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Affect, excess & settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel

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ABSTRACT

What happens when we pay attention to the sensations of our research? Based on an image and encounter during fieldwork in West Jerusalem, this article traces how a feeling of discomfort both confirms and challenges what we (think we) know about settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel. Rather than dismissing the moments when narratives, objects and exchanges generate unease, I suggest that exploring this 'data' attunes us to how settlers navigate the complex and contradictory conditions of coloniality – how they create resources for living. Structuralist accounts of settler colonialism are not fully capable of engaging this texture, even as they might invoke or attempt to harness emotion through mechanisms including the logic of elimination, settler indigenisation and heteropatriarchy. While thinking with this existing theory, I ask scholars and activists to consider what exceeds our dominant frames, following how affects spill over, attach and circulate among settler subjects in ways that have material consequences. This uneasy approach entails letting things play out, accepting our own implication in power and taking theorisation seriously as an ethical practice. At the same time, it is profoundly future-facing, enabling us to better identify what must be done as we work toward decolonial futures.

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Figure 1. Kibbutz Beit Alfa, November 1923. Matteo Omied / Alamy Stock Photo.

It looked something like this Figure 1.

An image in a family photo album. A volume of intimacy and evidentiary proof – of existence and presence, of striving to build and become. Of erasure and absence. Of elimination.

Within the space of this article, I wish to consider an image and a sensation – residue from fieldwork conducted in 2010-2011, which has been causing me some discomfort. I aim to replicate and transmit this feeling as I write, as a means of thinking through a sense of unease and insisting that history is *felt* as much as it is thought.[1] Throughout the subsequent pages I seek to understand why traces of particular exchanges or encounters linger, and to consider what they might tell us if we pause to listen.

My analysis pivots around a single experience in Arnona, Jerusalem during 2011. I understand a focus on one narrative and encounter to be a potentially risky methodological choice, yet I hope to demonstrate how a seeming dearth of data is anything but. Rather, I suggest that multiple layers attach to – and intensify – the image above, stretching its analytical and political value beyond the seemingly available frame. Using a photograph, an interview transcript and a record/recollection of encounter, I attempt to work through some of the tensions within critical settler colonial theory and take a step toward understanding how this might contribute to decolonial praxis.

The work of this article is multiple, making visible layered fields – political, social, temporal, territorial, affective – much like the image(s) in question. The first layer is a methodological exploration of troubling or uncomfortable data, which materialises in the form of narratives and experiences that haunt us after fieldwork. Here I want to bring together scholarship on

'glow moments'[2] – when data strikes us forcefully – with work on the appearance of ghosts or spectres within our research.[3] The article's second layer consists of an intervention in critical settler colonial theory, made possible by feminist engagements with objects and affect.[4] While an interview experience might confirm what we know about settler colonialism, its unruliness compels us to consider what exceeds, spills over, and seeps from dominant structuralist accounts.[5] Yet the third layer is perhaps the article's most crucial: a response to the ethical demands of settler colonial theory,[6] which calls upon scholars to stay with feelings of uncertainty, unease and discomfort as we work toward decolonial futures.[7] Throughout these moves, I ask us to reflect on who is at the centre of our research and praxis, suggesting that critical settler colonial theory must give way to Indigenous decolonial approaches if our contributions to knowledge and action are to be transformative.

Setting the scene: finding the approach [layer 1]

This article takes a rather unconventional approach to academic 'knowledge production', openly tracing moments of confusion, failure and recalibration as fundamental to the arguments and possibilities that emerge. Over the past few years, I have come to question the extent to which we 'produce' knowledge, growing increasingly wary of how neoliberal capitalism underpins notions of productivity that centre 'our needs' and the means of meeting them.[8] Inspired by the work of Indigenous scholars and activists, I have shifted to the language of 'knowledge cultivation and sharing', which necessitates (for me) a degree of transparency about research as a relational learning process. In this spirit, I include my experience of peer review as part of 'finding the approach' – this dialogue is key to the work of my text and its ethical implications.

Within this text, my approach is foremost one of 'storying', taking seriously how narratives, experiences and imaginaries can create arcs of thought and action. I follow scholars like Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Shawn Wilson, Nahla Abdo, Rosemary Sayigh and Ruba Salih,[9] who powerfully illustrate how stories enable the expression of voice, creation of meaning and formation of communities – in ways that can yield contrapuntal histories and counter-discourses, and/or make possible the quotidian rhythms that sustain life, memory and futurity. The story in these pages is my own, interlaced with a story from an interview participant in West Jerusalem. But at the same time, it is also a story of Palestine; this has become clear through an exchange with one of the article's reviewers. Her reading of my initial draft raised a concern articulated by Edward Said in 1984: who has permission to narrate? How might an article focused on how 'Leftist' Jewish Israelis feel their way through the everyday of settler colonialism also – necessarily – tell the story of Palestine, in ways that erase Palestinian voice, presence and agency?

I thought that I could tell a story about political violence in Palestine/Israel that disrupted critical settler colonial theory in generative ways, expanding our knowledge of how the logics, mechanisms, structures and sensations of settler coloniality become common sense among settlers.[10] However, upon reflection it is apparent that my work obeys troubling limits when it comes to decolonisation and radical transformation: it continues to provide a Zionist centred reading of the narrative of Palestine, even as/in critique.[11] Though gently couched, my immediate response to the reviewer's concern was a desire to simply withdraw my manuscript – scholars and activists do not need more settler-centred accounts of domination. Yet I have decided to persist and re-write sections

of this piece through a new lens, made know-able to me through encouragement by the same reviewer. The story of this article has thus become a first step toward a larger political project formulated powerfully by Rana Barakat: realigning critical settler colonial theory within the framework of Indigenous resistance and intellectual sovereignty in Palestine.[12]

As a tentative motion, I cannot claim to have succeeded in this aim through a single article; as you will see, I am finding my way. But I am propelled by the intuitive sense and simple argument that *how we feel matters* – to power, to struggle and to the future. As a mode of 'politically motivated intellectual work',[13] setting the scene for this piece also requires a statement of positionality, which I had deleted from my original manuscript. In an earlier draft I wrote:

> As an American (US) researcher living in England with a Jewish Israeli partner, I am implicated in settler colonialism across three contexts. My family history ties me particularly tightly to Fort Snelling (St. Paul, Minnesota) and the massacre of Dakota people committed at this military outpost-cum-concentration camp in 1862.[14] Yet … I am not certain that this is politically or intellectually helpful.

Through dialogue with my reviewer, I understand positionality to be not only helpful but actually critical to the work of this article. As a settler-scholar writing the story of Palestine through the memories, images and sensations of a Zionist settler, I have a responsibility to name racial power as my own.[15] This entails acknowledging my implication within the material and affective bases of power as they connect contexts, even as I call myself anti-Zionist. Put simply: I benefit, much like the research participant you will soon meet. Political modes of scholarship require us not to put this truth to the side as irrelevant (thereby absolving responsibility), but also not to make it the centre of our work (turning story of Palestine into the story of settlers).[16] In the final section of this article I try to find an ethical, political and intellectual way forward.

Image matters[17]

Let us turn to the image at hand, or rather to its substitute. I do not possess a copy of the original photograph, so we must use a stand-in to sense – to *feel* – what it tells us. The story of this image must be told as entangled with my own: as a then-PhD student undertaking research among leftist Jewish Israelis, and as a now-university lecturer troubled by the memory of an encounter. This history is analytically and materially important, as Sara Ahmed reminds us: 'Histories shape "what" surfaces.'[18]

In 2011, I was a PhD student at the Centre for Gender Studies at SOAS, University of London, undertaking twelve months of fieldwork in Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem. My research grappled with the question of political apathy among self-defined 'Leftist' Jewish Israelis – individuals who opposed 'conflict' and 'occupation'[19] in the region, yet expressed feelings of disillusionment, despair and hopelessness in relation to politics. For many – if not most – research participants, lived experiences generated a sense of inability to change the wider material/political realities in which they lived. This felt inefficacy then prompted a retreat from the political, both in everyday life and on activist stages.[20] Through ethnographic research, I attempted to understand what underpins apparent apathy, a contradictory political emotion and practice wherein those

conveying disillusionment also believed sincerely that they *could* and *should* do something.

Fifty-eight interviews, extensive participant observation and a year-long ethnography of everyday life in two research sites revealed significant social mechanisms that sustain conflict as an ideational framework and mode of political violence. Through an evolving network of participants, my analysis came to reflect a particular sub-set of leftist Jewish Israelis as a political community: maximally enfranchised middle-class, heterosexual, secular Ashkenazi[21] women and men living in Tel Aviv and West Jerusalem. Yet while I sought to distil patterns specific to this group, my fieldwork and analysis remained attentive to complexity and contradiction, approaching gender, sexuality, race, class, religion, location, generation and coloniality as dynamic relations of power.[22]

As I collected and worked with the data, a number of narratives and fieldwork encounters felt particularly fraught or suffused with tension, troubling the emerging trends and patterns. These interactions stood out in various ways, from feelings of awkwardness generated by curt responses or prolonged silences, to surprising or problematic accounts that challenged my perception of 'Leftist' politics. While many ethnographers would argue that all data requires untangling at some level, these moments were notable for their emotional charges – in disobeying pattern and structure, they made me feel something. I was left unsettled and uncertain.

What does it mean to pay attention to the *sensations* of our data, to attend to the emotional resonance that marks their histories and trajectories? In looking back at the discomfort of my own data, I realise now that often these tense experiences implicated me directly within the exchange. Not as a researcher, but as a confidant, friend and potential ally – my positionality matters. Throughout fieldwork I identified myself and my politics in a way that encouraged connections with my participants, emphasising points of commonality that did not compromise my own sense of ethics. Yet within interview and participant observation settings these tentative bonds became far stronger than I had anticipated; often I was read as (almost) 'one of us', whether on the basis of a shared interest in women's rights or a common understanding of politics in Palestine/Israel. During fieldwork encounters people shared intimate stories and objects, openly declared their trust, and moved meaningfully to include me within their lives. With little reservation they offered up fears, anxieties, traumas, losses, hopes and dreams, articulating cautiously guarded beliefs and experiences.

In the prior draft of this article, I called this data 'unruly' as it refused to fit my framework, becoming a source of frustration and irritation. But I realise now that these uncomfortable narratives and encounters from my fieldwork are disobedient to the extent that they reveal settler colonialism for what it is – violent, contradictory and deeply personal. As unfolded in the following pages, this data is only unruly because we (settlers) hold on to a particular story about ourselves, one that uplifts us at the cost of Palestinians' humanity.[23]

A speculative methodology

Engaging with the traces of an encounter, the circulation of an image and a lingering sense of discomfort requires tools and language beyond that provided by anthropology or feminist theory, my disciplinary homes. Within this article, I propose that following a

'methodology of unease'[24] makes space for extra-ordinary data to 'glow'[25] in a way that does not tuck it neatly into patterns or trends.

Through their experiences of researching wartime rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), political scientists Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern suggest that methodology may be the result of research findings and changes in researchers themselves, rather than a driver of methods and analysis.[26] In doing so, they create the possibility that what we feel during and about our research might produce new insights and approaches, even – or especially – in moments of unexpected tension. They describe their practice thus:

> Instead of glossing over our sense of discomfort with our research findings and what they might imply, and rushing to embrace a new explanatory framework that would seemingly provide more coherence to both what we learned and our concerns, we lingered in our uncomfortable questions, fears, distress and apprehensions.[27]

For Baaz and Stern, paying attention to the sensations of their own surprise, shame, distress, disgust and desire paved a way not only to answering their original questions about how rape 'works' in the context of the DRC 'warscape',[28] but also to formulating new questions that interrogate the limits of academic discourse and the effects of critique.[29]

This permission – or challenge – to methodologically centre discomfort, ambiguity and anxiety makes possible my return to the sensations generated by a photograph shared in the space of a Jerusalem apartment. As data, both the image and the encounter emit an energy that lingers, 'glowing' for me in ways that resonate with Baaz and Stern's methodology of unease. Following post-qualitative educational researcher Maggie MacLure, the glow of data.

> […] can be felt on occasions where something – perhaps a comment in an interview, a fragment of a fieldnote, an anecdote, an object or a strange facial expression – seems to reach out from the inert corpus (corpse) of the data, to grasp us.[30]

We are stopped in our tracks by tension, surprise, awkwardness or illumination, jarred or led gently by moments that confuse, repulse or produce wonder. Our data comes alive and exerts a force. What interests me especially is the capacity of these 'glow moments' to animate thought in ways that open us to new possibilities[31] – methodologically, analytically and politically.

In this article the glow of data is not simply an alarm or warning, but the focus of investigation. If we are to understand what our research seeks to tell us, identifying the texture or quality of glowing data becomes an integral task.[32] This entails attending to *how* data reaches out to us, discerning *which* sensations and emotions the moment of contact produces. Along my journey, this has meant taking seriously the feeling of 'hauntedness' that an image and encounter produce – how a persistent sense or vague suspicion has followed me from Jerusalem to Exeter (UK), from 2011 to 2022. Avery Gordon's sociological work considers the phenomenon of 'haunting' in a way that provides tools for understanding how sensations and encounters cross time and space, guiding us toward particular incidents and actions.[33] For Gordon, haunting becomes a way in which previously repressed social violence makes its presence known, refusing to be contained and altering our experience of past, present and future.[34] In this way, sensation again becomes key to both methodology and analysis – to seeing and understanding the object, subject or event to which a ghost or spectre directs our attention.

Collectively, these authors challenge prevailing academic conventions that narrowly define what counts as data, the origins of methodology, and the significance of research as an emotional experience. Yet this critical scholarship is also future-facing, making possible links between research practice, felt knowledge,[35] and political action. It is toward this orientation that I take tentative steps in the final section of this article. As Gordon writes,

> Following the ghosts is about making a contact that changes you and refashions the social relations in which you are located. It is about putting life back in where only a vague memory or a bare trace was visible to those who bothered to look. It is sometimes about writing ghost stories, stories that not only repair representational mistakes, but also strive to understand the conditions under which a memory was produced in the first place, toward a countermemory, for the future.[36]

N(arr)ative encounter: settler colonial theory and affective interference [layer 2]

I sit with Hila in her home in Arnona, Jerusalem, a small flat that attests to its owner's identity as an artist and former archivist. Paintings, drawings and sculptures pepper the rooms and walls; a small balcony is filled to overflowing with flowering plants. We spent the previous hour conversing about 'the conflict' over tea, sliced apples and biscuits – a gesture of welcome to the (American) researcher visiting from the UK. Born in the 1940s, Hila was raised on a kibbutz in northern Israel, served in the army in Tel Aviv, and went on to study art before working as an archivist in the Knesset. Her family emigrated to Israel from Poland in the 1920s.

> Hila: […] If we go back to Palestinians and Israelis, what will bring peace? There are conditions. First, in Israel we have to agree with the Palestinians about the settlements – the settlers have to come back to Israel. I think it was a big mistake, 20 years ago I said it. Israel always when conquering a place – [clarifies] like Sinai, the settlements got millions of dollars to make roads, cities, farms. Then we agree with Egypt to take them (the settlements) out and the millions go in the sand. It happened again near Gaza: Israel withdraws without an agreement, destroys the cities and farms it built. They invested millions of dollars and it all goes to sand. And we got not peace, but rockets. Second, there must be goodwill. Recognising Israel is a condition. Hamas must recognise that we can stay here. They still say that we steal their country – we are not! When my parents were here there were half a million Arabs. Look!

At this point she brings out a photo album from the next room; it has a brown tattered cover with aged, black pages. Some pages are missing photographs and have only the plastic corner tabs to testify to their absence. Other pages have yellowed and curling images from the 1920s and 30s – amazing. (Her goal here is to show me the absence of Arabs and how hard the pioneers tilled the 'empty' land to make their lives.)

> Acre by acre they pay for it – the *Keren Keyemeth LeIsrael* [KKL, or Jewish National Fund],[37] they buy from the sheikhs who stay in Beirut and Damascus. These sheikhs are rich, that had lots of acres in Israel – 'Palestine,' they called it. […] No one steals – they *bought* it acre by acre. And what did they sell us? The worst earth in the world they gave to the Israelis? It was not a good one where you can grow, but swamp where there were mosquitos. My father worked there, he was very ill many times – probably with malaria. Forty to fifty years before he came, in the north there were people from Russia, they wanted to build a farm. All the children died from malaria. Many people died from it or were sick.

We page through the photographs with white tents, horse teams, early pioneers in simple clothes working the land.

> You know, in the Knesset there was a beautiful woman from Haifa, she was an Arab Christian. She said to me, 'You are taking our country.' I said to her, 'No, you don't know history! [getting emotional] You go to the University of Haifa, the University in Jerusalem and you don't know history. No, we buy (the land)! Tel Aviv was sand, we built it. Haifa was small – the pioneers built the country.' The woman said no. I said that I would show her in books how it looks, what Arabic farms look like. All of Israel was empty, there were no people there – that's why we came. There *were* Arabic people, but not many: half a million in the Independence War[38] and also half a million Jewish in the Independence War. Now we have seven million.

> KN: Did she see the photos?

> Hila: The woman, she came to see the photos. I showed her the farms, they were small and built from mud. The woman said no! But I showed her. Of course there were Palestinians here, but it was empty. I asked my mother, 'You came and there were Palestinians – what did you think?' Her answer was, 'I think we can live together.' Life in the kibbutz was so difficult: you live in a tent, it's hot, there is nothing to eat or wear – if you had sandals you gave them to another.

She shows me a picture of the kibbutz to understand what was happening in the beginning: a gray and white photo of white tents across a barren landscape, with hills rising in the distance.

> There are no Arabs here.

There indeed weren't any in the photo.

> People hate Israel in England. In France I met a woman who said, 'Why are you in Israel? Isn't it the Palestinians' country?' I said that we build it, work hard, and defend it. I remember being in the field with my father and a Bedouin came with his sheep to go on the field to graze. I said, 'Father, they are three (people)!' He said that he is not afraid, they will go. And they *did* – my father yelled at them and waved his arms. My parents made a revolution, against their own parents they come to build a country. The Palestinians were asleep, very primitive. There wasn't a nation or country of Palestine, there were people that sit here under the Turkish and the English. Then they wake up and want to be a nation? I understand, but it was too late. The state of Israel already was.[39]

I recount this narrative at length – the language of expression, setting of exchange, sensations of encounter – in part to relay its contradictions. Much about the text is troubling or sits uneasily: the assertion that the land was empty yet home to 'half a million Arabs'; Hila's self-identification as 'Leftist' and her simultaneous espousal of seemingly Right-wing rhetoric; an admission of conquest on the part of Israel, but either through purchase or the actions of (other) settlers. Her story glows in uncomfortable ways. As elaborated in the discussion that follows, these contradictions point to mechanisms through which settler colonialism gains purchase and durability in Palestine/Israel; they confirm our existing knowledge. Yet I also grant this passage generous space in order to convey its intensity – something happens between the photograph and the narrative, between Hila and me. Energy circulates within the time and space of a room as an object is passed between people, not necessarily doing the 'work' it was/is intended to do. My encounter with Hila suggests that affective charges interfere, working on sometimes ambient frequencies to attune us better to how people navigate their social and political worlds.

Structural(ist) confirmation

When data glows, how do we react? Why has it taken so long for this scholar (me) to sit with the feelings of intensity and discomfort produced in an encounter, now filtered through years of experience and sensation? For many of us, the immediate response to our data's capacity to shake or grasp us – its inherent agency – is to reach for something stable, something known and familiar. We struggle to hold onto the matter that (we think) is our data; this is the time of theory.

Feeling haunted by my encounter with Hila and its act(s) of transmission, I circled back with the intention of understanding what the experience confirmed. Faced with unease, discomfort and anxiety, I wanted these feelings to point me toward something recognisable, to be an indicator of *what we know*. Emotion could be harnessed in the service of logic and structure. Critical settler colonial theory provided a comfortable frame for the mechanisms that unfolded within Hila's narrative, as well as for the political work that I hoped to do. While creating a language that enables diagnoses of violence and power, 'the logic of elimination', 'settler indigenisation' and 'heteropatriarchy' also make possible pathways to resistance and transformation.

Reach out, grasp theory, hold.

Theorised by Patrick Wolfe as a central structural driver of settler colonialism, 'the logic of elimination' allowed me to tether Hila's account and my feelings about it to a framework that could soothe the glow of this data. Wolfe argues that, motivated by the desire for access to territory, settler colonial societies employ – and invent – a range of strategies and tactics through which the native or indigenous[40] population is effectively 'eliminated', along with their claims to the land.[41] This logic is not limited to erasure in the form of killing or 'frontier homicide'; rather, it moves on, adapts and departs. Here, elimination evolves to include strategies of containment, removal, expulsion and assimilation. As Wolfe writes,

> The logic of elimination not only refers to the summary liquidation of Indigenous people, though it includes that. … [S]ettler colonialism has both negative and positive dimensions. Negatively, it strives for the dissolution of native societies. Positively, it erects a new colonial society on the expropriated land base – as I put it, settler colonizers come to stay: invasion is a structure, not an event.[42]

Read as structural, settler colonisation is a complex social formation characterised by continuity through time, yet capable of 'transmut[ing] into different modalities, discourses and institutional formations.'[43]

Through this lens, the image and account offered by Hila in the space of her Arnona apartment attest to epistemic and ontological erasure. While the photograph provides no visual evidence of indigenous Palestinian presence or the violence of removal, dispossession and assimilation, Hila's narrative is peppered by multiple admissions that 'there *were* Arabic people.' She estimates Palestinians to number 500,000 at the onset of the 1948 War, which falls far short of the 750,000 inhabitants solely made refugees between 1947 and 1949.[44] Coupled with the image of 'empty' land, this statistical evidence and discrepancy confirm the negative dimension of settler colonialism: a move to dissolve native societies. Yet her account also testifies powerfully to the positive

dimension of settler colonisation, which allows elimination to proceed through processes of building and growth. To again quote Hila, 'the pioneers built the country'; 'my parents made a revolution, against their own parents they come to build a country' – physical and emotional labour underpin the establishment and expansion of Jewish settler space and society.

When approached through the logic of elimination, Hila's narrative began to feel less unruly; a structuralist framework clarifies the means and moves through which territorial conquest unfolds in Palestine/Israel. However, there is more at stake. Hila's words and experiences also alert us how colonisation shapes subjectivities and political communities – how settlers are not just *on* the land, but become *of* the land.

Reach out, grasp theory, hold.

Lorenzo Veracini posits settler 'indigenisation' as a process of becoming that attempts to erase the founding violence of invasion, by 'transform[ing] an historical tie ("we came here") into a natural one ("the land made us")'.[45] In Hila's narrative, settler indigeneity is asserted not through a positive claim ('we were always here'), but rather through the repudiation of Palestinian indigeneity. This passage bears repeating: 'There wasn't a nation or country of Palestine, there were people that sit here under the Turkish and the English. Then they wake up and want to be a nation? I understand, but it was too late. The state of Israel already was.' By casting Palestinians as oddly 'of the land' but 'too primitive' to lay political claim to it, Hila points to a break in the conditions that lead to sovereignty as she understands it. If Palestinians are 'pre-national', the matter of their indigeneity is beside the point. The emergence and recognition of Israel as a state supports the basis of a new articulation of (settler) indigeneity: 'we are here now.'

Held in this way, Hila's words can sit alongside the image offered as evidence despite their apparent tension. While she speaks undeniably to Palestinian presence, the photograph from her family album corroborates a sense of Palestinian absence, depicting only the dwellings, animals and tools through which the Jewish settler community could cultivate the land and their own emplacement. Though 'there *were* Arabic people', according to Hila they did not inhabit the land in the 'right way' for making legitimate (political) claims to it – thus, they can be cast as absent and their claims to territory denied. On the literal ground of this newly 'emptied' land nascent Israelis indeed 'built a country' and consolidated collective identity, as evidenced through accounts and images of toiling, striving, constructing, cultivating and defending. Yet so too this labour made possible the naturalisation of their presence, if only through the seeming inevitability of statehood. 'The state of Israel already was' and with it were (indigenous) Israelis.

Between the logic of elimination and the indigenisation of settlers, existing critical theory assuaged my sense of unease with Hila's words and images. A structural frame curled errant claims and troubling sensations into place, revealing not only their satisfying 'fit' but also how mechanisms of native elimination and settler indigenisation actually work – how they become rationalised, internalised and implemented by Jewish settlers and their descendants. Yet still a tension remained, arising from the capacity of theory to expose the ambiguities of settler colonialism. As Scott Lauria Morgensen warns, while attempts at self-indigenisation might aim to naturalise settler colonialism, these narratives also reveal how settlers 'record their own illegitimacy and efforts to resolve it.'[46]

Reach out, grasp theory, hold.

Within Hila's account above, the indigenisation of settlers clearly remains a fraught process, in part due to the persistence of Palestinians *in place*. Yet while their presence might threaten to disrupt or destabilise, so too it is necessary for the (re-)materialisation of settler subjectivities and societies. As Wolfe reminds, '[…] settler colonialism does not simply replace native society *tout court*. Rather the process of replacement maintains the refractory imprint of the native counter-claim.'[47] Settler indigenisation is always incomplete and contested.

In discourse and everyday life, settlers navigate an uncomfortable reality in which Palestinian presence on the land is ongoing and necessary. How to make sense of this condition? As highlighted by scholars including Veracini and Morgensen,[48] civilisational discourses do the work of acknowledging ongoing existence, while simultaneously undermining 'native counter-claim[s]'.[49] Hila gave voice to this dynamic in her next breath:

> You can see until today that they work in the field with very primitive [instruments]. It will take time until they are more educated, liberal, and democratic – they still murder their daughters. So many murders. Because they think she looks at another man, because she doesn't listen to her brother or father, they kill her. For "honour." It's not "honour," it's murder – it's awful to kill your daughter. When they change the mentality there will be peace.[50]

Deemed 'primitive' in the face of settler technologies of agriculture and socio-political organisation, Palestinians are placed – by Jewish Israelis – in ways that deny their collective rootedness and coherence. According to Hila, Palestinians are not only *pre-national*, but *pre-human* – incapable of adequately cultivating the land, let alone participating in political dialogue.

These are troubling moves and claims, though it merits asking *why* we feel disturbed. The leaps and links made by Hila upset differently if concern for the settler and her humanity is our frame of reference, versus a commitment to the struggle for Palestinian liberation and self-determination. As experienced in the space/time of Hila's apartment and now reproduced in the text of this article, it grates – even shocks – to trace the connections made across agricultural labour, honour crimes and conflict resolution. Hila admits to past, present and future Palestinian inhabitation through reductionism and essentialism, mobilising powerful tropes that resonate with Orientalism and Islamophobia. In doing so, she relays how colonisation is popularised within settler communities; the translation of its logics into everyday terms and familiar biases enables easy reproduction, no matter how tenuous the associations. Then this final passage from Hila illustrates how 'common sense' arguments justify and sustain settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel – and how a gendered, sexualised and racialised system of classification underpins its structure.

When confronted by this passage, I was unsure of what to do with the response(s) it evoked in me. Anger, frustration and disbelief – what was the work of these sensations? At the time of our interview, the effect was silencing and (self-)censorship as I opted to see where the exchange would go next. Yet as they lingered, these feelings enabled me to find my way toward feminist and queer decolonial studies, whose interventions alert us to the significance of heteropatriarchy as a colonial structure and logic. Rather than

arguing for an additional mechanism through which domination is enacted and sustained, scholars such as Morgensen contend that '[…] gendered and sexual power condition, or even generate the power relations we call "settler colonialism"'.[51]

Reach out, grasp theory, hold.

Hila's words do not sit more gently within this frame nor does it lessen my affective response; yet through heteropatriarchy we come to better understand *how* she makes the uncomfortable connections above, and with what effects. While 'race' is widely theorised as animating the logic of elimination and settler indigenisation,[52] Hila's narrative makes painfully clear how normative patterns of gender and sexuality condition these mechanisms. In Palestine/Israel, a 'colonial/modern gender system'[53] in part determines who is subject to elimination, unable to be recuperated through an unending civilising mission. So too it sets the terms by which settler indigeneity can be claimed, in its articulation among Jewish Israelis as a product of (modern) statehood.

As engaged within Indigenous and decolonial feminist and queer scholarship, heteropatriarchy is often analysed for how the systematic privileging of heterosexuality and male domination erases diverse gender and sexual relations. Critical accounts make knowable the means through which.

> […] heteropatriarchal colonialism has sexualised indigenous lands and peoples as violable, subjugated indigenous kin ties as perverse, attacked familial ties and traditional gender roles, and all to transform indigenous peoples for assimilation within or excision from the political and economic structures of white settler societies.'[54]

Yet these are not solely local modalities of violence, as evident in the rhetoric mobilised by Hila – rather, powerful heteropatriarchal logics embed settler colonisation within the broader project of colonial modernity.

Hila's words bring into stark relief how 'primitive' and 'modern' are assessed on the basis of assumptions about *how they treat their women*,[55] where instances of gender-based violence are generalised to the values and practices of Palestinian society in its entirety. In doing so, she illustrates how 'educated,' 'liberal', and 'democratic' are defined through the bodies, practices and beliefs of women and men, and shot through with assumptions about race and religion. Significantly, Hila grounds her argument in a reflection on land and its cultivation. In parallel moves, she divorces the use of particular agricultural instruments and techniques from wider structural conditions of economic 'de-development',[56] and detaches the gendered and sexualised construction of 'honour' from the broader context in which Palestinian patriarchal relations articulate with Israeli settler colonialism.[57] These shifts and elisions result in discourses and logics that inferiorise and dehumanise Palestinians based on a normative construction of modernity, which conditions and is conditioned by colonialism.[58] It is through this lens that political impasse is read as a function of (Palestinian) failure.

Once tucked and smoothed into theoretical place, sensations from my encounter with Hila can be harnessed to show how settler colonialism takes root, adapts and becomes durable in Palestine/Israel. We are able to name and better know the logic of elimination, settler indigenisation and heteropatriarchy as violent relations that dissolve and create worlds. Structural frameworks grant us this chilling clarity. But as I sat in the room with

Hila and later held the printed transcript of our exchange, I was still bothered – haunted – by her words, the image and the energy between us. As I sit with the text now, it seems obvious that this encounter would continue to demand my attention – it speaks plainly of setter colonialism as violence, much more so than other interviews conducted during my fieldwork. There is no illusion here, no attempt at glossing brutality. Yet something about my encounter with Hila cannot be folded into structuralist explanations, as significant as they are to our understanding of settler colonialism from the perspective of the settler. Something spills out and over from the pages of a worn photo album, in the unease between two women sharing the space of a sitting room, by the way that memory slips back and forth across past, present and future. Something exceeds our existing frames.

As social scientists, how do we account for the charge generated by a black and white image as it passes from hand to hand across time and space? What happens if we allow ourselves to take seriously the tone (not just the text/words) of Hila's narrative, which varies from earnestness to insistence, anger, despair, frustration and hope? How can we follow the traces and resonance of objects and encounters, which are felt more than seen, spoken or heard? What kinds of political and social work might they do?

Feel your way

To engage these possibilities, we are compelled to let things play out.

In the moves that follow, I consider what Hila's way of sensing and being in the world might indicate about how (certain) people encounter, struggle with and ultimately rationalise settler colonialism, as well as how these experiences are passed on as knowledge. I wish to raise the possibility that an image and narrative of 'empty' land in Palestine exposes not only the production of Indigenous absence, set as the backdrop against which Zionist settlers claim(ed) and enact(ed) presence. Rather, the transmission of this photograph across generations and between hands makes knowable how affects may be generated and mobilised by settler subjects as a resource for living.

By 'affect' I mean to describe the constellation and movement of intensities that make feeling, emotion and texture possible in everyday life. Following Eric Shouse, I read affect as a '*non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential.*'[59] Here, affect precedes emotion, constituting 'what makes feelings feel'.[60] Yet affect may also be experienced as a residue, trace or excess – something left behind. It is this freedom of affects – their ability to transfer and attach to a range of 'objects' in temporally unlimited ways[61] – that distinguishes them from physiological 'drives', wherein emotion becomes the vehicle through which an aim is achieved or satisfied.[62] Affects are profoundly adaptable,[63] tethering us to 'people, ideas, sensations, relations, activities, ambitions, institutions, and any number of other things, including other affects'[64] through sensory and perceptual bonds that accumulate, intensify and circulate.

While the precise quality and intensity of affect is significant to how we understand Hila's photograph and our exchange in Arnona, we must also attend to what it produces or makes possible – what is the work of affect on relational and political scales? Far from constituting an isolated interior world, affects connect us to others, 'plac[ing] the individual in a *circuit* of feeling and response'.[65] In this way, affects might be amplified as they

transfer between people. As we accumulate, register and narrate affective experiences, we also develop ways of negotiating or moving through our wider social world. These complex 'affect theories', as conceptualised by Sylvan Tomkins, are the evolving aggregation of our affective experiences and responses over time[66] – they travel with us, bind us to each other and help us to navigate the world(s) in which we live.

My point of departure is how a material object – here, the faded black and white photograph whose substitute begins this article – provides access to one such affect theory. Precisely how this theory is generated, felt, embodied and transmitted becomes legible only through approaching the photograph as an object capable of discharging emotive energies, particularly when attached to narratives, memories and experiences of political violence.[67] These energies are intensified through the location of the image within an album, which allows it '[…] to move, to circulate spatially and temporally, travelling between people and forward in time'.[68] A single photograph takes on an active life that we might hope to trace.

In tracing this life, I am concerned less with naming the affects or charges that the image evokes, and more with beginning to understand what is transmitted or cultivated – sometimes between people with no relation or little commonality (for example, Hila and myself). The question is one of transgenerational inheritance, where narratives, images and sensations relay the values that *tell us who we are* in the face of conditions that threaten to destabilise this story. As unfolded in the preceding section, my encounter with Hila enables us to learn how Israeli settler colonialism is (re)produced discursively, materially and socially through structures of gender, sexuality and race. We are also alerted to how settler colonialism articulates with class and physical ability – it is significant that Hila describes how arduous agricultural labour not only materially 'builds a country', but also constitutes a trial through which those physically able to perform (and endure) it claim both territory and power. However, if we allow my experience with Hila to play out in its fullness – also including and implicating me – we learn how powerful fields of feeling, sensation and energy sustain and simultaneously spill over structural frameworks.

Embodied and imagined affect theories point toward an intimate practice in which complexity and contradiction are not 'made sense of' or resolved; rather, settlers *feel their way* with unease and discomfort. Despite the confidence conveyed by Hila's words and the sharing of a family photograph, everyday life entails a degree of awareness of – if not confrontation with – counter-narratives and alternative realities. We sense this in the shift from her claim that 'All of Israel was empty, there were no people there … ' to '[…] There *were* Arabic people, but not many' within a single breath. Prompted by a Palestinian colleague's direct challenge to the story of 'a land without a people', Hila invests in telling and showing. She urgently presents evidence that might convince, entreating her colleague to witness and validate her own (Palestinian) community's purported absence as illustrated through the presence of 'primitive' farms. To remind us: 'I showed her the farms, they were small and built from mud. The woman said no! But I showed her.' Hila implores and insists, conveying her truth through embodied actions, gestures and feelings as much as words and images.

This charge (re-)materialised within the space of Hila's apartment during our exchange when she offered the photograph as evidence once more. As we spoke, the apartment enfolded us in the textures and traces of her life – bronze sculptures and oil portraits

adorned the living area, while the walls of her art studio were lined with pastoral scenes of local fields and hills. A small balcony was transformed into a garden with tropical plants and ancient geraniums flowering both outside and inside the sitting room. While I sat at her kitchen table, Hila boiled water for tea and prepared sliced apples with a platter of biscuits. Hila invited me into her home and her life in these ways, infusing our exchange with intimacy and trust. When she produced the worn family album, these spaces, objects and attachments shaped how I received it; they created the conditions for transmitting knowledge as image and story.[69] Hila again demanded that her interlocutor (me) regard and register the land in the photograph as empty, sharing the album at a moment when Zionist narratives are challenged. Let us recall: 'They still say that we steal their country – we are not! When my parents were here there were half a million Arabs. Look! Acre by acre they pay for it […] they buy from the sheikhs who stay in Beirut and Damascus. […] No one steals – they *bought* it acre by acre.' Upon looking and being shown, my role is to corroborate Hila's claim and (re-)stabilise the story that gives it grounding – to quietly witness and validate as an ally.

In the exchange of affects between us – an experience of intensities in motion[70] – something is transferred, passed down from speaker/show-er to listener/see-er. This transgenerational inheritance collapses time and space, enabling a charge to accumulate and flow from the Galilee in the 1920s to a Knesset office in the 1980s/90s, a southwest Jerusalem apartment in 2011 and a desk in Exeter (UK) in 2022. Yet this circulation of energy is not unidirectional. A charge moves across, among, back and between, bending present and projected future ('what will bring peace?') to touch the past in a way that casts 'here' as a complex, multi-layered place that we navigate *together*. The inheritance is much more than a story or a photograph – it is a resource for making our way through the fraught and often contradictory narratives, sensations and conditions that sustain our world.

Conveyed not only as certainty, but also through confusion, frustration, anger and despair, this knowledge is built through the persistent presence of rough edges. Uncomfortable truths, troubling counter-claims and alternative landscapes are not smoothed away or tucked into place, at least not permanently or entirely. Rather their eruption into everyday life enables settlers to reassure themselves of their moral consistency, sense of being in place (at home) and right to territory. As Hila illustrates, challenges to the Zionist narrative of 'a land without a people for a people without a land' make it possible for her to recall and convey collective knowledge about the honesty with which land in Palestine was acquired ('they bought it'); the optimism and seeming generosity of nascent Israelis when faced with the community already inhabiting that land ('I think we can live together'); and the relations of care created through transforming the land into a country ('if you had sandals you gave them to another'). This cluster of beliefs, qualities and feelings speaks of *who we are* – in a way that transcends both language and structure.

When this energy or intensity circulates between people – across generations, time and space – it constitutes more than a story that might be captured and recorded as History. This knowledge tells us how to respond when confronted, how to manoeuvre not despite but with discomfort; in doing so, it binds us together. When shared and cultivated, these feelings and responses indeed embed us within a circuit, as scholars of affect suggest, forming a collective map or compass – an affect theory that enables us

to carry on living, striving and thriving.[71] We learn and grow into this ability through feelings, charges, textures and sensations that exceed our attempts to harness or capture them; these energies are not symptoms or effects of structure. Affects resist being smoothed or coaxed into our existing frames, spilling over in messy contingencies and mobile attachments. Because of this they are powerful, capable of conveying a *sense* – of how we came to be and how we (will) endure – that grounds and stirs us. We know this as we feel it. An affect theory enables us (settlers) to navigate settler coloniality as a mix of contradiction, unease, grasping, insisting, suspecting and being haunted. It is built through these tensions and nourished by them, giving us something to live with.

Toward representational repair [layer 3]

In her work on 'the visceral logics of decolonisation', Neetu Khanna writes 'If our political and scholarly practices aim to dismantle colonial habits of thought and ideologies, we must be able to engage the multiple sites in which these enduring ideologies continue to operate'.[72] I have attempted to do precisely this by grappling with a memory, narrative and image of colonial encounter. In doing so, I have written my own ghost story: an account of the conditions, assumptions and frameworks under which I began this journey, and a re-telling of the tale through a lens that I hope makes possible 'a counter-memory, for the future'.[73]

I began thinking about this article and its tensions four years ago, troubled by the persistent sense that my doctoral research was incomplete. Something bothered me: a voice, an exchange, a photograph. But also a feeling of needing closure, which could only come with following through on unfinished political work. I needed to respond to interlocutors who asked how my research enriches our knowledge about settler colonialism in Palestine/Israel, and those who gently enquired about its ethical and political responsibility.

Initially, I expected the thrust of my argument to be that Israeli settler colonialism must be understood not solely as an eliminatory project, but as a mode of political attachment – to land, community, hope and memory. Sara Ahmed's work powerfully reminds us that any movement away from one object is necessarily a movement toward another.[74] Like settler colonialism itself, the attachments I expected to sketch in my analysis would be fundamentally structural; in some ways this explanation holds true and can be traced through the preceding pages. But so too this frame smooths rough edges and tidies the messiness of lived – and felt – experience.

To reconcile this tension, we might turn to Raymond Williams' 'structures of feeling', wherein affective elements are approached as simultaneously 'set, with specific internal relations' and 'in process'.[75] Williams' work creates space for affect to be both structural and dynamic, stable and in-becoming. Rather than being singular or static, structures of feeling are differentiated and historically variable, temporally overlapping and hierarchically arranged.[76] For Williams, a given structure of feeling becomes dominant through processes of formalisation, classification and institutionalisation, 'giving the sense of a generation or a period.'[77] This recalls Lauren Berlant's work on liberal sentimentality in the twentieth Century United States, wherein the deployment of a 'mass norm of affect' by the 'culturally privileged' served to '[…] bind persons to the nation through a universalist rhetoric … of the capacity for suffering and trauma at the citizen's core'.[78] So too Sherene Razak has made know-able how 'witnessing' the Rwandan genocide

ushered Canadians *as a nation* into an international affective space, 'a place where middle-power nations can experience belonging'.[79] During a time when major international actors (the US and UN) either refused or failed to intervene, Canadians' position as a 'compassionate but uninvolved observer' enabled them to occupy a moral high ground with other 'good', if less powerful, nations.[80]

Yet according to Williams, even as one structure of feeling becomes dominant another is already beginning to form, often as a function of the rise of a class or fragmentation/tension within it.[81] As Berlant writes of American sentimentality, a structure of feeling might contain the seeds of its own undoing:

> […] [I]n order to benefit from the therapeutic promises of sentimental discourse you must imagine yourself with someone else's stress, pain, or humiliated identity. The possibility that through the identification with alterity you will never be the same remains the radical threat and the great promise of this affective aesthetic.[82]

However, as Razak warns, 'identification with alterity' can easily become 'stealing the pain of others', a practice through which (white) superiority is confirmed through (Black) suffering. Empathy becomes 'slippery', as '[t]he nearer you bring pain, the more the pain and the subject who is experiencing it disappears, leaving the witness in its place'.[83] This prompts a different kind of discomfort, an awareness of how the suffering of others becomes our own – or is even transformed into our pleasure.[84]

Structuralist frames are thus worryingly, if not dangerously, limited. At the same time, a structural approach to affect is decidedly seductive in its capacity to attend to relationality, multiplicity, power, change and subversion. In the context of Palestine/Israel, analysing 'settler structures of feeling' enables us to better recognise how affective formations might 'normalise settler presence, privilege and power',[85] and how processes of naturalisation enable coloniality and settlement to 'become embedded in law and material worlds'.[86] This knowledge is critical to the imaginative, material and political work of decolonisation.

My encounter with Hila suggests that affect cannot be contained by structure, as much as structures may be always trying to harness the affects that exceed them. Something spills over, leaves residue or traces, lingers and glows. Digging deeper into the capacity of an encounter to haunt and generate unease does not mean rejecting critical theories of settler colonialism as structure. I do not propose that we cast aside the powerful ways in which the logic of elimination articulates with the indigenisation of settlers and the imposition of heteropatriarchal sex/gender systems. Instead, I appeal to scholars of settler colonialism – and the activists who might draw upon and shape our work – to consider how structures are produced, but do not constitute the sum total of interaction and relation. I ask us to reach for the frameworks and possibilities that exist beyond.

The things we hold

This article raises the possibility that attending to discomfort enables us to make precisely this move. Let us recall Avery Gordon's words:

> When you have a profane illumination of these matters, when you know in a way you did not know before, then you have been notified of your involvement. You are *already* involved, implicated, in one way or another, and this is why, if you don't banish it, or kill it, or

reduce it to something you can already manage, when it appears to you, the ghost will inaugurate the necessity of doing something about it.[87]

Staying with the feeling of unease generated by troubling exchanges and unsettling images alerts us to the presence of 'something-to-be-done'[88] – discomfort calls us to account and to action. Katie Boudreau Morris compellingly illustrates how nurturing a 'habit of discomfort' is a critical practice for those engaged in 'decolonising solidarity'.[89] In continually attending to power imbalances and engaging with difference(s), these political actors 'cultivate' uncertainty as the basis upon which solidarity with Indigenous communities might be built.[90] Here, settlers are charged with listening to the stories and histories of (Indigenous) others; interrogating their own social, epistemological and territorial locations; and resisting the urge to minimise or redirect resulting feelings of discomfort.[91] Decolonising solidarity requires settlers to practice self-reflexivity in ways that hold them/us accountable and refuse the self-centring that underpins settler colonialism as a mode of domination. Yet this practice first requires us to recognise Palestinians and others struggling against colonial power/violence/domination *as subjects* – people who are not 'simply the conduit to our own sense of self,' but who claim hi/stories and humanity on their own terms.[92]

The prospect of this work compels us to consider ethics, as they shape – and emerge from – our practices and theories. Unease alerts us to the ethical demands of critical settler colonial theory,[93] just as it provides a basis for radically transformative action. As engaged scholars, we have a political responsibility to move beyond the 'structural inevitability' of settler colonial theory, which risks forestalling political action through the depiction of settler colonialism as unending.[94] Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakocsh shed light on this worrying tension between theory and political action, writing that the apparent persistence of the past within present and future leaves political activists '[…] to wait for the structurally determined future, and at most to prepare others for its arrival.'[95] This sense of temporality might help us to grasp how an affect theory is produced among settlers, particularly activists who navigate living in what feels like a state of suspension. Yet in failing to provide an account of an alternative future or pathways to dismantling settler colonialism, critical settler colonial theory '[…] can lead to a theoretical and political impasse and result in a kind of colonial fatalism'.[96] With structures depicted as highly stable and capable of absorbing and extinguishing efforts at disruption, settler colonialism indeed appears to be 'here to stay'.[97]

Our way out of this seeming impasse is to stay with the feelings of unease and discomfort that arise through encounters with theory, people, environments and objects. We must let things play out and not resist our own implication in processes, dynamics or discourses. We must pay attention to the moments when we feel haunted or uncertain, as these textures and sensations call us to account and action, alerting us to structures of power and how people feel their way – how they live on.

As Dian Million writes, 'To "decolonise" means to understand as fully as possible the forms colonialism takes in our own times'.[98] This entails gaining knowledge of structures, logics and mechanisms, as well as what exceeds them. Critical settler colonial theory – as an account of how settlers explain ourselves to ourselves[99] – is valuable in this regard. But the foreclosure of future visions is a high cost to pay. Perhaps this discomfort is at the heart of the words written here. Perhaps it is a way for me, as a settler-scholar who

wishes to work toward a decolonial future, to trace routes of intellectual, political and intimate travel and recuperate from them something that cannot be so easily held. Something that defies and slips away, only to return in a manner that urges us forward. Perhaps it gives me something to live with. In their critically acclaimed article, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang posit that settlers.

> […] desire to be made innocent, to find some mercy or relief in the face of the restlessness of settler guilt and haunting. Directly and indirectly benefitting from the erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples is a difficult reality for settlers to accept. The weight of this reality is uncomfortable.[100]

These are the things I hold.

My uneasiness with the memory of an image and exchange has resulted in a struggle with critical settler colonial theory, which enables me to know and push beyond its structural boundaries. I am feeling my way, but I am also following the lead of others. As Leanne Simpson states, 'If we accept colonial permanence, then our rebellion can only take place within settler colonial thought and reality.'[101] This sense of permanence is in part produced through the 'structural inevitability' highlighted by Macoun and Strakosch as underpinning critical settler colonial theory – structuralist narratives might propose or accommodate visions of 'radical change,' but only to the extent that these changes obey the very structures described.[102] The limits of thought become the limits of action. This realisation is profoundly uncomfortable; at the same time, it indicates something to be done.

Instead of obeying the limits and structures that perpetuate settler colonial power, we might respond in ways that are 'not part of its logic'[103] – following affects as they spill over, asking where they might take us. They bring us to a West Jerusalem apartment and the sense of urgency transmitted through the sharing of a family image; they enable us to feel the room, the energy and the story. Affects make us aware of what it means to be implicated, even included, in a collective narrative – to recognise ourselves as sharing the script or map that enables power and violence to endure. But they also take us elsewhere, toward stories we have not written and realities we have not built, because it is not our place to do so. Critical settler colonial theory can be 'part of a deeply political scholarly mode of indigenous resistance in Palestine'[104] when we – as settler-scholars – relinquish our claim to the story and the land of Palestine. When we step aside and change the lens. Decolonisation is not accountable to settlers nor the frameworks we create; rather, it is about forms of struggle and visions sovereignty that we cannot imagine. This is troubling and uncertain. It makes us vulnerable and accountable.

These are the things we hold.

Notes

1. These moves are indebted to the existing work of feminist, queer and indigenous scholars, as detailed in subsequent notes.
2. Maggie MacLure, 'The Wonder of Data', *Cultural Studies < -- > Critical Methodologies*, 13, no. 4 (2013): 228-232.

3. Avery Gordon, *Ghostly Matters: Haunting and the Sociological Imagination,* 2nd ed. (Minneapolis & London: University of Minnesota Press, 2008).

4. Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling: Affect, Pedagogy, Performativity* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2003); Clare Hemmings, 'Invoking Affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn', *Cultural Studies* 19, no. 5 (2006): 548-567; Yael Navaro-Yashin, 'Affective spaces, melancholic objects: ruination and the production of anthropological knowledge', *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 15, no. 1 (2009): 1-18; and Tina Campt, *Image Matters: Archive, Photography, and the African Diaspora in Europe* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2012).

5. See Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (New York & London: Continuum, 1999); Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387-409; and Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).

6. Alissa Macoun and Elizabeth Strakosch, 'The ethical demands of settler colonial theory', *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, no. 3–4 (2013): 426-443.

7. Katie Boudreau Morris, 'Decolonizing solidarity: cultivating relationships of discomfort', *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017): 456-473; Eva Mackey, 'Unsettling Expectations: (Un)certainty, Settler States of Feeling, Law and Decolonization', *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 29, no. 2 (2014): 235-252; and Neetu Khanna *The Visceral Logics of Decolonization* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2020).

8. Timothy Mitchell, 'Climate Crisis and the Futures of Liberalism' (keynote at the 32nd annual Gulf Conference, University of Exeter, UK, June 28, 2022).

9. Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*, 2nd ed. (London & New York: Zed Books, 2012); Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods* (Halifax & Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing, 2008); Abdo, 'Feminism, indigenousness and settler colonialism: oral history, memory and the Nakba', in *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, eds., Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha (London: Zed Books, 2018); Sayigh, 'Palestinian Camp Women as Tellers of History', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 27, no. 2 (Winter, 1998): 42-58; and Salih 'Bodies that Walk, Bodies that Talk, Bodies That Love: Palestinian Women Refugees, Affectivity and the Politics of the Ordinary', *Antipode* 49, issue 3 (2015): 742-760.

10. See also Mark Rifkin, 'Settler common sense', *Settler Colonial Studies* 3, nos. 3–4 (2013): 322-340.

11. Rana Barakat warns against this orientation in her piece 'Writing/righting Palestine studies: settler colonialism, indigenous sovereignty and resisting the ghost(s) of history', *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (2018): 350.

12. Ibid., 357-361.

13. Ibid., 358.

14. Waziyatawin 'Decolonizing the 1862 Death Marches', *American Indian Quarterly* 28, no. 1/2, Special Issue: Empowerment through Literature (Winter-Spring 2004): 185-215.

15. Sherene Razak, 'Stealing the Pain of Others: Reflections on Canadian Humanitarian Responses', *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies* 29, no. 4 (2007): 391.

16. See Razak 'Stealing the Pain of Others' and Barakat 'Writing/righting Palestine studies'.

17. This section owes its name to Tina Campt's book of the same title; see footnote 4.

18. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2006), 44.

19. This phrasing reflects the terms used by participants during our exchanges, whether interviews or participant observation.

20. See Katherine Natanel, *Sustaining Conflict: Apathy and Domination in Israel-Palestine* (Oakland, CA: University of California Press, 2016).

21. 'Ashkenazi' refers to Jews of (Western) European ancestry.

22. Kimberlé Crenshaw, 'Demarginalising the Intersection of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscrimination Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics', *University of Chicago Legal Forum* 1, Article 8 (1989): 139-167; and Avtar Brah and Ann Phoenix, 'Ain't I

A Woman? Revisiting Intersectionality', *Journal of International Women's Studies* 5, no. 3 (2004): 75-86.

23. Razak details this dynamic in the Canadian context; see 'Stealing the Pain of Others'.

24. Maria Eriksson Baaz and Maria Stern, 'Researching wartime rape in the Democratic Republic of Congo: A methodology of unease', in *Researching War: Feminist Methods, Ethics and Politics,* ed. Annick T. R. Wibben (London: Routledge, 2016), 117-140. My thanks go to Akanksha Mehta for introducing me to this text.

25. MacLure, 'The wonder of data'.

26. Baaz and Stern, 'Researching wartime rape'.

27. Ibid., 129.

28. Ibid., 122.

29. Ibid., 132-134.

30. MacLure, 'The wonder of data', 228.

31. Ibid.

32. Baaz and Stern, 'Researching wartime rape', 132.

33. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters.*

34. Ibid., xvi.

35. See Vera John-Steiner, 'Felt Knowledge: Emotional Dynamics of Collaboration', in *Creative Collaboration* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006); and Dian Million, 'Felt Theory: An Indigenous Feminist Approach to Affect and History', *Wicazo Sa Review* 24, no. 2 (2009): 53-76.

36. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.

37. The KKL-JNF was established in 1901 with the intention of procuring land for Jewish settlement in Palestine, becoming a primary vehicle of territorial seizure and control. See Enaya Banna-Jeries, 'Land and Planning Policies in Israel: 70 years of the Nakbah', in *70 Years of Nakbah* (Haifa: Mada al-Carmel, 2018), 55-79.

38. The 1948 war resulted in establishment of the Israeli state after the end of the British Mandate; among Palestinians it is known as the *Nakba,* or catastrophe.

39. Interview with the author in Jerusalem, May 5, 2011. This passage also reflects my fieldnotes as written at the time. Ethics approval for verbal consent granted by SOAS, University of London.

40. As becomes evident within this article, 'indigenous' is a contested category in Palestine/Israel. Beyond this, the term is problematic in the ways that it may assume purity or create an easy binary (indigenous/coloniser), masking complex power relations. Despite these concerns, I employ the language of indigeneity following both Indigenous studies and critical settler colonial theory.

41. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and elimination', 388.

42. Ibid.

43. Ibid., 388, 402.

44. The total Palestinian population in December 1947 numbered 1.3 million, with one million people living in the territory that would be claimed as the state of Israel; of these, three-quarters would be displaced through violent campaigns of expulsion, extermination and dispossession. Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld, 2006), 49.

45. Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 1-22.

46. Scott Lauria Morgensen, 'Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism: An Introduction', *Settler Colonial Studies* 2, no.2 (2012), 9.

47. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and elimination', 389.

48. See Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*, 21–23 and Morgensen, 'Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism', 9.

49. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and elimination', 389.

50. Interview with the author in Jerusalem, May 5, 2011.

51. Morgensen, 'Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism', 14-15.

52. See Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and elimination' and Veracini, *Settler Colonialism*.

53. María Lugones 'Heterosexualism and the Colonial / Modern Gender System', *Hypatia* 22, no. 1 (2007): 186-209.

54. Morgensen, 'Theorising Gender, Sexuality and Settler Colonialism', 4. See also Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill 'Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections Between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy', *Feminist Formations* 25, no. 1 (2013): 8-34.
55. See also Natanel, *Sustaining Conflict,* 67-70.
56. See Sara Roy, 'The Gaza Strip: A Case of Economic De-Development', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 17, no. 1 (1987) 56-88; and Roy, 'De-Development Revisited: Palestinian Economy and Society Since Oslo', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 28, no. 3 (1999): 64-82.
57. See Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Militarization and Violence Against Women in Conflict Zones in the Middle East: A Palestinian Case Study* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); and Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian and Suhad Daher-Nashif, 'Femicide and Colonization: Between the Politics of Exclusion and the Culture of Control', *Violence Against Women* 19, no. 3 (2013): 295-315.
58. Lugones, 'Heterosexualism', 202.
59. Shouse, 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect' in *M/C Journal* 8, no. 1 (2005), doi: https://doi.org/10.5204/mcj.2443; also cited in Campt, *Image Matters*, 15.
60. Shouse, 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect'. 'For the infant affect is emotion, for the adult *affect is what makes feelings feel*. It is what determines the intensity (quantity) of a feeling (quality), as well as the background intensity of our everyday lives (the half-sensed, ongoing hum of quantity/quality that we experience when we are not really attuned to any experience at all).'
61. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 19.
62. Ibid., 17-19.
63. Hemmings, 'Invoking affect', 551.
64. Sedgwick, *Touching Feeling*, 19.
65. Hemmings, 'Invoking affect', 552.
66. Ibid.
67. Navaro-Yashin, 'Affective spaces, melancholic objects', 14.
68. Campt, *Image Matters*, 18.
69. See Yael Navaro-Yashin's work on ruination in Cyprus for an excellent account of the relationship between affect, objects and knowledge; Navaro-Yashin, 'Affective spaces, melancholic objects'.
70. See Shouse, 'Feeling, Emotion, Affect' and Campt, *Image Matters*.
71. Hemmings, 'Invoking affect', 552.
72. Khanna, Visceral Logics, 2.
73. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 22.
74. Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology* and *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).
75. Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', in *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), 132.
76. Ibid., 134-135.
77. Ibid., 131-132.
78. Berlant, 'Poor Eliza', *American Literature* 70, no 3., No More Separate Spheres! (1998), 636-637.
79. Razak, 'Stealing the Pain of Others', 381.
80. Ibid.
81. Williams, 'Structures of Feeling', 132-134.
82. Berlant, 'Poor Eliza', 648.
83. This is Razak's reading of an argument made by Saidiya Hartman in *Scenes of Subjection: Terror, Slavery and Self-Making in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York & Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), see 'Stealing the Pain of Others', 376-378.
84. Razak, 'Stealing the Pain of Others', 385-386.
85. Mark Rifkin, 'Settler States of Feeling: National Belonging and the Erasure of Native American Presence', in *A Companion to American Literary Studies*, ed. Caroline F. Levander and Robert S. Levine (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011), 342.
86. Mackey, 'Unsettling Expectations', 238.
87. Gordon, *Ghostly Matters*, 205-6.

88. Ibid., xvi.
89. Boudreau Morris, 'Decolonizing solidarity: cultivating relationships of discomfort', *Settler Colonial Studies* 7, no. 4 (2017): 456-473. Critically, Boudreau Morris does not suggest that we should 'decolonise' solidarity, but explores how activists and scholars are already enacting a form of solidarity that is 'anti-colonial in perspective and decolonizing in practice/process.'
90. Ibid., 467-469.
91. Ibid., 461-468.
92. See Razak, 'Stealing the Pain of Others', 391.
93. Macoun and Strakosch, 'Ethical Demands'.
94. Ibid.
95. Ibid., 435.
96. Ibid.
97. Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and elimination', 388.
98. Million, 'Felt Theory', 55.
99. Macoun and Strakosch, 'Ethical Demands', 437.
100. Tuck and Yang, 'Decolonization is not a metaphor', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), 9.
101. Simpson, 'Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation', *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 8.
102. Macoun and Strakosch, 'Ethical Demands', 435.
103. María Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism', *Hypatia* 25, no. 4 (2010): 754.
104. Barakat, 'Writing/righting Palestine studies', 350.

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Disclosure statement

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