispossessed and dispersed” (20). The West Bank was the culmination of decades of Zionist colonization and territorial expansion which continue into the present.

## 2.4 Expelled from history: silencing the victims of Zionism

The destruction of Arab Palestine described above was not seen as such by much of the rest of the world, as Israel engaged in a campaign common to colonial projects - to transform “usurpation into legitimacy” through re-writing the historical narrative (Memmi 1967, 52). Israel had a distinct advantage in controlling narratives of Palestine and its history, as immediately following the Nabka the nascent state carried out a massive appropriation and destruction of Palestinian archives, records, library collections, private papers, pictures, and all moveable and immoveable objects which became state property under Israeli law (Masalha 2012). Historians have mostly displayed a methodological bias towards archival sources (Masalha 2008, 136), a dedication to the cult of positivism and the “immediately ascertainable facts” supposedly available in written sources. Even when the official hegemonic narrative is challenged, this challenge is mounted through the use of Israeli, mostly military archives, relegating Palestinian Arab testimony to the position of “unverifiable oral, potentially self-serving, memories” (Slyomovics 2007, 31). Israel was (and is) naturally in a better position to keep a written record of events and create archives, meaning that most sources come from Israeli archives (Weaver 2007, 131). Most importantly, the bias towards archives has rendered the Palestinian narrative unreliable, and Palestinians, especially the refugees of 1948, as agentless in the construction of their history.

This process of the deliberate erasure of the Palestinian narrative took place, and takes place, in large part outside of Palestine itself. It is Zionism’s sense of “the world as supporter and audience” that made the Zionist struggle for Palestine, one which was launched, supplied and fueled in the great capitals of the West,” so successful (Said

1978, 4). In Canada the continued expansion of the Israeli state and the consequent dispossession of the Palestinians is filtered through a framework where Palestinian non-existence is taken as a starting point, and in an inversion of the reality of the power imbalance between Israel and the Palestinians, Israel becomes a valiant David facing an enemy that appears as almost a caricature of Orientalist stereotypes. This kind of characterization of Palestinians is evident in the lead up to the Suez Crisis (when Israel, Britain and France invaded Egypt over access to the Suez Canal), when the relationship between Canada, Israel and Egypt featured prominently in foreign policy discussions in the Canadian House of Commons. Liberal Member of Parliament Donald Carrick characterized the situation as one in which Egypt continues to “terrorize Israelis”, while he dismissed any international or Israeli responsibility for the Palestinian Arab refugee problem, as he claimed, in an exact echo of official Israeli discourse on refugee responsibility, that the Grand Mufti ordered the refugees to leave “in order to disrupt the Israeli economy” (Parliament of Canada 1956, 760).

He complains that despite Israel’s noble efforts to compensate the refugees by facilitating their assimilation into other Arab countries, these countries have not cooperated with Israel as “it is quite clear that the purpose of the Arab governments is to drive the Israelis into the sea” (Parliament of Canada 1956, 760). His solution is to provide unlimited arms to Israel, which he describes as “an outpost and a source of security... an arsenal for the democracies of the free world in the Middle East” (Parliament of Canada 1956, 762). Even those speakers who opposed arming Israel, including the Liberal Pearson, and Conservative MP Drew, espouse a narrative of inherent Arab hostility and violence, and the reduction of the Palestinians to the “Arab refugee” question. This exchange points to how the discursive strategy of what Ahmed Sa’di refers to as the “un-narration” of the Palestinians had come to characterize Canadian discourse.

This “un-narration” is constantly reproduced in mainstream discourse, and has become an important facet of Palestinian experiences of exile. Invariably, nearly all of the Palestinians I interviewed, both young and old, said that when they identified themselves as Palestinian or “from Palestine” people misheard Palestine as Pakistan,

while these same people recognized the word Israel. As 25 year old Leila noted, “people aren’t convinced there is even something called Palestine; everyone recognizes Egypt, so I’d have to say it’s close to Egypt.” The absence of even the word Palestine in Canadian vernacular reflects a similar form of Israeli denial of Palestinian national identity. Israeli leaders have long characterized Palestinians as generic Arabs with no special claim to Palestine, referring to them as “the so-called Palestinians” in a slight variation of former Israel Prime Minister Golda Meir’s 1969 claim that the Palestinians do not exist (Said 1978). Fadi, a former student activist from London who just recently graduated from university, deals with this absence with his characteristic dark sense of humour. He would jokingly respond to people’s confusion about the word Palestine by saying “you know Palestinians and Israelis, and then I would joke, I’m on the side that throws rocks. And then it becomes clearer to them, ok he’s not an Israeli, he’s the other side.”

Fadi is aware that for many Canadians Palestinians are defined by their role as the losing side of a distant Middle East war, as the enemy of a state that has strong allies in many North American leaders. Amin, another former student activist whose family is originally from Majdal in what became Israel, and who describes himself as “a Palestinian who had never entered Palestine,” has always taken after his mother by being both out-spoken and opinionated. He remembers confronting the assertion of his own non-existence at eight years old when all the atlases in his school library labeled Palestine/Israel as simply “Israel.” In the only act of resistance and an eight year old could carry out, he crossed out the word “Israel” and wrote “Palestine.” The next chapter will examine the ways these kinds of representations that Amin and Fadi mention are reproduced in Canadian public discourse, and what Palestinians think of these representations of themselves produced by others.

## Chapter 3

### 3 'A Light upon Nations': The Israeli 'Us' and the Palestinian Other in Canadian Public Discourse

In November of 2013 Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper was honoured by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) for his “outstanding support for Israel” at the organization’s annual Negev Dinner at the Toronto Convention Center (Menkes 2013). Drawing on old colonial tropes of the backwardness and degeneracy of Oriental land and people (Said 1979), Harper described Israel as a “light of freedom and democracy in what is otherwise a region of darkness,” and as a country which “shares common values with us” and faces “the same threats that we face in Canada and throughout the Western world.” He went on to proclaim that “the future of our country and of our shared civilization depends on the survival and thriving of a free and democratic homeland for the Jewish people in the Middle East” (Morrow 2013). His remarks were lauded by both Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel’s ambassador to Canada, who thanked him for his “friendship” and “integrity” (Morrow 2013).

Though Prime Minister Harper didn’t specify what he meant by “common values” or “common threats,” he made it clear that Israel, along with Canada and the rest of the “western world,” is part of a family of civilized nations threatened by that “region of darkness” of which Palestinians are supposedly a part. This kind of narrative, propagated through mainstream media, by Canadian officials, and frequently by representatives of non-governmental and social institutions, assumes a fundamental difference between the Israeli-Canadian “us,” seen to embody “western” cultural and democratic values, and the Arab-Muslim-Palestinian “them.” Nawal and her husband, an elderly Palestinian who have been living in Canada for over two decades consistently counter these images of Palestinians as the antithesis of this “shared western civilization” writing articles and talking to people, both more generally and in their church community. When I interviewed her in the summer of 2014 she responded to these ideas of mutually exclusive civilizations:

Our history is quite different from the way it is portrayed in Canada; Palestine and the Palestinians were always exposed to many civilizations, peoples and cultures in ancient and contemporary history... for example, there would be British, Italian and French institutions, some people who went to a convent school would learn French, or Italian, others studied in Istanbul or Damascus, and I think we were among the most educated people in the world you know, we were never isolated from the world and our history clearly shows our interaction with Western civilization

Nawal, was anticipating, and responding to ideas about Palestinians being ignorant, insular, and stuck in the past, and taking the opportunity to express a narrative largely absented from public discursive space in Canada.

This narrative of “us” and “them” laid out so explicitly in Prime Minister Harper’s speech at the JNF Negev Dinner, how it affects Palestinians, and how they counter it will be the subject of this chapter. Drawing on the interviews I conducted as well as media items, events, statements by political leaders, and critical race theorists, I will argue that this idea of “us and them,” which is rooted in that shared taproot of settler colonial discourse and praxis examined in the previous chapter, continues to shape public discourse about Palestine-Israel. Past narratives of European superiority and Oriental difference are re-articulated and reproduced in narratives of the “shared values” of liberal democracies and the “region of darkness” which threatens them. In this process the colonial origins of these kinds of narratives are obscured in order to make them palatable to the Canadian public. It is this process of enfolding and adapting, the “internal consistency” (Said 1979) of ideas of Israel and the Orient, which allow past narratives of European superiority and Oriental difference to be re-articulated and reproduced in ways which align the Zionist project with Canada’s purported liberal democratic values. Importantly, this narrative of a “shared civilization” concurrently reproduces Canada’s national mythology of itself as a peaceful and progressive liberal democracy, erasing the way Canadian settler-nationalism is premised on the violent exclusion of Indigenous peoples and racialized minorities.

The experiences of the Palestinians-Canadians I interviewed show that they are positioned within this hegemonic discourse as racialized Others and their access to public discursive space is often severely constrained. They find that they face the choice of

either staying silent or having to encounter both reductive images of Palestine and Palestinians and the inevitable backlash that comes with publicly challenging this hegemonic discourse. The next section examines the way Zionism and Palestinians are positioned within the racialized structures of Canadian nation-making.

### 3.1 The great White north: Whiteness, racism, and the making of a settler state on Turtle Island

In the fall of 2012 the Atlohsa Native Family Healing Center in London, Ontario hosted a travelling exhibition called “A Child’s View from Gaza” featuring artwork by Palestinian children living in the Gaza Strip. This event is part of a larger trend of collaboration between Palestinian and First Nations people who are increasingly seeking to coordinate events and activities against colonial policies in both countries. These kinds of collaborations and solidarity, another example being the Palestinian support for Idle No More (Ditmar 2013; Toensing 2012), are predicated on the similarities of colonial dispossession on both sides of the Atlantic. Canada, as a White settler state and a former British dominion, was founded on the “dispossession and near extermination” of Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island<sup>2</sup> by European settlers (Razack 2007a, 74). This destruction was both physical, involving the violent subjugation of Indigenous lands and bodies, but also involved, in the words of Taiaike Alfred and Jeff Corntassel (2005, 98) attempts to “eradicate their existence as peoples through erasure of the histories and geographies that provide that foundation for Indigenous cultural identities and sense of self.” This type of colonial violence is embodied in policies like the Indian Act (Lawrence 2011), the Residential School System (Ing 2011), the “Sixties Scoop<sup>3</sup>,” and the continued violations of the nation-nation relationship between Europeans and

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<sup>2</sup> Turtle Island is a word used by Indigenous Peoples to refer to North America, and is connected to the Haudenosaunee creation story. The drawing of colonial borders in North America fractured many Indigenous nations.

<sup>3</sup> The “Sixties Scoop” refers to the Canadian government practice from the 1960’s to the 1980’s of taking Aboriginal children from their families and adopting them out to non-Aboriginal families

Indigenous nations set out in the Haudenosaunee Two Row Wampum, or Gusmentah<sup>4</sup> (Cannon and Sunseri 2011).

The 2013 Speech from the Throne delivered in the Canadian parliament by the Governor General (a symbolic remnant of Canada's origins as a British settler-colony) illustrates how Canada's national myth of origins and its related markers of national identity and distinctiveness erase the reality of historical and ongoing racialized violence. The Governor General describes Canada's "founding" as follows:

*Pioneers, then few in number, reached across a vast continent. They forged an independent country where none would have otherwise existed... With hard work, sacrifice and common sense, those Canadian men and women built this country.... As we look to the 150th anniversary of our Confederation, we are reminded that ours is a rich inheritance: a legacy of freedom; the birthright of all humanity and the courage to uphold it; the rule of law, and the institutions to protect it; respect for human dignity and diversity (Throne Speech 2013, emphasis mine).*

The Governor General's speech reproduces the colonial myth of "terra nullius" (described in Chapter Two) used to justify the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in the Americas and Palestine, and which continues to form an important basis of both Canadian and Zionist settler nationalism. The Governor General's contention that pioneers "reached a vast continent" and "forged an independent nation where none would have otherwise existed" evoke these old colonial tropes - simultaneously erasing both the pre-contact history of the distinct Indigenous nations of Turtle Island, as well as the violence of hundreds of years of colonial expansion. As mentioned in the previous chapter, Palestinians face a similar erasure through narratives of the ingenuity of Zionist settlers who "made the dessert bloom" and must continually affirm their historical and present existence in Palestine. In the words of 80 year old Nadir (whose life history will be discussed later in this chapter):

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<sup>4</sup> In *Racism, Colonialism, and Indigeneity in Canada*, Sunseri and Cannon describe the Two Row Wampum as "a beaded belt embroidered with fresh water shells – which serves to formalize or 'certify' original nation to nation agreements." The Two Row Wampum signed between the Dutch and the Haudenosaunee in 1613 showed two vessels existing alongside each other in peace friendship and respect. The wampum signifies the original nation to nation relationship between Indigenous nations and the Crown, and the principle of separate jurisdictions.



Some of us are descendants of those Israelites, and Canaanites, and Greeks, and all that amalgamation is the Palestinian people. And Palestine wasn't empty guys despite what Israelis say, I tell them. Palestine was never empty, [there were] always periods of war and peace between Philistine, Canaanites, and Jews. So we were there before them, we stayed there all through and we deserve it, we deserve the land. Even on the basis of the biblical claim you have no claim.

Nadir, who has lived in Canada for over three decades, described to me an incident that revealed the connections between colonial relations here and in Palestine-Israel. He recalls:

One day I was giving a lecture, and there was a Chief, local Indians. After I finished my speech, his turn came, and he looked at me, all his stature, "you are naïve my Palestinian friend, you are very naïve, how do you expect those guys who took away my land from me, to support you against those who took yours, you are very naïve." Wow, amazing, I said, wow. Unbelievable.

At the same time Palestinians, like other non-white immigrants in Canada, are situated in contradictory ways within the Canadian nation-state. As Lawrence and Dua point out, non-white immigrants in general (2011, 23) are "marginalized by a white settler nationalist project" but "as citizens they are nonetheless invited to take part in ongoing colonialism." When discussing the racialization of Palestinians in Canada, it is important to recognize that their marginalization and racialization occurs within settler society, on land that was appropriated from the 55 founding First Nations (Haig-Brown 2009). However, Palestinians were dispossessed based on a very similar colonial logic of non-White inferiority not dissimilar in intent from that which dispossessed Indigenous peoples of Turtle Island, and most Palestinians are unable to return to historic Palestine.

In Canada, Palestinians Arabs, like other Asian migrants and Jews, were racialized and associated with disease, low intellect, deceit and servility (Hennerby and Amery 2013). Due to continued Israeli colonial expansion in historic Palestine and armed conflicts in the region (for example the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the 1990/1991 and 2003 invasion of Iraq), and because Palestinians are prohibited from returning home and many of them are stateless, Palestinian migration to Canada has increased in recent decades. In the 2011 31,245 people reported being of Palestinian origin (Statistics Canada 2011). Despite this increase in migration of Palestinians and

other Arabs to Canada and their participation in society at various levels, Arabs in general have reported experiencing continued discrimination due to their ethnicity, religion, race or accent (Statistics Canada 2007). The Palestinians I interviewed also faced a particular form of racialization as a group colonized and dispossessed by a country closely allied with Canada. The erasure of the dispossession of Palestinians parallels the way the colonization of what is now Canada is erased in official public histories of Canada's founding.

Stephen Harper's recent statement that "Canada has no history of colonialism" may be an especially blunt example of the "disavowal of conquest", but it is by no means an anomaly in the way Canada's founding is presented in the public sphere. Michael Ignatieff employed this narrative of settler innocence when he claimed during his Massey lecture in 2000 that:

*Throughout centuries of collaboration between newcomers and aboriginal nations, Native people have accepted, with varying degrees of willingness, the fact that being the first possessors of the land is not the only source of legitimacy for its use. Those who came later have acquired legitimacy by their labours; by putting the soil under cultivation; by uncovering its natural resources; by building great cities and linking them together with railways highways and now fiber-optic networks and the internet (in Razack 2007a, 74, emphasis mine)*

Ignatieff's depiction of Canadian history is a manifestly racialized story of the civilization of pre-modern spaces by White settlers which not only seeks to justify the original conquest, (Razack 2007), but also extends this colonial rationalization to the ongoing processes which deny First Nations their inherent right to self-determination. This narrative also erases the way that the founding, and maintenance, of the Canadian nation-state was dependent on not only dispossession of First Nations but also the exploitation and racialization of immigrants from the Global South. The racist immigration legislation used to turn Chinese immigrants into cheap, and expendable, labour for the Canadian Pacific Railway is thus hidden behind a narrative of White Settler ingenuity (Stasiulis and Jhappan 1995).

Razack's (2000; 2004; 2014) examination of the way the racialized violence of Canadian "peacekeeping" in Somalia was erased and de-raced in the public sphere

illustrates how national mythologies work to make the nation white, and normalize violence against bodies of colour as an inevitable part of the civilizing process. The shooting of two Somali men in the back, the torturing to death of 16 year old Shidane Abukar Arone, and the various videos and photographs of degrading, racist and violent acts perpetrated against Somalis by Canadian peacekeepers (Razack 2004) was constructed in the public sphere as both the betrayal of Canada's history of innocence by a few "bad apples", and the result of an encounter between "men of clean snow and men of the hot desert." Razack's work succinctly connects national mythologies about Canada's origins, immigration policies, and image as a peaceful moderator between superpowers, to illustrate how these mythologies work in tandem to "help the nation to forget its bloody past and present" (Razack 2004, 9).

Thus the maintenance of hegemonic Whiteness and dominance over Indigenous people and People of Colour is sustained and erased by Canadian national mythologies both at home and internationally (Nadeau and Sears 2010). Palestinians in Canada find that as both a dispossessed Native population and a racialized minority in Canada, violence against them has been largely normalized in the public sphere. As Nadir learned during his talk, the fact that Palestinian dispossession is largely ignored in mainstream public discourse is not surprising when it is put in this context. It is within these racialized structures of citizenship and national identity that the Othering of Palestinians and the identification of Israel as part of a "shared civilization" can be properly understood and deconstructed.

### 3.2 "Those without lips"<sup>5</sup>: Un-narration in the Canadian public sphere

Nadir an eighty year old Palestinian man who lives in a Toronto suburb with his wife, their daughter Rana and Rana's husband and their two children, immigrated to Canada at

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<sup>5</sup> The phrase "those without lips" comes from the introduction to the book *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and Claims of Memory* edited by Ahmad Sa'di and Leila Abu-Lughod. The authors use the phrase of an elderly Palestinian woman from the Galilee region of what is now Northern Israel, who responds to their question of why she doesn't speak about her Nakba experiences publicly by saying: "how can those without lips whistle?"

the beginning of a wave of Palestinian emigration in the late nineteen seventies. Their house, where an extended family of three generations lives under the same roof, is a place where passionate political discussion is likely to be followed by Monty Python impressions. Nadir is a former principal of a school in Haifa, a city not far from the small town of Shefa 'Amr where he lived in the north of Mandatory Palestine. He acquired his formal education by correspondence in Arabic literature and history as an adult, because his education was derailed by the Nakba in 1948. As a Palestinian who managed to remain in what became Israel in 1948 he was treated as a despised Native, abruptly transformed into a "non-Jew" or a "minority" during the ethnic cleansing of Palestine.

Sitting at his dining room table with his daughter Rana and his 18 year old grandson Ahmad, Nadir spoke with eloquence and some bitterness about the Nakba, and his experiences living under military rule between 1948 and 1966. He was 15 years old when the state of Israel was created, and though his family managed to stay inside the nascent Israeli state, much of their agricultural land was forcibly expropriated. Nadir lost his chance for a scholarship, and was separated from his 17 year old brother, who was studying in Lebanon and became stateless as a result. Nadir lived for the next 20 years under the humiliation of military rule, in which permits, curfews, administrative detention, and the criminalization of Palestinian political parties and expressions of Palestinian national identity characterized everyday life.

The next time Nadir saw his brother Farid was over 20 years later after his brother had had a heart attack. Describing their first reunion after all these years he remembered: "somebody from faraway was calling [our names], running, a heart attack patient came running. This is part of our tragedy, isn't it? ...One night (Nadir and his brother) we were drinking some whiskey... my brother asked me, tell me how did my father die? Describe his funeral to me. It was unbelievable." When Nadir says "this is part of our tragedy" he is referring to the way Israeli colonial violence penetrates and disrupts the functioning of everyday life, tearing families apart and preventing them from even repairing these ruptures by prohibiting the return of those expelled.

This colonial violence also eventually drove Nadir from historic Palestine, as his political activism made him a target of the Israeli authorities, who threatened his job, and pressured him to abandon his activism and collaborate with them. His refusal put him in danger of state retaliation and he was thus forced to leave with his wife and children to Canada. However, his experiences in Canada were contrary to the images and understanding of what it would be like living in a new country. In the following, he remembers the humiliation he felt adjusting to life in Canada after leaving Israel in the late 1970's:

I started working as a labourer, it was hard work, from being a leader in my community, and principal of a school. All of that and you come to work [hard labour]. I was not prepared for that kind of place. I was always perceived as middle class in our community, a principal of a school, back home I had an important position, and was a political leader... Honestly, I wouldn't allow myself to show them my agony; I used to cry my eyes out before I came there.

Nadir, who distinguishes between what he calls “real Canadians, Anglo-Saxon,” and the rest of the non-white population of Canada, spoke about being publicly marked as non-white:

One time I was passing downtown, and for some reason the taxi driver shouted “you Paki” ... One day I was at the station getting into a bus, there was some pushing around us. A lady was in front of me, I'm getting into bus, and she said you immigrants, why do we bring them all here?! And at the top of my voice I said “To teach you manners ma'am!”

While Nadir's experience as a Palestinian in Israel was one of discrimination, repression and humiliation, moving to Canada meant experiencing a change in class position encountering racialized discrimination in Canada, and the interviews with him express the frustration he felt since his arrival. Although his children, or the younger generation, adjusted more easily to the new social world, it was also difficult at the beginning as his daughter Rana, who is now in her late forties, described the first months and years adjusting to life in Canada:

I was completely lost once I came here, I couldn't understand a thing. We came during Christmas break, so I started grade nine in January, and grade nine is already hard, but at the same time it was the middle of the school year, friendships

were already formed, and people know I didn't speak English. And, for them, I looked funny; my parents bought me these old woman coats.

Listening to Nadir it is evident, from the depth of his historical and political knowledge to the way he can captivate an audience, that he has spent the better part of his life teaching students, and later speaking about the Palestinian cause to Canadian audiences. Tapping his hand against the table for emphasis he says:

In my book...I remember events that took place when I was 4 years old. After a while you hear your family talk about it a number of times, and then you can't differentiate between what you have really seen and stayed in your head and what you have gathered from collective memory of those who were around you, so it becomes part and parcel of your experience. And that's why when I talk about things that happened when I was 3 years old; these things are so much impressed on me, I cannot really, even if I wanted to, get rid of these memories. When I talk to you now they are in front of me, I see them, I can describe certain events, I see them right now, entering my house, leaving my house, the rebels in 1936, 1938. And sometimes it so painful to remember. You cease to be objective sometimes, you cease to be academic when you talk about your very painful experiences of your people, and your family. I mean, you cannot be objective when you express your anger, your pain, if I may put it mildly. It's anger mixed with pain, rage... rage. If there was a word in English that could express the amount of anger I feel now I would do it...I am now 80 years old and I am still angry.

His grandson Ahmad responds, laughing, "is that why you keep banging the table, Jeddo [Grandpa]?" Nadir stresses the fact that despite having Canadian citizenship he is first and foremost Palestinian, an identity that becomes all the more poignant and therefore important for him because of the pain and intensity of exile, which is immediate and sometimes all-consuming.

Nadir's experience of Palestine is different from his daughter Rana. Although Rana was born in what had then become Israel, she completed secondary and post-secondary education in Canada, whereas his grandson Ahmad was born and grew up in Canada. These differences in age and experiences, in their social, political and cultural life and relationships, rendered Nadir less able to negotiate a comfortable place in Canadian society. Rana, in contrast was able to develop relationships and in time spoke English with almost no accent as did the grandchildren. Generally speaking, the first generation of Palestinians in Canada I spoke to, especially the elderly, find it harder to

adapt and in time their attachment to the Palestinian homeland becomes stronger.

Another example of these generational differences was expressed by Sana, a 28 year old woman I interviewed in Toronto, whose grandparents were expelled from the coastal city of Yafa (Jaffa in English) during the 1948 Nakba. She said that the closer her grandmother got to the end of her life, the more Palestine began to find its way into every discussion.

Before she passed away, one thing I noticed about her was she was talking about Palestine every day, she was 80 I think, and she would bring up Palestine every two seconds, when the weather comes up, when were eating beans she would be like, “the beans in Palestine are different.” It got to the extent that my mom got frustrated with her, and she’s like “Palestine, Palestine, Palestine, can you please stop talking about Palestine!” She had reached the point where she thinks she’s gonna die before she goes back, and it’s painful, so she keeps talking about it. When my mom said that ('stop talking about Palestine') my grandma didn’t talk to my mom the whole day.

Sana's grandmother is not an exception; most of the literature on Palestinian memory point to the deep attachment to the land and places in Palestine, especially for the generation that lived there before 1948 (Sa’di and Abu-Lughod 2007; Farah 2004; 2009).

The yearning for return to Palestine combined with a general sentiment that they are living in a country which supports those who caused their exile, creates a deep sense of alienation and frustration. Exile in its subjective (feeling and sentiment) sense was expressed in the interviews I conducted, with Palestinians talking about their experiences trying to navigate Canadian society and institutions. Many of them spoke about the difficulty in having educational and workplace qualifications recognized and finding a job, a difficulty which they share with other refugees and migrants, but in the Palestinian case they also associate those difficulties to being Palestinian Arab Muslims or Christians. Hala moved to Canada just over a year ago from Jerusalem with her husband and five children. She was born in Nazareth near the end of the period of military law imposed on Palestinian citizens of Israel from 1948-1966, but even after military law ended, she and her family experienced systematic political, cultural, economic and social discrimination and exclusion. Moving to Canada proved more difficult than she anticipated. She spoke about her difficulty finding a job, saying that that while she would

like to participate in Canadian society in many different “levels”, she was stuck with the most basic, which is survival.

I worked this year very hard, looking for a full-time job and it's not easy. You don't want to hear me talking about that also, because I am very frustrated since I arrived here with great and rich and impressive experience as a skilled worker... I have a PhD, I worked with all East Jerusalem principals, with Jewish principals, I make this contribution, and I have ten people you can call as a reference. It is very difficult to start here. They are not making our lives as immigrants and skilled workers easy.

Hala attributes her experience not just to being a newly arrived immigrant, but to the position of her and her family within Canada's racial hierarchy. In a biting critique of the Canadian mythology, and official policy, of multiculturalism (Nadeau and Sears 2010), often contrasted with the “melting pot” approach in the United States, she observes:

I notice an amazing thing: that Canadians are nice, are kind, but still I assume that Canada is not a real place for diversity. And there is still the white above, and there are all the diverse under.

Both the experiences of Nadir and Hala described above are common to many racialized migrants in Canada, however Hala identifies a specific form of prejudice against Palestinians who are further demonized as the enemy of a state that is closely allied with both the United States and Canada. Before she moved to Canada, Hala received some advice from family in Michigan which spoke to this antipathy toward Palestinians in particular in North America:

They say when we arrived here in North America and say we are Palestinians, people do not love that. We say we are Palestinians from Israel, they accept, it sounds good Israel... So we start saying we are from the Holy Land, it is the best way to define yourself because you don't know with who you are talking and how they will react. They have a lot of biases.

By identifying themselves with terms such as “from the Holy Land” Palestinians hope to make their origins understood while avoiding the questions and often negative associations of identifying as Palestinian. Her experience of living in Canada for nearly a year confirmed in large part what her relatives had warned her about:



Canadians are...because they are polite, and they are nice, they don't show you or tell you [what they really think or feel]. But we know that there are, we know that the West have their [negative] attitude toward us...because they are with the strong, they are with Israel... it's about being Arab, Palestinian, and it's about being dark.

Though both Hala and her husband had steady jobs in Israel, she wanted to move so that her children could “be proud to be Arab, not feel like they are second class.” She makes sure they speak Arabic at home, and learn about their history. When she invited me over to meet her family she made a traditional Palestinian breakfast of olive oil, za'atar (thyme and sesame seeds), Labneh (thick yogurt) and hummous, while her youngest children quizzed me on my Arabic. Watching her youngest daughters play in the backyard she told me that her six year old was embarrassed to have her come to a field trip because she “talks English funny.” Hala jokes that even in kindergarten her youngest daughter is worried about her social status. For Palestinians a very specific set of biases are mapped onto the broader historical framework of characterizing Arabs and Muslims in the West, and the more general discrimination faced by non-white Canadians and migrants to Canada.

As an Arab and mostly Muslim community, Palestinians have been largely interpreted through Oriental tropes which characterize them as backward, irrational, and religiously fundamentalist (Said 1978). The framing of the Israeli occupation of Palestine also takes place within an Orientalist discourse which contains an “entrenched cultural attitude toward Palestinians deriving from age-old Western prejudices about Islam, the Arabs, and the Orient” (in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 2001, 119). The occupation is thus framed as a cultural or religious conflict, a narrative which has gained force since the events of 9/11. Since then, the occupation of Palestine, though pre-dating the events of September of 2001 by decades, became subsumed in a post-9/11 political climate (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008) where “Islamic civilization” and “Western civilization” are seen to be inherently incompatible and antagonistic (Abrahamian 2009; Mamdani 2002; Ashcroft 2004). These kinds of sentiments are perfectly reflected in Stephen Harper's statement that Israel and Canada are part of “a shared civilization” quoted earlier in the chapter, and which Jana, a young Palestinian woman I interviewed was acutely aware at a young age.

Jana, who moved to Canada when she was ten, had lived in Hebron (in the Southern West Bank) for most of her childhood, but was born in Jerusalem during the First Intifada (1987-1991). The Intifada literally means an uprising or “shaking off” - an Arabic word that had entered the English language to describe an uprising against the Israeli occupation that began in 1987. Here she remembers what her mother had told her about the First Intifada:

I was born on the day of the Al –Aqsa massacre. My mom tells the story of how she almost died giving birth to me, my aunt had to take her to the hospital and there were people shooting, ambulances, and the hospital was just crazy busy. She walked in and there were bodies everywhere, and it was overwhelmed with injured people. My aunt always tells me it was scary, they pretty much had to dodge bullets to get to the hospital. This was 1990.

When Jana moved to Canada, she found that these experiences of Palestinian suffering were largely absent from Canadian discourse. The year she moved to Canada (2000) marked the beginning of the Second Intifada, when the image of the “Palestinian terrorist” and the “Palestinian suicide bomber” gained wide circulation. Given the images of Palestinians circulating during the Second Intifada and the 9/11 attacks which occurred a year later, Jana was inclined to hide her identity as both a Palestinian and a Muslim.

But yeah after September 11 it was more intense. I remember when it happened I was in grade 6, and I went home and my parents had a talk with me, and said you know this time Muslims living in North America, were going to be targeted, you have to be careful, don’t go out so much, stay at home, 'cause everybody is against Muslims rights now... most people view the Middle East as the scary region of terrorists.

I was young, in high-school, I wanted to fit in, so you don’t want to say you’re from the Middle East, especially from Palestine. So yeah, I remember this one teacher was like where are you from? And then I kind of ignored the question. I just like looked at him, and he was just like never mind. I hated that question.

This feared backlash against Arabs and Muslims as Jana noted in the above, was largely realized. The Canadian government passed the *Anti-Terrorism Act* giving the state new powers to identify, detain and punish suspected terrorists (Razack 2007b:16). The government also increased its use of security certificates, first issued in 1996, which allow for the indefinite detention and expulsion of non-citizens deemed a threat to

national security, and which have been used primarily against Muslim men of Arab descent, including several Palestinians (Razack 2007b).

Sherene Razack identifies the logic used to fill the security certificate slot as “race thinking”, which she describes as “the division of humanity into those prone to violence and those who are not, according to racial descent” (2007b, 6). The positioning of Arabs and Muslims in the category of those prone to violence is dependent on the long-standing style of thought that characterizes Western thinking about Arabs and Muslims, and recent events that have brought Arabs and Muslims, and the ideas about them, to the forefront. Razack offers the example of the internment of Japanese Canadians and Japanese Americans during World War II for reasons of “national security.” That this internment did not apply to German or Italian North Americans, though North America was also at war with both Italy and Germany, provides an example of how the creation of unequal rights regimes depended on prior notions of the “racial inferiority” of Orientals (2007b, 10). Like the Japanese internment, the security certificate regime depends not on specific acts or offences but on “who a person is believed to be, what they are believed to believe, and who they associate with” (Bell 2006, 76).

Suha, a university student who emigrated to Canada from Jordan with her family when she was in elementary school, succinctly articulates the way processes of racialization and Orientalist stereotypes shape the experience of being Palestinian, Arab and Muslim in Canada.

See, for me it's like I'm kind of like a hidden Muslim, and Palestinian, I don't wear a headscarf; there are people who tell me I look very Arab, and others who say everything but Arab. I don't have the physical, other than being not white, I don't have the stereotypical traits, I don't have an accent, thankfully I'm pretty well-spoken and I read a lot, I can choose to hide my identity if I wasn't, but I make the decision not to. My brother ... he looks like an Arab. When you see Al-Qaeda on the news, when he doesn't shave for two weeks 'cause he's too lazy, he kind of resembles them, strong Arab nose, beard. He's very cynical as well, very outspoken. Funnily enough wherever he goes to the airport he gets selected for random checks, he can't even check in online. So his experience of being Arab and Muslim is different from mine.

She insists that this positioning affects what Palestinians can say and in what spaces they can say it: “in terms of power relations ... as a group don’t have power at all, we are always the ones who are explaining and defending, when we speak it’s always done in spaces where it matters only to us.” She also mentions a generational difference in this regard; the older generation of Palestinians, those who through their accents, experiences and life histories are rendered more visibly “foreign” and Arab than those who were born or grew up in Canada, are often more hesitant to express their political opinions publicly. Suha’s cousin had to hide her membership in a Palestinian solidarity student group from her father, who was afraid of how being a Palestine solidarity activist could affect her future: “They have this fear that they don’t want it to come back to hurt them. They have this fear that if someone finds out it could impact chances of getting a passport, or a job.”

In this post 9/11 context, categories previously treated as race-neutral, like religion, citizenship, and democracy became racialized. Being an immigrant or refugee, and a Muslim, and Arab specifically became increasingly prominent markers of non-whiteness and other-ness (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008). What Nadeau and Sears (2010, 20) call “Racial Palestinianization” is mapped on to an Orientalist framework which characterizes Arabs and Muslims and “further circumscribes claims for legitimization in the national space.” Palestinians, as an Arab and majority Muslim population, and a specifically “demonized racial group” are excluded from the category of whiteness, and therefore rendered suspect before they even speak (Nadeau and Sears 2010). Abu-Laban and Bakan (2009) drawing on Mills (1997), point out that Whiteness, which is the dominant marker of power and national belonging in Canada, is not really a colour at all but a “set of power relations” which determine who has access to space, power and consequently who enjoys narrative authority in the public sphere.

Speaking to the specific processes of racialization that Palestinians encounter, Suha pointed to the decision by the popular clothing chain Urban Outfitters, which has stores in Canada, to discontinue selling a checkered scarf due to complaints from pro-Israel individuals that the scarves resembled the Palestinian Keffiyeh, which they described as a “symbol of terrorism” (Kim 2007). The black and white checkered Keffiyeh, worn by Palestinians and their supporters as symbol of resistance to

occupation, is often used to same way in Hollywood films - according to one of the young women I interviewed it has become in mainstream cinema “a symbol of terrorism and death.” Jack Shaheen (1984; 2001) has detailed in depth how this kind of portrayal of Arabs and Muslims in both film and television recycles old Orientalist tropes, and erases the complexity and lived experiences of Arabs and Muslims in general, and Palestinians in particular.

When the image of the “Palestinian terrorist” is cast within the global discourse of the “war on terror” and outside of the specific national context of a 62 year Israeli occupation and the progressive colonization of Palestinian land, it is easy to recycle Oriental tropes of an inherently violent people and region (Ashcroft 2004, 118). Mina, a 20 year old university student whose family is originally from Acre but who grew up in Saudi Arabia and Lebanon, recalls the way that Palestinian suicide bombings were de-contextualized from this specific history by both the professor and in ensuing class discussions during an undergraduate class: “They talked about suicide bombers in my class, and it was just brutal the way she was talking about it... she didn’t even talk about it properly; didn’t even bring the occupation into it, made it sound like random suicide bombers.” Similar religio-cultural framings and Orientalist tropes shape mainstream news coverage of Palestine-Israel in Canada (Suleiman 1984; Moufawad-Paul and Rudmin 2006; Baltodano et al. 2007). Suleiman (1984) found that media coverage in the 1980’s portrayed Arabs as backwards, untrustworthy and associated with terrorism, while in relation to Palestine-Israel, Canadians showed an “inherent propensity to sympathize with white settlers against the natives.”

A more recent work by Baltodano et al (2007) found that both Canadian and American media coverage revolved around discourses of “Israeli benevolence”, “Palestinian failure”, “Palestinians as future threat”, and “Israeli actions as justified.” Baltodano et al analyzed news coverage from both *The Vancouver Sun* and *The Seattle Times*, covering the events of the Israeli pullout from Gaza in 2005, the Palestinian presidential elections in 2006, and parliamentary elections in 2007. Through images of Israel as a “benevolent protector” trying to cultivate the conditions for peace, Palestinian violence appears as irrational and wholly without context (Baltodano et al 2007).

According to the western narrative of the Israeli occupation (which in mainstream media is a ‘conflict’ and not an occupation), “Palestinians never had a history; they were never there until, apparently out of the blue, they began preying on Israel” (Christison 1999, 2). Much like the discussion of suicide bombing in Mina’s class, violence, when removed from context, appears random – like de-contextualized violence in Somalia, it seems to be an innate feature of the people and landscape. Thus blame is assigned to “the failure of the Palestinian leadership” and “militant Islamists” to take advantage of the “opportunities for peace” that Israel has so benevolently offered to them (Baltodano et al 2007). *The Vancouver Sun* explicitly frames Palestine-Israel in the discourse of the “war on terror” when it writes: “The war on terror is not over, and will take place every day and in every place. It is the natural right of the Jewish people, as it is of every people, to hunt down those who wish to exterminate them” (in Baltodano et al 2007: 8).

Sana, the woman whose grandmother began to “talk about Palestine every two seconds” nearing the end of her life, grew up in Syria and the Gulf and moved to Toronto with her mother, little sister, and brother just after graduating from high-school. When her family first decided to move to Canada from the United Arab Emirates, Sana wanted to avoid this racialization and be “like the Western colonizer”:

When my dad first applied, I was really excited, I’ll be able to go to concerts, that was the main reason, back then not a lot of singers from the U.S came to play in Abu Dhabi. That was the main reason; I wanted to see the Backstreet boys, seriously! And it’s exciting, I think part of it is when you’re there you always think, you really want to be like the Western colonizer, the colonizer is awesome, they have these awesome movies, I wanted to go live like they live in the movies, it’s like this obsession

Her image of Canada was completely shattered when she was doing her undergraduate degree during the 2008-2009 Israel invasion of Gaza. She described this experience of confronting dehumanizing images of Palestinians:

In 2009 the war starts in Gaza, and that’s when I had lots of friends in university, and Israeli friend, well not friend, but know from class. I never had any interaction with her politically. That was the point when I was really integrated into the society, first few years I was in a little bubble. And that’s when I was in shock, by the mainstream opinion about Israel/Palestine. Before that I never paid attention to it

Then you read the news on CBC and I read the comments, and the comments drove me crazy... You would read stuff like all Palestinians are terrorists; we should bomb Gaza with a nuclear bomb. And that's when I thought, Oh My God where do live? Why am I here? Their context was portraying the conflict as if it's between two equal sides, Palestinians started the attack, and Israeli is defending itself. And that's when I changed. Before I would boycott stuff, but I was never political, and I was never that angry. I was angry, but then I wasn't this aware.

What happened was I was depressed, I dropped three courses. I was watching the news every day on al-Jazeera. I hardly ate for 2 weeks, I would force myself to eat. I would wake up in the morning and be like how many people died today. And then university started. I had a feeling, I have a volcano inside of me, I'm upset, I was crying and I feel helpless. At one point I thought if I walk naked in the street in the minus 50 degrees people will pay attention. I was seeing people lose their kids, and I thought about losing my mom and sister. Not only that but I felt very, very guilty because I support the resistance but I'm not paying the price they are. How can I tell people to hold onto my right to return when I'm living the perfect life in Canada, getting educated. It was like survivors guilt, like I'm a hypocrite and I'm full of it.

Thus Palestinians find themselves pushed further and further to the “uncivilized” side of the “colour line” dividing a civilized family of nations from the “barbarity” of much of the Global South, which Razack (2004) identified as so important to Canadian national identity. As Said (1980) observed in an article in *The Nation*: “Very little of the detail, the human density, the passion of Arab-Moslem life has entered the awareness of even those people whose profession it is to report the Arab world. What we have, instead, is a series of crude, essentialized caricatures of the Islamic world presented in such a way as to make that world vulnerable to military aggression.” Sana found that being on that side of the colour line rendered Palestinian lives less worthy in Canadian public discourse, their deaths acceptable collateral damage against a state that is seen to be defending itself from “terrorists.” As In a recent documentary by Al Jazeera’s *Fault Lines* entitled “the Other Special Relationship,” prominent Palestinian-Canadian activist, spoken word artist, and Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) organizer Rafeef Ziadah speaks to how this racialized dehumanization has affected the character of Canadian public discourse on Palestine/Israel: “you have to really start from scratch. You’re starting at a) Palestinians are human, and b) they’re not all terrorists, and then the conversation has to begin” (The Other Special Relationship 2010). In short, Palestinians have been so dehumanized that establishing their basic humanity becomes a pre-requisite for conversation.

### 3.3 The Israeli 'us'

Through the historical development of what Abu-Laban and Bakan (2008) refer to as an international “racial contract” which assigns common interests between Israel and political allies like Canada, Palestinians are absented as both non-white and stateless. Following the Second World War there was a gradual shift in the international “racial contract” and consequently the socio-economic and racial positioning of Jews in Europe and North America. Political Zionism’s association with European colonialism, especially at a time of European, and later American, geostrategic interest in the Middle East, contributed to this shift. Abu-Laban and Bakan (2009, 646) point out that while previously, anti-Semitism cast Jews in the role of the Oriental other, following World War II the Zionist appropriation of European colonial discourse constructed Israel as a European project, and its citizens as White Europeans. Zionism came to synergize with European, specifically British, race-thinking and colonial aspirations at the same time that European Jews were partially de-racialized in the West (Brodkin 2007), acting as a bridge to an unstable whiteness (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2009).

The events of September 11<sup>th</sup>, 2001, worked to further align Israel and Zionism with the West in the “war on terror,” framing its struggle as “America’s struggle” (Pintack 2006, 38; Christison 1999, 259). The Israeli discourse of its “war on terror” draws on historical narratives of Israel as a civilizing liberal and western country and Palestinian society as backward and anti-progressive, and seeks to neutralize support for Palestinians among the Canadian public. Carol, a non-Palestinian woman I interviewed summed it up nicely when she said: “Israeli government discourse is we are a western country like other western countries, we are like you, we’re not like those evil weirdo Islamic republics.”

Amin, the young Palestinian man who wrote the word Palestine in his school atlases when he was only eight years old, who loves reading about history, and has experienced living as a religious Muslim in Canada, analyzes how Zionist narratives draw on old colonial tropes that appeal to Canadians:



It's like the superiority of western civilization over barbaric whatever it is... you see that a lot in the way Israelis are justifying things; like Israel invented this medicine, and Israel invented this -what does that have to do with anything? Technological advancement doesn't justify what you've done...this guy is, back in like the thirties, this Zionist guy was explaining how the Jewish population of Palestine has written like 365 books this year one for every day... Okay big deal...we're farmers so does that mean you can take our land?

The image of Israel as “Western” is reproduced through engagement with ideas, theories and knowledge produced outside the national boundaries, or what Tsing (2005,7) calls “knowledge that moves.” Zionism, and later the Israeli state, has been largely successful at aligning itself with broader discourses which establish its place on the civilized side of the colour line. The Brand Israel campaign launched by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Toronto in 2007 followed in this same vein, attempting to align Israel with narratives of technological, environmental, and cultural “innovation” through its key branding concept “creative energy” (“Winning the Battle” 2010). The campaign included a spotlight on Tel Aviv at the Toronto International Film Festival and a number of ads and events promoting Gay tourism to Israel a “gateway into Israel’s liberal culture.” In a working paper for the Herzliyah Conference, prepared by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Prime Minister’s Office, and several Pro-Israel NGO’s, the logic for diverting attention to Israel’s “creative energy” potential is made explicit:

To create and mobilize support, one must point to convergent *morals and similar values*. In that sense, messages should be coupled with examples of *similar compatible values of Israel with the West*...Participants noted that introducing people to daily life in Israel has been very successful in gaining their support; *spending a night out in Tel-Aviv or taking part in a tour of Herzliya proved to be the best way for foreigners to understand and relate to Israel* (“Winning the Battle” 2010, emphasis mine).

The choice of Toronto as the launching pad for a re-branding effort was largely linked to the birth of Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) on a Toronto campus, described by organizers as an “annual international series of events held in cities and campuses across the globe... to educate people about the nature of Israel as an apartheid system and to build Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns as part of a growing global BDS movement” (IAW 2014). Not only does IAW directly challenge the image of Israel as “the only democracy in the Middle East,” it promotes a specific solution set out by

nearly 200 of Palestinian civil society organizations, unions, campaigns and associations in 2005, namely boycott, divestment and sanctions against the Israeli state until it complies with international law (IAW 2014). Toronto is also home to a vibrant LGBTQ community, and a well-attended annual Pride parade. While a Maxim Magazine feature on women in the Israeli Defence Forces (Reilly 2012) targeted heterosexual men, in 2007 Israel began to promote itself a liberal and progressive “world Gay destination,” focusing on global cities with thriving Queer communities like New York, Toronto and London through poster campaigns, Queer Film festivals, and events such as “Out in Israel” in San Francisco (Puar 2011).

The Brand Israel campaign employed a discourse which produced a binary of Israel as liberal, civilized and progressive, and Palestinians as backward, homophobic and uncivilized – erasing both homophobia within Israeli society and the work and organizations of Palestinian Queers (Puar 2011). Through the re-articulation of civilizational narratives and neo-Orientalist tropes within discourses of “Gay Rights” and a political climate where Israel and “the West” as positioned as co-victims of Islamic fundamentalism, the colour line is drawn in new ways. Puar (2011) correctly identifies the colonial precursor to this kind of narrative: “The “Woman Question” is now being supplemented with the “Homosexual Question.” That is, in the colonial period, the question of ‘how do you treat your women?’ as a determining factor of a nation’s capacity for sovereignty has now been appended with the barometer of ‘how well do you treat your homosexuals?’” (139).

This strategy sparked a vibrant “anti-Pinkwashing” campaign by Palestinian and Palestinian Solidarity Queer groups, who challenged the way the Gay tourism campaign promoted a reductive notion of Queer oppression which erases intersectionality in order to cover up the colonial oppressions of both straight and Queer Palestinians (Puar 2011). In Toronto this resistance took the form of the founding of the group Queers Against Israeli Apartheid (QAIA), which was subject to repeated attempts by members of the Toronto City Council and pro-Israel group B’Nai Brith to ban them from marching in Pride (Greyson 2012). The discourse around the attempted Pride ban was similar to one of the tactics used to silence IAW events on university campuses, namely framing the use

of the term Israeli apartheid as a violation of the norms of “civility” (Nadeau and Sears 2010). While QAIA withdrew from marching in the parade in 2009 in fear that their participation would be used as an excuse for withholding funding from Pride altogether, they have marched every year since. One of the QAIA members I interviewed, Michael, a man who identifies as Jewish, part Israeli and Queer, remarked that the organization was “trying to talk about human rights, like page one, it felt kind of regressive in some ways...we’re just fighting for our very, very basic right to exist and to just walk down the street with a bunch of other homos during pride parade.”

This was in a quite literal sense a battle over access to public (Queer) space, over the right to simply narrate Palestinian dispossession and challenge hegemonic Israeli narratives. As Michael noted, however, the pink-washing campaign had the opposite effect it intended: “We have been supported substantially by the community, certainly when things really heated up, was it 2009, or 2010. The main thing in 2010 is that it became a freedom of speech issue. So there were a lot of free speechers who came out and marched with Pride that year.” He also notes that some of these new allies have “increasingly supported us in a more sophisticated and specific sense, going beyond the free speech arguments and saying, and expressing a little more support for the substantive arguments. At the same time, to me, QAIA is very indicative of a broader struggle within LGBTQ communities.” Michael attributed some of the support to the way that the repression of QAIA connected other Pride participants with the broader issue of freedom of speech and what he calls the “political discourse around queerness and the political and oppositional nature of Gay Pride” –a discourse which rejects the de-politicization and neoliberalization of Queer spaces of which the QAIA banning was a small part. During my fieldwork I marched with the QAIA contingent in the 2013 Pride Parade, which despite the occasional booing from people in the crowd, has managed to become a more or less accepted part of Pride Toronto.

### 3.4 Conclusion

In this context, where the hegemonic narrative of Palestine-Israel affirms Israel as a liberal, tolerant Western democracy, and Palestinians as an Eastern and potentially violent Other, Palestinian-Canadians know that speaking publicly always carries risks

and possibly negative consequences. Many of the Palestinians I interviewed, when I explained my research to them, observed that people were more apt to listen to me because I am, as Nadir says, a “White Anglo-Saxon real Canadian.” Through the re-articulation of Orientalist tropes, colonial erasures, and the discourse of the war on terrorism (Nadeau and Sears 2010), Palestinians are firmly excluded from claims of whiteness and the accompanying privileges. Simultaneously, Nadeau and Sears (2010) point out that “Israel’s recent entry into multiculturalism is being accomplished by rebranding its founding claim as an exclusively Jewish state within claims to racial inclusivity, tolerance of sexual diversity, and other citizenship rights that are the hallmark of white liberal multiculturalism” - a discourse which aligns Israel with Canada’s official policy and public discourse on Multiculturalism (19-20).

This approach is exemplified by the Jewish National Fund Canada (JNF) in North America, which allied itself with the “liberal, progressive values” of environmentalism (Long 2008), in strategy that activists have dubbed “greenwashing” (Kershner et al. 2011). The fact that PM Harper affirmed a fundamental connection between Canada and Israel at the Jewish National Fund’s Negev Dinner (mentioned at the beginning of this chapter) provides a perfect example of the way colonial processes are both effaced and normalized through the reproduction of hegemonic narratives. The Jewish National Fund, an Israeli parastatal agency developed in 1901 to aid in the Zionist colonization of Palestine, uses its afforestation work to demarcate an Israeli nation-space and dispossess the Palestinians (Long 2008). Areas already developed and planted by the JNF were included as part of the Jewish state in these proposals, including the 1947 Partition Plan (Long 2008), while national forests planted on the ruins of Palestinian villages depopulated during the ethnic cleansing of 1947-8 prevented the return of refugees. In the occupied territories following the 1967 war, afforestation served to dispossess Palestinians of both private and public land (Long 2008). One example is the construction of “Canada Park” (funded by the Jewish National Fund Canada through tax-deductible donations) on the ruins of the Palestinian villages of ‘Imwas, Yalu, and Beit Nuba, whose residents were expelled during the 1967 war (Guttman 2005; Abu-Laban and Bakan 2008). The JNF also gives out awards to prominent public figures, including former University of Western Ontario (UWO) president Paul Davenport who was given an award for his

commitment to “diversity, tolerance and human rights” despite a letter by 22 faculty members, as well as personal meeting with four of them, urging him to reject the award on principle (Farah et.al, 2008).

The JNF’s annual Negev Dinner serves as a fundraiser for projects of “promoting soil conservation” and the restoration of “deteriorating, non-productive agricultural lands” in the Negev region (Jewish National Fund, n.d.), home to a significant Arab Bedouin population subject to repeated state efforts of dispossession. These projects, like those enacted in the pre-state period and after the 1948 Nakba, are discursively constructed as the redemption of land degraded under Arab neglect and restored through the technically advanced stewardship of Israeli Jews. The awards ceremony in Toronto was a performance of national mythologies, both Canadian and Israeli, in which colonial narratives of the European civilization of barren, empty lands were re-articulated through the language of development and stewardship, erasing the violence that went into the making of both settler-states. Erased by this discourse that presents their dispossession as “development”, there is little room for Palestinians in Canada to narrate their own experiences. In this way, rendering Palestinian experiences unspeakable works not just to preserve Israeli mythologies but Canadian ones as well.

## Chapter 4

### 4 The 'Old New Land': Historicizing the Bible, Claiming Indigeneity and Erasing the Palestinian Past

Theodor Herzl is known as “the Father of political Zionism” mostly for his pamphlet “Der Judenstaat” (“The Jewish State”). Less well-known is his “utopian” novel, which in German is entitled *Altneuland* (1902), in English “Old New Land”, which details the journey of Viennese doctor of law Fredrich Lowenburg from Vienna to Palestine, to an unnamed Pacific island, and back to Palestine again. Lowenburg's two visits to Palestine, which he refers to as “the land my ancestors left eighteen hundred years ago,” convey some of the foundational myths of the Zionist project in narrative form. In this novel, Herzl evokes the myth of the redemption of land degraded by uncivilized Arabs when he contrasts the years between his first and second visit to Palestine: from a place which embodies “misery in bright-colored Oriental rags: and is peopled by “poor Turks, dirty Arabs, timid Jews lunged about” on a landscape of “bare slopes and bleak rocky valleys,” to a thriving cosmopolitan city rebuilt by intrepid Jewish settlers (in Khalidi 2001, 57). While his novel, like his political project outlined in *Der Judenstaat*, is patently secular, the title “Old New Land” embodies the claim of a Jewish Biblical right to the land of Palestine, which would become central to modern Zionism. The novel also points to the way Zionism characterizes Jews, and later Israelis, as both part of the West and a “partially ‘Eastern’ people emancipated from the worst Eastern excesses” (Said 1978, 85).

The simultaneous Occidentalization/Orientalization of Jews and Israelis plays an important role in achieving legitimacy for Zionist narratives in the West. Drawing on fieldwork interviews and the literature on this topic, this chapter argues that in Canada, the selective historicization of aspects of the Hebrew Bible, including the paradigm of a “promised land - chosen people,” works to negate the history of Arab Palestine, while simultaneously asserting Jewish Indigeneity and associating Israel with Canada’s proclaimed “Judeo-Christian heritage.” This narrative of a land “redeemed” based on Biblical right, as well as the appropriation of Palestinian culture as Israeli, works to

inscribe both the landscape and history of Palestine-Israel as Jewish, effacing colonial expansion by presenting it as simply a “nation returning home” (Abu al-Haj 2002, 34). Where are the Palestinians in this narrative which negates centuries of their existence in an attempt to assert a history of Jewish continuity? Erased both in and by these Biblical narratives, the Palestinians become at best human place-holders in a land awaiting the return of its “rightful owners,” and at worst usurpers, a disposable population without national rights to a land discursively, and later physically, constituted as eternally Jewish. Once their disposability has been established, their dispossession and displacement becomes not only justified but seemingly necessary. They are not only subjected to the same process of colonial dehumanization used to dispossess Natives in other times and places, but as Palestinian-Canadian educator Hanan explained, they are denied even the recognition of their status as a dispossessed and colonized people through narratives which, in an inversion of history, present them as the usurpers. The rest of this chapter will detail how Palestinians in Canada experience and explain this process through which they are rendered usurpers in their own land, and how these narratives are reproduced among secular and religious Canadians.

#### 4.1 The Living Stones: Arab Palestine in Canadian churches

The Palestinian community in Canada includes Christians who belong to the Orthodox, Catholic, and Anglican denominations, among others.<sup>6</sup> The experiences relayed to me by a Christian Palestinian couple in their 90s (and their family) show how these Christian Palestinians have been rendered invisible in public discourse on Palestine-Israel. Both Rashid, a retired Anglican priest originally from Shefa ‘Amr, and Nawal, a writer of poetry, short stories, folktales and novels from Nazareth, grew up during the British Mandate and were in their mid-twenties when the state of Israel was created in 1948. Following the Nakba of 1948, the Anglican congregation in Haifa which Rashid ran became a center for intellectual, cultural and political life for Palestinians in Haifa,

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<sup>6</sup> Statistical information on the percentage of Palestinian Christians in London and Toronto is not available as this information is not recorded in the census or upon entry to Canada.

who had become, in a matter of months, a minority in their own land. In 1965 the couple took their four children to East Jerusalem, which was then annexed by Jordan and part of the remaining 22% of historic Palestine not yet under Israeli control. However, barely two years later, they would experience the second colonial expansion of the “Jewish state” and prolonged foreign military occupation, first in East Jerusalem and, then in Ramallah where they had moved. In the late 1970’s Rashid took over a congregation in Beirut, where he and his family experienced first a civil war and in 1982 a third Israeli invasion. The rest of their lives, first in Europe, and then in Canada, have been spent using both their lived experiences and their historical and religious knowledge to disrupt the hegemonic narratives of Palestine-Israel which render them, and Palestinians in general, invisible.

In three visits to their Toronto apartment, sipping on Arabic coffee and black tea, Rashid and Nawal shared with me their experience of British rule, living as a despised native minority in Israel under military rule (which applied only to Palestinian Arabs and not the new Jewish citizens of the nascent state), under direct military occupation in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and in exile in Lebanon. Nawal is a charismatic and passionate woman who speaks with pride and nostalgia about Palestine, her birthplace of Nazareth, and her work as a writer and with the Church in the Middle East, England and Canada. She says: “I enjoyed growing up in the hills where Jesus must have walked, and I could imagine things happening at the time of Jesus, and that the hills are the same.” She talked about living under British and later Israeli rule:

I lived under the Mandate, then we became aware of the scheming against us, very early on I became aware that Palestine is in danger. Even in primary schools we used to go out and demonstrate against the British, sometimes the army was after us, or the police. It was a mess. From then on, even as a child Palestine meant so much, it meant to me that I should do whatever I can to be on the side of what is right and on the side of my people. We suffered a great deal as the beautiful cities of Palestine were falling one after the other. I still remember hearing that Haifa fell, Tiberias, then my own town Nazareth fell.

When she was twenty-six, Nawal married Rashid and moved to Haifa where he had taken over the Anglican congregation, after boarding the last train to Haifa in the wave of ethnic cleansing against Haifa’s Palestinian Arab population. Together, under the



draconian conditions of military rule imposed on Palestinian citizens of Israel from 1948 to 1966 (Bsoul 2006, 30), the couple ran the congregation, the attached school and founded one of the first human rights organizations concerned with the status of the Palestinian Arab minority living under Israeli rule. Rashid, a warm and compassionate man, is well-read and intelligent, and given his age, has an incredible recollection of both historical knowledge and personal memories of Palestine. While we sat by a sunny window in his Toronto apartment eating Arabic sweets, he recounted both the history of Palestine from Ottoman rule until the Nakba, his experiences in Anglican churches in the Middle East and abroad, and his thoughts on the erasure of Palestinian history and Palestinian Christians in popular discourses in Europe and North America.

It was a military government with all kinds of limits for Palestinians; the sick couldn't go to a doctor because the [Israeli] permit was not available. They used to send a military man to a village once a week [to get a permit], not every day. You can't open a shop without some kind of license. Slowly the Arabs were prevented from having any kind of economic, political or social organizations that was for them.

He also talked about his involvement in efforts to resist land appropriation and the economic, political, and cultural marginalization of the Palestinian Arab population, efforts which earned him the nickname "the Red Dean":

We formed a society, called the Society for the Defence of Arab Minority Rights in Israel, at the beginning of the 1950s. I was the only ordained minister, but the Society included mayors, heads of labour parties, members of the Knesset [the Israeli parliament], people from the Haifa municipality, one Jewish dentist, about 15 people from all parts, including the Mapai [political] party. Slowly these people, under pressure from the Israeli government left, except for me and the communists. I was thus called the "Red Dean" at the time. Then we fought against the Citizenship Law which stated that any Jew who comes to Israel, and as soon as he lands, is a citizen, but Arabs have to prove certain things and impossible conditions were placed upon them to get citizenship, especially on those who were expelled so that they would not be allowed to return. We also held conferences and wrote letters against certain laws through which Israel dispossessed Arabs from their land, all kinds of laws, like the absentee property law, development plans and laws, the designation of military areas, all in order to take over all the Arab lands. We tried to do everything possible but if you ask your Jewish friends what's happening, they will tell you we can't do anything, because the Zionist movement was a movement to occupy all of Palestine.

Rashid spoke of how difficult it was to organize for Palestinian human rights under a repressive regime, and how divide and conquer tactics were used against the Christian community. He recalls how members of the Israeli Transfer Committee (see Masalha 2012) convinced one member of the Anglican congregation to promote the idea that Anglican Palestinians should relocate to South America, an idea which he helped defeat in the Synod, the governing body of the church. This tactic seems quite similar to the recent effort of the Israeli government to recruit Christian Palestinians into the army by sending out voluntary draft notices. These divide and rule efforts, which are couched in a discourse which identifies Christianity and Christians as part of a common “western civilization” (but without giving or acknowledging the Palestinian Christians their rights to the land or return) antithetical to the Oriental Muslim Other, is opposed by most of the Palestinian Christian community (Kane 2014).

Rashid and Nawal’s daughter Hanan remembers clearly the experience of leaving Haifa and crossing to Jerusalem, which was then under Jordanian control:

So I remember that day very clearly. I was very young about 11 years old. I said goodbye to my dog Toffee, knowing instinctively that it was a journey with no return. Although I didn’t know exactly what was happening, I knew we were leaving for good, I was even kissing the walls of the house, a dramatic thing for a child to move knowing you can’t return... I had one aunt who was separated from her family during the ‘48 war and had been living in the West Bank since then. As is the case with almost all Palestinians separated by the war, she had not seen her family who remained on the other side for all these years. She came with her son to welcome us on the other side, which was the West Bank then annexed by Jordan. She saw us from a distance and saw her parents and family with their hand clutching at the barbed wire on the border which separated Israel from Jordan. There was a small stretch of no-man's-land ...My aunt and her son tried to catch a glimpse of her parents whom she hadn’t seen since ‘48. So her son held her hands and dragged her : “Run! Run!” And she ran across the land that separated her just close enough to touch and see them, but was soon forced to go back to the Jordanian side. I remember hands waving, everybody crying, tears just flowing - this sense of fatality, that something is gone forever.

Both Nawal and her daughter expressed a sense of relief upon entering the Jordanian controlled West Bank. Nawal says “I was happy to be in a Palestinian milieu with friends I had known before the war, and that my kids are going to a school where they will not be hated and humiliated, because this was very common in Israel. Palestinian

children were humiliated, up till now. They would call us *Aravim melukhlakhim* - it means an Arab rag, dirty, or stupid.” The sense of elation did not last long, however, as the West Bank was occupied by Israel in 1967. Hanan remembers hearing the bombing overhead, and then the transformation of daily life when Jerusalem came under foreign military occupation:

That’s when the checkpoints started; we were searched going to school from Beit Hanina to Jerusalem and back. Certain images are deeply etched, on the way to school with my sister and our bags being searched by Israeli soldiers armed to the teeth. I remember the village women carrying produce such as vegetables or fruit to sell in Jerusalem on the bus. One day Israeli soldiers at the checkpoints dragged a woman off a bus, threw her vegetables on the ground, and insulted her. The world we lived in under occupation was scary. And in 1970 when Adbul Nasser died, we broke all the school rules and ran out in the streets, crying and protesting. Gamal Abdul Nasser was the Egyptian president, an Arab nationalist whom we hoped will help us liberate Palestine. Of course the Israeli army and police were sent out to quell the protests and I remember them coming with full force, some on horses carrying clubs to beat us with... When I grew up, being Christian or Muslim did not matter, we were all colonized.

When Nawal and Rashid, moved to England and later Canada after living through civil war and the Israeli military invasion of Beirut, they found that there was little room in discourses of Palestine-Israel, especially in Christian discourses, to narrate these lived experiences of what the “redemption” of a “promised land” looked like from the perspective of the dispossessed Indigenous population. Rashid says:

So when you talk to people, especially church people, they had the idea that Israel of today is linked to the Israel of the Bible, although of course they are very different. One friend of mine, in one of the congregations I served, told me he was always thinking that Israel in the Bible is the same as the one of today, and linked to it. Completely wrong. I think in the West, [this is] a great deal resulting from centuries, and centuries of people in Europe reading in the Bible that God gave Israel this land to the people of God. Especially in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, there were sermons about the need to get the Jews back to Palestine

Rashid has written a number of articles challenging the literal interpretation of the Bible, some of them have not been published in Church circulars and journals precisely because they challenge these interpretations. He observed that these kind of Biblical interpretations among Christians are part of the very structure of Western Christianity, both in religious and secular education and during church services: “they know very

little, because the history here in the schools in more or less Canadian and Western, the East is....it's the same in theological colleges they teach about the Reformation, about Western theologians, but what happened in the East is left out." The result is that Christianity, which originated in the Middle East, is produced as a Western religion somehow inherently opposed to Islam, which is thought to belong, both historically and "culturally" to the East.

Samman (2013) argues that in order to understand the Zionist movement, it is "pertinent to locate its discursive property as emanating from and latching onto the religious changes taking place within imperial Europe" which solidified the identification of Palestine as the rightful home of the 'children of Israel'" (15). Zionism latched on to these ideas in order to make Jews "Western" –to Occidentalize or de-Orientalize them – by referring to what is now the commonsensical notion of a "Judeo-Christian" civilization, one in which the Holy Land becomes "the property of Europe itself, with Jews as the rightful Biblical keepers" (Samman 2013, 17). Thus Jews, and Israelis in particular, are simultaneously constructed as Occidental and, concurrently, as Edward Said (1978) puts it, "partially Eastern". Rashid finds that this vision is reproduced in church services: "In the liturgy on the church they mention Israel 100 times; they read from the Old Testament a hundred times. So they think in the West that Israel is linked somehow to what the bible says."

In his 2007 book *The Bible and Zionism: Invented Traditions, Archaeology, and Post-Colonialism in Israel-Palestine*, Nur Masalha, drawing on Hobsbawm and Said, describes the invention of tradition as a "typical European practice of using collective memory selectively by manipulating bits of the national and religious past" while suppressing others, and mobilizing this selective memory for political ends (18). The historicization of aspects of the Hebrew Bible is central to modern political Zionism in this sense, as it has been reworked into a nation-making narrative which produced both a shared history for Diaspora Jews who lived in different countries, spoke different languages, and practiced different traditions, and established a "sacrosanct title deed" to the land slated for colonization (Masalha 2007, 19). Biblical claims of a promised land are centered on several related stories in the Hebrew Bible, namely the promise of the

land of Canaan by Yahweh to Abram (Abraham) and his descendants in the book of Genesis, a promise reiterated to Isaac and Moses in the Book of Exodus, and finally fulfilled by Joshua (Prior 1999, 160).

Following the promise of Canaan to Abram, described in Exodus 3.8 as “land flowing with milk and honey,” Yahweh instructs Moses during the exodus from Egypt to repossess the land of Canaan by force:

When my angel goes in front of you, and brings you to the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Canaanites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, and I blot them out, you shall not bow down to their gods, or worship them, or follow their practices, but you shall utterly demolish them and break their pillars in pieces (in Prior 1999: 160).

The Zionist movement, and later the state of Israel, incorporated Biblical scripture into a secular nationalist framework, institutionalizing particular stories into popular discourses, the national educational curriculum, and nationalist archaeology (Masalha 2007, 2012; Prior 1998, 199; Benvenisti 1986, 2006). Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi, a professor at Haifa University in Israel, summarized the centrality of biblical narratives when he wrote in 1992:

Most Israelis today, as a result of Israeli education, regard the Bible as a source of reliable historical information of a secular, political kind. The Zionist version of Jewish history accepts most Biblical legends about the beginnings of Jewish history, minus divine intervention. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are treated as historical figures. The descent into Egypt and Exodus are phases in the secular history of a developing people, as is the conquest of Canaan by Joshua. The biblical order of events is accepted, but the interpretation is nationalist and secular. The historicization of the Bible is a national enterprise in Israel, carried out by hundreds of scholars at all universities (in Masalha 2007, 21).

These same Biblical stories of a promised land took on heightened importance for Christians in Europe following the Protestant Reformation, which sparked a new interest in the concepts of a Chosen People and Promised Land embodied in the story of Yahweh’s covenant with the Jews, and resurrected earlier strands in Christian thought concerning the expected Second Coming of Jesus Christ (Prior 1999, 138; Masalha 2007, 87). A belief in the inerrancy of the Bible led Protestants to assert that Jews were the descendents of the ancient Hebrews, and that their ingathering in the Holy Land was a

sign of the Second Coming of the Messiah (Prior 1999, 138). This Christian Zionism was very much tied to what Nur Masalha (2007) describes as “revivalist, millennialist, fundamentalist and apocalyptic eschatology” that became popular between the 17<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century, and at the end of each century since (89). With European, and particularly British, imperial involvement in the Middle East in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ability to impose a biblical lens on a present landscape, through imperial methods like land surveys and biblical archaeology was greatly increased. Sir Charles Warren of the British Palestine Exploration fund remarked that “King Consul [James Finn] rules supreme, not over the natives of [Jerusalem], but over strangers; but yet these strangers for the most part are the rightful owners, the natives for the most part are usurpers” (in Masalha 2007, 92). The way European imperial officials achieved this epistemological displacement of Palestinians Arabs from the landscape through Biblical narratives of a “Chosen People” was largely appropriated by, and formed the fundamental framework and narrative of, the early Zionist movement.

These Biblical narratives of historic Palestine also played an important role in Jewish and Christian Zionism in North America. Evangelicalism, as a particular brand of Protestant Christianity, is strongly associated in North America with John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), a minister whose version of dispensationalist doctrine (the division of history into a number of periods) asserted that the seven “epochs” of the world would end with the millennial kingdom of Jesus and the battle of Armageddon (Prior 1999). He influenced evangelical leaders like Schofield, Blackstone, and Moody who would spread Evangelicalism in North America, where a strong Christian Zionist movement, well-connected with political elites in Congress and the White House alike, has maintained an unprecedented influence on the American policy in the Middle East since the Reagan administration (Prior 1999; Masalha 2007).

John Darby made seven missions to Canada and the U.S. between 1862 and 1867, promoting the idea that Jewish colonies would “turn the wilderness [of Palestine] into a garden of the Lord” (Engler 2010, 13). The idea that Biblical scripture justified colonial expansion and the dispossession of Indigenous inhabitants was not a particularly unusual idea at the time in the United States or Canada, as Biblical justification was key to the

initial conquest and continued colonial expansion of European powers in Turtle Island/North America (Prior 1999). In 1925 during the dedication of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, Canadian Prime Minister Arthur Meighan, remarking on the outcome of the First World War, said: “Of all the results, none is more important and more fertile in human history than the *re-conquest* of Palestine and the *rededication* of that country to the Jewish people” (in Azrieli 2008, 44 emphasis mine). Prime Minister Bannett proclaimed in a 1935 national radio broadcast that Zionism represented the fulfillment of biblical prophecies: “When the promises of God, speaking through His prophets, are that the home will be restored in the homeland of their forefathers...the historic and ancient homeland some time again settled by the descendants of a dispersed and conquered people” (in Azrieli 2008, 69).

An alliance between prominent Jewish Zionist organizations in Canada and their Christian counterparts began to solidify nearing the end of the British mandate in Palestine. A key figure in this effort was Canada’s first Jewish judge, Henry Batshaw who began to court non-Jewish support for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine in the early 1940’s. From this effort the Canadian Palestine Committee (CPC) was formed, with fervent Zionist Anglican Minister Herbert Mowat at its head, a man whom the B’nai Brith executive praised for having “certainly sold the non-Jew the idea of Palestine as the rightful homeland of the Jews” (in Azrieli 2008, 84). By 1946 the CPC, which lobbied parliamentarians for a partition of Palestine, counted among its members 79 federal MP’s, several provincial parliamentarians, two federal cabinet ministers, and several senators (Azrieli 2008, 84-5). Biblical beliefs also played a role in Lester Pearson’s decision to push for a partition of Palestine. In his memoirs he writes: “I must admit that I became emotionally involved in a very special way because we are dealing with the Holy Land – the land of my Sunday school lessons. At one stage in my life I knew far more about the geography of Palestine than I did the geography of Canada” (in Bercuson 1985, 233).

Palestinian Christians in Canada have to contend with this deeply rooted alliance between Christian and Jewish Zionism in Canada, which has only increased following the election of Prime Minister Stephen Harper, himself an Evangelical Christian. Thus, it is

not surprising that Palestinians like Rashid encounter enormous difficulties in trying to present the history of Palestine and talk about their lived experience as Palestinians in Christian spaces. In recent years, for example, Joseph Ben-Ami, a former strategist for Stockwell Day and Stephen Harper, and former director of Government Relations and Diplomatic Affairs for B'nai Brith iterated the importance of Christians Zionism in Canada: "The Jewish community in Canada is 380,000 strong. The Evangelical community is three and a half million. The real support base for Israel is Christians" (in McDonald 2011, 323).

Key figures in this new alliance include B'nai Brith Executive Vice President Frank Dimant, Joseph Ben-Ami, Sun News journalist Ezra Levant, Charles McVety of Canada Christian College, Brantford Minister John Tweedie of Christians for Israel and ardent Zionist and former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration Jason Kenney (Dart 2012, 29). In 2006 B'nai Brith partnered with the Israeli Government and Canada Christian College (which have given Dimant and McVety honorary degrees) to bring American televangelist and militant Zionist John Hagee to speak to crowds of Canadian Zionists in Toronto. The organization has also co-organized trips to Israel with the Christians United for Israel, whose founder John Tweedie justified his religious support for Zionism by claiming that "history has no record of a nation called Palestine" (in McDonald 2011, 416). While the influence of the Christian (Evangelical) right should not be over-estimated, the experiences of the Palestinians I interviewed reveal that the idea of the land of Palestine-Israel as an exclusive Jewish homeland still maintains a fairly wide currency in Canadian discourse.

Nawal spoke of these ideas as a serious obstacle to making her lived experience, and the story of Palestine more generally, knowable in Europe and North America:

You know in a very humble way, through our lives Rashid and I, we tried to do what we can to enlighten people about the realities of Palestine ...but our efforts are humble as we speak mainly to individuals and small church communities. But this story should not be only told to individuals but all people should try to raise awareness about the truth of what is happening. They think it is a romantic story, the people of Israel are coming back to build the temple...it is a myth.



Palestinian Christians in Canada, as an interruption to this dichotomous narrative of Christianity as Western and Islam as Eastern, are marginalized or erased from discourses on Palestine-Israel. When I asked Rashid if people in Canada knew that there were Palestinians, or Arabs in general, that are Christians, he said “probably secular people don’t know, some Christians I think know. Of course you are right the general impression is that Arabs, Palestinians mean Muslims. This has been the impression throughout history, since the Crusaders, they were fighting Muslims armies.” When the couple travelled through North America to talk about Palestine and the occupation, they often experienced disbelief at their very existence as both Arabs and Christians, as Nawal recalls: “they don’t believe that there were Christians, [they ask] when were you converted? And they don’t know that we are the first Christians in the world, as we are the descendents of people who accepted Christianity from the disciples.” Rashid’s cousin Nadir (see chapter 3), who came to Canada nearly 20 years earlier, experienced similar reactions in churches: “They think of us as Muslims, we try to say the Arab Christians were here long before Islam came. Once I said we belong to the first Christian church on earth.” His daughter Rana tries a humorous approach: “we used to joke that my great, great, great, great etc grandfather used to play marbles with Jesus, ‘cause we went back to that time.”

The way these biblical texts were appropriated by the Zionist settler-national project also meant a re-thinking of the relevance and meaning of the Hebrew Bible (the Old Testament) for Palestinian Christians (Prior 1999). According to Rashid, who has been struggling against fundamentalist and literary interpretations of the Bible and has adopted a more liberationist approach:

The missionaries who came taught the people who were converted, whether Presbyterians, Anglicans, etc. that every word in the Bible is God’s word, a literal interpretation, you must believe in it. So they used to read the Old Testament as that’s what God says. And this, before 48, the Palestinians thought it was nice to hear about Moses and Jacob and so on and the Israel conquest, but after 48 the whole thing is changed. I myself had written a thesis in England the one year I was in college there, about the relevance of the Old Testament to the Christian community because I was struggling, why are these missionaries coming and saying Jews should take the land of Palestine, because of their insistence every generation was teaching in the West that God gave Palestine to the Jews.

His comments remind me of Edward Said's (1986) insistence on the necessity of re-reading Biblical texts with the "eyes of a Canaanite" – that population Yahweh orders destroyed as part of a divine conquest of the "promised land." Masalha (2007) notes that North American native writer Robert Allen Warrior, in light of the Biblical justification used for the conquest of the Americas, calls for a similar re-reading of texts of Yahweh's covenant with the Jews and the ensuing conquest of the land of Canaan. Warrior insists that it is the Canaanites with whom Indigenous people can naturally identify, and that this reframing of biblical narratives is the point from which to "articulate theologies of liberation" (in Masalha 2007, 282).

This kind of re-reading however, does not enjoy wide circulation in Christian communities. Nawal and Rashid identified religious tourism and pilgrimages to Palestine-Israel, specifically to Jerusalem, as another vehicle for perpetuating Zionist interpretations of the Holy Land:

They [Christians] know Israel, sometimes when we say Palestine they say you mean Israel? We've been there, it's so nice they say. They go as tourists, and they see it from the Zionist Jewish point of view...they love it, they think it is a realization of a dream; you must know how affected they are by the Old Testament.

Jerusalem was occupied in two wars; the western part became part of Israel during the 1948 war, and the eastern part, which was occupied in 1967, contains most of the religious sites and is therefore the focal point of most religious tourism. The Israeli declared Jerusalem Israel's capital (a move not recognized by any foreign government), though its historical and religious significance is shared by Christians, and Muslims. The most contentious area, known to Jews and Israelis as the Temple Mount and to Muslims as Haram al-Sharif, contains the ruins of former Jewish temples and the revered Dome of Rock and al-Aqsa Mosque. When Israel occupied the West Bank it illegally annexed East Jerusalem, including the revered holy sites (Abu al-Haj 1998) and began carrying out archaeological excavations on the newly occupied land, capturing the Palestine Archaeological Museum and all its artifacts and eventually making the site the headquarters of the Israeli Antiquities Association (Silberman 2001). The government

immediately began a process of the Judaization<sup>7</sup> of the landscape (making the demographic and physical landscape Jewish), turning nationalist images into material reality. Tourism to Jerusalem is not only a major revenue generator for the Israeli government, but through control of both the presentation of and access to Holy Sites, it is able to perpetuate particular narratives of the Holy Land which leave little space for a “Canaanite reading” of the history or landscape.

Father M, a Catholic priest who has been involved in social justice and solidarity work with both First Nations communities and Palestinians for most of his sixty odd years, noted that many church groups bring delegations to Israel to see the Holy Sites but never visit Palestinians. Rashid and Nawal noticed the same thing; speaking about standard religious tourism to Palestine-Israel, Rashid remarks:

They came back and reported what was happening, including the story where they went to 'Ebilleen, near Shefa 'Amr, a Greek Catholic Bishop was a priest there...At any rate we went there, this priest said why are you coming here, if you want stones we don't have stone, it means we don't have remains of ancient churches, but we have living stones, it means [the Palestinians living there]. When he came back he and I and some other person, very nice Roman-Catholics all of them, said let us start something called the Living Stones organization, it is still going. The aim was to promote pilgrimages to the Holy Land to see Christians, Muslims, Jews (people instead of stones); help British Christians understand the situations there.

This kind of resistance to narratives that cast Palestinians as usurpers in eternally Jewish land has a long history in church communities, in large part due to the efforts of Palestinian Christians like Nawal and Rashid, who were involved in early efforts to help religious tourists see the landscape with Canaanite eyes.

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<sup>7</sup> The Israeli government has pursued a policy of Judaization in Jerusalem, which involves manipulating the demographic and physical landscape in order to turn Jerusalem into a Jewish City – culturally, demographically and politically. This project is similar to those pursued by the Israeli government within its borders following the expulsions of Palestinians in 1948. In the Galilee, the area with the highest concentration of Palestinians inside of Israel, the government implemented a project with the official name “Judaization of the Galilee”, involving both the demolition of Palestinians homes and significant subsidies for Jewish immigrants buying houses in the area.

While the Living Stones organization was focused on bringing British Christians to Palestine-Israel, the Catholic priest I interviewed, Father M, is involved in similar efforts in Canada to both challenge Biblical interpretations of the landscape which obfuscate its present reality, and promote instead seeing Palestine-Israel through a lens of justice and compassion:

Unfortunately, a lot of the delegations just go to the holy stones, not the living holy people, don't even meet the Palestinians. And they get these guides, sometimes they're Christian Palestinians but they just want to go to all the holy spots, they never meet the people on the ground that are peacemakers. We do the opposite, bring people to the peacemakers trying to end the oppression.

In Christian communities this work has often involved challenging not just narratives of the Holy Land but more basic issues of church doctrine, from emphasis on Old Testament readings during liturgy, to challenging Just War doctrines and encouraging the use of Palestinian liberation theology influenced with liberation theologies coming out of Latin America in the 60's and 70's (Masalha 2007, 263).

In Palestine-Israel the organization Sabeel (in English "the way") headed by Palestinian liberation theologian Dr Naim Ateek, works to form a Palestinian liberation theology based on peace, non-violence and justice, promoting this message through connections with churches around the world (Masalha 2007, 265). The Palestinian Christian organization Kairos is involved in similar efforts, most well-known its 2009 declaration on the suffering of the Palestinian people and the responsibility of the church:

In this spirit the document requests the international community to stand by the Palestinian people who have faced oppression, displacement, suffering and clear apartheid for more than six decades. *The suffering continues while the international community silently looks on at the occupying State, Israel. Our word is a cry of hope, with love, prayer and faith in God. We address it first of all to ourselves and then to all the churches and Christians in the world, asking them to stand against injustice and apartheid, urging them to work for a just peace in our region, calling on them to revisit theologies that justify crimes perpetrated against our people and the dispossession of the land* (Kairos 2009, emphasis mine).

The collective works of biblical scholar, liberation theologian, human rights and justice activist Michael Prior (1997, 1998, 1999, 2003) have made important contributions toward challenging biblical theologies which justify oppression, focusing the majority of

his later scholarship on the suffering of the Palestinians. His commitment to moral engagement as a pre-requisite for both good scholarship and religious faith and theology, embodied in his involvement in the founding of the Living Stones for the Holy Land organization (which Nawal and Rashid were involved in founding), has offered a serious challenge to hegemonic biblical narratives of Palestine-Israel.

Nawal and Rashid have been part of this larger movement from almost the beginning, involved not only in the Living Stones for the Holy Land, but other organizations which make Palestine and Palestinian suffering visible in mainstream Christian spaces. Something that Nawal and Rashid recognize is that the most important and effective work they can do to make Palestinian voices audible happens outside of Palestine-Israel itself. Nawal says that when she is outside of her homeland she has a responsibility to be “an ambassador for her people.” When I ask Rashid if he talked about Palestine during his work in churches in England, he said:

Of course! One of the things we were involved in was a group called Christians Aware. It is now a movement headed by the wife of a former Bishop. Their aim is to engage church people to understand the culture and religion of other areas of the world, Africa, Asia, groups coming, them going there. And at the beginning it was actually to promote the Palestinian issue, Nawal and I were on the organizing committee, then it developed into the organization known as Christians Aware. Nawal produced a booklet with some stories and other poems and things like that - that was the first thing we did in the British media.

Though Rashid was retired when he and Nawal moved to Canada, he continued to tell the Palestinian story through his church involvement, though not as much as he would have liked:

We didn't meet many Canadians, but when we came to the church, we were welcomed by the priest there, a very good priest, and introduced to the congregation, but we didn't want to impose ourselves on people, we had to go very, very nicely, slowly, quietly. Some people can react badly to you if you try too hard. Through our membership in that church most people know about the Palestinian issue. We have at least three or four times people coming to bring Zeitoun (Palestinians olive oil brand) from the West Bank that we sold in the church.

He does still feel there is a lot of work to be done: “If I were younger I would make a revolution here, but I am too old now.”

Father M has been to Palestine-Israel more times than he can remember, volunteering in al-Khalil (Hebron, a city in the occupied West Bank) with an all-denomination Christian justice organization committed to acting in solidarity with Palestinians –led non-violent resistance to occupation. He too recognizes the importance of doing work in Canada:

Work at home is important as well, because things will only change when Israel feels pressured, especially in the U.S. We do a lot of that, being a Catholic priest I can get into Catholic schools, and there are 200 high schools, and I call the chaplains, religion teachers, history teachers, geography teachers. And I go in not as a rabble rouser but as a Catholic priest. I show them, I just tell stories, take them to Hebron and to the West Bank and just tell story after story after story. Start in Shuhada street, go to South Hebron Hills, go to Bethlehem and look at the wall, and then they start to ask questions, how can this be? And then, telling stories is the best way.

He found that morally engaged theology and practice involved mounting challenges to certain theoretical suppositions, particularly the Just War doctrine within the Catholic Church. This kind of work has led to a shift in the discourse on Palestine-Israel, as the endorsement of the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) has become a topic debated by the leadership of different Christian denominations. The United Church of Canada, one of the more progressive denominations, passed a resolution in 2012 to encourage Canadians and the Canadian government to “contribute to ending the occupation” by boycotting goods produced in settlements (Tapper 2012).

Rashid was involved in responding to the backlash from pro-Israel organizations following the United Church decision:

Martin Buber [a well-known Jewish theologian and philosopher] wrote me a letter [in the late 1940's] encouraging me [in his work in the Society for Arab Minority Rights]. And by the way, I sent yesterday a letter to the Anglican journal because they had a short article, sort of accepting the proposal by Kairos, Palestinian Kairos. Ghada Karmi [a Palestinian medical doctor and author] met the archbishop, they voted in the Synod in favour of defense of Palestinians, their suffering, the injustice. Some Jewish man called Simon Folger, from the Center for Israeli and Jewish Affairs in Canada, of course he was against the United church because it voted for divestment, he said you're going the wrong approach, and I'm answering that.

By calling for a boycott of goods produced in Israeli settlements, the United Church resolution is offering a challenge to claims of the divine sanctity of the occupation of Palestinian lands, and looking at these lands and the people within a framework of justice and compassion, one which recognizes, implicitly, the historical rights of Palestinian Arabs. This move offers such a challenge to the status quo in Canada, that the former Development Minister cut off aid to the ecumenical organization Canadian Kairos, a decision former Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney publicly admitted was in opposition to the groups supposed leadership role in the BDS movement, though their website makes it clear they have never supported BDS (Caplan 2009).

As Father M's work shows, these challenges to Christian doctrine and the role of churches can also speak to colonial processes in Canada, especially important given the involvement of major Christian denomination churches in the residential school system, a colonial policy to "kill the Indian in the child" by removing Indigenous children from their communities and stifling any cultural expression (Ing 2011). Father M. tells me:

What I do a lot with high school kids, if I have an hour and 10 minutes, one period... First 20 minutes on Israel-Palestine, and then switch to Palestinian, Aboriginal justice, colonization that took place here, who were the settlers here... they've never thought about it, they don't consider themselves settlers. I'm a settler.

So what's going on in Israel, it's been going on here for 500 years, and we've put native people on reserves, tried to assimilate them with residential schools so we could take their land and resources. That's the same thing that's going on over there, they want the land and they want the resources, the water. I try to make that connection. It's a really important one, because all of a sudden you're involved. It gets them involved. We'll do a checkpoint coming in, for a grade 12 class, maybe 150 kids, all day, sometimes in a church, sometimes in a school. As they enter the teacher hands out cards of different colour, let's see your pass, sit over there, and stay against the wall. They have no idea what's going on... and then you tell them we just role played a checkpoint, this goes on everyday for kids going to school on Shuhada street [in the West bank city of Hebron]. We talk to people, some are arrested, and some go through and then it's over.

And then when we switch to Canada well do the blanket exercise, you put whole bunch of blankets on the floor and that's North America, and a group of kids stand on them and you can walk, and then people from Europe come, roll blankets up, put people in places, blankets disappear, and whole bunch die from disease, we hand out cards and yellow means you're dead. Just enough so they can

visualize oh my God that's what happened in Canada. So we do that, and then in small groups we do non-violence training with them

Zionist organizations in Canada actively try to stifle or pre-empt these kinds of connections and solidarity between Palestinians and First Nations. These organizations have targeted First Nations leaders for free trips to Israel (McDonald 2011) where a narrative of common suffering and Indigeniety is mobilized, perhaps a response to the growing BDS movement which analyzes Israeli policy in a colonial framework. In her 2011 book *The Armageddon Factor: The Rise of Christian Nationalism in Canada*, Marci McDonald recounts her visit to the B'nai Brith office of executive vice president Frank Dimant, where she saw, in a visual representation of three facets of Zionist strategy in Canada, a picture of Stephen Harper, an honorary degree from Canada's Christian College, and the dream catcher given to mark his status as an honorary chief of the Keewatin Tribal Council on his wall - the latter following B'nai Brith sponsored trips bringing First Nations leaders to Israel (311).

An article in June 2013 by a Métis man named Ryan Bellerose entitled "Native Jewish Bond thicker than Water" gives some idea as to the narrative that has been promoted. The article, carried in dozens of Canadian newspapers as a special to the QMI agency, recycled old Zionist tropes, claiming that Jews are Indigenous to the Holy Land, while Palestinians arrived as conquerors in the seventh century. He further lauds "Zionists activists" for sharing their "innovative agricultural techniques with Native groups" (Bellerose 2013). However, the assertion does not seem to have gained wide legitimacy among either First Nations communities or social activist communities – Bellerose's article was in fact in response to a conference organized by the Council of Canadians called "Indigenous Perspectives on Water: Canada and Palestine" (Bellerose 2013). In many ways, the various responses from First Nations people highlight important differences and tensions within First Nations communities, particularly tensions between band councils and traditional forms of Indigenous governance. Reactions to this rhetoric has been strongly condemned by many prominent Indigenous people in Canada, with former Algonquin Chief Robert Lovelace, who participated in the Canadian Boat to Gaza campaign, being the most outspoken advocate of the notion that



supporting Palestinian human rights is a natural position for other Indigenous people. (Toensing 2012).

The response to Bellerose's article, which was also carried in the Indian Country Media Network (ICMN), took him to task for both his heavy-handed rhetoric and historical inaccuracy, while pointing to a widespread opposition to this kind of faulty reasoning (Toensing 2012). This opposition includes the recent decision by the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (whose members include Metis and First Nations people) to endorse the Palestinian call for an academic and cultural boycott (Gilio-Whitaker 2013). Campus Palestinian human rights groups, many of which are based in an explicitly anti-colonial framework for understanding Palestine-Israel, have begun to highlight the connections between colonialism in Canada and in Palestine-Israel. During my research, I attended an event at Western university organized by the campus Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) on woman's rights under occupation, which featured a Palestinian and a Métis woman talking about the status of women under colonial occupation in Turtle Island and Palestine. Before the event started, the Palestinian organizers, though they struggled with the pronunciation, began by acknowledging whose traditional territory the event was taking place on. Though they are of course important differences between colonial dispossession on Turtle Island and in Palestine-Israel, there are important similarities in the discourses used to dehumanize those displaced during colonial expansion. This narrative that is being challenged, one which asserts Jewish Indigeneity in Palestine through biblical justification, is part of a larger strategy of Indigenization of Israeli Jews both in Palestine-Israel and in Canada. One of the other forms this Indigenization takes is the appropriation of aspects of Palestinian/Arab culture into displays of Israeli national identity.

## 4.2 'They stole our land, why shouldn't they steal our culture?'

This appropriation of Palestinian/Arab culture is part of this expanded domain of violence which seems to follow Palestinians wherever they go. Twenty-year-old Amal was born in Jordan, the second of three countries where her family lived in exile. Her mother was born in a small town just north of Nablus, a Palestinian city in the West

Bank, where she lived until she was seven years old, when her family was forced to flee on foot to Jordan when Israel invaded and occupied the West Bank in 1967. Amal's mother later moved to Kuwait where her father was working, and eventually met her husband, Amal's father, there. When Palestinians were expelled from Kuwait during the Gulf war, Amal's parents moved to Jordan. In a situation sadly common for many Palestinians, though Amal's mother had Jordanian citizenship, her father was stateless, and because citizenship is based on the male line Amal became stateless as well, prompting Amal's mother to move the two of them to Canada when Amal was five. The rest of the family is scattered throughout historic Palestine (in the northern West Bank and Israel), places Amal and her mother have visited several times, and across neighboring Arab countries. Amal gained Canadian citizenship, an official nationality, but identifies herself as a Palestinian living in exile.

Talking about her experiences in Canada, one of the things that seemed to affect her deeply was the appropriation of what she saw as a vital part of her Palestinian identity, while in Canada. She says:

Even on campus one day they had "Israel Day" and claimed za'atar was theirs, and for me za'atar is very special to me, my grandma used to make it, and living here when a friend comes back from Jordan they'll bring us, handmade by my grandmother. When I saw it in front of me at the Israel booth, they had za'atar saying it's Israeli, they had hummus, falafel... that za'atar thing was a piss off, it means something to me as a person, I almost cried. When you're here and your family is there it means something else; I live only with my mother here, it was a slap in the face when someone takes it.

Her experience reminds me of Edward Said's (1986) description of his own encounters with the violence of Western representation of Palestinians (an article that referred to traditional peasant dress showcased at a UNESCO event as "terrorist couture"), the appropriation of the Palestinian dish tabbouleh as "kibbutz salad", and the apathy of academy in the face of a speaking event in which the Palestinian presence was written out of the history of Acre. He laments that "if we look closely it is easy enough to see that violence against us goes on, getting at every small corner of our lives, intervening and establishing an enemy presence wherever we thought we were safest" (Said 1986: 135).

The appropriation of Palestinian culture by the Israeli state, and those who promote its interests around the world, is experienced as an assault on that intimate domain of cultural markers of identity which acquire their meaning, their poignancy, through lived experiences - the taste of za'atar ground by a grandmother's hand, the falafel eaten from a stall in the Old City of Jerusalem, or the smell of an uncle's orange groves in Jaffa. Sana (see Chapter 3) talked about the symbolic and nostalgic connections her grandmother, who was ethnically cleansed from Yafa in 1948, felt with Jaffa oranges. During "no-power days" in Syria, where the family lived in exile before Sana, her mother, and siblings came to Canada, her grandmother would tell stories of Yaffa: She was "always playing outside. Between the orange trees, she talked about the orange trees every day, and every time we ate oranges she has to say that these are not good oranges." Rashid and Nawal's daughter Hanan recounts the story of a Palestinian man in Canada who would cry every time he saw Jaffa oranges at a supermarket, remembering the orange groves that now bore fruit for the Jewish families who moved into Palestinian homes and took over the orchards planted and grown by Palestinian families ethnically cleansed from Yafa.

The twin processes of the de-Arabization and Judaization/Biblicization of the landscape of Palestine-Israel (Falah 1996; Masalha 2012) is a part of the process of making the "ancient-modern" homeland and sanctifying the colonization of Palestinian land by constructing that land as Jewish. Narratives of Jewish continuity and Indigeneity in Palestine could be maintained by asserting that place names were of ancient Hebrew origins, and had been simply "preserved" by Palestinian Arabs (Masalha 2012). Thus Ayn Hawd became Ein Hod, Ayn Karim became Ein Karem and Mahlul became the Hebrew Nahlal (Masalha 2012). A narrative of Arab "preservation" of a Jewish past was also applied to dress, food (Ranta 2014; Ariel 2012; Raviv 2002, 2003) dance (Rowe 2003), music (Pappe 1997) and tangible cultural artifacts like books (Masalha 2012; Amit 2011) in a massive invention of tradition vital to producing a unified Jewish nation with historical rights to the land of Palestine. As Rowe (2003), drawing on Ilan Pappé, points out, this was not a process of political inclusion on the part of the Zionist movement, but a practice of appropriation and exclusion in which local Palestinians were seen as merely "useful cultural vessels" (365) for Jewish cultural restoration.

Thus early Zionists – most of them European and Yiddish speaking - related to local Palestinians in somewhat contradictory ways - the latter were seen as pre-modern people in need of European civilization, while certain aspects of Palestinian Arab culture were emulated. “Reconnecting” with the diet, traditions, and dress “preserved” by local Arab Palestinians was part of a larger process of building a new Zionist subjectivity, resurrecting an “ancient Hebrew spirit” fit, strong, and rooted in nature, which stood in contrast to the passive, weak and spiritually degenerative exile (Long 2008). Food, particularly hummus, falafel and Jaffa oranges, was an important part of this process, as the growing and consumption of “locally made” food (meaning made by local Jewish labour) (Raviv 2002) was seen to connect Diaspora Jews in a bodily way with this ancient Hebrew past (Ranta 2014), much in the same way as nature walks and tree-planting were tied to the making of a new Jewish subjectivity (Stein 2009; Long 2008). The appropriation of Palestinian heritage also served as a unifying symbol and everyday bodily practice of performing Jewish nationhood.

Emulation was only a temporary process, as the next step was a de-Arabization or de-Palestinianization of the appropriated culture and its transformation into markers of Israeli national identity. Some cultural aspects were constructed as the restoration of ancient Hebrew ways of life, while others, like falafel, were presented in national narratives as introduced by Middle Eastern Jews, specifically from Yemen (Raviv 2003). Once the Arab origins of cultural products were obliterated, they became normalized as quintessentially Israeli, and marketed to the rest of the world with their Arab origins carefully concealed. Jaffa oranges, a fruit and an industry physically and symbolically appropriated after the ethnic cleansing of Jaffa, and Falafel, rebranded in the early 1950’s as Israel’s national snack, are two prominent examples of Arabic dishes which have been successfully marketed as markers of Israeli identity.

Appropriation serves as a national signifier of Israeli-ness, a marker of indigeneity used to buttress claims of return to a lost “homeland” and negate the presence of the Others who were displaced in that process of “reclamation.” 25 year-old Leila, whose parents were born in Khan Younis in Northern Gaza, grew up in the Saudi Arabia where her parents moved to find better job opportunities. She remembers that she always

identified strongly as Palestinian; her family would visit family in Gaza every summer when school let out. As the family only had Palestinian passports, which she describes as a nightmare to travel with, and Saudi Arabia denies citizenship and the opportunities it affords to people of other nationalities (regardless of where they were born), her family decided to move to Canada when Leila was fourteen. While in university, she saw that the occupation of the Palestinian narrative had reached across the Atlantic, onto her campus, where pro-Israel student organization attempted to usurp the narrative of Indigeneity: “They put a lot of effort into propaganda. They put a lot of effort into spreading awareness about Israel, and they are very smart about it because they spread it in a positive light too you know , like they had Israel day with hummus and falafel and ...hummus and falafel are not Israeli and we all know that, but anyways they bring it in a very positive light.” Leila remarks that she isn’t surprised by this appropriation: “well they stole the land why shouldn’t they steal the culture... obviously steal the music, they would steal the food, even do something like Dabke” (traditional group dance).

Fadi, who recently graduated from university, where he was also a campus activist, moved to Canada when he was a teen. He still regularly visits his family in Gaza, where they stayed after being driven away from their coastal village in what is now central Israel. Fadi always maintains his sense of humour, even speaking about his experiences of being in Gaza during what he refers to a “war season” (Israel airstrikes and bombings in Gaza), which he jokes is practically a tri-annual event there. His recounting of the time he had to travel to Gaza through underground tunnels from Egypt sounds like something from a sitcom:

The weird thing about Gaza you just realize there was a tank in Egypt looking for people smuggling, you realize you were just smuggled into your own country, imagined being smuggled into your own house. And then in Gaza you are treated like you’re coming into Canada customs, guy giving you a stamp, like Salaam Allaykum. The scariest thing is that I left Gaza when Egypt was screwed up... you go into an air-conditioned building, and then you sit down, and there is a sign saying take a number, even though we’re the only ones, like are we going to fix my cell phone service? We sit down and somebody comes out, we go into an office ... we were being smuggled, and this guy is wearing a suit, and this guy on the other side is military, so obese, he had a beard, and he would comb it, and he was holding, I started laughing, he had a huge gun, and he’s sitting there and not even paying attention, and he’s holding an ipod, and he has it on loud and he’s

playing foot ninja, its like chi-ching, chi-ching! Im like this just fucking happened. ..But what was even scarier, we walked in to the tunnel with someone, and they hold your bags and they run, toughest guys, you need someone to show the way. Halfway there, there's another bag left, and there's this kid like 17 years old, sleeping, they're like get up and go get the bags. He's full-out sleeping. It was nice to see him honestly, if he feels secure and is sleeping then we should feel secure. You run the whole way, 'cause you just want to get out. I come out and I get this message on my phone that says "welcome to Switzerland."

Fadi experienced a kind of shock moving to Canada, seeing Israeli flags during a demonstration in campus, and then seeing the food and traditions he grew up with being presented as the national icons of the country occupying his land.

The sheesha...it's weird, we [the Palestinians] did not create it maybe but it's very, very Arab. The hummus, the grape leaves, the couscous, belly dancing, there's a dabke thing, an Israeli version, this crossed the line, there's an Israeli version of Palestinian keffiyeh, it's the blue and white, and if you open it up it's just a star

Grinning, with his characteristic sense of humour he quips: "It's funny because if you look at most Israelis they are European, that's why when you go there you get a sun-burn so badly, I don't get a sunburn." Fadi was responding to a question I had asked him about whether he saw the pictures of a display on campus by an Israel student club in the main public student space, which featured a hookah for smoking sheesha (flavoured tobacco) in what looked like the inside of a Bedouin tent, as part of a display of "Israeli culture."

This is not a phenomenon localized to post-secondary campuses. Rana, whose experiences of being Palestinian and an immigrant were discussed in chapter three, felt this kind of violence, as Edward Said remarked, gets at every corner of her life:

On the menu it says Israeli salad. You go to all these kosher places, and its falafel and hummus, and Israeli salad. And you're just fuming, this food doesn't belong to you...I had a staff of mine that left, she's marrying a Jew and she's converting. We had a goodbye thing, and she picked this place, and said I know it's far but it's the only kosher place I can eat at. It's all shawarma and falafel, and she's describing the food to everyone like lafa, she says it's wrong; it's just anything you roll. But I really resented her sitting there explaining to everybody oh this is really good, and this is what's in this food. That's my food; it's not your food. I wanted to say something but people just don't get it, no one was saying is this really Israeli food, and I'm always the odd one who raises this question, but it's work, and I don't want to be accused of anything.

The appropriation is usually sanctified through a discourse that draws on concepts like syncretism and hybridity, mobilizing the challenges made (in disciplines like anthropology) to conceptions of culture as a static and coherent whole to erase the unequal power relations enacted when a occupying power calls a staple dish of the colonized its “national snack”, selling postcards with an Israeli flag stuck in a ball of falafel. Raviv (2003) offers a critical perspective on the Israeli appropriation of falafel, but concludes that “Israelis choice of falafel or humus as markers of identity should perhaps be perceived as a reflection of their wish to become part of the Middle East. Would their motives not be more questionable had they insisted on gefilte fish or hamburger as the “national” snack?” (25) Her assertion that Israelis want to “become a part of the Middle East” turns territorial expansion and colonial power relations into a benevolent act of cultural borrowing. This may be part of the appeal of these narratives in Canada, where the appropriation and commercialization of parts of Indigenous cultural traditions as part of “our heritage” is normalized as an everyday experience in settler society – from the mass marketing of “native headdresses” and dream catchers (Kulchyski 1997), or the use of racial epithets in the name of sports teams (ICTMN 2013) – which many Indigenous group actively oppose (Friesen 2013)<sup>8</sup>.

### 4.3 Conclusion

This chapter has explored how the simultaneous Occidentalization/Orientalization of Jews and Israelis plays an important role in achieving legitimacy for Zionist narratives in the West. I have examine how the selective historicization of aspects of the Hebrew Bible, including the paradigm of a “promised land - chosen people,” and the appropriation of Palestinian Arab culture, works to negate the history of Arab Palestine, while simultaneously asserting Jewish Indigeneity. As the chapter shows, these kinds of narratives has faced sustained resistance of various kinds from Palestinians like Rashid and his wife Nawal, and Christians like Father M. Cultural appropriation is also directly resisted by the younger generation of activists, many of whom were born outside of

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<sup>8</sup> Ian Compeau of the Indigenous music act “A Tribe Called Red”, recently won a grievance at the Human Rights Tribunal of Ontario forcing the Nepean Redskins of Ottawa to change to change their name.

Palestine and see Palestinian cultural symbols as important markers of identity. Amal, the young woman who was so affected by the sight of za'atar remade as a signifier of Israeli-ness, recently participated in a program for Palestinians in *al-Shatat* (the Diaspora or dispersed) to connect them with their cultural heritage and history through a guided trip to Palestine-Israel. Though she was involved in campus activism before the trip, she explained that becoming more connected with her cultural heritage made her realize how maintaining cultural practices in an atmosphere where they are being continually erased was an act of defiance itself. The student club she was involved in has recently put more effort into cultural resistance through bringing Palestinian poets and recently devoting their yearly display in the main student space to Palestinian culture, Israeli appropriation and cultural resistance. The display featured photos of pre-1948 Palestine, showing traditional dress, cuisine, dance, and music – a glimpse into the mundane everyday-ness of Palestine life before the Nakba, and a refutation of claims of Palestinian non-existence. A number of months before I began research for this project, the same student club organized a Dabkeh (a traditional Palestinian/Arab dance involving a circular dance with linked arms) “flash mob” on campus, which ended with students holding signs which read: “stop erasing Palestinian identity.”



## Chapter 5

### 5 'The Victims of the Victims': Hierarchies of Suffering and the 'New anti-Semitism'

In his recounting of life under colonial rule and in exile Nadir recalled an event that for him symbolized the Palestinian tragedy, the meaning of exile, and the effects of both on his own family. It was a story about how he found out that his cousin had been killed during the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982<sup>9</sup>:

I was watching the invasion of Lebanon on the news, I saw someone killed in the car, and put in the trunk, I didn't know who this person was. I went up, I was in the basement, I told Muna, my wife that I saw something so horrifying on television. No sooner than I had finished saying this my brother from America called: "Nadir, have you heard the news?" I said I saw someone put in a trunk. He said yes, that was your cousin. I saw him for the last time in '47, he was two years older than I, next time I saw him was while they were throwing him in the truck. And he was very close to us, to me and my brother.

Speaking to the way these kinds of lived experiences are not acknowledged, and often contradicted, in the public sphere, Nadir says: "This is a Palestinian story, and people here don't know, they don't know." His experiences, whether giving lectures about Palestine at colleges in Canada, in conversations with parishioners at the church his family attended, or watching mainstream media, pointed to the way that the history of Jewish suffering in Europe was often used to displace or silence discussion of Palestinian suffering. Nadir is clearly distressed when he asks: "Why should I pay the price for crimes I didn't condone, accept, or commit. Why? We were made to pay the price; *we were the victims of the victims*. I'm sorry because sometimes when it comes to experience, it's painful."

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<sup>9</sup> The Israeli invasion of Lebanon left 20,000 Palestinians and Lebanese dead, including Palestinians massacred at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps by Israeli-backed Lebanese Christian militias, with help from the Israeli army, which surrounded the camp to prevent refugees from fleeing. A International Commission into the invasion accused Israel of war crimes, and declared the invasion illegal (MacBride, Seán; Asmal, A. K.; Bercuson, B.; Falk, R. A.; de la Pradelle, G.; Wild, S. (1983). *Israel in Lebanon: The Report of International Commission to enquire into reported violations of International Law by Israel during its invasion of the Lebanon*. London: Ithaca Press.

What is publicly denied, obfuscated, and silenced is also revealing of an underlying discursive structure; one which takes as self-evident what Abu-Lughod and Sa'di (2007, 4) call a “death-rebirth dialectic” in which “the 1948 war that led to the creation of the state of Israel was made to symbolize their re-birth within a decade of their persecution in Europe and subjection to the Nazi genocide.” Through this narrative, they remark, “the Palestinians are excluded from the unfolding of history” (Abu-Lughod and Sa'di 2008, 4) and their opposition to Zionism is often cast as anti-Jewish. Drawing on both interviews conducted with Palestinian – Canadians and a number of conflicts over access to public space (in both the literal and figurative sense), this chapter will explore how the strategic invocation of the history of Jewish suffering in Europe and related accusations of anti-Semitism work to circumscribe the kind of speech which is allowed to circulate in the Canadian public sphere (Butler 2004) and negate Palestinian suffering, particularly the Nakba of 1948. I will argue that this discourse, which, conflates Judaism and Zionism, and as a result anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism, is maintained by a silencing campaign (Nadeau and Sears 2010) that is particularly focused on university campuses. I will also argue, drawing on both Palestinian experiences and Butler’s concept of “grievable lives” (2004), that this kind of speech aligns with the selective (and highly racialized) way that suffering and loss are publicly acknowledged and commemorated in Canada, creating a receptivity to Zionist narratives in the public sphere.

## 5.1 Displacing suffering: erasing the Nakba with the charge of anti-Semitism

Amin, the young man who wrote “Palestine” in his school atlases, like Nadir finds that Palestinians’ status as the “victims of the victims” circumscribes the way that narratives of Palestinian suffering are presented in the Canadian public sphere. Amin tells me his grandparents and entire extended family is from Majdal, in what became the Israeli city of Askelon, but were driven to Gaza city during the ethnic cleansing of 1948. He remarks that even though Majdal is not on international maps, Palestinians still use the Arabic name, and pass on to their children a kind of demographic and cultural re-mapping of pre-1948 Majdal. He says: “So even though on a world map, or an Israeli map, there isn’t anything called al-Majdal, Palestinians still know what al-Majdal is.”

Though his parents grew up in Gaza, and Amin in Saudi Arabia and Canada, he knows by a Palestinian's last name whether or not they originate from Majdal, and his family has kept alive some of the mundane everydayness of pre-Nakba Palestine. He tells me how Palestinians in Canada still tell jokes about how people from Majdal are cheap, relaying to me a joke about ants that loses its punch line in translation.

Palestinian author Ghada Karmi (1999, 40) noticed a similar phenomenon in the way her late parents, Palestinians who lived in London, would ask about the lineage and village of origin of all other Palestinians they met. She observes that while she had for years thought this was a quirk of her parents; she soon came to realize that “after 1948, establishing a person's origin for Palestinian became a kind of mapping, a surrogate repopulation of Palestine in negation to the Nakba.” This richness of Palestinian experience and Palestinian society before the Nakba of 1948 is written out of narratives which present the founding of the state as an act of justice in restitution for the Holocaust. Amin remarks:

And it's a shame, seriously, you learn about the Holocaust just so you can justify crime? That's an insult to victims of Nazi oppression; that's something that I find shocking. So people learn they gave them a country 'cause they got murdered, okay. They just happened to give them mine.

In *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, Edward Said (1986: 134) perfectly expresses what unique misfortune Palestinians suffer as the victims of the victims:

There has been no misfortune worse for us than that we are ineluctably viewed as the enemies of the Jews. No moral and political fate worse...there is always the connection made between Israel and the Holocaust, how one makes restitution for the other. I find myself saying a generation later that the Holocaust has victimized us too, but without the terrifying grandeur and sacrilegious horror of what it did to the Jews. Seen from the perspective provided by the Holocaust, we are inconsequential as children on a playground; and yet – one more twist in the reductive spiral – even at play we cannot be enjoyed or looked at simply as that...just by virtue of where we stand, every playground is seen as a breeding ground for terrorists, every pastime as secret plan for the destruction of Israel, as if our own destruction was not a good deal more probable.

Said has identified the main facets of what many of the Palestinians I interviewed experienced as the positional inferiority of Palestinians in the Canadian public sphere.

Freeman-Maloy (2011) convincingly argues that the “anti-oppressive pretenses of the Zionist project” were justified in the West through their depiction as a justified response to the suffering of European Jews during the Holocaust and as a natural extension of the fight against Fascism, gaining “broad legitimacy” for the Zionist movement on liberal grounds (64). This narrative is in large part dependent on the conflation of Judaism, a mono-theistic religion, Jewishness as a cultural identity, and modern political Zionism (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012; Butler 2004). These conflations, which are written into Israel’s own self-definition as a “Jewish State” and the perpetuation of this idea by both Israel lobby groups and government officials, are central to characterizing criticism of Israel as an attack on all Jews. Many Jewish critics of Zionism, including Norman Finkelstein (2003), Judith Butler (2004), and Canadian Yakov Rabkin (2006) identify strategic invocations of the memory of the Holocaust, or Shoah, and accusations of anti-Semitism as a key ideological weapon used in the West to justify Israeli crimes against Palestinians.

Butler (2004), Rabkin (2006), and Finkelstein (2003) all critique the way that assertions of the singularity of Jewish suffering coupled with conflations of Jews and Israel, allow Israel to assert an eternal victimhood even in the face of gross power inequalities in which it constantly maintains the upper hand. If Israel and Jews are fully conflated, and Jews are seen to, in Butler’s (2004, 103) words “monopolize the position of victim”, then Israel’s hyper-militaristic national culture and its position as the 5<sup>th</sup> largest nuclear power thus becomes not evidence of its oppressive power but legitimate defence against future anti-Semitism (Rabkin 2004). Israel’s creation itself is not only legitimized by the Holocaust, but its continued existence is couched as a kind of insurance policy against the always looming threat of global anti-Semitism (Rabkin 2006, 184-5). Israel’s self-representation as the legitimate voice of world Jewry works to characterize all criticism as immediately suspect – not for what is explicitly said but in the claim that these utterances are received as an attack on Jewish people, and therefore are anti-Semitic. Thus, the boundaries of permissible public critique of Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians are rigidly controlled (Butler 2004; Keefer 2010).

Many of the Palestinians I interviewed said that this kind of discursive strategy meant that speech which disrupts the hegemonic narrative of the founding of Israel - a key moment in a teleological narrative where 1948 is seen as a redemption for Nazi genocide - were systematically excluded from circulating in the public sphere. Nadir's daughter Rana was born nearly 15 years after the Nakba, near the end of the period of military rule enforced against Palestinian citizens of Israel. She says:

By the time I was born and went to school, all the educational system was Israeli based, so I remember learning geography of Israel, history of Israel, not really what I knew the story to be...I remember the cover of my Geography book was blue and it had the map of Israel and it included all of it [meaning the Occupied Territories as well]. Later in the 60's, early 70's, I remember distinctly seeing that shape [of the map] there, it was based on their version, their propaganda.

Not only was the history of pre-1948 Palestine, and the violence that went into making the state of Israel suppressed in the Israeli school curriculum, but also in Canada, where Rana moved at age fourteen:

If I said it's the anniversary I don't think anyone would know. That it never happened is already the accepted story. I read the Toronto Star, and every once in a while, they mentioned the Nakba, just that it's what the Palestinians call it, not as if it happened as fact. Not like saying the Holocaust, they would never say that's what Jews call the Holocaust, but it's very occasional on an anniversary or if there's a speaker, Like George Galloway. I think what they said was for Palestinians it was equal to the events that created the state of Israel. And no one word on how it was created, what was done to create it.

She felt this way when a colleague told everyone he was going on a Birthright trip to Israel, explaining that every Jewish person had the right to "return." "So I said at the same time there are all the Palestinian refugees who live in exile and can never go back to their homes. But no one had any idea what I was talking about, and they all kept saying [to him] that's so nice." Her words appear, as Edward Said says, as "a dislocation in their discourse" – an interruption to a certain deeply entrenched ideas about Israel/Palestine.

Leila, a former student activist from Khan Younis in Gaza (see Chapter Four) offered a similar analysis of a Nakba commemoration that we had both attended:

All they showed on the news was us dancing and having fun, and no mention of what actually happened during the Nakba, no mention of the significance of the

Nakba, it was like we just celebrated something important to us.....that's a silly light for me, for us to be presented in, I mean its local 11 o clock news, but we have to get real at some point. ..The way that Israeli was formed, so they're almost shocked, but they are also in disbelief that they don't want to believe what you say, because it just doesn't make sense, *it doesn't fit the image they have of Israel.*

Denial of the Nakba is often unnecessary outside of Israel as the Palestinian narrative has simply been rendered invisible in Western discourses (Masalha 2012). Julie Peetet claims that one must have “permission from the academy” to narrate Palestinian history, pointing to a much-lauded volume on refugees in which Palestinians, the largest and longest-standing refugee population, is given but one paragraph (in Nader 2009, 163). Through these omissions, Nader (2009, 162) claims, ‘the violence evaporates.’ Abu-Laban and Bakan (2012) explain the logic behind the continuous erasure: “The strategy of the silencing campaign is therefore the assertion of Palestinian non-existence, in essence to make Palestine unspeakable in order to preserve the pristine narrative of the rise of Israel. Ahmad Sa’di describes this pristine narrative, where the victims simply vanish, as an “important strategy of un-narration” (2007, 13).

Jana, the young woman who was born during the First Intifada in a hospital filled with victims of Israel’s colonial violence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, offered her thoughts on the strategy of un-narration: “Here it [the Nakba] doesn’t exist. Even when I tell people this happened, they are like never heard of it. It’s part of the Palestinian history they’re trying to erase and create the new Israeli history which is the Independence Day – they’re trying to erase as much Palestinian history as they can.” The result is that in order to gain access to space in the public sphere, many Palestinians felt that they were required to alter their framework of analysis, what they both knew and felt to be true through their and their families lived experiences, and their analysis of the Zionist project and its consequences for Palestinians.

Hiba is a young journalist and former Palestine solidarity activist who attended university in London, Ontario. She describes herself as a “third culture kid” as she has lived in the Arabian Gulf, Canada, and now the United States, someone at once at home nowhere and anywhere. Her paternal grandparents were driven from Yafa (Jaffa) in 1948 to Gaza, where her father grew up. He met her Palestinian mother in Kuwait, where Hiba

was born and lived until she moved to Canada to attend university. She has always identified strongly as Palestinian, saying “I was always proud to be Palestinian, it’s a big part of who I am.” After graduating from university she was involved in a Canadian non-governmental organization which seeks to influence Canadian foreign policy, media and community discourses on Palestine-Israel by focusing on international law and human rights. Reflecting on strategies when dealing with politicians, usually Members of Parliament in Ottawa, she remarks that this internalized idea of Israel’s founding often circumscribes what kind of speech is seen as legitimate in public space. “I think with 48, we honestly mostly talked about that privately, only because you’re trying to win hearts and minds of politicians that kind of rhetoric wouldn’t have gone over well. [They would respond] Are you saying Israel shouldn’t exist?”

She pointed out that the negation of the Nakba and the reality of Palestinian suffering in the public sphere often results in a kind of self-silencing in which fear of accusations of “calling for the destruction of Israel,” or the related accusation of anti-Semitism, limits discussions which problematize myths of Israel’s founding. She recalled how the controversy over translations of former Iranian President Ahmedinejad’s speech in which he purportedly called for “Israel to be wiped off the map”, was in effect “hanging over” all discussions of Palestine-Israel at the time. She pointed to a specific incident in Canada which illustrates the consequences of transgressing the line of acceptable discourse on Palestine/Israel: “Libby Davies, what happened to her... It’s sad that she ended up having to apologize about these things. What are you apologizing for, for the facts?” She was referring to what occurred in June of 2010 when Libby Davies, then Deputy Minister of the NDP party (considered Canada’s most left-leaning of the three major Federal political parties) was videotaped at a rally in Vancouver saying that the occupation of Palestine began in 1948 and expressing support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (De Souza 2010).

Conservative Prime Minister Harper’s hyperbolic response included claiming in the House of Commons that “this is a fundamental denial of Israel’s right to exist,”

comparing her to Helen Thomas<sup>10</sup>, and later Hamas and Hezbollah<sup>11</sup>, and eventually calling for Davies' resignation (in De Souza 2010; Parliament of Canada 2010). A comparison to groups designated as terrorist in Canada, veiled references to anti-Semitic motivations (as this is what Helen Thomas was publicly accused of), and a call for resignation - all in response to a simple acknowledgment of the protracted nature of Palestinian dispossession - was not only the response of the ruling party. The NDP and the Liberal Party, along with the mainstream media and major Zionist Canadian organization, espoused the same sense of hyperbolic outrage. Following op-eds in the *National Post* and the *Ottawa Citizen* NDP leader Jack Layton stated that he had "spoken to the [Israeli] ambassador to indicate very clearly that those comments were not the position of our party and Ms. Davies has sent a letter indicating that she made a very serious mistake" (De Souza 2010). Davies, publicly and privately chastised by her own party, apologized on the party website and retracted her "inadvertent error" in publicly acknowledging the Palestinian dispossession of 1948. Then NDP co- Deputy leader, and current party leader Thomas Mulcair, and Liberal foreign affairs critic Bob Rae all joined in characterizing the public recognition of what the establishment of Israel meant to Arab Palestinians as tantamount to an affront to Israel's very existence (CBC 2010; De Souza 2010).

Two non-Palestinian, non-Arab individuals interviewed, Father M, the Catholic priest whose work on Palestine in Christian spaces was highlighted in Chapter Four, and Carol who works for a human rights organizations, shed some light on why and how these kinds of narratives became part of the common sense of their generation. As Father M remarks:

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<sup>10</sup> Veteran White House reporter Helen Thomas was asked on camera, days after Israel killed nine Turkish citizens on a Flotilla to Gaza, for comments on Israel. She said: "Tell them to get the hell out of Palestine. Remember, these people are occupied and it's their land, not Germany and not Poland." She is asked where they should then go. "Go home. Poland, Germany, and America and everywhere else." For these remarks, she was publicly accused of anti-Semitism and forced to resign.

<sup>11</sup> Hamas is a Palestinian Sunni Islamic organization whose armed wing is called the al-Qassam Brigades, it was founded in 1987 during the First Intifada. Hezbollah, like Hamas is both a political party and an armed group, and was formed in response to the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982.



They still have the image of the Exodus, right up though the story of the original founding of Israel, it was great book [, it was just called the Exodus. A boat full of refugees from Europe, having to fight the Arabs, and they were the heroes. It was very, very popular. But that image is still in a lot of people's minds. And after you read Ilan Pappé you realize that wasn't true at all. Its myth, "a land for no people for a people with no land" - but they knew it and planned it and did it [ethnic cleansing].

Carol, who has been active in social justice work for the better part of her life, with Palestine-Israel being among many issues she has been involved with, offered her thoughts on why Zionist historical narratives are often uncritically accepted:

I think a bit of that, a bit of identification with European Jews, and anybody over the age of 40, and that is the age of most decision makers, most parliament, has been exposed to quite a lot of the Israeli narrative over the years, some of it is true some of it's not, main point is that we internalize this. But relatively few of those people have been exposed to the Palestinian narrative. Most Canadians I think if you ask them what happened when Israel was founded, they would say well the Jews tried to set up a country of their own and were immediately attacked, there is no space in that narrative for a discussion of the expulsion of the Palestinians. And I think most Canadian couldn't tell you how many thousands or millions of refugees there are. And many of them if you were to ask them why do you think the Palestinians are refugees, they might say well maybe they were committing terrorists acts and they got thrown out, they were trouble makers. I think there is often a bit of an assumption that if they kept the peace they would have been allowed to stay...there was period for example when the film Exodus was shown repeatedly on TV, it came out I think in 1965, it could be 68 or 9. Exodus came out I think just about every Canadian over the age of 40 or 45 can hum it.

De-historized and de-contextualized in these kinds of narratives Carol and Father M. discussed, Palestinian violence is seen to stem from an innate hostility between Arabs and Jews and not from historical circumstances. Hiba commented on how the absencing of history presents conflict as intractable and eternal:

Some of the older more experienced people with [the human rights organization] would point that out and say you should pick up on the articles that don't say that there is a root cause to the conflict, instead of saying oh these people in the Middle East are fighting, and they've been through talks for years and nothing has happened, and the Palestinians you know refuse to do this, they refuse to negotiate, but that's not enough and that s not the reality. You know, what are they fighting? I've had some very educated friends say but why are they still fighting?

Indeed, the majority of the Palestinians I interviewed were critical of the reference to the Palestinian- Israeli question as an “Arab-Jewish” or a “Muslim and Jewish thing”. The result of this kind of characterization is not only a cultural/religious framing of events, similar to the way Orientalist discourse works to de-historicize Palestinian resistance, but also an implication that Palestinian opposition to Zionism is simply a modern manifestation of anti-Semitic hatred.

Older Palestinians, those around 60 years at minimum, stressed that Jews and Arabs had co-existed in Palestine before Zionism, saying “we don’t hate” –as if anticipating that their challenges to the narrative of Israel’s founding will be characterized as anti-Semitic. When Nawal (see chapter 3) and I were discussing her work making Palestine visible in Christian spaces, she said:

I usually tell people when I am talking about the issue that it is not that we do not appreciate the spiritual journey of the Jews, I believe they like Christians and Islam believe in one god and have some beautiful writings, but that does not mean that Jews were ever the only population in Palestine, or that the country is theirs, and I don’t hate them, I have some friends among them. I am only critical of the history they propagate, we never hated Jews , they lived amongst us in the region, in Iraq, etc..but we hate what the Zionists and the Israeli state have done to us

Bilal, a 65 year old doctor from al-Fallujah who was nearly a belated casualty of the Nakba, expressed a similar narrative. Sitting in his living room drinking tea with na’na (mint), which he grows in his garden along with other herbs used in Palestine like mairamiyya (sage), he talked about how he was only a few months old when Zionist militias attacked al-Fallujah and expelled its residents, killing his uncle and older brother in the process. His mother, overcome with grief, stopped producing breast milk and Bilal almost succumbed to severe malnutrition as a result. With a kind of defiant bravado, he recounts how despite this early malnutrition and living in poverty in Gaza as a refugee, where he later lost residency when Israel invaded in 1967 when he was away at medical

school<sup>12</sup>, he was always top of his class and eventually become a respected doctor. He explained that:

The missing part is they [people in Canada and in Western societies] don't go to the roots of the problem, that is, the history. They say there is state called Israel, it is democratic, but it was established on whose ruins? If they go back to the history and say there were Palestinians kicked out they would change their mind.

When talking about what the creation of the state meant for his family he prefaces his descriptions with an assurance that Palestinian opposition is about Zionism and not Judaism or Jews:

...and we are not against Jews, Jews were our friends, my dad told me that [before 1948] Jews came to our home and ate at our table, when Europe was treating them badly, we were accepting them, ... we are against the Zionists, these gangs who kill Palestinians everywhere, the massacres in Palestine everywhere [in 1948], including in my village in al-Fallujah.

This points to a generational differences both in the older generation's experiences in Palestine, as they or their parents remembered Palestine before the creation of Israel, and the way they have been constantly exposed to narratives which use the Nazi genocide to stifle discussions of Palestinian suffering. But this instrumentalization of suffering to silence Palestinians may be losing some of its earlier potency and effectiveness as time passes and Israel's self presentation as a besieged David in a sea of Arab goliaths becomes more and more implausible.

However, the conflation of anti-Zionism, which is about opposing the colonial policies of the Israeli state and its oppression of the Palestinians, with anti-Semitism, is still used to restrict of the boundaries of public criticism in Canada, due in large part to the efforts of an alliance consisting of right-wing ideologues and Zionist groups. One of the more glaring examples of attempts to circumscribe legitimate speech about Palestine-Israel is the operation of the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (CPCCA), which was constituted in 2009 with members from all major Canadian

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<sup>12</sup> After the occupation of 1967 Israel Israel prohibited Palestinians who lived in Gaza, most of them refugees who were studying or working abroad, from returning to Gaza

political parties (though with no formal parliamentary standing) to investigate what it termed the “new Anti-Semitism.” It is important to note that the group was formed after Israel's 2008-2009 invasion of Gaza, in which the UN accused Israel of massive violations of humanitarian law, and which resulted in the deaths of over 1,300 Palestinians (UNHCR 2009). One of the organizers of the CPCCA is Jason Kenney, the former Minister of Citizenship and Immigration and possibly the most extreme ideologue of Harper's Conservative cabinet, who publicly proclaimed that the “new anti-Semitism” tries “to hide behind anti-Zionism and is represented by a coalition of the far left in the West with extreme currents of jihadi [sic] Islam that seeks the destruction of the Jewish nation” (Cairns and Ferguson 2011, 415). The other founder is MP Irwin Cotler, a professor at McGill's faculty of Law and a former liberal Justice Minister, well-known for defending Israel's actions and conflating anti-Zionism with anti-Semitism in academic journals and newspaper opinion editorials (Keefer 2010).

The CCPCA was born out of the Inter-parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (ICCA), a coalition tied to the Israel government, counting Yuli Edelstein, the Israeli Minister of Diplomacy and Diaspora Affairs and Cotler on its steering committee. Prior to conducting any research, receiving any submissions, or hearing any oral testimony, the CPCCA claimed that: “Anti-Semitism is an age-old phenomenon, yet it is always re-invented and manifested in different ways... so that anti-Zionism is being used as a cover for anti-Semitism,” and identified campuses as places where “Jewish students are ridiculed and intimidated for any deemed support for the “Nazi” and “apartheid” State of Israel, which is claimed to have no right to exist” (in Cairns and Ferguson 2011, 417). Given that the CPCCA had already reached its conclusions, the coalition cherry-picked participants who would support their claims to testify at the oral hearings conducted between 2010 and 2011, when their final report was made public (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012). The CPCCA heard 72 of the 150 submissions it received (though neither the selection process nor the rejected submissions are available for public scrutiny), with one in four witnesses being drawn from state institutions, and several from American and Israeli universities (Cairns and Ferguson 2011). The pro-Israel ideological function of the CPCCA and its consequent refusal to hear opposing viewpoints, including dozens from Jewish individuals and organizations who rejected their logic, were the main reasons that

the sole Bloc Quebecois MP quit the coalition in March 2010 (Cairns and Ferguson 2011).

This logic of the “new anti-Semitism” was used to justify a number of government interventions into the public sphere in order to stigmatize and in many cases actually censor what it deemed to be illegitimate forms of criticism of Israel. Many of these interventions were initiated by CPCCA founder Jason Kenney, including the withdrawal of funding for new immigrant language programs provided by the Canadian Arab Federation (CAF) based on a speech by its leader at a Gaza solidarity rally, the aforementioned withdrawal of government funding the ecumenical organization Kairos, and banning British MP George Galloway from Canada, where he was slated to speak about Palestine (Nadeau and Sears 2010). These government interventions were framed as protecting the public from “terrorism” and “hate” (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012) in a perfect marriage of Orientalist caricatures of Palestinians and Palestine solidarity activists, and the McCarthyite logic of the “new anti-Semitism.”

Nadeau and Sears (2010) describe these government interventions as part of a silencing campaign which seeks to block Palestinian solidarity activism and certain types of discourse by limiting or re-defining freedom of expression and academic freedom. As a result, certain types of speech and certain voices are systemically denied access to public discursive space. Palestinian-Canadians, as Arab Muslims and Christians are seen as especially prone to anti-Semitic hate – a presumption illustrated in Jason Kenney’s public labeling of the CAF as an organization that supports terrorism and anti-Semitic hatred (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012). The logic of the “new anti-Semitism” argues Richard Koper, seeks “to reframe the debate, not necessarily to exclude certain voices, but to render them suspect before they even speak.” As professor of Cultural Studies Ella Shohat (1992) who identifies herself as an Iraqi or Arab Jew, posited:

The master narrative of universal Jewish victimization has been crucial for the Israeli "ingathering" of peoples from such diverse geographies, languages, cultures and histories, as well as for the claim that the Jewish nation faces a common historical enemy in Muslim Arabs. Associating Arabs with Nazis (and in 1992 with the Inquisitors), projects a Jewish European nightmare onto the structurally distinct political dynamics of the Middle East ... the conflation of the

Muslim-Arab with the archetypal European oppressors of Jews strategically understates Israel's colonial-settler dispossession of Palestinian people (25-29).

I witnessed a particularly crude example of this conflation when the campus Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights (SPHR) at Western University hosted a talk by Suzanne Weiss, a Jewish Holocaust survivor originally from France, in the winter of 2014. In the question and answer period following her critique of Zionist and Canadian colonialism and the political use of the Holocaust to shield Israel from criticism, a student asks her to address the “fact” that *Mein Kampf* (Hitler’s manifesto) is supposedly the 6<sup>th</sup> best-selling book in the West Bank. These kinds of insinuations that Palestinian opposition to Zionism stems from anti-Semitic hatred renders Palestinian voices suspect before they even speak - they are by default considered antithetical to liberal tolerance and diversity until they can establish themselves as otherwise. This may in part, explain why Nawal felt the need to distinguish her opposition to Zionism from her thoughts on Jews and Judaism, establishing her right to speak, her narrative authority, by dispelling the myth of Palestinians as inherently anti-Jewish.

The way that the logic of the new anti-Semitism works to circumscribe public speech about Palestine-Israel can be best understood by examining academic discursive space, which many of the Palestinians I interviewed identified as a key site of public struggle over narrative, and in a way a microcosm of larger struggles over the speakability of Palestinian narrative in the Canadian public sphere. Examining the way Palestine –Israel is discursively constructed in academic spaces also highlights the way the narratives of victimization intersect with civilizational tropes, which cast Israel and Canada as safe-guarders of the values of liberal tolerance against a (largely Muslim Arab) anti-Semitic intolerance.

## 5.2 Palestine-Israel in Canadian academic space

Leila, the young woman whose family is from Khan Younis, and who moved to Canada when she was fourteen, used to visit Gaza every summer until the Second Intifada<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> The Second Intifada, an uprising against the Israeli occupation, began in 2000 and ended in 2005.

started. The last time she was in Gaza was when a French news crew captured one of the most potent images of the Intifada - the death of 12 year Muhammad Dura, who was killed while cowering in terror behind a slab of concrete with his father when he was hit several times by Israeli fire (Sherwood 2013).<sup>14</sup> Though she hasn't been able to return to Gaza since 2000, her activism on campus at Western University helped her to feel she was "giving back to her country."

I started the end of first year, beginning of second year, when I saw how much was already there, some of the people that were there at university doing solidarity work. I was very impressed and I admired them at the time, all the time and effort they put in aside from all the school they had just to spread the word about their country, or about even if they weren't Palestinian about the cause that they believed in. And I also felt that I had that same obligation, like this is the least I can do because I was lucky enough to be able to come and have the opportunity to pursue a first class education, to go to school safely, to live safely, to not be worried about my house being destroyed or not having enough food or enough money, so I felt the last I can do is get involved in solidarity work. So solidarity work was my way of giving back to my country.

One of the difficulties she faced in finding room to make these Palestinian realities heard in discussion with other students was the implication that criticism of Israel is religiously or ethnically motivated:

That's the image that they have, so they kind of still want to sympathize because their whole life all they have learned about is the Holocaust but it doesn't justify what's happening today... Because Israel is a Jewish state and everybody knows that they always go back, to or they always refer to oh this is Muslim - Jewish problem. I'm like this is not a Muslim-Jewish problem. I mean yes the majority of Palestinians are Muslims, but in our religion, I mean it says in the Quran that Jerusalem is holy place, it's a holy place also for Christians and Jews, but that's not why we're fighting the cause, the cause is about humans more than anything else.

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<sup>14</sup> After initially taking responsibility for shooting al- Dura, the Israeli government denied they had killed the 12 year old Palestinian boy, and even put out a report - based on military testimony and failing to include any testimony from other witnesses - suggesting neither Muhammed nor his father had been shot. The cameraman for France's channel two, a Guardian correspondent who was on scene, as well as Muhammad's father Jamal, who has given permission for his son's body to be exhumed, all maintain that he was shot by Israeli fire.

She was involved in the first Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) held at Western University when university administrators carefully policed the language which could be used to describe Israel's policies:

We had to fight for [to use] apartheid, we really had to fight for the word, to use the term Israeli apartheid we, and even when we did use it and we were allowed to use it there was a huge backlash against us, and there were people saying we were doing something illegal and anti-Semitic, not that that even affects me anymore – I don't think they know what it means, so (laughing), it's like no I'm not against myself thank you very much [as Arabs are Semitic]. But yeah apartheid was the biggest one.

Characterization of the word apartheid as at best “uncivil” but more prominently as a form of “hate speech” is a view espoused by pro-Israel lobby groups, many federal and provincial politicians and mainstream media outlets as an example of the new anti-Semitism. In 2009 B’Nai Brith took out a full-page advertisement in the *National Post* under the headline “Back to School Checklist for Jewish Students and friends of Israel” which advises students to “select your courses, buy books and prepare to face hate on campus” (in Nadeau and Sears 2010: 14). Accusations of “hate” on campus, by lobby groups like B'nai Brith, Zionist student groups and university officials, are in large part targeted against the use of an apartheid analysis which characterizes Israel's treatment of the Palestinians as a violation of the ban against apartheid enshrined in international law (Davis 1987, 20).

The condemnation of the term Israel apartheid by the Toronto City Council over the participation of QAIA in Toronto pride (Peat 2012) was largely echoed in the public reaction to Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), a series of events which criticize the treatment of Palestinians within the frame of colonialism, and which are held annually on university and college campuses. IAW was publicly labeled as a “hate fest” by Ontario Parliament (Benzie 2010), federal politicians (Gold 2011) and in the Op-ed's of major media outlets (Kay 2013; Lakritz 2013). In 2009 four universities - Carleton, Wilfred Laurier, University of Ottawa and Trent University - banned the poster for IAW, which showed an Israeli helicopter shooting a missile at a Palestinian child called “Gaza” (Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012). At Carleton the group sponsoring the IAW on campus, the university chapter of Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA), received a written statement after



all 100 of their posters had been taken down, informing them that Equity Services at Carleton had found that the poster infringed on the Ontario Human Rights Code as it could incite fear and violence on campus (Tobianah 2009). Predictable hyperbolic connotations of Palestine solidarity activism and anti-Semitism were espoused by Conservative cabinet members, by Liberals and NDP MP's, largely echoing the claims of the B'nai Brith that IAW was a campus "hate-fest" (Hill 2013). The Ontario parliament passed a private members bill, supported by the progressive Conservatives, and the Ontario Liberals and NDP, condemning IAW on the grounds that it "incites hatred against Israel" (In Abu-Laban and Bakan 2012, 325)

A few years ago after visiting Gaza in the wake of Israel 22 day assault in 2008/2009, a Palestinian friend and I were discussing with incredulity how the self-definition of Israel as a "Jewish state" (a definition which repudiates both the rights of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel and refugees and their descendants expelled in 1948, as well as Jews who do not identify with the Israeli state) had become so normalized in Canadian discourse that Israel's demand to be recognized as such by the PLO was not even challenged in Canadian media. She remarked that, ironically, it was those who pointed out how Israel's self-definition and functioning as a Jewish state is discriminatory who were faced with accusations of anti-Jewish racism. Edward Said (1980) describes the way these inversions are reproduced: "The power of a consensus, of a tradition, of a coherent discourse such as that which exists between Israel and liberal opinion, that its sheer institutional presence dispels any evidence to the contrary, it simply flicks it away as irrelevant. More: it cannot convert what one would expect to be devastating challenges to it into *support* for it" (44). In this context, pointing out the discriminatory and racist nature of Israeli treatment of the Palestinians becomes evidence not of the victimization of Palestinians but of the anti-Semitic victimization of Israel and its supporters. As the image of Israel as a liberal, progressive state, or "the only democracy in the Middle East" has enjoyed such wide diffusion in the West that evidence to the contrary is not only "flicked away" but seen instead to reflect an irrational hate of Israel based self-proclaimed description as a Jewish state.

Fadi, the young Palestinian man who experienced the violence of what he called “war season” in Gaza, experienced a similar inversion of racialized oppression when highlighting how access to space in the West Bank is determined on the basis of national origin and ethnic identity. “They [students on campus] mention it [anti-Semitism], they say that when we talk about apartheid, we say Jewish only roads, and it looks anti-Semitism, so they would say that.” This kind of claim also operates at an institutional level. In a repetition of the pressure put on Sherene Razack after she criticized the Israeli re-invasion of Jenin - a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank - in 2002 (Nadeau and Sears 2010), Masters student Jenny Peto, and Ruth Bettina Birn (chief Historian at the War Crimes Department of the Canadian Ministry of Justice), both faced sustained campaigns of public repression for their work on the political and ideological uses of the Holocaust. Birn was threatened with legal action, and a public smear campaign by B’nai Brith, while the Canadian Jewish Congress, referred to her work as “an anti-Semitic canard” and pressured the Department of Justice to launch an investigation (in Keefer 2010: 225). Peto’s thesis made headlines in several national papers across the country (Dale 2010a; Kay 2010; Urback 2010), which printed accusations by former CJC president that her thesis was “bordering on [being] anti-Semitic” (Dale 2010b) - a claim repeated in Ontario parliament when a liberal and two conservative MPPs condemned her work on record (Legislative Assembly of Ontario 2010). Two Jewish women, in Peto's case the granddaughter of a Holocaust survivor, were ironically accused of anti-Semitism for publicly denouncing the racist dispossession of Palestinians and the political uses of the Holocaust to sanctify this dispossession.

The accusation of anti-Jewish hatred against students who criticize Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians, whether explicit or through claims that Jewish students feel “unsafe” or “uncomfortable” on campus, is not a recent tactic used to stigmatize and negate expressions of solidarity with Palestinian suffering. Neither is the interference of pro-Israel lobby groups with freedom of expression on campus. The SPHR club that Leila (whose experiences of student activism were recounted earlier in this section) belonged to was only recently granted a name change from the Palestinian Students Association (PalSA) to SPHR, after a ban on SPHR had ended. The first SPHR lost club privileges and was later de-ratified (Gazette Staff 2006) over a mock “apartheid wall” (emulating

Israel's real wall in the West Bank). The decision to de-ratify the SPHR was passed after students from the Israel Actions Committee and Hillel clubs complained that the wall "was intimidating, offensive and hateful toward Jewish and Israeli students" prompting a review of university policies on harassment (Gazette Staff 2004). One particular aspect of the wall deemed "offensive" to Jewish and Israeli students was a map of historical Palestine with the word Palestine written on it in English (Carpay and Kennedy 2011) - an implication that even acknowledging the historical existence of Arab Palestine is outside the limits to publicly sanctioned debate.

30 year old Munir has faced similar repression as a student activist at York. Munir was born in Gaza, but lived in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), Canada and for short periods in Gaza, as his parents tried to circumvent the difficulties of trying to provide for their family as stateless refugees in a country that would never grant them citizenship. He remembers that after moving back to the UAE from Canada, he told people there he was Canadian but in Canada he always identified as Palestinian – not from Palestine: "It's not because I don't want to say it, not because I don't recognize Palestine. I don't say I'm from Palestine, because Palestine was destroyed and ethnically cleansed. I'm a Palestinian, and people recognize Palestinian, they see it on the news all the time, Israel vs. the Palestinians." As a student activist at York, he stresses the importance of linking the fight against the silencing of Palestine solidarity activism with a rejection of the corporatization of the university:

Okay so at York, York's traditional protest space was Vary Hall. After the war on Iraq and the demonstrations around that York starting to change the rules. So they banned protests in Vary Hall by amending the temporary use of space policy. They implemented code of conduct, which every student has to sign to enroll in classes. And they amended the Senate's policy on disruptive and or harassing behavior in academic situations. Although that policy is vague and there is a chance we never violated it...I think York is a leading institution in going on that neoliberal - we call it the neoliberalization of campus, its part and parcel of the larger corporatization of the university and its spaces.

Munir talked about how this neoliberalization of campus was used to block Palestinian solidarity activists from gaining access to campus space, both discursive space, and in a more literal sense:

Over the years they've cancelled our rooms for Israeli Apartheid week, like the day before. And I mean for demonstrations they'll fine us, we've been fined, security sent after us to stop our rallies. And over the past ten years we've seen a system being developed by York to stop activism. They've amended certain rules and added new ones to make it difficult to protest and book space....

They renovated Vary hall, did I tell you. No? When the rules weren't working after 2009, when we demonstrated despite the rules, they decided to renovate Vary Hall...to physically alter it to stop protest. Because the rules were obviously not being a good enough deterrent so they built a kiosk in the middle of Vary Hall now...in 2012 they built a kiosk in Vary Hall and they admitted to the student newspaper that they built it to stop noisy protest. And to add insult to injury they said we don't have enough student space, this should provide student space.

Nadeau and Sears (2010) argue that this growing trend towards the corporatization of university campuses through fostering links with the private sector creates a disjuncture between purported liberal democratic principles of public universities and growing privatization (Nadeau and Sears 2010). Many Canadian campuses have strong links with Israeli institutions, and employ neoliberal corporate models of controlling access to university space to stifle Palestinian activism (Nadeau and Sears 2010). One of the most outspoken critics of both the consumer-driven corporate model of university management, and the way these processes intersect with the silencing of Palestine solidarity activism, was the late David Noble, a former professor at York University (YU) who Munir encouraged me to research. His pamphlet "The Dog that Wags the Tail" which accused York's fundraising arm the York University Foundation (YUF) of pro-Israel bias, pointing to the institutional affiliations of board members with Israel lobby organizations like the United Jewish Appeal (UJA) and the Center for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) (Stewart 2010: 49). For distributing this pamphlet, Noble, who was himself Jewish, was accused of anti-Semitism in a public statement by YU, YUF and the campus Hillel, as well as by CIJA and B'nai Brith – accusations repeated in major Canadian media outlets. Though Noble eventually won a grievance against the University for violating his academic freedom, the silencing campaign worked rather successfully to shift discussion from the effect of Israel lobbyists on York policy to accusation of anti-Semitism (Stewart 2010).

Munir says that, ironically, this kind of repression has often had the opposite effect, much like the way attempts to ban QAIA connected the group with what QAIA activist Michael called “free-speechers”:

This year, we held a rally in March, it wasn't just SAIA (Students Against Israeli Apartheid) that got letters of warning, not just SAIA, not just students from SAIA, but the other clubs that spoke, like president of the Black Students Association, president of the Middle Eastern Students Association, and a member of the Latino Youth Alliance, got letters as well. Now the admin might have been trying to show that they are even-handed, but it wasn't very strategic of them, because those members joined SAIA and now these groups are even more supportive, because they see that there is a... backlash going on, so it's not just us who see it.

Despite the repression SAIA has faced on campus, Munir says that the commitment of universities to liberal democratic values, when they are respected, has also meant that campus has served as an important space to narrate Palestinian dispossession. He cites the fact that recently SAIA was successful at pushing through a Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions motions at York's graduate and undergraduate student unions, demanding divestment from four companies which profit from the illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, a victory repeated at the University of Toronto Graduate Union (Al-kamisi 2013), the Ryerson Student Union (RSU) (Urback 2013), and through a referendum at the University of Windsor (Levitan 2014).

However, there was considerable backlash and repression at both York and Ryerson; the SAIA at York had its club status revoked for holding a protest in Vary Hall not long after the vote (Khandaker 2013), while officials at the University of Windsor attempted to prevent a ratification of the referendum results by launching an investigation. It was later revealed that a donor to the university, Richard Spencer, had sent a letter threatening to withdraw financial support to the institution, claiming that the referendum was “anti-Semitic” (Levitan 2014). He employed a blatantly discriminatory logic of inherent Muslim anti-Semitism to justify his opposition: “I am reasonably certain that the majority, if not all, of this small percentage of the student body are of the Muslim faith, which promotes violence and hatred toward the Jews in the Middle East. ... What is next? Christian students, too, will feel unsafe on campus because of this intolerant group?” (in IJV 2014).

In his analysis of recent changes at York, Munir charts an institutionalization of a kind of de-politicization of campuses as another strategy of muzzling Palestine activism:

York has this kind of spirit thing going on now. And York was actually trying to conflate school spirit with activism. They're trying to say we encourage activism but then the form that they encourage activism is in the school spirit form... So these clubs would organize charities and call that activism...they want to reframe what activism means, that's what they've been doing. So they have these charities, they have these educational about liberal causes...they actually held something about the Middle East, but it was so...there are different truths, that's how they framed it. I was so insulted by that...they are trying to reframe the discourse.

The promotion of this kind of sanitized and controlled public discussion plays into the claim that Palestine solidarity activism is “uncivil” and violates the liberal norms of “balance” and “meaningful dialogue.” a Nadeau and Sears (2010) argue this kind of speech works to depoliticize discussions of Palestine-Israel and silence Palestine solidarity activism, which is seen to violate the norm of “respectable debate.” This discourse of civility and dialogue was espoused by York University’s Task Force on Student Life, Learning and Community, commissioned by YU President Shoukri in 2009 in response to complaints about Palestine activism on campus, and an inquiry launched into the planning and organization of a conference called *Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace* (Stewart 2010; Nadeau and Sears 2010). Nearing the conferences start date, Canadian Zionist groups labeled the conference a “hate fest” for including the “one state solution”<sup>15</sup> in planned discussions (Abu Laban and Bakan 2012) and urged the sponsoring universities to withdraw funding culminating in the federal Minister of State and Technology Gary Goodyear interfering in the peer review process by urging SSHRC to order a second review of the conference (Stewart 2010, 55-56). Though the conference eventually went ahead as planned, president Shoukri, who had during the debacle strongly defended academic freedom, ordered an inquiry into the conference. Both the conference task force and the one commissioned by

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<sup>15</sup> The One State Solution refers to the creation of a bi-national state in all of historical Palestine, including Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza, with equal rights and citizenship for all without distinctions due to religion or ethnicity.

Shoukri in 2009 called for “civility, diversity, equity and respect” and an atmosphere that promotes “meaningful dialogue”, the earlier task force containing recommendations to limit unauthorized speech by establishing a student code of conduct and amending the polices governing uses of public university space (Nadeau and Sears 2012, Stewart 2010).

Mina, a student activist at Western University whose family is from Acre recounts an experience of this kind of sanitized political discussion. Mina and her sister grew up in Saudi Arabia, Canada, and Lebanon, but when her family moved to Canada from Saudi Arabia her little sister would tell people she was “from Palestine” thinking that they had come by plane straight from Palestine. Mina had a somewhat more sophisticated understanding of the complexities of being born somewhere but not being *from* there, but she admits her knowledge about her own history was very limited until recently: “I didn’t really know anything, I just knew the land was occupied, I couldn’t go there, that’s always what my parents would say when we were younger, but I didn’t really understand why until later.” She had just begun to learn about her own history and had become more assertive about her identity in university; but recalls how criticism of Israel was derailed by attempts to enforce a dialogue oriented “civility” during class:

Yeah we had that debate too, I was in second year and I was scared to talk, but I had to talk, I was like *Palestine’s weight is on my shoulders*. We talked about checkpoints, that [pro-Israel] guy was like they’re so necessary they save lives, and I talked about how people are treated at checkpoints, how they’re stripped of their human rights, you know women delivering at checkpoints. I would be like I feel that’s its unjust, and the professor was like you need to stop saying I feel, you need to stop bringing emotion into it.... It was the same people that would talk, back and forth. The Prof made us, like introduced us to [a pro-Israel guy], like he was the one talking back and forth, *and she was like maybe you guys could talk, and he was like oh I was just there this summer on a birthright trip, and I was like oh cool, I’ve never been there, and she was trying to, it was just the fakest conversation ever, she was like maybe you guys could share pictures, trying to make it all happy, and I’m just like NO!*

In their analysis of the use of the language of “civility” and violations of “equity” or feeling of “discomfort” to ban the 2009 IAW posters, Nadeau and Sears (2010, 26) argue that this kind of speech reveals a kind of “race-thinking” which casts Palestinians, (and to some extent those who stand in solidarity with them) as people who violate norms of

“civil” discourse, and are prone to irrationality and violence. Accusations of anti-Semitism, whether directly or through claims of “singling out Israel”, work to divide people, in highly racialized ways, into the tolerant and civilized, and the intolerant and barbaric (Brown 2009). Wendy Brown’s 2009 Book *Regulating Aversion: Tolerance in the Age of Identity and Empire*, recounts the way that the language of tolerance works to distinguish the civilized from the uncivilized and underwrite Western imperialism. Her analysis of the Simon Wiesenthal Museum of Tolerance (MOT) which commemorates the victims of the Nazi Holocaust in Europe, reveals how presentations of Palestinians as uncivil and anti-Jewish works to establish Palestinians as “enemies of tolerance” and appropriates discourses of tolerance to legitimate Zionist political positioning (Brown 2009, 107-108).

I would argue that the characterization of Palestine solidarity activists, many if not most of whom are Palestinian exiles, as engaging in “uncivil” speech which create an unsafe or “uncomfortable” atmosphere for Jewish and Israeli students (a narrative running through both the poster bans, and York’s task force and inquiry) is a reproduction of this highly racialized logic of tolerance. As “enemies of tolerance” Palestinian activists and their allies, so this line of logic goes, must be reigned in and shown how to engage in appropriate liberal forms of debate. As Nadeau and Sears (2010, 17) argue, “the ultimate effect of these efforts will be to reinforce the silencing of Palestine.”

### 5.3 Ungrievable lives: race, colonialism, and hierarchies of suffering

In October of 2013 the Toronto Transit Commission (TTC) banned an ad commissioned by the organization Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East set to be displayed in Toronto subways. The ad features four maps showing the progressive loss of Palestinian land from 1946 until the present with text below it reading “This is unfair. It is also illegal under international law. ” Below the text there is a picture of a Palestinian school girl walking among the rubble of destroyed buildings (Abunimah 2013). The ad is similar to ones which ran in Vancouver amid vocal public opposition from B'nai Brith (Hutchinson 2013). The Toronto ad was ultimately rejected by the TTC, on the grounds



that they didn't accept that the loss of land was "unfair or illegal", and the ad could incite anti-Jewish violence. TTC spokesperson Brad Ross told the Toronto Star that "making that statement may cause some ... to then target Israelis and/or Jewish people. Some may view it as discriminatory, [and] could advocate for violence or hatred against Israel or the Jewish people." He also added a particularly galling and uninformed statement - given the numerous UN resolutions and International Court of Justice decision on the illegality of Israel's occupation - that "there is no finding in our legal opinion of illegality around loss of land under international law ... no court, no tribunal has ruled on loss of land being illegal" (Kalinowski 2013). The language largely reflected that of the B'nai Brith which congratulated the TTC for its decision (B'nai Brith 2013). CJPME says it plans to appeal the decision to the Supreme Court if necessary (Raza 2013).



Figure 1: Poster template submitted by CJPME to the Toronto Transit Commission

This was a battle over which narratives are allowed to, quite literally, occupy public space in Canada and sent a clear message to Palestinians about the validity of their experiences of displacement. It was also a stark example of whose suffering is granted recognition and acknowledgement in the public sphere, whose lives (and deaths) are considered worthy and grievable. Nadir's grandson, and Rana's son, Ahmad identified a kind of hierarchy of grief, in which Arab and Muslim deaths are located near the bottom, as a defining characteristic of the Canadian public sphere. He recalls the way this hierarchy was manifested when he was in 12<sup>th</sup> grade:

There was a moment of silence for the victims of the [Boston] bombing, and I didn't stand. So, we had a student teacher from York, he says, why don't you stand? I said because you don't stand for me, I don't stand for you. At beginning of class he says, its religion class, if you want us to say a prayer, moment of silence, tell me, and I thought yeah right you bloody hypocrite. So I did the same thing, the day before 50 kids were killed in a drone strike in Pakistan, and I said let's stand for that, and I'm the only one who stands. To prove my point I said no one stood. He said it's because I was disrespectful, but I said no they don't care.

In her book *Precarious Lives: the Power of Mourning and Violence*, Judith Butler (2004) examines the way hierarchies of grief are established and maintained in the public sphere through processes in which some lives (heterosexual, married, white, etc) are marked as worthy and are humanized, while other lives (and deaths) are cast out from the realm of common humanity. Through this process the Other is subject to two inter-related forms of violence - that which is committed against their body (the torture, injury and death of war) and the denial of this violence through a prohibition on their public "grievability" (Butler 2004, 35-6). This exclusion from grievability and the realm of the fully human is ordered by the racialized power structures that maintain national and colonial projects. Butler (2004) argues that

The public will be created on the condition that certain images do not appear in the media, certain names of the dead are not utterable, certain losses are not avowed as losses, and violence is de-realized and diffused. Such prohibitions not only shore up nationalism based on military aims and practices, but they also suppress any internal dissent that would expose the concrete, human effects of violence (37-38).

Hierarchies of grievability in the Canadian sphere are determined in large part by the continuation of colonial processes which demean, dehumanize and systemically oppress Indigenous people, and to a lesser extent racialized minorities. This racialized dehumanization is constructed in ways which maintain Canadian national mythologies of Canada as a peaceful, race-neutral nation with an admirable record of treatment towards Indigenous people; a mythology that would be greatly disrupted by recognizing the past and continued violence against Indigenous, Black and Brown bodies. In her article comparing news coverage of missing/murdered White and Aboriginal women, Kristen Gilchrist (2010) finds that news-coverage works to devalue Aboriginal womanhood and idealize White womanhood through intimate portraits of White women's lives, hopes, fears and comparably scant details offered about Aboriginal women. She argues that this discourse reproduces structures of racism, sexism and colonialism, and contributes to the relative invisibility of Aboriginal women and their symbolic annihilation from the Canadian social landscape.

Gilchrist's work is important for the way she accounts for the intersectional processes of constructing public "worthiness" in news media, the way the devaluation of Aboriginal women is dependent on the hyper-valuation of White womanhood, and the way that racialized, gendered processes of worthiness intersect with the political exigencies which maintain national projects. She refers to Jiwani and Young's (2006) research comparing news coverage of Afghani women post-9/11 and missing/murdered Indigenous women, in which they argue that while Afghani women, subsumed under the an Orientalist rhetoric that cast them as legitimate victims requiring protection from Islam (a justification for war on Afghanistan), are seen as worthy of saving, Indigenous women were constructed as disposable (in Gilchrist 2010, 377). So, while the construction of worthiness is highly racialized (and gendered) they are also dependent on how processes of racialization relate to domestic mythologies and foreign policy at given historical moments.

How do Palestinians fit into these processes of public worthiness? Edward Said (1986) argues that "historically, [Palestinians], have been regarded as a population that is essentially disposable, the subject people or inferior race of classical imperialism..."

transported, dislocated, and dispossessed according to that same principle: Palestinians are not a coherent national group” (130). This is as true in Canada as it is in the American context to which he refers. Within the civilization discourses that cast Palestinians as the barbaric Other of a European state with Biblical rights to a “promised land,” Israel is aligned with Canadian liberal democratic values and Palestinian opposition to their dispossession is seen as further evidence of their intolerant barbarity and their exclusion from the civilized West. Palestinians, as an Arab and majority Muslim population, have been systemically rendered as less than human since the events of 9/11. Hiba, who moved to the US nearly a decade after 9/11 to pursue a career in journalism, talked about the way Afghani lives (once women’s bodies were no longer needed to justify invasion) were deemed un-newsworthy in a class during journalism studies:

I was just disagreeing with her thing [the Professor] where you pitch the stories, what goes on the top of the broadcast, what would go into the block. One time we got into an argument, that it was the day Facebook decided to sell shares in the company was the same day the news broke about Robert Bales, the soldier in Afghanistan who went on a freak gun shoot and just shot up women and children, and she had decided to go with facebook as the top story. I just looked at her and no one else in the class said anything, and I said I can’t do that, it just doesn’t make any sense to me. And she said everybody in this country has a facebook account, people care.

With Israel as a Western ally, Palestinian lives don’t have even the same limited and temporary political currency as say the lives of Afghani women, who became instrumentalized as justification for western intervention in Afghanistan (Abu-Lughod 2002). Their humanization in the public sphere and the recognition of their suffering would not serve to bolster Canada’s national mythologies - it would in fact do quite the opposite. Butler argues that the establishment and maintenance of a hierarchy of grievable and ungrievable lives is “not so much a dehumanization of discourse, but a refusal of discourse which produces dehumanization as a result...in the silence of the newspaper, there was no event, no loss.” Through the dehistoricization of Palestinian dispossession, the unspeakability of their lived experiences and the historical injustices that have led to the present state, the violence evaporates. We rarely hear the names of murdered Palestinians, Butler (2004) argues, we don’t know about their hobbies, whether

they loved their families, what they hoped for the future – an absence that both produces de-humanization and limits the possibilities for empathy.

As the invisibility of Indigenous women is dependent on the hyper-visibility of White women; similarly the refusal to see Palestinian lives and deaths as grievable is dependent on the hyper-visibility of Israeli and Jewish suffering. Norman Finkelstein points to the discrepancy between scholarly studies on the Holocaust and those about the some 10 million Africans who died in the European exploitation of the natural resources of the Congo (2004, 143), as an example of the way states tend to refuse to commemorate violence that they are implicated in. He argues that looking at when the memory of the Holocaust is invoked is revealing in the same way as “crimes of official enemies such as the Khmer Rouge bloodbath in Cambodia, the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait, the Serbian ethnic cleansing in Kosovo recall the Holocaust; crimes in which the US is complicit do not” (Finkelstein 2004, 146).

I would argue that similar processes are at work in Canada. Findlay (2010, 13) argues that “many countries have a significant history of anti-Semitism to live down, and Canada is no exception. When Montreal receives a graft off Anne Frank’s tree in Amsterdam, this seems more a tribute to Canada’s role in liberating Holland from Nazi occupation, and of Canada’s support for Israel, than the recognition of our openness to Jewish refugees during the 1930’s.” This is not in any way to say that the horrors of Nazi genocide in Europe should not receive recognition in the public sphere, but to challenge the way that some lives are constructed as more human, and some suffering is pushed to the margins. This pattern is continued in the way Israeli lives and deaths are hyper-visible and grievable as compared to those of Palestinians. That is one of the most basic things many Palestinians, and non-Palestinian solidarity activists, have been fighting for - the recognition of the humanity of Palestinians, the validity of their lives, and the grievability of their deaths. Seeing a deviation from this general negation and absence of the Palestinian story in Canada when Palestine was represented on campus, Leila remembers her elation: “I thought that was amazing! And that was another reason, that sort of positive reinforcement that ... people do want to learn, people do want to know about you, *you matter.*”

## Chapter 6

### 6 Conclusion: ‘The Truth is like Water’

While I was writing this thesis the Israeli army instituted a massive crackdown on the Palestinian population of the West Bank – major universities have been raided, areas under Palestinian Authority (PA) control since the Oslo accords have been re-occupied, the entire city of Hebron was put under siege, house raids became a daily occurrence, and six Palestinians were killed in two weeks. This violence has disappeared down the same “black hole” that Amena Saleem from the news website Electronic Intifada describes as swallowing up the fate of other Palestinian children and teens living under Israeli military occupation. She writes:

In the first ten days of June, seventeen teenage boys were abducted in the occupied West Bank. The youngest was thirteen, the oldest seventeen. All of the abductions were documented by the Palestinian Monitoring Group. None were reported by the international media. No Western politicians called for the release of the boys. On 12 June, three more teenage boys went missing in the West Bank. Their disappearance sparked worldwide media coverage, cries of terrorism and demands for their release by the US Secretary of State and the UK Foreign Secretary. Those three are Israeli. The seventeen others are Palestinian (Saleem 2014).

The crackdown, which many Human Rights groups operating in the West Bank (including Amnesty International, B’Tselem, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, and Adalah) have described as collective punishment of the civilian population, was justified on the unproved Israeli claim that Palestinians were responsible for the Israeli settlers’ disappearances (B’Tselem 2014)<sup>16</sup>. These events highlight both the cumulative and ongoing nature of Israeli state violence,

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<sup>16</sup> B’Tselem has posted on its website a letter by rights groups operating in the West Bank, sent to the Israeli Minister of Public Defense and the Minister of Security, calling for the government to immediately cease its collective punishment of Palestinians in the West Bank. The letter is signed by Amnesty International, B’Tselem, Gisha – Legal Center for Freedom of Movement, the Association for Civil Rights in Israel, the Public Committee Against Torture in Israel, HaMoked: Center for the Defence of the Individual, Yesh Din, Adalah, Physicians for Human Rights – Israel, Rabbis for Human Rights and Breaking the Silence.

Palestinian suffering, and the annihilation of this reality from the public sphere. It also illustrates the way hierarchies of grief and worthiness are maintained. After the bodies of the three Israeli teens were found outside of the Palestinian village of Halhoul, the army shot a Palestinian man dead in Jenin and carried out 34 airstrikes on the densely crowded Gaza Strip, putting into bloody action Prime Minister Netanyahu's warning that " Hamas is responsible - and Hamas will pay" (Ravid and Lis 2014). All of Canada's major national newspapers featured stories about the discovery of the Jewish Israeli teens bodies on the home page of their websites, featuring pictures of the boys and reactions from Israeli leaders, the Israeli public, and the families of the teens (Deitch 2014; Heller 2014; Federman and Deitch 2014; National Post 2014), and describing the collective punishment that preceded this discovery, including the arrest of 400 Palestinians, as a "frantic manhunt" (The Globe and Mail and the National Post), a "feverish search" (the Huffington Post and the National Post) and a "crackdown on Hamas" (The Globe and Mail). The unworthiness of Palestinian lives and deaths is reflected in their absence in mainstream media coverage. "In the silence of the newspaper," Butler (2004) reminds us, "there was no event, no loss."

The lives, and deaths, of three Israeli teenage settlers make national headlines while the deaths of six Palestinians, the detention of hundreds more, the bombing of Gaza, and the daily escalating dehumanization of the collective punishment of 2.5 million people disappears into that black hole of calculated indifference. As I am writing this conclusion, over 600 Palestinians in Gaza (the vast majority civilians) have been killed in a two-week period by ongoing Israel airstrikes and a ground invasion (Al-Jazeera 2014)<sup>17</sup>, while 31 Israelis, the vast majority soldiers, have been killed by Hamas fighters. The Israeli strikes targeted, among many other civilian installations, two of Gaza's major hospitals (Weaver, Juhas and Halabi 2014). I sent a message to Leila, the young student activist from London whose family is from Gaza, asking if her family there is okay. She responded "even my grandmother who survived 1948 says it's never

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<sup>17</sup> The death toll of 600 Palestinians is accurate as of July 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014, a number which, sadly, will likely have increased by time this thesis is submitted.

been like this.” This continuity of suffering reveals the poignancy of Farah’s (2009b, 21) observation that “by the time the history of a village or a town, or of a massacre is documented another takes its place demanding recognition and recording. There is no respite.”

These events make me think about the repetitive continuity of this process of Palestinian “unfreedom” (Nadeau and Sears 2010) across time and space, when violence against them, whether of the scale of the past weeks or something smaller and more mundane, is erased from public view. I was involved in organizing the first Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) at Western University in 2010, in which the campus Solidarity for Human Rights (SPHR) at Western faced considerable push-back from pro-Israel students and, to a lesser extent, university officials. The president of the club showed the rest of the organizers, and later the campus newspaper, a message she had received from the head of the Jewish Defense League in London, a far-right militant group classified by the FBI as a terrorist group. The email called her derogatory words used to insult women in Arabic – which translates as “whore” in English - and promised that he would see “an Israel free of Arabs.”

The article published in the campus Gazette detailed threats made against students who organized a facebook group against IAW, but said that Iman, the President of SPHR, has received “criticism” (Stone 2010). How could calling a woman a “whore” and a threat of, at the least the ethnic cleansing, and at worst the mass murder of an entire ethnic group, uttered by a member of an organization considered extremist even by the FBI, become “criticism” in a university newspaper? It may seem like a small thing I know, but as Edward Said (1986, 134) wrote in *After the Last Sky*, when the dots are connected between all these tiny happenings patterns become detectable. “They are all a part,” he writes, “these tiny offences against the scattered truth of our lives.” That has been in large part what I have attempted to do in this thesis, to highlight the way Palestinian exiles experience these offences - both the everyday and mundane, and the bombings, the house raids, the killings that disappear from headlines - and how they connect the dots to explain why so much of this narrative has often been rendered unspeakable in public discursive space in Canada. I have traced, both across space and



historically, the process of Palestinian un-narration in Canada that have made possible the interpretation of the collective punishment of civilians as a “crackdown on Hamas.”

The structure of Palestinian unfreedom in Canada is shaped by three overlapping and intersecting narratives - a long colonial and Orientalist tradition, the instrumentalization of particular Biblical stories, and the invocation of the Holocaust and anti-Semitism in public conversations of the treatment of the Palestinians. I have detailed the way these powerful and pervasive narratives are continually reproduced and re-articulated in ways which position the Zionist project favourably within the racialized history and structures of Canadian society, while Palestinian histories and experiences survive mostly at the margins and the interstices. These three narratives have been looked at separately for analytical purposes, but in practice they often overlap and complement each other.

A large part of the power of Zionist narratives of Palestine-Israel, in Canada and elsewhere, is the way that these narratives have appropriated or latched onto broader narratives and discourses, like the Jewish National Fund’s presentation as an environmental stewardship organization, and the promotion of Israel as a haven for Gay rights, or a leader in a global “war on terror” following 9/11. These narratives rest on assumptions that have been laid down over years and have become in some senses axiomatic. Though these narratives have been re-articulated in ways that make it more palatable in the public sphere, there is a remarkable continuity in early depictions of Zionist settlements as bastions of European civilization in a sea of Oriental backwardness, to the description of Israel by the current Prime Minister as a “light in a region of darkness.” When these narratives become so entrenched that they are thought of, in the Gramscian sense as “common sense”, evidence to the contrary is often dismissed. The description of Israel as a liberal democracy which uses violence, unlike Palestinians so the narrative goes, in “self-defense,” cannot be smoothly told if Israeli racism and colonial violence are exposed to public view. So threats of ethnic cleansing become “criticism”, and the right-wing vigilante mobs that roamed Jerusalem after the news of the three settlers’ death broke, yelling “death to the Arabs” and beating anyone

who looked Palestinian (Weaver 2014), receives one mention in an article in the Toronto Star, three quarters of the way down the page (Martin 2014).

To add to an already cluttered wall, to use Said's metaphor, Biblical narratives of Israel as a "promised land" have held strongly among some sectors of Canadian Christians, but also in its more secular historical version among non-religious Canadians as well. Carol, a non-Palestinian woman who works for a NGO which advocates for Middle East justice, commented on the currency of this idea of the creation of Israel as a return of historical lands in her experiences talking to secular politicians about Palestine-Israel. A narrative in which the creation of Israel is seen as redemption for the horrors of the Holocaust in Europe also has a remarkable continuity. Similarly, accusations of anti-Semitism against those who criticize Israel's policies is an old silencing tactic which is re-emerging with the notion of the "new anti-Semitism" associated with the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition on Anti-Semitism (CPCCA). These narratives often work to reproduce not only support for Israel, but certain myths about Canada and Canadians, as liberal, and progressive peace-keepers, and as a country which actively fights racism.

The way Zionist narratives of Palestine-Israel are often aligned with broader discourses, and the need for constant reproduction in ways that are palatable in the Canadian public sphere is also one of the greatest vulnerabilities of these narratives. Hegemony is never complete – it is an ongoing project of reproduction full of holes, inconsistencies and contradictions. The alignment of Zionist groups with reactionary and often fringe currents of Christianity has provoked opposition from more justice-minded Christians and denominations, especially among the United Church, which has now, despite historical involvement in the horrors of the residential school system in Canada, fairly progressive politics and is involved with various social justice movements. Israel's self-presentation as a progressive liberal democracy is frequently at odds with the abundance of evidence to the contrary, carefully documented by the United Nations, human rights groups, and most importantly Palestinian journalists, bloggers and activists who have taken full advantage of the growth of social media.

Palestinian activists in exile, especially young activists like the men and women I talked to, have been instrumental in disrupting pristine narratives of Israel and offering a different framework of understanding for interpreting what is happening in Palestine-Israel. Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) and the related Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement have been growing in strength in Canada in large part on university campuses. Both IAW and BDS work to achieve justice in Palestine-Israel by confronting Zionism within a colonial framework, specifically through the use of an apartheid analysis of Israel's treatment of Palestinians exiles, those in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, and those who hold Israeli citizenship. Perhaps the reason that both IAW and BDS have faced such backlash and repression in the public sphere –whether in the form of public accusations of anti-Semitism or the outright ban of certain images and certain kinds of speech – is that these forms of analysis completely invert the hegemonic frame of understanding. They aren't just interruptions or criticism of existing narratives, but attempts to challenge the limits of discourse itself, to change the very structure of debate to one in which Palestinian experiences of Zionism become a starting point for understanding and action. Amin, though often cynical, due perhaps in part to his seemingly boundless knowledge of history, is confident that this discursive shift will be achieved despite what he sees as an often biased media: He says:

At the end of the day if you watch enough news you're going to be like what the hell is this? What is this all about? It doesn't take much, how should I say this... lies are costly, lies are fabricated and take a lot of effort, not only to fabricate but to then convince people of. But the truth is like water; it just seeps through the cracks and fills people in. You know what I mean?

As the civilian casualties in Gaza continue to mount, including the killing of four boys on a Gaza beach in front of dozens of international journalists (Logan 2014), there may be more cracks forming in that “wall of denials” (Said 1980, 51) which Zionism puts up to block Palestinian history, experiences and suffering from achieving widespread public visibility. I have noticed a shift, slight but still present, in the media discourse over the last few weeks. The mass demonstrations and direct actions across North America, which many of the Palestinians I have interviewed have been involved in, are attempts to open these cracks further, in the hope that the truth just may “seep through.”

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# Appendix A



Research Ethics

## Use of Human Participants - Ethics Approval Notice

Principal Investigator: Dr. Randa Farah  
 File Number: 103565  
 Review Level: Full Board  
 Approved Local Adult Participants: 30  
 Approved Local Minor Participants: 0  
 Protocol Title: Palestinian History/Memory in Canadian Public Discourse  
 Department & Institution: Social Science/Anthropology, Western University  
 Sponsor:  
 Ethics Approval Date: July 03, 2013 Expiry Date: September 30, 2013

### Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

Document Name	Comments	Version Date
Other	References for Methodology Section 2.1	2013/02/18
Western University Protocol		2013/02/23
Response to Board Recommendations	Cover Letter	2013/06/16
Letter of Information & Consent	Letter of information and consent (second revision)	2013/06/16
Other	Interview Guide	2013/04/23
Response to Board Recommendations	Response to recommendations	2013/04/23


This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB's periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 0000941.

### Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

 Grace Kelly (grace.kelly@uwo.ca)	Vikki Tran (vikki.tran@uwo.ca)	Shantel Walcott (swalcott@uwo.ca)
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*This is an official document. Please retain the original in your files.*

## Curriculum Vitae

- Name:** Peige Desjarlais
- Post-secondary Education and Degrees:** Western University  
London, Ontario, Canada  
2007-2011 B.A.
- Honours and Awards:** Province of Ontario Graduate Scholarship (OGS)  
2012-2013, 2013-2014
- Social Science and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)  
2012-2013
- Related Work Experience**
- Teaching Assistant  
The University of Western Ontario  
2012-2014
- PSAC Local 610 Anthropology Rep.  
Western University  
2013-2014
- Presenter: "Narrating Palestine in Canadian Public Discourse."  
CASCA  
May 2014
- Publications:**  
Desjarlais, Peige. (2013). "Excavating Zion: Archaeology and Nation-making in Palestine/Israel," *Totem: The University of Western Ontario Journal of Anthropology*: Vol. 21: Iss. 1, Article 2.