

# Hazem Harb: Worlding Through the (an)Archive

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## **Abstract**

Postcoloniality requires new methodologies to facilitate decolonial futurities. An (an)archival practice becomes a necessary tool to imagine what deimperial potentials can be useful in colonial worlds; memory, sensorial methods, oral traditions, etc. are central to expose the constructedness of neutrality and normativity and exercise pluriversal worlding. Hazem Harb, a Palestinian artist exiled between Rome and Dubai, arguably engages in an (an)archival practice through his subversion of colonial archives and manipulation of extra-archival materials to produce possibilities redefined through Palestinian sovereignty of spatiality, temporalities, and bodies. Exploring artworks from three of Harb's series, worlding occurs on three axes by constituting shared imaginaries undefined by borders, concretizing principles of waiting to deny imperial progress, and embodying the self with the collective.

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## **Biography**

Grace Lapp-Sullivan is a Master's student at Carleton University in the Art and Architectural History program. Her research interests are driven by deimperial, diasporic, and pluriversal scholarship within archival-based multimedia. She uses collage and fragmentation as reflexive modalities for thinking through art, theory, and potential. She hopes to disseminate methods of unlearning and reimagining to public institutions by implementing more art into everyday discourse.

The archive cannot conciliate the postcolonial world project as it was built on and for colonial needs of erasure. The (an)archive, as proposed by Carine Zaayman, becomes a reflexive tool of rethinking and reimagining that comprises everything the archive cannot such as memories, experiences, oral traditions, the body, affect, sensorial methodologies, imagination, and extra-archival materials that are held within communities.<sup>1</sup> The (an)archive becomes a necessary medium to understand the worlding within Hazem Harb's collages and textiles that denote colonial frameworks. As will be shown, Harb negotiates space, time, and politics for belonging to unhinge historiography and challenge colonial logics that perpetuate violent hegemonies of power to deny, distort, disfigure, and destroy. Three artworks from separate series, *Borders are only in our mind #2* (2023),<sup>2</sup> *The Labyrinth* (2023),<sup>3</sup> and *Gauze #2* (2024),<sup>4</sup> will be used to conceptually and materially explore the (an)archival practice and its potential of postcolonial worlding. This research participates in the larger body of academic discourse that calls for the de-linking of imperialism to produce decolonial scholarship that values pluriversalist ideologies and opposes oppressive narratives.<sup>5</sup> My research will be guided by this principle question: what sovereignties does Harb's (an)archival practice provoke? Harb's (an)archives demonstrate resilience against state-sponsored erasure and acts as restorative projects of heritage and knowledge to redefine Palestinian sovereignty through space, time and bodies.

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<sup>1</sup> Carine Zaayman, *Anarchival Practices: The Clanwilliam Arts Project as Re-imagining Custodianship of the Past*, (ICI Berlin Press, 2023), 4, <https://doi.org/10.37050/wpc-ca-01>.

<sup>2</sup> Hazem Harb, *Borders are only in our mind #2*, 2023, UV fine arts unique print layered upon acrylic, 100 x 150cm, Tabari Art Space Contemporary Gallery, Dubai. Available to view: <https://www.tabariartspace.com/artworks/4293-hazem-harb-borders-are-only-in-our-minds-2-2023/>.

<sup>3</sup> Hazem Harb, *The Labyrinth*, 2021, installation, dimensions and location variate. Available to view: <https://www.tabariartspace.com/exhibitions/196-tabari-artspace-presents-hazem-harb-at-offscreen-paris/overview/>.

<sup>4</sup> Hazem Harb, *Gauze #2*, 2024, gauze on fine art cardboard, 80 x 60cm, Tabari Art Space Contemporary Gallery, Dubai. Available to view: <https://www.tabariartspace.com/exhibitions/158-gauze-hazem-harb-solo-curated-by-munira-al/overview/>.

<sup>5</sup> Kuan-Hsing Chen, "Introduction: Globalization and Deimperialization," in *Asia as Method: Toward Deimperialization*, 1–16, (Duke University Press, 2020); Walter D. Mignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Western Modernity," in *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, 1–24, (Duke University Press, 2020); Partha Mitter, "Interventions: Decentering Modernism: Art History and Avant-Garde Art from the Periphery," *The Art Bulletin* 90, no. 4 (2008): 531–48, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00043079.2008.10786408>; Brigit Hopfener and Karin Zitzewitz, "Towards a Multi-Temporal Pluriverse of Art: Decolonizing universalized Historiographic and Temporal Frameworks," in *Inquiries Into Art, History, and the Visual* 5 no. 1 (2024): 1–14, Perusall.

***Borders are only in our minds #2***

Looking to the collage, *Borders are only in our minds #2*, the acrylic blocks of colour demarcate the landscape into unnatural right-angled sections. Despite these divisive overlays, the ecosystems and biota are undefined through their topographical continuity across plains. Ultimately, Harb is toying with the real (evidenced through the indexical quality of the archival photograph) and the imaginary (suggested through the pastel haze) in an effort to comment on the constructed nature of national borders that often serve elided political agendas of hegemonic powers to control land, resources, and people. In Harb's division of the pastoral Levant, he mediates archival landscape photographs from various institutions to subvert the neutrality of the colonial worlding project. By highlighting these state fabrications through collaged abstraction, Harb engages in (an)archival practices, producing a fresh visual artefact that speculates rethinking of historiography and geography.

Harb's use of photographic archives is an interesting choice in the project of deimperialization. As argued by Ariella Aisha Azoulay in *Potential History*, the camera, or rather the shutter, was the first act of imperial worlding through its implementation of borders (the frame fragments the land into planes just as national borders compartmentalize the earth into pieces) and divisions (into axes of time, space, and differential body politics).<sup>6</sup> The indexicality of photographs divorce their subjects from materiality and sensibility into an impression of light, removing elements of physicality and making them sense-less. Photography is the materialization of imperialism, the process in which subjects are metamorphosed into objects, abstracted into a-neutral categories. *Borders* subverts abstraction metaphorically and physically to revise colonial absurdities of confinement and engages in a process of deimperialization through Harb's refutation of state narratives/neutralities. Borderlines dictate principles of belonging through their implementation of state-documentation and differentials that govern body politics of crossing; in other words, borders abstract their own foreignness onto those who cross them and condition fugitivity as an illegality.<sup>7</sup> Citizenship, therefore, becomes a requirement of imperialism that allows freedoms to infringe on sovereignties through ontological differentials.<sup>8</sup> Reimagining the archival images exposes the potential violence of photographs in their constitution of 'facts' of matter (borders) and re-situates authorship into a Palestinian context.

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<sup>6</sup> Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, (Verso, 2019) 5–6, 51. (Azoulay's argument operates on the logic that photographic imperialism has three dividing lines: in time (the before and the after the photograph), in space (who and what is behind the camera and who and what is in front of it), and the body (those who operate, accumulate, and appropriate and those who are extracted from, objectified into.)

<sup>7</sup> Inspired by a class discussion regarding this particular reading November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025: Leslie Gross-Wyrtzen and Alex A. Moulton, "Toward 'Fugitivity as Method': An Introduction to the Special Issue," *ACME* 22, no. 5 (October 30, 2023): 1258–1272. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1107308ar>.

<sup>8</sup> Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, (Verso, 2019) 49–51.

Before and after the Nakba in 1948, Palestinian archives were displaced into Israeli systems of management to signify a colonial ownership of material. Writer Khalil al-Sakakini was forced into exile in Cairo during the Nakba occupational period, leaving behind his cherished library. He wrote a farewell letter to his books in Cairo,

Farewell, my library! Farewell, the house of wisdom, the abode of philosophers, a house and witness for literature! How many sleepless nights I spent there, reading and writing, the night is silent and the people asleep [...] goodbye, my books! [...] I know not what has become of you after we left.<sup>9</sup>

In 1967, fourteen years after al-Sakakini's passing, his two daughters, Hala and Dumya, found his books with his handwritten notes in the margins at the Jewish National and University Library in Jerusalem.<sup>10</sup> Many Palestinians do not share this story of rediscovery. Even for the case of al-Sakakini, it was not one of redistribution. As curator Rona Sela notes, in other colonial states, cultural materials are usually stored and controlled in museums and galleries, however, in the Palestinian context, their cultural material is recontextualized, destroyed, and dehumanized in Israeli-state archives, treated as enemy material and censored for five decades, never to be repatriated or returned.<sup>11</sup> In times of imperial expansion, archives can also be desecrated outside state institutions, as was the case in November 2023, when the Central Archives of Gaza City was destroyed by an air-strike.<sup>12</sup> Through mechanisms of displacement, colonial powers control Palestinian historiography at the state-level, imprisoning cultural knowledge to deny, 'distort, disfigure, and destroy' their collective past.<sup>13</sup> The violence of colonial archives leads to dispossession on three axes (space, body, time) and must be read along and against their grains,<sup>14</sup> for it is not only air-strikes that have the power to erase, but historiography as well.

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<sup>9</sup> Khalil al-Sakakini, *This is the way I Am, gentlemen!* trans. Gideon Shilo (Keter Publishing House, 1990) 239–240.

<sup>10</sup> Connor White, "Stolen Pieces of Palestine: Archival Responsibility," in *The iJournal* 9, no. 1 (2023): 49–59, <https://thejournal.ca/index.php/ijournal/article/download/42235/32257/114452>.

<sup>11</sup> Rona Sela, "Ghosts in the archive: The Palestinian villages and the Decolonial archives," *GeoJournal* 4, no. 1 (2021): 1–3, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10708-020-10364-4>.

<sup>12</sup> "Statement of the International Council on Archives on the Destruction of the Central Archives of the Municipality of Gaza," *International Council on Archives*, December 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, <https://www.ica.org/statement-of-the-international-council-on-archives-on-the-destruction-of-the-central-archives-of-the-municipality-of-gaza/>.

<sup>13</sup> Frantz Fanon, "On National Culture," in *The Wretched of the Earth*, Sixties anniversary edition (Grove Press, 2021) 210–211, Perusall.

<sup>14</sup> Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Rani of Sirmur: An Essay in Reading the Archives," *History and Theory* 24, no. 3 (October 1985): 247–72, Perusall. (Spivak opened the discourse of worlding in the (an)archive or along its grain which is a foundational concept in this paper and Harb's works alike, to constellate the absences in the colonial archive.)

Harb's preoccupation with the (an)archive aligns with Franz Fanon's concerns on national culture,<sup>15</sup> as both cultural and national displacement can be mended through the reconstitution of shared memory and identity consciousness (where (an)archival facets are produced with new meanings out of struggle). Arguably, nations are not geographical spaces, but are rather shared imaginaries living in the amassed minds of individuals. While Palestinians are currently struggling to secure geographical and spatial sovereignty,<sup>16</sup> their national/state sovereignty is constituted through a shared history of oppression, culture, and (an)archival materials located in communities that, like biota, are not restricted to defined geographies. The (an)archive preserves control within communities and becomes a danger to imperialism (that often confronts it with genocide) as it cannot be re-contextualized into an archive for it defies the very logistics of cataloging and indexing. Rather, it vitalizes the living memory of communities and is dependent on the body politic reiterated through the collective selves. Palestinian state/space sovereignty faces uncertainty, but through the pulsing activation of the (an)archive, Palestinian national culture as a shared imagi-nation is reconstituted in the diaspora and will resiliently seep through colonial archives, into palimpsests and margins.

Using collage, Harb distorts the ontological differentials of archives and borders by explicitly making visible the mechanisms of imperial control and undermines the façade of neutrality in both borders and archives by exposing their capacities to obscure, influence, and manufacture. Neutrality does not remove the acrylic overlays in *Borders are only in our mind #2*, but allows their violence to continue. As will be further explored in *The Labyrinth*, the institutionalization of neutrality helped propagate the notion of progress, or as Azoulay might articulate, temporal imperialism.<sup>17</sup>

### ***The Labyrinth***

The black-and-white photograph landscaping the back of the installation is an archival photo of Jerusalem during the 1920s. Visible in the city is the diverse Christian, Muslim, Jewish and Ottoman architecture, but a complete view of the scene blocked by the grey labyrinth. Through this spatial abstraction, Harb forces the viewer to move around the structure and confront the impossibility of a single perspective on the city. In *The Labyrinth*, the participation of the viewer through the installation activates a pluriversalist method for looking and

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<sup>15</sup> Fanon focused on state oppressions that derive culture union from national consciousness against colonial domination. For Harb, reconstituting the archive through extra-archival practices restores the injury of denial by reclaiming sovereignty over the collective past. Both focus on rebuilding the nation through aspects of fortifying commonalities; Fanon through a collective struggle, and Harb by re-contextualizing and rebuilding the archive.

<sup>16</sup> (Being continually displaced into enclaves A, B, C, exiled from their homes and lands, and dispossessed of belonging(s).)

<sup>17</sup> Ariella Aïsha Azoulay, *Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, (Verso, 2019) 21, 42.

experiencing art and historiography. This installation questions how (an)archival practices can unhinge temporal sovereignty in its recognition of multiple realities, temporalities, and histories. *The Labyrinth* is experienced temporally and spatially to affectively communicate the sensorial potential of (an)archival practices in their navigations of the colonial past. Conceptually, the grey *Labyrinth* is a physical representation of the (an)archive and the state-sponsored absences that need to be constellated.

Continuing with Azoulay's notion of temporal imperialism, in which the need to progress into newness structures a linear notion of time driven by the principle of advancement, Israel's state-control, demilitarization, and de-facto annexation of Palestine perpetuates occupation through temporal imperialism. By managing the resource of Palestinian time, the state operates on uncertainty leading to anxiety, subordination, and eventual immiseration. In this context, waiting becomes an active tool of resistance and agency. Harb activates this notion of waiting in *The Labyrinth*, as participants move throughout the maze. Here, the imperial division of space, time, and body are mended through a pluriversalist methodology as participants must accord with all three to escape *The Labyrinth* in utilizing the potentials of the (an)archive and rejecting perspectival linearity. In the paradigm of 'defence' (whose rhetoric conflates entire civilian populations with terrorists), Walter Dignolo's colonial difference applies,<sup>18</sup> where imperial intervention is justified through logics of hierarchal advancement or pre-defence protocols that provoke conflict in enemy territory. Progress becomes increasingly preemptive for the project of advancement and defence. Harb, however, interrupts the colonial imaginary of epistemic difference in his spatial collage by denouncing singularity. The capacity of collage to layer worlds takes full effect in Harb's temporal imposition of three-dimensionality. Collage, like Pheng Cheah's worlds,<sup>19</sup> becomes a temporal category capable of distorting enlightened logics, calculations, and rationales that undermine the normative associated with colonial epistemic difference and imperial narratives of justification. As with Cheah's proposition (of literature that is being extended to collage), worlding as this rearticulation confronts the temporality of imperial progress by reasserting timeliness (life, agency, process) into displaced peoples and objects. Their narrative is one of becoming rather than conditioned to a static end from imperial expansion.

Perhaps the most infamously preposterous example of 'progress' within a Palestinian context was the proposal for Riviera of the Middle East, that blatantly relied on the total ethnic cleansing and displacement of over two million Palestinians in the name of 'redevelopment.'<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>18</sup> Walter D. Mignolo, "Coloniality: The Darker Side of Western Modernity," *The Darker Side of Western Modernity*, (Duke University Press, 2020), 1–24.

<sup>19</sup> Pheng Cheah, "Missed Encounters: Cosmopolitanism, World Literature, and Postcoloniality," in *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature*, (Duke University Press, 2016), 1–20.

<sup>20</sup> Absurdities such as this should be afforded no validation by being taken seriously in reference and writing and should be reserved to the footnotes with no additional information other than critique and dismissal.

Here, time functions on eradication. On the other side of progress is Mark Rifkin's notion of temporal imperialism where progress/state-erasure displaces Indigenous populations into a position of inevitable vanishing for the settler colonial worlding project.<sup>21</sup> This linear temporality places everyone at the same time in a singular space that ultimately denies Indigenous groups, like Palestinians, their history, sovereignty, and self-determination when it comes to 'the land question' reasoned through settler colonial logics.<sup>22</sup> As temporal experience depends on textures,<sup>23</sup> the universalizing effect of temporal imperialism denies alternatives to the narrative of progress. This state of perpetual erasure equally functions on normative logics of natural decay. The term 'political entropy' is appropriate here; operating as a temporal technology of Israeli imperialism that builds on the process of ruination where systems like deferral, neglect, and neutrality perpetuate an uninterrupted mundane violence of degeneration.<sup>24</sup>

The pluriversalist approach suggested in Harb's *Labyrinth* has the potential to unlearn imperial notions and structures of time to imagine a deimperial future. Following Cheah's conception of worlding that recentres on temporality, *The Labyrinth* reorients Palestinian temporal sovereignty as active, but its infringement proposes new alternatives of resilience through waiting enacted in the body. Harb pluriversalist practice exposes the violence of settler singularity and proposes uncertainty and uncomfortability within this narrative. The current imposition defined by *The Labyrinth* suggests that temporal sovereignty is still being actively negotiated, but deimperial potentials are situated outside the temporality of progress in the multi-temporal scape of the (an)archive.

## ***Gauze #2***

Harb's 2024 *Gauze* series revisits a medium connected to his childhood practice in Gaza where gauze was layered over cardboard to create a makeshift canvas. Gauze has a visceral connection to the body restoratively through its medicinal properties and its intimate proximity to fleshy vulnerability. Time also plays a central role concerning the materiality of gauze, how

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Deimperialization is the practice of denying imperial stupidities and halting progress by strong refutations of acknowledgement and entertainment.

<sup>21</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, (Duke University Press, 2017), viii.

<sup>22</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, (Duke University Press, 2017), viii.

<sup>23</sup> Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, (Duke University Press, 2017), ix. (Rifkin defines textures as the "perception and material experience of patterns of individual and collective memory, the legacies of historical events and dynamics, consistent or recursive forms of inhabitation, and the length and character of the timescales in which current events are situated.")

<sup>24</sup> Ariel Handel et al., "The politics of time: Political entropy, settler colonialism, and urban ruination in Hebron/Al-Khalil, Palestine," in *Political Geography* 111, no. 1 (2024): 1–2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.polgeo.2024.103093>.

long will it take for this wound to repair; how long do I have to live; how long will this genocide last? In *Gauze #2*, time has an immediacy that is not felt in the longitudinal vistas of the first image, *Borders are only in our minds #2*; its form is structured by time as the dampened material sets quickly into place. In the context of violent oppression, flesh becomes the site of resistance and gauze, as an extra-archival material, safeguards the (an)archive in its reparation of Palestinian bodies to nurture memories, oral traditions, etc.

Considering this, Palestinian self/body/flesh are reconstituted in the face of settler-colonialism, genocide, and ongoing displacement, which inversely contests and restricts sovereignty of the self/body/flesh. Thinking to scales of sovereignty, sovereignty of the individual is ultimately realized in the community, where the individual is rather multiples of the self stitched together by commonalities and held together in the collective. Through this reimagining of the self that is not dependent on the flesh or the body, but within relations, gauze as an (an)archival composition of seamed grid structures of threads has the potential to mend the body/flesh while also reconceptualizing Palestinian sovereignty of the self through the community. In this sense, Harb uses the contorted structure of gauze as a symbol of the community and the self within, but also as a medium that preserves the (an)archive in its potential to mend the body/flesh. Through this reconstitution of self/body/flesh, Harb actively provokes it with questions of waiting to realize Palestinian sovereignty and engage in an active process of worlding through the extra-archival material of gauze that has the capacity to maintain and transmit cultural DNA. The next sections will start to question how the self, body, and flesh are understood in the context of the postcolonial Palestinian diaspora.<sup>25</sup>

In the postcolonial diaspora, the self as identity is subjected to flux as it develops in relation to its surroundings.<sup>26</sup> Land, in a Palestinian context, is something experienced in exile or as a prison (through Israeli occupation) but is nonetheless crucial in defining the self (however, this relation to home/land and self is notably mediated differently between first- and second-generation diasporas).<sup>27</sup> In thinking of inter-narrative identities within large-scale conflicts, defense analyst, Ajit Maan describes second-generation diasporic selfhood as performative re-association across borders where agency is expressed in the margins between (or as Ingold might

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<sup>25</sup> Although a contradiction immediately presents itself here in the temporal logics of post-ness for a population whose experience of colonialism is ongoing.

<sup>26</sup> Tim Ingold's *One World Anthropology* has an interesting theory on ontogenesis as it relates to the self where the self is in an ongoing process of becoming as it corresponds with materials, bodies, and environments. Although the self has never been a static entity, it is a fair consideration to make that through varying incidents of injury and traumatic dispersion, materials, bodies, and environments are radically changed on chemical, sociological, structural, and emotional levels that all have the potential to significantly alter the self even during its process of becoming.

<sup>27</sup> Ajit Maan, "Narrative Authority: Performing the Postcolonial Self," *Social Identities* 13, no. 3 (2007): 415–416, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1080/13504630701365700>.

say, ‘along’) different dominant discourses, almost palimpsestic, and alienation is used as an anti-colonial ontological deconstruction.<sup>28</sup> For Palestinians, this rift in the experience of homelandedness will constitute the diaspora differently, so slightly imposes on Fanon’s concept of national culture in its essentialist paradigm, towards Paul Gilroy’s diaspora that navigates multiplicities.<sup>29</sup> In the event of forced displacement and dispossession, the separation of the self from the homeland nonetheless becomes a traumatic experience that shapes identity through memory and post-memory, and so Palestine moves beyond geographies to live and be constituted in the diaspora itself, where ‘Palestine’ becomes a praxis. To quote Dionne Brand, “In another place, not here.”<sup>30</sup>

Looking to a Palestinian-Canadian example, artist-scholar, Aniliese Spencer’s experience within the Palestinian diaspora reveals tensions that are present in Harb’s *Gauze #2*. As Spencer reiterates, she experiences an internal conflict of epistemologies/ontologies between her Canadian nationality and Palestinian ethnicity, a struggle of guilt regarding her position of living in the West as a Palestinian while individuals of Palestinian descent in Palestine are experiencing genocide, and compelled to utilize her opportunity of body/flesh safety towards activism.<sup>31</sup> These same tensions and dualities can be felt in *Gauze #2*; Harb, who is also living within the Palestinian diaspora between Rome and Dubai, shapes gauze to mimic the fluidity of identity but also its restrictions. This traction communicates the emotional and psychological spaces of the decolonial diaspora.

Moving to a discussion of the body, this section will follow Deborah Thomas’ notion of ipseity “representing the possibility to be oneself.”<sup>32</sup> The body, understood in the context of the Palestinian diaspora, is one mediated by violence and embodied memory. *Gauze #2* speaks to the tactility of trauma perpetuated by the continuation of the Nakba through Israeli occupation in the medium’s own tactile and intimate relation to flesh. However, its reparative potential withholds the body as an agent capable of resistance and resilience. In this sense, gauze supports the body’s refusal of erasure; the body becomes sovereign; sovereignty becomes texturized through the

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<sup>28</sup> Ajit Maan, “Narrative Authority: Performing the Postcolonial Self,” *Social Identities* 13, no. 3 (2007): 412, 417–418, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.carleton.ca/10.1080/13504630701365700>.

<sup>29</sup> David Chariandry, “Postcolonial Diasporas,” in *Postcolonial Text* 2, no. 1 (2006), <https://www.postcolonial.org/index.php/pct/article/viewArticle/440/839>. (Chariandry provides a really insightful comparisons and conversation between Gilroy and Fanon.)

<sup>30</sup> Dionne Brand, *No Language is Neutral*, (McClelland & Stewart, 1990), 34.

<sup>31</sup> Aniliese Spencer, “The Palestine Within: Exploring Diasporic Identity, Emotional Struggle, and Social Media’s Role in Shaping Resistance and Belonging,” in *The Motely Undergraduate Journal – Disrupt Something* 3, no. 2 (2025): 51, <https://journalhosting.ucalgary.ca/index.php/muj/article/view/80641>.

<sup>32</sup> Direct quote answering a text message question that was transcribed in a zoom chat by Dr. Wayne Modest during a class lecture, November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

body's augmentation and reinstitution of senses—the (an)archive—that the initial imperial shutter—archival photograph—denies. Memories and post-memory are reconstituted through bodies affectively and viscerally to produce counter histories to the colonial narrative of imperial justification. Hannen, a Palestinian journalist exiled to London, recounts a memory of occupational control over her body when she tried to visit Jerusalem, but also incites her own body's potential to engage in counter practice,

The last time I went to Jerusalem, [...] I sneaked in. Although I have a British passport, I cannot legally go. [...] There are lots of small things that make you hate going back: the way they search you for instance. Sometimes it can take you the whole day to cross the Allenby Bridge: You wait, wait, and wait. But the minute I cross the bridge and I am about to enter my city, the minute I get in, I take a deep breath I ... you cannot imagine how relaxed I feel ... It's like hugging your mother.<sup>33</sup>

In Hannen's recount, she uses her body subversively as a form of deimperial counter practice to go where it is illegalized. In her resistance of colonial oppression, she recounts the sensorial affect of her body, waiting, breathing deep, feeling relaxed, embracing a mother, that all tie to these notions of freedom in states of unfreedom. Here, the body uses its potential of mobility to unhinge colonial domination of state-sponsored documentation and exercise its sovereignty across geographies. Memories of occupation are transformed into counter practices of resilience through the potentialities of the body that defy the Cartesian split; rather the mind works in tandem with the flesh.

Sylvia Wynter's discourse of bios/mythios conceptualizes humans as storytelling *homo narrans* who create themselves autopoetically.<sup>34</sup> To quote her opening, "Words made flesh,"<sup>35</sup> where the mythios narrative is generative and the bios of flesh can be co-constructed and constituted through the participating collective. There is an incredibly sovereign aspect of the flesh that defies ownership from the logics of *Man1* and *Man2* (whereas with the self and the body, both inherently imply a form of possession and are implicated in the logics of owning, both being experienced through flesh). Even in Thomas' conception of flesh, "the human

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<sup>33</sup> Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, "Occupied from within: Embodied memories of occupation, resistance and survival among the Palestinian diaspora," in *Emotion, Space and Society* 34, no. 1 (2020): 5–6, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.emospa.2019.100653>.

<sup>34</sup> Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Unparalleled Catastrophe for our Species?: Or, to Give Humanness a Different Future: Conversations," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick (Duke University Press, 2015), 9–39.

<sup>35</sup> Sylvia Wynter and Katherine McKittrick, "Yours in the Intellectual Struggle: Sylvia Wynter and the Realization of Living," in *Sylvia Wynter: On Being Human as Praxis*, edited by Katherine McKittrick (Duke University Press, 2015), 1.

stripped from the body (the body represents the possibility to be oneself),”<sup>36</sup> it relies on a materiality other than self-possession. What is this materiality? And what then does this understanding of materiality, of fleshiness, mean in the context of the Palestinian diaspora? It is somewhere in the logics of becoming-with-ness.<sup>37</sup> The flesh is responsible for producing the lived, racialized, experience in a colonial world. It becomes encoded with semiotics of bios and mythos. Flesh, while constituted through the body, is arguably reduced to its material quality, a corporeality that is haunting given its potential to be inactivated.

An insightful essay in response to Judith Butler’s statement, “we can mourn, without qualification, for the lives lost in Israel as well as those lost in Gaza,” provides an open end to this concept of flesh within the Palestinian diaspora.<sup>38</sup> As David Atallah states, “We cannot mourn our dead because we cannot reach our flesh.”<sup>39</sup> Given the negotiation of Israel’s genocide on the Gaza Strip that depended on the repossession of the Israeli hostages and the hostage bodies, there is something macabre about Atallah’s disclosure of the absences. Through settler-colonial logics of nationalism essentially tied to blood/flesh and self-rootedness, one flesh becomes immeasurable in comparison to the other. How then can the (an)archive conciliate the project of repair for such injury? As a diasporic Palestinian, Atallah struggles with this notion of flesh as it is intrinsically tied to grief and loss, but argues for decolonial love as a form of healing through resistance. Here, flesh can be remembered in the (an)archive constituted by connective tissues of community. Atallah’s response suggests a flesh that expands across simple individuality, but tethers the diaspora into a shared materiality. In violent states of colonialism, the self/body/flesh face the impossibility of one-ness or singularity represented by the individual. Sovereignty must then be recognized at a larger scale; in the community, or as Ingold might say, within-ness. Palestine as a praxis is thus abstracted as the form taking place in *Gauze #2*.

To conclude, Hazem Harb imagines Palestinian worlding and sovereignty at multiple levels; national, temporal, and communal. Through an (an)archival paradigm and practice, this deimperial world takes place in his negation of colonial geographies, temporalities, and identities that are organized through linearity. Harb reinserts alternative methodologies in the diaspora to subvert ongoing attempts of erasure in the homeland. In his engagement with collage, he uses it like a chemical reaction that does not follow colonial ontological numerology, but rather imagines possibilities of decolonial futurity by mixing together fragments and distorting

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<sup>36</sup> Direct quote answering a text message question that was transcribed in a zoom chat by Dr. Wayne Modest during a class lecture November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2025.

<sup>37</sup> With this, I would direct your attention back to Ingold’s *One World Anthropology*.

<sup>38</sup> Judith Butler, “The Compass of Mourning,” *London Review of Books* 45, no. 20 (October 13, 2023): <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n20/judith-butler/the-compass-of-mourning>.

<sup>39</sup> Devin Atallah, “Beyond Grief: Decolonial Love for Palestinian Life,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 52, no. 4 (2023): 70–75, <https://doi.org/10.1080/0377919X.2023.2283354>.

oppressive structures. Likewise, Harb uses tools of the (an)archive to fashion the decolonial worlding project and reconceives the art-of-fact to encompass the more-than-material collective. Sovereignty is nonetheless complicated in the textures of the (an)archive, but finds hope in resistance and vitality through community. In Harb's imaginary, Palestine itself becomes a deimperial praxis.

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