THE TIME BENEATH THE CONCRETE
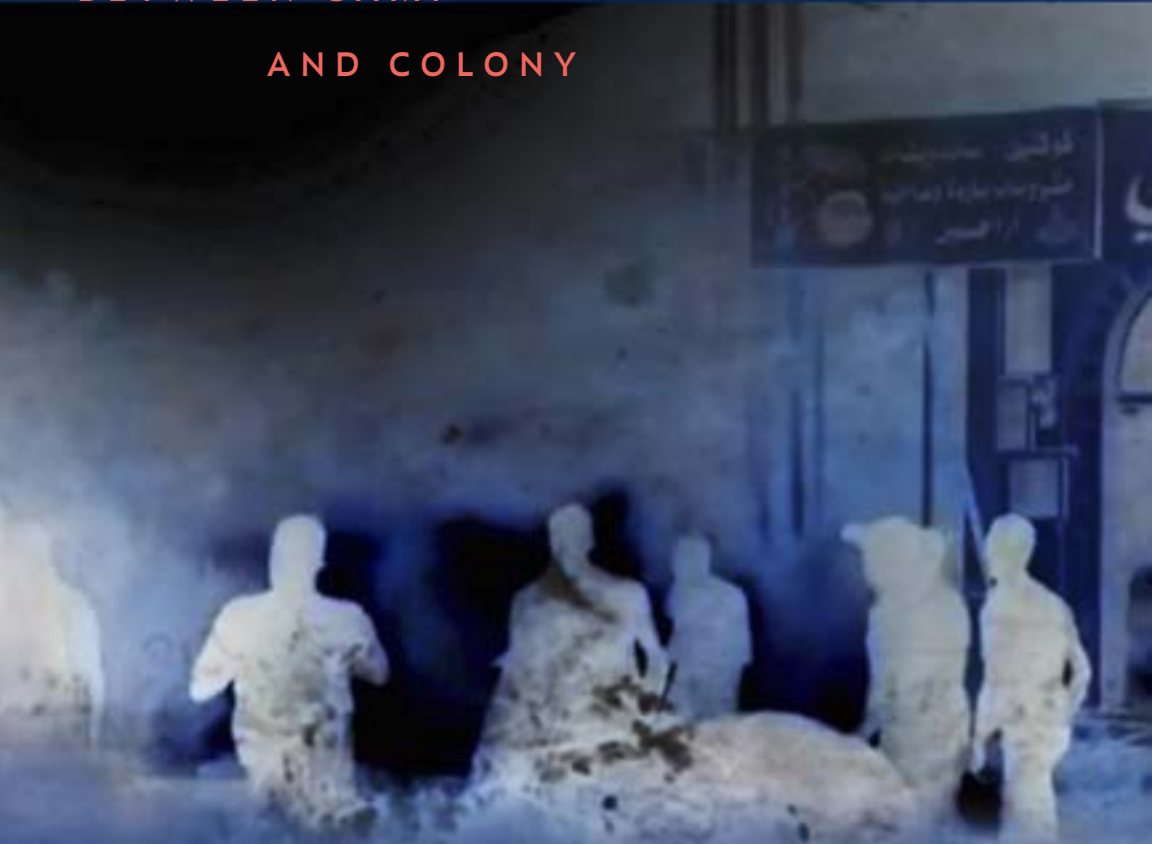
PALESTINE BETWEEN CAMP AND COLONY

NASSER ABOURAHME

**THE TIME BENEATH
THE CONCRETE**

BUY

THE TIME BENEATH THE CONCRETE

PALESTINE BETWEEN CAMP AND COLONY

NASSER ABOURAHME

Cover art: *(Front)* Basel Abbas and Ruanne Abou-Rahme,
Until we became fire and fire us, 2023. *(Back)* Basel Abbas
and Ruanne Abou-Rahme, *Gilboa, we haunt them*, 2023.
Courtesy of the artists.

To the Salmas

CONTENTS

PREFACE

I sat down to finalize this manuscript in the fall of 2023, amid the images and sounds of genocide in Palestine. That is, when all there was were the images and sounds of thousands of lifeless children being pulled out of the rubble day in, day out for months on end; the images and sounds of breathless people digging for bodies with their bare hands and nails; of the cries of endless bereaved parents in morgues and hospitals; of countless massacres in neighborhoods, schools, and refugee camps; of the siege of one hospital after the next; of story after story of summary executions; of millions displaced and starved; of our enveloping, almost suffocating grief. All of it not only aided and abetted by the world's biggest state powers but also accompanied by an enthusiastic dehumanization of Palestinians by nearly the entirety of the mainstream media and political establishments in the West. There was a brutality and a connivance here that even in the long history of the colonization of Palestine was arresting.

This kind of violence and radical indifference has its own way of foreclosing thought. What does it mean to write, and write in English, in the face of all this? What can this writing do? What can it offer a people—a people I happen to owe my entire existence to—who are subject to active annihilation and who need food and weapons before words and thoughts? Even for those of us committed to critical thought, to history and theory, as the scaffolding of our action and activism, writing amid genocide can seem a futility at best. Given the complicity of not just universities and epistemic structures in the West but the very conventions of liberal academic writing, always working to sanitize our language, it might feel compromised at worst. And yet we still write. We write to figure out what we think; to take stock of our own strength when it seems most distant; and to insist on our existence when it

is most denied. We write to make sense of the world and ourselves in it, even, or especially, when that world seems to have no place for us in it at all. We write against writing. We write not as a turn from action, but as an incitement to movement.

In truth, for all the shock of the moment, for how deeply we all felt scarred and changed by it, genocidal violence has long been both a formative history and a constant potential horizon in Palestinian life. We've always lived under its sign. And this book was always written as a way of grappling with the political structures that were formative of this violence and made its reproduction all but inevitable. The only way to really understand how we came to be faced with a frenzied genocidal campaign in Gaza at the end of 2023 is to think about the historical and temporal contradictions of Zionism as a settler colonial project faced with renewed forms of struggle and refusal. That is, the conjuncture could only be understood if located in the *foundational impasse* of the Zionist project, as that impasse had been shaped by a long century of anticolonial struggle. If political Zionism is, as this book argues, a project stuck at its foundational moment of conquest, unable to move past the past, it is not simply because its own immanent contradictions have risen to the surface, but because the Palestinian insistence on remaining and not disappearing amounts to a refusal to abide by the closure of time, a refusal of the rendering of the past into settler futurity, a refusal to allow the impasse to be overcome.

This book is largely about that impasse and the refusals that have formed it. But it is also written as a commitment to the ordinary dispossessed people whose forms of life demonstrate a world beyond settler colonialism and its degradations every single day. A commitment to those who even from the midst of genocide continue to insist—and insist with force—on life.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

been both supportive hosts and insightful and supple readers. Anoo-radha Iyer Siddiqi, Anupama Rao, and Casey Primel invited me to present some preliminary thoughts on inhabitation in a workshop that was immensely productive, and their engagements have stayed with me a long time. Teresa Caldeira and AbdouMaliq Simone both gave me platforms to explore some of the ideas in this book, and they always help remind me of the connections of my work to the broader questions posed by the lifeworlds of the global urban poor. Heba Alnajada kindly invited me to present a version of one chapter at the Race and Architecture series at Berkeley, which was generative, not least because it allowed me to reconnect with Sharad Chari, whose insights I treasure.

A two-year fellowship at the Mellon Interdisciplinary Fellows Program at Columbia was a huge boon; I'm grateful to all the other fellows, especially Emily Yao, who's one of the most perceptive readers I've ever come across, and the director Bill McAllister, who was always supportive and whose style and writing lessons were invaluable (today I teach them myself, using his same handouts). A one-year fellowship at the Princeton-Mellon Initiative in Architecture, Urbanism, and the Humanities also afforded me some space and time to work on the book; I'm grateful to Aaron Shkuda, Alisson Isenberg, and Mario Gandelsonas for the opportunity. I'm also grateful to Elizabeth Ault at Duke University Press, who read closely but capaciously and always knew what had to be done. My thanks also to Benjamin Kossack at Duke for his deft and patient editorial guidance.

The bulk of the research for this book was done in archives. It demanded a fair bit of persistence and a whole load of help and luck. I'm grateful to Helga Baumgarten, whose political history of the Palestinian national movement has been hugely informative and who also generously shared her collection of the Arab National Movement's early newspaper *al-Thaʿr*. I promise to pay it forward. Matan Cohen was the key that unlocked access to documents in the Israel State Archives; without him I'd still be waiting to get in. Muna Budeiri helped me navigate the formidable bureaucracies that guard the central records of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency.

Along the way, friends, accomplices, and fellow travelers have enriched my world, and their engagements with the ideas in this book have been formative. To note them here in a list is close to a betrayal of their importance, but I hope they each know their mark on this work is singular: Ahmad Dia, Ali Ugurlu, Brenna Bhandar, Deen Sharp, Eduardo Rega

Calvo, Emilio Dabed, Enas Alsafadi, Foad Torshizi, Henny Ziai, Kareem Rabie, Katia Hall, Khalid al-Hilli, Max Weiss, Nicola Perugini, Nikolas Kosmatopolous, Nora Akawi, Omar Jabary-Salamanca, Omar Sirri, Omar Tesdell, Pascal Menoret, Peter Lagerqvist, Rana Baker, Raof Haj Yahya, Ricardo Cardoso, Samar Maqusi, Saphe Shamoun, Sarah Hawas, Sarah El-Kazaz, and Taimoor Shahid. I finished this book while at Bowdoin, and I'm grateful for the support and friendship of some wonderful people there: Oyman Basaran, Meryem Belkaid, Ángel Saavedra Cisneros, Barbara Elias, Zahir Janmohamed, Paige Milligan, Salar Mohandesi, Robert Morrison, Brian Purnell, Shreyas Sreenath, Dharni Vasudevan, Bianca Williams, and Túlio Zille.

I owe an infinite debt to family. To my parents, May Jayyusi and Tawfiq Abourahme, who began my political education from the very start and have never stopped adding to it. That their radicalism has not dimmed or ebbed with time, not even for a minute, is a political consistency I can only aspire to. My mother, and her sharpest of intellects, charted this course long before I even knew it existed. To my aunt Lena Jayyusi, who pored over key chapters and mobilized her full formidable intellectual powers to enrich them. To my grandmothers: Salma Khadra Jayyusi, who passed in the spring of 2023, leaving us bereft but rich beyond measure with an inheritance of a lifetime of love, poetry, and feminist defiance; and Maryam Abourahme, who in 1948, after being ethnically cleansed, somehow "smuggled" herself and her six children back across the lethal border between what had just become Israel and Lebanon to make sure that we might hold on to but a piece of our land. All of them instances of a Palestinian will to live, of lives miraculously reassembled from the shards of fragmentation and displacement. All of them models of life lived in the anticolonial key. To my sister Ruanne Abou-Rahme and Basel Abbas, from whom I continue to learn, and who take the familiar and make us see and hear it otherwise every time they create. To Laura Ribeiro Rodrigues Pereira and that bundle of curiosity and beauty we brought into this world, Salma Pereira-Abourahme, who remind me every day that, ultimately, the power of life is all we have with which to fight and that the road to freedom always traverses the personal and the political. May we forever travel that road together.

INTRODUCTION. CAMP/COLONY

IN THE OPEN TIME OF DISPOSSESSION

"The Camp *Is* the Issue"

The primary claim of this book is a simple one—to read the question of Palestine, we have to read the camp. "The camp *is* the issue" (*al-mukhayyam huwa al-qadiyya*). In one sense, this rhetorical statement, often repeated in the refugee camps, operates as a straightforward metaphor. The term *al-qadiyya* (issue, cause, or question) is shorthand for the question of Palestine, and the refugee camp, this statement says, is just another name for this question—Palestine as camp. As such, one can read it as saying not only that displacement is still *the* constitutive Palestinian experience (such that "we Palestinians" is always at some level "we refugees") but also that *all* Palestinians are encamped one way or another: those who live in Israel proper as formal citizens but not nationals of the Jewish State in constricted towns and villages, many of which are legally "unrecognized" and denied basic infrastructure; those under long-term military occupation in the enclosed cities and villages of the West Bank or the entirely besieged Gaza Strip; or those living

stateless or as second-class citizens in permanent exile in the surrounding states. The camp is the issue because all are effectively encamped. All live in the permanent temporariness of camptime, with varying degrees of extraterritorial dislocation and extralegal vulnerability. Camps within camps, abutting or within a larger voluntary encampment—the settler colony itself.

But there is something else in this statement, beyond the figurative (and not always helpful) movement of the camp image as metaphor or synecdoche. There is an insistence in it, I would argue, that the question of Palestine *remains*, at heart, a story of colonial dispossession. In the early pages of *The Question of Palestine* ([1979] 1992), Edward Said wrote that among the different ways we use the English word *question*, one important sense implies the persistent duration of a problem—a question is often something long-standing, intractable, and insistent. The statement "the camp is the issue/question" urges us to locate that sense of temporal persistence at a particular point; it urges us to read this duration of intractability from and in the camp itself. If the camp is the effect of an ongoing and contested dispossession, and if dispossession is the modus operandi of the colonial, then what this statement in effect does is call out the issue for what it *still* is. For encamped refugees, once the backbone of the national liberation movement but now the principal losers in the geopolitical restructuring of the occupation regime still somehow called "the peace process," the statement insists on a reckoning with the open history of the foundational violence of the settler polity that cannot be sutured through the (indefinitely deferred) promise of Palestinian statehood. It is a rhetorical move that insists on the openness of the time of dispossession.

The camp is the issue not because it represents or marks anything outside of itself (as a paradigm or exemplum) or because it can stand in for a larger whole, but because it is materially and politically installed at the center of the *ongoing* history of colonial struggle in Palestine. At the center of this book, then, is the claim that we can tell the story of the Palestinian question by telling the story of the camp as a political object. From and through the camps, we can approach the heart of this story—and this is my main argument—as not only a struggle over land and its (dis)possession *but also a struggle over historical time itself*. Settler colonialism everywhere is a particularly, even peculiarly, fraught struggle over time: perhaps nowhere more so than here. From the camps, we come to see Israel as a settler colonial project defined by its inability to

move past the past, a project *stuck* at its foundational moment of conquest. And we come to see the Palestinian insistence on return as a refusal to abide by the closure of the past into settler futurity; we see that Palestinian struggle does not just happen *in* the open time of dispossession: it happens *over* this time. Palestinian refusal impinges on settler time, denies it closure and consolidation, surrounds it and smuggles its fugitive temporalities beneath and above it, all the while and with every passing day chipping away at this order's certainties and keeping the question, a question.

"At Best an Arab Encampment"

In Palestine's encounter with Zionism, the camp, at least as image, has been there almost from the beginning. Writing at the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, an English playwright, novelist, and eventual president of the Jewish Territorial Organization, Israel Zangwill, would, while celebrating Zionism's gains, reflect on the challenges it faced. Zangwill—who is credited, somewhat erroneously, with generalizing what came to be one of the emblematic mottos of Zionism, "a land without a people, for a people without a land"—would later come to a break with and oppose the Zionist movement, embracing first what came to be known as "the Uganda option" and then any territorial settlement that allowed for Jewish self-government, even delivering a speech in 1923 at the American Jewish Congress that declared political Zionism to be dead. But in his 1921 Zionist treatise *The Voice of Jerusalem*, Zangwill remained focused on the conquest of Palestine, albeit with an important twist—he refuted his own earlier descriptions of Palestine as "wilderness" or "ruin" and insisted that the movement square up to the fact that the territory was not literally empty. On this, it's fair to say he was blunt, citing a 1904 speech he gave in New York in which he reminded his audience that "there is, however, a difficulty from which the Zionist dares not avert his eyes, though he rarely likes to face it. Palestine proper has already its inhabitants" (1921, 92).

For Zangwill, whose palimpsestic treatise reads like an uneasy mixture of tightly coiled English mannerisms and romantic, biblical literary flourishes, that Palestine was quite clearly inhabited only clarified the necessary course of action. "There is no example in history of an inhabited country being acquired except by force" (94). Even if this conquest

was the stuff of righteousness, without force it was a nonstarter: "A race, therefore, that desires a land of its own must—if it sets its eye on a land already inhabited—be prepared to face war" (95). Zangwill would square open conquest with the pretension to universality the same way every early liberal did, by racially limiting the terms of inclusion: "The only solution for this difficulty lies in the consideration that Palestine is not so much *occupied* by the Arabs as *over-run* by them. They are *nomads*, who have created in Palestine neither material nor spiritual values. To treat them therefore on the same basis as, say, the Belgians, would be to follow an analogy which does not exist" (97, emphasis added).

Though he was insistent on the need for force, Zangwill hoped persuasion would do the trick, and here he appeals to what he insists is the existing transience of "the Arabs": "We cannot allow the Arabs to block so valuable a piece of historic reconstruction, so romantic a reparation to the sorely-tried race of the Apostles. And therefore we must gently persuade them to 'trek.' . . . 'To fold their tents' and 'silently steal away' is their proverbial habit: let them exemplify it now" (97–98).

Zangwill's imagery of Palestinian Arabs as tent-dwelling nomads, proverbial or otherwise, is no outlier. Seraje Assi (2018), for one, shows that the Zionist national enterprise in Palestine eventually came to be defined in its very opposition to what it identified as nomadism. Patrick Wolfe came to a similar conclusion: "The new Jew's formative Other was the nomadic Bedouin rather than the *fellaheen* farmer" (2006, 396). But the reproach of nomadism was not merely figurative—it worked to render Palestinians removable. For Labor Zionists, so invested in the sedentary cultivation and settlement of land, nomadism became the paradigmatic lens that shaped Zionist discourse and attitudes about native Palestinians as foreign, marauding desert tribes. This image acted, writes Assi, as double repression, negating both sedentary Arab culture and nomadic Jewish traditions.

And yet, given Zionism's "lateness" as a colonial enterprise, the construction of nomadism had to contend with a land not just populated but also built-up. If settler colonialism is everywhere a struggle to capture and commodify land by replacing forms of inhabitation, then Zionism's lateness was not inconsequential. Here, settler colonialism had to face—and somehow negate—existing forms of inhabitation that spanned towns, villages, and, given Palestine's integration into global markets and its already articulated class formations (with proletarianized peasants, merchant classes, and an emergent bourgeoisie), urbanized cities.

If *nomadism* was a primary form of figuration through which colonial discourse everywhere rendered native presence, the camp or *encampment* would, here, be its spatial accessory. We need only note the sheer frequency of the image of the tented encampment that was such a staple—maybe even one of the defining motifs—of Orientalist and Zionist textual and visual accounts of Palestine. And at one level, this imagery of tents functioned *only* to highlight the absence of any imagery of buildings, towns, or cities. A little later in Zangwill's work, he gets at the heart of the intersection between dispossession and this image of nomadic life: "If Lord Shaftesbury was literally inexact in describing Palestine as a country without a people, he was essentially correct, for there is no Arab people living in intimate fusion with the country, *utilizing its resources* and stamping it with a characteristic impress: *there is at best an Arab encampment*" (1921, 109, emphasis added). Encampment here is meant to underline the passing temporariness or transience of physical and built native life. In a discursive move with almost immaculate settler colonial (and Lockean) overtones, it constructs not only the excessive and irrational movement of native bodies ("over-running") but also the essential transience of their relation to land; their built spaces are not cities, towns, and villages but something like bedouin caravans and mobile camps. Native peoples do not—indeed, *cannot*—inhabit the land "in intimate fusion": they merely "over-run" it in mobile and passing encampments.[1] Zangwill may have conceded the land was not actually empty, but neither was it inhabited or owned in any meaningful sense; it was vacant.

The camp here is not yet a mark of confinement but is something like a *placeless form*. We might say it stands as the inverse or opposite of a Hebrew word that in Zionist discourse would become steeped in an almost mystical aura: *yishuv* (settlement or territory). If the term *yishuv*, which came to refer to the entirety of Jewish settlement or territory in Palestine, and tellingly comes from the causative verb *le-yashev*, meaning "to settle" (from the root *y-sh-v*, which also gives us the verb *la-shavet*, meaning "to sit"), marked the settled, rooted, and possessed, then the images of camps were its photographic negatives, marking the unsettled, unrooted, and unpossessed. The camp is the *nonsettlement*. It is an image of negation, one that was put to direct use in the racialization of Palestinians (always strictly generic "Arabs") as alien interlopers in Palestine, naturally and incorrigibly nomadic, unrooted, and—above all—eminently removable.

Already we can see how an image of the camp sits at the center of the definitive biopolitical sites of settler colonial struggle: bodily move-

ment and land (dis)possession. Yet the *projected* placelessness and unrootedness that Zangwill, through the racial image of the encampment, superimposed on the Palestinian landscape would *only* eventually be engendered in the ethnic cleansing and subsequent *actual* encampment of Palestinians after 1948. Zangwill's discourse was, ultimately, performative. It was an image—like all those of nomadism and vacancy in colonial history—that was to have real material effects, the effects of removing people from and severing their connections with the land.

And yet, in the long colonization of Palestine, the camp form would play a very different role. From the beginning, the camp was not just a projected negative image of Zionist colonialism but also one of its formative spatial instruments. That is, beneath the discourse, the camp form wasn't just the opposite of Zionism's settled colony or city but was its overlapping *accomplice*. It's somewhat ironic that in the years after Zangwill's observations, camps would come to play a critically formative role for both Zionism and British imperialism. Put simply, both British and Zionist colonization relied on a variety of camp forms: forms that brought together a flexible mixture of penal-carceral, extractive, labor exploitative, demographic, and territorial logics. There was here a very basic, primary, and elective affinity between camp and colony forms, especially in the early stages of settlement, and in ways that drew on the existing repertoires and networks of imperial history.

The list is extensive. We can think, for example, of the racially pure cooperative settlements, the *kibbutzim*, so critical to the entire "conquest of land" doctrine, which in many instances began precisely as tented encampments; these were themselves heavily influenced by early twentieth-century German agricultural colonies in the mainly Polish province of Posen, knowledge of which was brought to Palestine by figures like Arthur Ruppin (a eugenicist and race theorist known as "the father of Zionist settlement") who was deeply involved in both contexts.[2] Or take the "wall and stockade" (*homa u-migdal*) formations of the *yishuv*, which themselves often began as tented camps, constructed in a single day between sunrise and sundown; this practice was informed in turn by British colonial counterinsurgent architecture of the Mandate period like the Tegart Forts and their military watchtowers (which still make up the insignia of the Israeli Border Police).[3] These formations, fifty-seven of which were spread out across Palestine during the Great Revolt between 1936 and 1939, were essential to the establishment of the state and became the very *conceptual* model not only of Israeli architecture but arguably of

the state project itself, with their two essential functions, fortification and observation, replicated on every scale (Rothbard 2003).

Earlier still we can think of the British Mandate's prison labor camps. Built between 1920 and 1947 and often run as jail labor companies, these labor camps straddled and brought together British and Zionist imperatives in Palestine (al-Saleh 2022). Sited near quarries, railroads, or major road works, they were the sites of a forced labor regime in which criminalized landless peasants worked to build the infrastructure that would both facilitate the extraction of resources and mineral wealth *and* lay the infrastructural foundations for the emergent settler state. In many instances, these same camps would be taken over when the emergent Zionist state operated its own labor and concentration camps in Palestine; at least one, Nur al-Shams, adjacent to the city of Tulkaram's major stone quarries, would itself become a refugee camp for ethnically cleansed Palestinians.[4]

These British prison labor camps foreshadowed Zionist labor camps and also were their incubators (except the Zionist state had the decency to drop the pretense of criminality entirely). Over the course of 1948, Zionist forces established at least five major labor camps (and some sixteen smaller ones) across Palestine that detained and put to work about twenty-five thousand Palestinians who had just been expelled from their towns and villages, in conditions that the International Committee of the Red Cross called "slavery" (Abu Sitta and Rempel 2014); these camps remained active until 1955, when these Palestinians too would be expelled. Around the same time, in depopulated Palestinian cities, the small numbers of Palestinians that remained after 1948 were confined for months behind barbed wire in urban encampments that Israeli officials themselves described as "fenced concentration camps" (Raz 2020). In Haifa, for example, the roughly three thousand Palestinians that remained from a population of more than seventy thousand were rounded up on David Ben-Gurion's orders and confined in a camp in the neighborhood of Wadi Nisnas; in Jaffa, the 'Ajami quarter (today the site of aggressive gentrification by Israeli real estate capital) was fenced off and designated as a zone of concentration for remaining Palestinians.

After the establishment of the state, absorption camps (*ma'abarot*) held hundreds of thousands of Arab and Middle Eastern Jews before they were dispersed across the state's frontiers into peripheral "development towns" that both proletarianized them and put them on the front lines as human buffers.[5] The camp form in this case exceeded the settler-native binary and, at least in part, shaped the internal racist class divisions of

Israeli society. Colonized Palestine, then, was, and to a large degree remains "an extensive laboratory of camps" (Katz 2017a, 2). For Palestinians, encampment—as dispossession's accomplice—has cast a decisively long and stubborn shadow over their lives.

Even in this short account, we can see how this fungibility in camp and colony forms relied on a circulation of expertise and knowledge across imperial terrains. Ann Stoler has tracked the overlapping contours of camp and colony forms and the concepts congealed around them, tracing the commensurabilities between them and the political logics they sustain to argue that "the colony and the camp are both containments, enclosures, and unsettled encampments that are more closely allied than we may have imagined" (2016, 77). She reads one mid-nineteenth-century French work (a five-volume study on *colonies argicoles*) not because it became a widely cited document (it did not), but because of the kinships it calls forth. And so, she tracks a litany of forms: agricultural colonies, penal colonies, resettlement camps, detention camps, island military bases, camps refitted as sites for colonial settlers, and failed settler colonies militarized with soldiers as settlers, which were all connected nodes in an imperial network; these were all connected, however, through mutation, not correspondence, and filiation, not fixity. Camp and colony are in a "deadly embrace" from the start: "a conjoined conceptual matrix, twin formations that give rise to social deformation with different effects," borrowing and blending essential features of their protective and coercive architecture "until they are strategically and violently torn apart" (2016, 78). In the colonization of Palestine, this is clear enough in the brief inventory we just ran through.

Yet what I'm arguing here is that the entanglement of the Palestinian refugee camp and the Israeli settler colony is of a different order altogether. The entanglement is not just about the filial borrowing and blending of forms in a joint conceptual matrix, or just another example of a "common camp" (Katz 2017b), one node among many in Israel's territorial transformation and demographic manipulation. Rather, the entanglement goes to the particularity of Zionism as a *settler* project, defined both by its own (now rising) immanent contradictions and—above all—by the long century of Palestinian struggle it has always been responding to. Here, the "deadly embrace" of (refugee) camp and (settler) colony does not belong to the order of kinship per se, but to the structural and historical oppositions of settler-native struggle; it belongs to the political necessity at the core of Zionism's project that Zangwill so di-

rectly squares up to, and its ongoing incompletion and frustration—the necessity of removal.

"The Refugee Camp Ambushes Me Anywhere, Any Moment"

The Palestinian refugee camp has its own status in this encounter, one that goes directly to the temporal contradictions and impasses of the colonial struggle here. There is a centrality, often contradictory and overdetermined but always urgent to the Palestinian camp question that is not hard to gauge. The refugee camps were the direct outcome of the near-total devastation of Palestinian lifeworlds and their forms of inhabitation in what came to be named and commemorated as the *Nakba*. The camp was not simply the *imaginary* opposite of the propertied settlement Zionism came to build; it was also the engendered *material* effect of the destruction of the rural and urban geographies Zionism encountered.

Between 1947 and 1949, and especially in the six months between March and September of 1948, almost 800,000 people (nearly two-thirds of the native population of Palestine) were expelled from their homes, some 530 villages destroyed, and eleven urban neighborhoods depopulated (Pappe 2007), with close to seventy documented massacres punctuating and shaping the waves of expulsion and flight (Abd al-Jawad 2007). Of the 370 new settlement towns that Israel would build in a frenzy of construction in its first decade of existence (1948–58), 350 were located on the lands of the depopulated villages, often directly on the same sites. The historiographical record is, by now, well established, even if forms of denial stubbornly persist and archival censorship and erasure, if anything, increase.[6] That increase seems only to confirm the state order's vulnerability to historical narrative and the collapse not only of its historical myths but also of the collective forms of repression that made them possible. In fact, today in Israeli society, denialism seems, if anything, a receding psycho-affective mechanism that constantly gives up and succumbs to the jouissance of an open affirmation of the violence that not only "had to be done," and may need to be done again, but that was good and right. Today, denial and affirmation come together, almost concurrently, often in the same conversation, such that you can easily be confronted with statements that insist both that "the *Nakba* never happened" and that, unless you're careful, "a second *Nakba* is coming."

After periods, often months and sometimes years, of wandering between villages, caves, disused buildings, or the open, many expelled Palestinians found themselves seeking refuge and relief in concentrated sites serviced by one or another charity organization, often in old military barracks or in previous encampments and temporary built sites, like Ottoman-era khans or caravanserai. An ad hoc United Nations (UN) body, the United Nations Relief for Palestine Refugees (UNRPR), coordinated aid and relief activity in these camps in the immediate aftermath of the expulsion.

At the tail end of 1949, with political negotiations at a standstill, the UN established an expressly instituted organization, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), referred to colloquially and tellingly simply as "the Agency" (*al-wikala*), which took over the administration of these camps and the provision of services within them. Today, these same sites make up the majority of the fifty-eight recognized refugee camps in Gaza, the West Bank, Syria, Lebanon, and Jordan, most of them established in the years between 1948 and 1950 (though with a significant number, six, established in Jordan after the 1967 war produced another round of Palestinian refugees, most of them twice displaced). The camps range in population size from small formations housing roughly 2,000 to sprawling urbanized forms with some 200,000 people. In these camps live 1.5 million people (out of about 4 million registered Palestinian refugees), inhabitants from the majority of the depopulated villages and cities, still largely clustered according to their place of origin. They have never been allowed to return to their homes and, save the very few who managed despite grave risk to spirit themselves back onto their land, none has returned.

The camps, in the simplest terms, both contain and shelter those displaced bodies expelled but not allowed to return. They emerged as the inevitable, but also almost incidental, technical-humanitarian measure in place until a political solution or, as the terminology felicitously has it, a "settlement" might be reached. In other words, the camps emerged as the spatial effect of the engineered *political* irresolvability of the question of Palestine. The surplus population created in the establishment of the Jewish State could not be allowed to return, nor would the neighboring Arab states allow for their permanent resettlement, something the vast majority of them vociferously rejected in any case, and still do.

What came to be known in the West as "the Arab refugee problem" remains to this day, of course, *the* most intractable point of conten-

tion in the struggle over Palestine. For official Israel—in its racial self-organization—the return of the refugees is the single most threatening eventuality.[7] And so, unlike almost any other recent peace accord, negotiation here a priori precludes the possibility of any substantial return or repatriation.[8] What this book shows is that this "problem" is entangled with and often even exceeded by the question of the camps.

Since their establishment, the camps have incited quite different, often contradictory, but always urgent and stark responses in political practice and discourse. For the imperially backed regional state system, with Israel firmly established as one of its geopolitical poles, the camps hold in place displaced bodies that cannot be left to wander and move across borders; *but* equally, the camps came to be seen as obstacles to the final resettlement of the refugees across the border (and the effective liquidation of the "refugee problem") and as such sites of a distinct unsettledness, of potential movement. The camps are at once guarantors of stability in the region *and* an obstacle to peace: sites to be maintained as places of relief until a "solution" is found, or sites that need to be undone precisely for such a "solution" to be reached.

For UN administrators the camps were, for a long time, seen as overcrowded, vice-ridden, demoralizing spaces that eventually came to interrupt the imperative of work-based rehabilitation and the restoration of refugees to productive life. But, at the same time, for these same administrators, the planning and regulation of the built spaces of the camps came to be the primary instruments for both the provision of services and the construction of durable authority and the disciplining of the refugee-inhabitant. For Palestinian liberationist politics, the tension had been equally stark. The camps were carceral spaces of immobilization that paternalized and domesticated those in its ward. They were understood, by the earliest Palestinian political forces, explicitly as depoliticizing devices of racist and colonial institutions like the Agency; in producing this humanitarian statelessness of Palestinian subjects removed from historical time, camps were something to be overcome and left. At the same time, as temporary spaces that reinforced the openness of a *political* question, and blocked a permanent resettlement, the camps came to be seen as "way stations" that tacitly kept certain claims to return open. As such, they were political spaces to be defended and held on to, so much so that to be forced to leave a camp would be as bad as the *Nakba* or might even be worse, because it would mean being twice displaced and would also finalize the closure of the possibility of recovering what was lost in the

original dispossession. For the Israeli colonial order, the camps did the work of keeping the displaced away from the state's borders and out of the territory it claimed; at the same time colonial officials came to see the camps as incubators of a dangerous "consciousness of the temporary," as the very material form of an ongoing land claim that threatened the settler order. The perceptions are at odds even within a single political formation, yet a sharp, even foreboding, sense of political-temporal consequence is consistent across the board.

The Palestinian refugee camp, then, weighs heavily on the archives. And yet it remains this slightly curious, overdetermined object of thought and practice that everyone initially agreed was to be but a passing temporary phenomenon. For Euro-American UNRWA administrators, the camps would eventually cease to exist, when the refugee problem was resolved through work-based rehabilitation in the 1950s and 1960s. For Palestinian revolutionaries, the camps were to be transformed into insurgent bases of revolutionary movement and eventually disappear through the redemptive politics of return. For Israeli officials, the camps were to be eventually undone through demolition or municipal integration in ways that would finally resolve the refugee problem and normalize settler time.

Nobody *really* wants the camp, nobody even wants the word *camp*, and yet it remains strangely resistant to the various forces of opposition it is up against, with an unexpected topological elasticity and a stubborn persistence. The camps have changed morphologically, infrastructurally, architecturally, demographically, socioeconomically, even jurisdictionally, but remain camps. Even the name, as we will see, stubbornly refuses to fade away, refuses to be divested from its object. And not for lack of trying. Almost everyone tried to change the name, as though, short of the transformation or destruction of the object, the very word *camp* becomes a problem, a liability, a nuisance, but also an opportunity for a shortcut, a quick fix. But not only is getting rid of the name sometimes not possible without getting rid of the object, names themselves, often even more than their objects, can prove stubborn in their persistence.

Yet, as we shall see, Agency administrators would spend months if not years haggling over what to rename the camps so as to delimit the organization's liability and responsibility over them (while maintaining an ambiguous form of authority): "settlements," "living quarters," "towns," "encampments" (as if that gets very far) all came and went as suggestions, until they realized "camp" wasn't going to budge. They spent a few

years disassociating themselves by typing the word *camp* in scare quotes, before this pretense was eventually also dropped and *camp* remained *camp*. Palestinian revolutionaries, always careful about terminology, saw "bases" (*mu'askarat*) of militants or returnees rather than camps of refugees, and more than once at the height of the Revolution proclaimed the end of the "camp," sometimes in quite heavy-handed, almost awkward, style: "And the first wave of militants graduated from the training bases of the camps—sorry, of the barracks, for there is no longer a camp and there never again will be" (Badir 1969, 1). If the Agency thought it could get rid of the name and keep the thing, then the Israeli State understood that its plans stood a much better chance if both name and thing were eliminated altogether. In camp demolition schemes, after camps were to be leveled and refugees relocated, it was essential that they be housed in "towns," not "camps." Israeli planners feared, and these fears were to a large extent realized, that the new built environments they constructed for refugees, regardless of their level of planning and appearance of permanence, or their jurisdictional incorporation, would, one day, also become "camps." That is, not only would the object refuse to be divested of its name, but this name would claim new objects as well. Where UNRWA officials succumbed to a kind of nominalism and thought changing names would be enough, Israeli officials succumbed to a brute materialism and thought improvement or demolition would be enough. Yet camps remain camps because what is at stake is a question of neither language nor matter, but of the politics that courses between them; that is, camps remain camps as long as the political events that produced them remain historically open.

For every political force that faced it, the Palestinian camp was understood as a constitutive apparatus in its own right. The figurations may radically differ (refugee, huckster, returnee, militant, revolutionary, terrorist, rejectionist), but their causal relation to the camp is constant. UNRWA administrators worried about the camps' squalid environments and its "breadlines" breeding a "professional refugee mentality"—an abject figure of self-pity but also trickery and deceit. Palestinian revolutionaries, likewise, saw camp life producing a static, dejected, dependent figure of refugeehood and sought to transform the camps not only into "launching pads" that would "sprout" mobile revolutionaries, but also into communes that would revolutionize social relations, freeing women of traditional gender roles, freeing working classes from elite domination, and freeing youth of the conservative hierarchy of their elders. Is-

raeli politicians saw the camps incubate a "consciousness of exile" and a subject of refusal; in the mid-1970s, when the camps were being politically mobilized, an Israeli diplomat fretted to one UN administrator—in a striking sentence—that the camps are seeing "the political evolution of the Palestinian refugees into Palestinians."[9]

Beneath this spoken discourse, there are the marked silences and absences, the *unsaid* that the camp indexes. For Palestinians, a sense of unspoken guilt, even shame, surrounds the fact that, despite the proclamations of unity and the symbolic place of pride the camp has in the national-liberationist economy of signs, the camps have paid and continue to pay a higher price. We know that there, in those stacked, almost beautifully fragile, and meticulously overdecorated houses, which most Palestinians will not even visit in the course of a lifetime, the poorest of the poor will pay with life and limb before anyone else. More recently, in the postrevolutionary period of "state building," this shame or guilt has been in some places overtaken by, or more likely displaced into, a classed, almost racialized, contempt for "camp people" (*mukhayyamjiya*) that also barely speaks its name, hiding behind appeals to law and order, or cleanliness and civility. This contempt, it needs saying, has a real material class basis: the camps as spaces of a militant urban poor incite fear in an insecure and entirely dependent Palestinian bourgeoisie and political elite that see their fragile class gains within a colonial economy perennially threatened by the camp's unwillingness to forgo insurgency.

For Palestinians, there is something at once hypersymbolic and unrepresentable about the camp. It has a kind of *totemic* presence in the Palestinian cosmos—emblematic but necessarily mystified, present often only at a certain repressed distance, and bound up with originary guilt. "The camp," writes Sharif Elmusa, "is a zone of exile in the Palestinian mind" (2012, 35). Difficult to talk about, heavy with pathos, and strangely absent from Palestinian poetry, the camp as a symbolic transit station remains the opposite of home (which can only ever be Palestine), and its present can never lead to a future (which can only ever be the camp's reversal). For Elmusa, a poet and scholar who grew up in Nuʿayma Camp outside Jericho, camp inhabitants have to navigate the marks of camp life alongside these silences and omissions: "It takes a reservoir of inner freedom and self-confidence for those who stay, or even those who leave, to heal the laceration of living in that flawed quarter" (35). And even then, the camp never leaves you: "Memories flash in unexpected ways, shake me into acknowledging them, and let me go. The refugee camp am-

bushes me anywhere, any moment" (28). The camp is Elmusa's "portable absence."

For much of Israeli political order, the camps, just as much as if not more than the remains of the depopulated Palestinian villages and cities, are experienced as anxiogenic sources of vague but imminent threat. The pathology with which the camps are imagined not only indexes but also hides or obscures the actual sources of this anxiety. It is easier no doubt to see only festering hovels of subhuman rage, the "crammed, stench-ridden . . . shanty-towns of squalor and fundamentalist hatred," as one occupying solider put it (Ben-Tal 1991); it is easier to reassure oneself with the smug comfort of supremacy and see nothing but "infrastructures of terror." It is easier, that is, than admitting that one's own sense of home, one's very place in the world, was and remains contingent on stopping the inhabitants of those "shanty-towns of squalor" from ever returning home. It is easier than recognizing that Israeli political order—arguably Israeli political subjectivity itself—rests on the violence of the continued displacement of these very "refugees," a violence that is not just this subjectivity's enabling condition but its very substance. And *that* is the reason the bulldozers, tanks, cartographers, and urban planners descend on the camp with such persistent force. The camp indexes both the ongoing unsayability and necessity of the foundational violence that is still the condition of possibility for a Jewish State in Palestine; it is a reminder of the always-unfinished work of repression.

Here, the camp is a window onto the political unconscious. And coming to terms with all this, with the said and unsaid that the camp indexes, with what ties the camp form here to its seemingly inseparable double, the colony, demands thinking through the politics of time and temporality more closely: time not as historical context or periodization, or even as a political technology, but as itself the—at once clear and obscure—object of struggle between settler conquest and anticolonial refusal.

Settlerness, or The Time of Unsettlement

What is it about settler colonialism that makes it so unstable a political formation? Why is it that, even centuries after their foundational events, settler states seem so often stricken with a malaise and enmity that continuously open up "old" wounds and pose existential anxieties anew? Why has settler colonialism risen to the surface of our present, again, as

a global problem? Today, we are told the settler colonial ethos has been globalized: the political language of besiegement and the permanent war-footing so definitive of settler colonialism are no longer confined to settler colonies proper, but now shape securitized politics right across the West (Hage 2016). Settler colonialism persists in our ostensibly post-colonial world and seems to proliferate along new axes and in new forms, dredging up questions of unfinished pasts wherever it goes.

Time itself in settler states seems like a charged and also particularly fateful political question. Both colonial settlement and the intransigence of anticolonial refusal keep time an object of political contestation. Colonial settlement is, after all, as much about the conquest and foundation of new time as it is about land; it depends on the creation of new foundations that wipe the slate before them, on both immutable racial myths of origin that exclusivize historicity ("the return to history," "manifest destiny") *and* new temporal beginnings that mark the start of civilizational and sovereign time ("making the desert bloom," "the birthday of a new world," settler declarations of independence). Frantz Fanon understood this as sharply as anyone in the anticolonial tradition: "The colonist," he told us, "makes history. His life is an epic, an odyssey. He is invested with the very beginning: 'We made this land'" (2005, 14). Opposite the colonist are those who are listless and petrified, consumed not by history but by static "custom."

Yet if "the colonist makes history and he knows it," as Fanon (2005, 15) insisted, the colonist also somehow feels that history's vulnerability. The challenge of time here, of unfinished pasts in the present, cannot simply be met in narrative or the writing of an epic. In a footnote to an essay about the transformation of Buenos Aires, Jorge Luis Borges wrote that "only new nations have a past" (1984, 42).[10] Borges, looking at the city in the 1920s through its layers of centuries of colonial-capitalist change, felt a heightened sense of time in conquest "so indecisive" that it constantly demanded renewal (such that his grandfather in the nineteenth century was still fighting the sixteenth century's wars of conquest). And though he doesn't say as much, we can also read this heightened sense of time, despite Borges's own attachments, in the "New World's" *precarity of achievement*. It's here, not in Granada (standing in for something like the Old World's taken-for-granted historicity), that Borges felt the "passage of time"; it's in the settler colonial "new republics" that time "moves more boldly" (42), and, I would add, looms more ominously. If the figurative settler seems obsessively fixated on stories with clear beginnings

and ends (Simone 2020), then this has as much to do with the unsettled temporalities of conquest as it does with the narrative demands of new nations.

In turn, surviving and resisting settler colonization is about refusing temporal orders as much as it is about clinging to what's left of geography. In fact, the two are inextricably linked, native geography/land itself remaining the very basis of another parallel but incommensurate time, beyond or beneath the project of settlement—the time beneath the concrete. To insist on Palestine, for example, as this viable, still-existing, recoverable place is to insist on not only what is beneath the forests and housing complexes of colonial erasure, but what is beneath their present as well: that is, beneath the temporal order that settlement both relies on and constitutes. This Palestine is as much a when as it is a where. For so much of Palestinian life, then, the challenge has been to fashion practices of inhabitation and collective self-formation that produce distinctly Palestinian experiences of time beyond the temporality of settler sovereignty. I mean time here both in the sense of temporality—that is, the images, signs, embodied experiences, practices, rhythms that are constitutive of a sense of an age or moment (Mbembe 2001)—and time in its historical character as the organization of a relationship between past, present, and future.

There is, of course, nothing neutral about these terms.[11] In *Beyond Settler Time*, Mark Rifkin opens with a concise statement that speaks to the dilemma of thinking through time in settler colonial contexts: "Native peoples occupy a double bind within dominant settler reckonings of time. Either they are consigned to the past, or they are inserted into a present defined on non-native terms" (2019, vii). In turn, the need to assert Indigenous being-in-time, to insist on the coevalness and presentness of native peoples, always risks taking the temporal frames of settler governance for granted (Rifkin 2019). For Palestinians, as much as any other colonized peoples, these challenges and dilemmas were and remain formidable. Like so many movements for decolonization, the Palestinian struggle has moved between temporal inclusion and temporal alterity. We can see this for example in the Palestinian Revolution of the 1960s and 1970s that seemed to embody these dilemmas right to its end. The Revolution was, on the one hand, a bid to enter universal history through that history's privileged form (revolution) and as such normalize and include a self-determining Palestinian nation-state as a historical entity just like any other. On the other hand, it was the antistatist making

of a new revolutionary and anticolonial Palestinian time that could *not* be assimilated into the historical present of the global national order—a time against history.[12]

Time has long loomed large over the Palestinian condition: a condition that Palestinians have come to understand through a set of distinctly spatiotemporal images and concepts, such as siege (*al-hisar*), waiting (*al-intithar*), exile (*al-hijra*), the temporary (*al-muwaqat*), deferral (*al-ta₃jil*), and, above all, return (*al-'awda*). For all the dominance of the spatial turn and political geography in Palestine studies, the politics of time and temporality has recently come into its own. Edward Said ([1979] 1992) was early (or maybe the rest of us are just late) when he conceptualized Palestinianness as a state of temporal impasse, defined by the impossibility of its present. Now that we've caught up, we have compelling takes on the Palestinian condition as defined by the ruptures, twists, and emptiness of "checkpoint time" (Tawil-Souri 2017); the waiting and "stolen time" of closure (Peteet 2016); the perpetual present of "post-revolutionary time" (Abourahme 2016); or the fractured time of "internal severance" (*inqisam*) (Mor 2024). Israel's occupation has itself been understood as a state of "permanent temporariness" (Azoulay and Ophir 2009): a regime of endless, repressive "conflict management" that seeks neither solution nor decision but "buys time" and profits from deferral and abeyance in a style that draws on wider colonial histories of rule. And, of course, much has been written on Zionism's ideological formations as they relate to a fairly crude instrumental treatment of mythico-historical time: the negation of exile, the return to history, and so on (Raz-Krakotzkin 2013). Here, however, I am interested, in more pointed terms, in time as the *object* of political struggle.

My argument that the camp allows us to read the struggle in Palestine as a struggle over time demands bringing the temporal more explicitly into our readings of the settler colonial. But it also demands doing so in ways that exceed the limits of settler colonial studies. Though Palestine has functioned historically as the constitutive exclusion of the very field of (post)colonial studies, the question of Palestine has today become privileged terrain in the field of settler colonial studies (and not only for good reason but with good effect).[13] What might be thought of as a second wave of settler colonial studies in the early 2000s has opened up a field of comparative thought and political solidarity. And though the reception of this work tends to elide an earlier Palestinian moment in colonial critique in the 1960s and 1970s, it has nonetheless de-exceptionalized

the question of Palestine, taking it out of the quarantine that Zionism's claims to uniqueness had imposed on it.

This, of course, is one of the principal gains of a settler colonial analytic. Namely, it demolishes the claim of singularity every settler project depends on. That is, it insists that the interaction with the dispossessed *is* the very history of who the settlers collectively are; there is no history of the institutions and ideologies of settler societies that is not simultaneously a history of settler-native relations (Piterberg 2008). Which is to say, just like any other settler colony, there is never anything extrinsic in Palestine about the struggle with native presence; there is no "Arab Question" in Israeli society that might be bracketed and examined, recognized, even conceded to and redressed, apart from the wider political and social structures. One of the effects of comparative settler colonial studies as an emergent field of critical scholarship was precisely to challenge this fundamental conceit of hegemonic settler narratives that says they are defined by some national or civilizational essence—what defines settler nations first and foremost is the interaction with those they have dispossessed.

At the center of this turn was Patrick Wolfe's 2006 article that would go on to become something of a foundational text. For Wolfe, the key term in thinking the settler colonial was, of course, *elimination*. Elimination is settler colonialism's organizing principle with race as its organizing grammar. Settler colonies are, or become, organized around the logic of elimination because the historical conditions that are large-scale colonial settlement have, when it comes to existing native populations, tended to demand *land* more than they demand *labor*. In other words, settler colonies are a kind of threshold at which colonial politics and native-settler relations cease to be *primarily* organized around the exploitation of surplus value from Indigenous labor. "Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element" (2006, 388). In this article Wolfe gave us perhaps the most paradigmatic characterization of settler colonial invasion as "a structure, not an event" (388).[14] It is a statement that has become emblematic—and suffered all the associated consequences.

The massive gains of settler colonial studies notwithstanding, critiques of it have been compelling in their own right.[15] There is a tendency in this second wave to displace histories and critiques of capital, and too often, settler colonialism appears like a roving ideal type disassociated from the entangled histories of primitive accumulation, proletarianization, private property, and enslavement that gave us capitalism

as a world system. The focus on elimination can obscure both settler colonialism's history as a class project—a project that not only mitigated class conflict in the metropolitan world but also shaped dependent class formations in colonized societies—as well as the persistent reliance of settler capital on the (super)exploitation of colonized people's labor (Englert 2020) in differentially valued forms of labor and life (Clarno 2017). South Africa, for example, often conspicuously missing from Wolfe's purview, was defined by the simultaneity of elimination and exploitation, or more precisely, exploitation *as* elimination (Kelley 2017).

This critique can hold for Palestine too. The Zionist project was undoubtedly founded on its ability to exclude Palestinian labor, on its ability to conquer both labor and land in what would relatively quickly become a "pure" type settler colony (Shafir 1996). But its separation from Palestinian labor has never been as seamless as it seems. Large sections of Israeli capital remain wholly dependent on the exploitation of racialized Palestinian labor and skill, most obviously in the construction sector—dispossessed Palestinians have quite literally built Israel (Ben Zeev 2020, 2021; Ross 2019). But beyond all this, *value* has always been generated from disposable Palestinian life alongside a logic of elimination, without necessary recourse to either formal exploitation or wage labor. The racialization of the Palestinians (as indolent, itinerant, idle), like the racialization of colonized peoples in any settler colony, is after all, the very basis of *all* value, because it is what renders native life removable and, as such, land and labor commodifiable. This same dispossessed life in Palestine has today become the laboratorial target of an Israeli arms and security industry that sells its technology as "field tested" and constitutes a larger per capita share of the economy than ever before, as well as a larger share of total exports than any other country on earth (Hever 2018). In their maimed, disabled, debilitated, and killed bodies, Palestinians are part of speculative value generation on a global scale (Puar 2017). If the persistence of primitive accumulation at the heart of global capitalism demonstrates anything, it is that disposability is not antithetical to value but increasingly its very condition of possibility (Tadiar 2022). What I mean to point to here is the multiplicity of vying logics at play that might be missed with an overemphasis on elimination. Palestinians are absolutely slated for and subject to elimination as a collective, and yet they are *not* external to the generation of value by any means.

The earlier Marxist accounts of Palestinian scholar-activists—in what should be thought of as the (forgotten) first wave of settler colonial studies

—were arguably more adept at thinking about the tensions and synergies between elimination and exploitation, locating Zionist settler colonialism as an inseparable historical part of wider European imperialism and the capitalist world system (Sayegh 1965; Jabbour 1970; Kayyali 1977; Abdo 1991). In his 1965 text, published as the first monograph of the Palestine Research Center he helped found, Fayez Sayegh, for example, was not only among the first to identify Zionism as a settler colonial project founded on "racial elimination" (preempting aspects of Wolfe's much better-known essay by decades), but he also insisted on its ongoing connections to Euro-American capitalism in the region in a way we often lose sight of today. Settler colonial studies has never been a roving, prefab category "applied" (or "misapplied," as some have it) to Palestine and Zionism: it was grounded knowledge that emerged from the terrain of Palestinian struggle itself.

If all this weren't enough, there is too the uneasy tension between settler colonial and Native studies. There is a sense that settler colonial studies has tended to obscure the importance of precolonial lifeworlds and cosmologies as well as their endurance beyond the rupture of colonization; that it misses an account of the Indigenous and Black "earthworlds" that settler colonialism could not have survived without—that worldmaking gift turned into conquest (Gill 2023). Even at its most critical, settler colonial studies has a habit of displacing the question of Indigeneity (Kauanui 2016), and as a narrative form it too easily ends up overemphasizing the "triumph" or "success" of settler replacement (Barakat 2017).

Many of these critiques seem to meet at what is seen as the mistake of isolating settler colonialism as a *type* from what then becomes "franchise" or "metropole" colonialism. Stoler, always apprehensive of the ability of hard typologies to make sense of what she has so consistently shown to be the patchworked, contingent, and contested nature of colonial history, tells us her reservation around settler colonialism "has less to do with the political concept itself than with the fact that it is often invoked as an ontological state rather than a fractious historical condition" (2016, 60). Settler colonialism, she insists, is but one "protracted moment in colonial statecraft" (60), appearing and receding in colonizing projects across the board as failed visions for the settlement of European colonists come and go; countless colonial governments, she reminds us, sought at one point or another to move European populations into the colonies, only to flounder, lag, or change course.

This is all fairly well rehearsed at this stage. What I want to get at here is how we might come to terms with what settler colonial politics does—in terms of opening a field of temporal struggle—without getting too bogged down in just what it is or isn't. If settler colonialism is, we can agree, not a unique type, then the question is what terms and concepts can parse this "fractious historical condition"—from which there does not seem to be any going back and which never seems to finish. Even if we rightly don't subscribe to a hard distinction between metropole and settler colonies, the protracted moment of settlement cum replacement seems at least to mean a shift in a colony's order of priorities and, I would argue, in its temporal dynamics.[16]

How then can we come to terms not with settler colonialism per se but with what we might call *settlerness*? I don't mean settlerness as a quality that might distinguish settler colonial situations from colonial situations.[17] I use settlerness as a concept and in the form of a nominalized adjective, instead, to describe a political mode of existence that can appear anywhere large-scale colonial replacement occurs. The condition of settlerness might intersect with extraction, exploitation, elimination, and replacement but is not entirely reducible to any single one. By settlerness I mean the way by which the recursive but endless task of dispossession-settlement both forms its own political imperative and is shaped by anticolonial refusal in ways that open up temporal contradictions. Settlerness describes both the project's dynamism *and* its inertia; it's a way of getting at this mixture of territorial expansiveness and a frequent sense of besiegement, even an unsettledness. Settlerness describes life in the shade of an uneasy domination. It describes a form of restless inhabitation, *because to describe things as still settler is to describe things that are not only stunted and unresolved but defined in large part by their opposition.*

I take the condition of settlerness, at least in Palestine, then, to be ultimately a kind of *dynamic stuckness*—a way of coming to terms with the mixture of unsettledness and expansiveness that defines the encounter here. In other words, it's a way of describing the political-temporal conditions of an expansive and powerful settler project but one that, faced with persistent refusal, is unable to overcome or move beyond its foundational violence and "naturalize" the ongoing dispossession in stable liberal regimes of property and civil law. And, so, I think of settlerness not as the opposite of Indigeneity but as the effect of struggle or anticolonial *refusal*. That is, here at least, this stuckness is as much the effect

of the persistence of Palestinian forms of refusal as it is the effect of Zionism's immanent contradictions. The openness of the time of dispossession is double. Dispossession is not simply ongoing; in a very real way, the struggle *against* dispossession also stops it from becoming a mere administrative routine, technical legality, or fait accompli. It's the struggle that keeps dispossession in Palestine reliant on orders and magnitudes of explosive violence that belie or foreclose claims to "transition," "legitimacy," "success," or "normalcy." Israel's temporal impasse as a settler project isn't a failure. It's a defeat.

Settlerness is a concept, then, immanent to the terrain of social struggle, and it has its own direct equivalent in Arabic in *al-istitaniyya*. This is often used as a straightforward qualifying adjective, as in *al-istiʿmar al-istitani* (settler colonialism) or *al-buʿar al-istitaniyya*, the ad hoc settlement encampments (mainly in the West Bank), somewhat euphemized in English as "outposts." And it's also present linguistically in the fact that Palestinians identify *al-istitan* (settlement) as the principal threat they face, with *mustawtinin* (settlers) (and not just *mustaʿmirin* or colonists) as their principal antagonists. But it can also be thought of and used more expansively as a concept drawn from existing Palestinian political practices as they act on the knot between time and settlement—practices in which there's an implicit refusal to consider the settler-state project and dispossession as anything more than temporary. The stealth cultivation of native wildlife and agriculture, the many furtive and open practices of return, the lived relationship to ruined and vanquished villages, the defense of the refugee camps, the rebuilding of demolished built structures, the entire ethos of steadfastness (*sumud*)—all of these are also temporal practices that refuse consignment to the finished past or inclusion in the settler historical present. They *refuse* closure, and as such what they refuse is precisely the transition beyond settlerness and its conflictual openness. The persistence of Palestinian life is measured in this refusal of resolution, in its insistence on the irresolution of the present. The secret of its power is not in any decisive finality but in keeping things unsettled and open.

Refusal is not just the disavowal of settler time; it is also the creation of a *temporal distance* that allows the colonized to know themselves on their own terms and in their own time: a distance that allows you to hold on to a set of truths that seem utterly implausible in the present but that you nonetheless know to be true. Refusal is rebuilding a village over two hundred times after it's been demolished and knowing perfectly well

that it will be demolished again; refusal is living in the midst of a settler state that is massively built-up and urbanized, technologically advanced, globally integrated, and still *never* wavering in your belief that it is fundamentally temporary.[18] Audra Simpson writes of refusal as the political stance of those "supposedly sequestered in the past" (2017, 23) that pushes up on the present; it impinges on time as both demand (of a future otherwise) and reminder (of the ongoing work of dispossession, of what has not passed). "In living and knowing themselves as such, they [the Indigenous] pose a demand upon the newness of the present, as well as a knotty reminder of something else" (22). And so, for Simpson, refusal is a *puncturing* of the settler present that comes from "the interruptive capacity of Indigenous political life" (22). What I'm calling settlerness is the name of the uneven and unresolved time produced by this puncturing interruption.

In short, I take settlerness here to be this dynamic but unsettled, expansive but stuck, temporal condition shaped by the collision of the force of settlement with the sheer persistence of Indigenous refusal. There is simply no coming to terms with the colonial encounter in Palestine without an assessment of not only its coloniality but also its settlerness and the refusals from which it has been shaped. Without this, there is no way to understand the Zionist project's mixture of confidence in ongoing territorial conquests and land grabs, on the one hand, and its constant anxieties of recognition, on the other. Or to square a nuclear-armed state's formidable military power with its fear of "de-legitimization." Or to understand the Israeli State's frustrated attempts to organize and portray the dispossession of homes and land as a "real estate dispute," that is, as a legally contained and arbitrated dispute between two symmetrical parties subject to a single, given, and final property regime, and why this gets so vociferously rejected by Palestinians.[19] All these lines of contact are shaped by the open historical moment of conquest, by the struggle between the forces that seek to close this moment in time through law and property and those that refuse this moment any kind of closure.

Settlerness moves us away from debates about just *what* settler colonialism is and instead opens up a space to think about *how* settler politics and anticolonial refusals constitute a field of struggle shaped around time. It allows us to locate—with anticolonial struggle—the settler state's points of strategic vulnerability precisely in questions of permanence and endurance. If the camp, as I've been arguing, is a site from which to "read" the colonial struggle here, it's because it politically exists exactly

at the point of temporal impasse that is settlerness. All of this demands we think through the politics of temporality more consistently. As much as land and race are the central concepts in settler colonial studies, it's clear, as I've been arguing, that once mass replacement becomes this almost irreversible imperative in a colonial project, it has its own particular temporal significance. The best engagements with Wolfe's emblematic characterization of settler colonial invasion as "structure, not event" all emphasize its temporal purchase, that this structure is "ongoing" (Simpson 2016, 440), "a system of relations in time and across time" (Gniadek 2017), and "endures Indigeneity" (Kauanui 2016).

But more than the ongoingness of settler invasion, what I want to get to here is the sharp temporal *impasse* of the settler project in Palestine. If settler invasion is a structure, it is a structure, as Lorenzo Veracini rightly notes, with a "specific end point" (2011a, 3). Veracini might veer into a hard typology of the settler colonial that isn't always helpful, but he is spot on in pointing out that the settler colonial moment "is characterised by a persistent drive to ultimately supersede the conditions of its operation" (3). The settler colony seeks its own self-supersession; *it seeks to achieve itself in the settler ceasing to be settler*. In other words, settler colonial moments ultimately seek to move toward—even if they never accomplish—the elimination of the native and the nativization of the settler.[20] Staying in a state of settlerness and temporal irresolution is a foundational problem.

To speak of this temporal tendency is not to posit a failure/success binary, or a comparative stagism in settler movements—none of them ever achieve self-supersession. The end point of nativization is, as I argue later in the book, a vanishing horizon; dispossession is not a "done deal" anywhere in the settler world (Kauanui 2016). But the drive toward "completion" and supersession is very real. And it's here that we can read the temporal impasse of settlerness *from* the refugee camps. Grant Farred, in an article called "The Unsettler," writes that the settler represents a form of "domestication," intent on "rooting" itself "against the temporal force of history, as it were, into the land," so as "to become integral to and at home in the land" (2008, 797). The imagery of rooting that Farred appropriates from settler repertoires brings together the bundled settler concerns about the possession and cultivation of land and self in forms of property and the temporal-historical dilemmas of colonial settlement.[21] Rooting is a getting to the depth of the land that is also an attempt at getting to the depth of the past, such that "expropriation becomes—through

time—renarrativized as historic affiliation with the land" (797). To achieve this the settler has to overcome and surpass the lived past. "The indigene, like the land, must be temporally marked so that the passing of native time (the 'time before history') might be noted in order that it be surpassed by—and passed into if the project 'succeeds'—the modernity of colonialism" (798).

We can concretize this in Palestine by thinking about the importance of agricultural settlement in Zionism's early history both as a means of land dispossession and as an expression, much like the archaeological fever that so grips the project (Abu El-Haj 2002), of the desire to root and nativize the settler by reaching into the depths of land and inscribing itself into its past. But it's just as palpable in the architecture and housing projects.[22] We've come to recognize how much Zionism stands out, even among the "settler international," as a distinctly spatial project, or as Zvi Efrat has it, "a peculiarly deviceful architectural movement" (2018, 14). But we are less attuned to just how much this responds to the temporal anxieties and imperatives of settlerness.

Consider for a moment Israel's National Plan of 1950. Drawn up just two years after the establishment of the state by "Israel's foremost master planner" (Efrat 2018, 8), Arieh Sharon, this key strategic document was to be an outline for the comprehensive physical planning of the whole country.[23] It was to guide the publicly funded building sprees of the decisive decades of Israeli statehood in the 1950s and 1960s, in which a staggering thirty new towns and over four hundred rural settlements were constructed. What's immediately noticeable about it as a textual object is how laden it is with an explicit sense of urgency and purpose. In it, Sharon begins by identifying the particular challenges that "determine planning in Israel and dictate its objectives," going on to state that "three factors impose a unique character of planning in Israel. They are: land, people, time" (cited in Efrat 2018, 73). This is a striking—even uncanny—reworking of the threefold knot of modern sovereignty: land, people, state. Whether Sharon intended it or not as his own gloss on sovereignty is not really important. What's important is how, in this decisive strategic mandate—arguably one of the state's foundational texts—time stands in for the state; or, better yet, time "imposes" itself on the state, as it takes the state's place and threatens the very viability of the emergent state. Time is what has to be overcome for the state to take place. For Sharon, it was "urgently necessary" to treble the population and treble the

urban and agricultural settlements within a few years if the state project was to have any chance of success. Time imposes an urgency that both compels and threatens the very viability of planning; it stalks this settler project from the very start.

What Sharon's plan missed, of course, is that no amount of construction or settlement can on its own close the temporal challenges of the state's foundational violence and dispossession. This is one gap that concrete just can't plug. The threatening urgency of time, which has only grown in the meantime, both drives forward the construction spree that is the Israeli project and at once, somehow, undermines even the most concrete of structures with a sense of instability and impermanence. There simply is no passing of the "time before history." Settlerness is a condition of protracted irresolution because settler replacement, as Farred reminds us, is an infinitely incomplete and incompletable project. Time, in its intimate relation with "place of origin," keeps the settler a settler, and the time of dispossession never passes. "Settlement," writes Farred, "marks a kind of infinity because it represents, due to its foundational violence, the time that will not pass—and cannot be passed—away" and, rather than become a given historical category, "the settler is, by virtue of the deracination it has enforced, the bearer of a fatal temporality" (2008, 799).[24]

Even among settler states Israel stands out in its temporal irresolution. Not because it is less "successful" or "complete" than other settler colonies but because it's more stuck. Stuck with a native population that makes up about half of its subject population that it can neither absorb nor (yet) fully eliminate, and stuck with a blunt set of political instruments that obstruct the normalization of its political order: formal apartheid and the legal distinction between citizenship and nationality, military occupation, states of siege, large-scale warfare, severe restrictions on the freedom of movement, and, perhaps most tellingly, systemic extra-legal and discretionary settler violence. Even the move to market- and capital-based forms of management is stunted, not least around land where dispossession is unable to transform it into a fungible private property relation, with over 90 percent of all land still held by the state or public bodies and administered by the Israel Lands Authority. There is no possible "transition" here to a set of liberal-procedural instruments and the politics of recognition and apology that might begin to look, at least on the surface, like some kind of historical resolution and transi-

tion. So, Israel remains reliant on open frontiers in orders of violence on a magnitude that set it apart. I return to this in chapter 4, but for now I just want to emphasize the temporal stakes of all this: Israel is a violently unsettled and unfinished project.

This is where one has to locate the entanglement of refugee camp and settler colony in Palestine. My argument is that the camp sits not only at the intersection of the most critical biopolitical sites of the settler colonial—the colonized body and its movements, land and its possession in regimes of property and state ownership—but also, and perhaps even more consequentially, at the point of their temporal (ir)resolution in a definite and stable form. Camp and colony are entangled from the start, coproduced in the double movement of dispossession and replacement, unsettlement and settlement, unhoming and homing; they are twinned but inversed topologies entangled in the temporal struggle between unfinished past (of the settler colony) and projected future (of the liberal postcolony).

Territorial Zionism both imagined its conquest as a civilizing, metropolitan, and engineering enterprise that faced, at best, encamped nomads, *and* at the same time, in a kind of performative engenderment, produced the Palestinian refugee camp, through dispossession and expulsion, as the settler colony's irreducible *foil* (foil in the sense of an antithesis or contrast, of connected characters in a story that expose one another's qualities, and foil also in the sense of that which frustrates or thwarts). If the camp is not just the result of the originary dispossession but is also, in its very material endurance, part of what keeps that very moment of dispossession unfinished and unresolved, then it is both the effect *of* and an interruption *to* colonial settlement. It keeps open the foundational violence that the settler colony needs to render into a past, even a wrongful past if need be, in which "mistakes" were made, but a past nonetheless that can be separated as extrinsic from the present project. Instead, the camps as placeholders for the vanquished geographies of Palestine, for the "time before history," persist as a set of claims to not only a pre-settler past but also a post-settler future. The camp doesn't simply mark this time: the camp *is*—in a very material sense, beneath its concrete—the time that will not and cannot pass. By keeping this past unfinished, and the question of return open, the camp sits at the heart of the temporal impasse that is settlerness. The camp, in one sense, keeps the settler colony, a settler colony. And in doing so it keeps the future open as an undetermined object of struggle.

The Camp Archive

What follows is neither an anthropology of encamped Palestinian refugees nor an urban sociology of one or more Palestinian camps (for both, we have many strong examples).[25] Rather I seek to read colonial politics in Palestine *through* the camp. That is, I attempt to locate a point of insight into the question of Palestine, into the project of settlement and the anticolonial struggle, into the means of their imperial and international management, in the very archival history of the Palestinian refugee camp. And in doing so I seek to ask how taking the camp as political object can open up ways for us to think through some of our political concepts *from* Palestine. What I am interested in, then, is the camp as a political object of practice and thought, and what we learn if we track it as such across the archives; if we follow the ways in which the camps have been conceived, constructed, regulated, planned, improved, policed, targeted, destroyed, defended, but also how they have been refused, disavowed, feared, revered, and celebrated. As such, "the camp" moves, necessarily and constantly, between noun and concept, object and figure; between a singular and definite article, *the* camp—by which I mean the generic and conceptual understanding of the Palestinian refugee camp as a unitary abstraction, often removed from the thing/entity it is thought to refer to (much like in the statement we opened with here)—and between the plural actuality of Palestinian refugee and other camp forms, camps. The camp in this work is a heuristic device, a way of seeing the whole and seeing it differently. In other words, the camp is an epistemic point of view that allows us to read global relations of forces in what otherwise appear as local sites. It is an archival pathway, an object to track and follow, and, as such, a method of reading the global political history of the question of Palestine and what this question, read through the lens of its camps, might tell us about our own historical present.

If there is an archival intervention here, it is not one of retracing a historical past. Nor is it one of inclusion. I don't seek to argue for the archival status of documents/objects in a revised account of the past—far from it. If anything, the history of our camps allows for a critique of archival authority not by uncovering something that wasn't known; the colonial records have long been betrayed by the open "archives" of colonial society and Palestinians have never stopped narrating their history to anyone who would listen. The critique instead comes in exceeding the limits of the archival; I use official archives heavily (the Israel State Archive,

UNRWA's central records, the US National Archives and Records Administration), but bringing the camp to the surface of appearance *across* sources is a way of both getting past the absences of these archives and at the same time avoiding the risk of getting caught in their internal citational logics. In reading across archival documents, texts, novels, visual artifacts, newspapers and print media, and personal papers, I use the camp-as-object to construct a different composite picture of the present. In short, if there is an archival intervention here then it seeks to create and contribute to an archive *of* the camps. It is not a complete repository, but a "shared place" that marks not only "the incompleteness of the past" (Azoulay 2016), but the irresolution of the present, the persistence of struggle: not archives as records of the past, but archiv*ing* as the active politics of a present-continuous (Hochberg 2021).

This book is organized conceptually and historically. Each chapter deals primarily with one single archive and, across a historical period, tracks the place of the camp in it as a political object of thought and practice. In turn, each chapter revolves around a single political concept, read *from* the camp: technomorality, authority, revolution, negation. Time and inhabitation are two conceptual through lines that cut across and string the chapters together.

Chapter 1 is a prehistory of the UN's Palestinian camp regime. It draws on the papers of the former director of the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), Gordon R. Clapp, whose recommendations established the camp regime in 1949. Almost every history of the camps or UNRWA starts from Clapp's report, but not a single one consults his papers or considers the wider histories and connections his role entailed and brought forth. By contrast, through the figure of Clapp, I show that the Palestinian camp regime emerged not in a strictly humanitarian but in a techno-imperial moment in global history that sought to put displaced "idle" refugees back to work. To really understand the logics of what would become a permanently interim camp regime, we have to understand the racializing presuppositions that Clapp and his team brought to Palestine from the US South. And I argue that we can better apprehend these presuppositions and their combination of technical mastery, racial figuration, and normativity in what I call *technomorality*. Read from the camps, via the long shadow of the South and in the wake of decolonization, the hidden content of the technocratic appears not only as depoliticization, or the triumph of instrumental reason, but also as repackaged racial world formation. The technical is an imperial alibi.

Chapter 2 looks at the place of the camp in the regime Clapp inaugurated and is written from UNRWA's archives. It unpacks the Agency's early planning efforts (1950–69) to formalize and spatially regulate the camps, before following the archival record around a moment of crisis that posed a foundational challenge to the Agency—the Cairo Agreement of 1969 in which the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) entered and assumed control of Lebanon's camps. The chapter argues that once the work projects that Clapp envisaged failed to take off, UNRWA's primary means of authority was in the regulation of the built environment itself, in domesticating the refugee as inhabitant. But in this history, the camps went from being the basis of the Agency's authority to the very sites at which that authority broke down. Camps should be seen not simply as legal artifacts but as built objects. In ways that presage the managerial turn, *authority* emerges in this history neither as something vested in popular mandate ("the will of the people") nor an inherited and continued historical foundation, but as the stuff of technical competence (what the Agency calls "administrative authority"), decoupling authority from sovereignty and exposing the former not as the opposite of force but as one half of its antinomian pairing.

Chapter 3 studies the camp from the perspective of the Palestinian Revolution in the period between 1968 and 1982. Turning to literary forms, it argues that the Revolution was defined by the historical dilemma of forming a militant subject from the encamped refugee; only a transformation of the camps that reversed their operative logic from confinement to movement could guarantee the popular-mass base necessary for revolutionary insurrection and the creation of a new historical time. But, where political discourse mediated the camp as an object to be transformed into the means of its own overcoming, literary narratives came undone at precisely this point, registering an irresolvable tension, in their very form, between life and politics. The chapter takes on three novels of the revolutionary period (by Ghassan Kanafani, Rashad Abu Shawir, and Yayha Yakhlif) to show that just at the point where the camp should be overcome in the protagonist's journey toward militancy the very narrative drive itself comes unstuck. Camp form and novel form are entangled. From this tension, the Palestinian *Revolution* appears as an event less about state capture or transition and more about an open-ended mode of subject formation, a becoming revolutionary.

Chapter 4 examines the place of the Palestinian refugee camp in Israeli politics. It relies mainly on documents from the Israel State Archives

relating to the series of plans, developed after the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, to completely undo the camps and resettle their inhabitants. I frame this chapter around one central question: Why do the camps themselves appear as such sources of political anxiety for Israeli officials? Here, I argue that Israeli state politics carried a deep abiding anxiety about political claims carried in the very temporality of the camps as interim placeholders for the originary villages of their refugee inhabitants. It was the camps themselves more than refugeehood that manifested what was repeatedly called by Israeli commentators a "consciousness of the temporary." Tracing the place of the camps in Israeli governmental plans illustrates, I argue, how settler politics demands the work of *negation*—the refutation of that which is not entirely repressible and its rendering in negative form. The push to undo the camps should be understood as part of the wider negational drive to "confirm" that there is no longer a place called Palestine, that there is nothing in fact to return to. Negation, as distinct from (if related to) denial, appears beyond the strictly psychoanalytic, as a mechanism by which settler politics acts—both reflexively and causatively—on anticolonial counterclaims.

The coda is written almost as a stand-alone piece in its own right; it doesn't so much wrap up the book as take flight along some of the conceptual lines the book forged. And it does so in a more explicitly global frame: What does it mean to read the global border crisis from the long colonial arc of Palestinian encampment? At stake in such a reading, at stake in a world of mass encampment is the question of inhabitation. Inhabitation, I argue, is perhaps *the* political question of our time. In camps, inhabitation, and not citizenship or rights, has become the basis of both political control *and* contestation. Thinking through inhabitation as a concept allows us both to recognize the enduring colonial terms of the border/climate crisis and to approach the political stakes of migrant/refugee struggle. A politics of inhabitation is one name for the life-making practices of the global dispossessed.

NOTES

Introduction

1 It's worth noting how much this reproduces aspects of the legal-discursive rationalities of settler colonial dispossession in other contexts. The term *over-run*, for example, comes up in the majority ruling in Canada's leading case on Aboriginal land title, *St. Catharines Milling and Lumber Co. v R* (1888), which held that Indigenous people "have no idea of a title to the soil itself. It is over-run by them rather than inhabited" (cited in Nichols 2020, 46).

2 Gabriel Piterberg notes that the entire *kibbutz* enterprise relied on the "formative influence" of German agricultural colonies in the pre–First World War colonization project of the German Reich in the Posen province of the east Prussian marches, knowledge that was brought to Palestine by German-Jewish settlement experts like Ruppin and Franz Oppenheimer (2008, 78–88).

3 Peter Lagerqvist (2009) has explored these continuities between British and Zionist colonization in Palestine by tracing the inheritances in built forms and securitized architectures.

4 I am grateful to Samar al-Saleh, whose brilliant master's thesis is the first sustained work I've come across on the British prison labor camps in Palestine. Her thesis helps us come to terms not only with the deep structural synergies between global accumulation practices, British imperialism, and Zionist colonialism in Palestine but also with how critical the almost entirely overlooked issue of prison labor was to this entire history.

5 Often according to settlement plans developed by figures like the agronomist and planner Ra'anan Weitz, then head of the Jewish Agency's Settlement Department, and who later developed similar proposals for the resettlement of Palestinian refugees and the removal of Palestinian camps in Gaza, and whom we will meet in chapter 4.

6 The history of 1948 was written and told by Palestinians as a story of colonial conquest and expulsion from the very start. Numerous Arabic-language memoirs and accounts recounted the expulsions and massacres, notably Muhammad Nimr al-Khatib's *Min Athar al-Nakba* (1951), a combi-

nation of memoir and eyewitness accounts, and ʿArif al-ʿArif, who wrote perhaps the most comprehensive early historical account of the expulsion, the six-volume *Al-Nakba: Nakbat Bayt al-Maqdis wal-Firdaws al-Mafqud 1947–1952*, published in 1956. English-language scholarship on the subject quickly followed. As early as 1959, Walid Khalidi (2005) published a historical account of the 1948 expulsions, written from the archives of the Arab Higher Committee and the Arab League. Nafiz Nazzal wrote a doctoral dissertation at Georgetown in 1974 on the expulsion of the Galilee's Palestinian inhabitants, later published as *The Palestinian Exodus from the Galilee* (1978). Later still, we got books by David Gilmour (1980), Elias Sanbar (1984), and Michael Palumbo (1987). Across the 1970s and early 1980s, the Institute for Palestine Studies, *Shuʾun Filastiniyya*, and the *Arab Studies Quarterly* published a host of firsthand accounts and oral histories that, in effect, amounted to a historical record. Nonetheless, it took the emergence of revisionist Israeli historians, known as the "new historians," to make a dent in the wider historiographical record of the Western academy.

7   For treatments of Israel as a racial regime, see Ronit Lentin (2018), Yasmeen Abu-Laban and Abigail Bakan (2019), Andy Clarno (2017), and David Theo Goldberg (2008). It needs noting, though, that this is also something of a "return" to categories of race/racism; Palestinian political scholarship had long identified Zionism as a form of colonial racism predicated on multiple racial hierarchies. This scholarship, for one, fed into the drafting of the part of UN General Assembly Resolution 3379 (1975) that declared Zionism a form of state racism, comparable to the racist state structures of Rhodesia and South Africa.

8   In her book, Megan Bradley (2014) demonstrates that over the past three decades, refugee repatriation has been an integral part of *almost every* "post-conflict scenario," with permanent resettlement becoming, after the Cold War, a very rare solution to refugee crises. Indeed, Bradley cites figures from the United Nations High Commissioner on Refugees that show that, between 1998 and 2007, 11.4 million refugees returned to their countries of origin through more than twenty-five large-scale repatriation programs. In this period, for every refugee resettled, fourteen returned to their home countries. This was the result, Bradley shows, of a consensus across global institutions, which held that peace processes and return movements are closely connected: "A strong conviction has emerged that voluntary repatriation movements should be supported because they have the potential to consolidate peace processes" (2014, 5).

9   Letter from Commissioner-General John Rennie to UN Under Secretary General for Special Political Affairs Brian Urquhart, August 14, 1975, file OR 150/1 SC, UNRWA Central Records.

10   This is drawn from a compelling footnote Borges has in a short essay called "Palermo, Buenos Aires" (in Borges 1984), in which he seems to implicitly link the transformative forces of urban capital with the open history of settler conquest. Gabriel Piterberg (2011) uses this footnote as the epigraph to a comparative study of settler literatures.

11   Not only is this conjunction of history and time, for a lack of a better word, historical, and, indeed, as people like David Scott (2014) have argued, decisively coming apart today in a postrevolutionary age defined by time without future, or temporality without historicity. Also, these conceptions and organizations of history and time were only "universalized" in the worldmaking that was colonial capitalism, probably no earlier than the late nineteenth century.

12   In this sense at least, the Palestinian Revolution would appear consistent with aspects of Gary Wilder's (2015) generative reading of the postwar decolonization movement as a struggle over distinct *types* of time and particular political tenses.

13   In a chapter called "Raw Cuts: Palestine, Israel and (Post)colonial Studies," Stoler makes the case that "the dominant definition of what constituted colonial and postcolonial conditions circumvented—and, indeed, seemed defined to exclude—Palestine/Israel and the U.S. presence as sites of inquiry" (2016, 40). In colonial/postcolonial studies, Israel and Palestine's colonial history of the present "remained systematically out of sight, largely absent from what long remained the canon" (40). This exclusion, for Stoler, was symptomatic of a broader set of conceptual and political elisions in the field as a whole.

The pervasive sense of exceptionalism and uniqueness around Zionism and Israel meant that in the Western academy frameworks of colonialism or settler colonialism were until relatively recently avoided. Again, it's worth noting that many Palestinian and Arab accounts were long insistent on the colonial and imperial dimensions of political Zionism. Qustantin Zurayq's book, *Ma'na al-Nakba*, written in the midst of the ethnic cleansing campaign in 1948, and which gave the event its proper name, *Nakba*, located Zionism within the wider historical encounter with European imperialism. Arguably one of the earliest inquiries anywhere into settler colonialism as a distinct political modality came with Fayez Sayegh's English-language book, published in 1965 as *Zionist Colonialism in Palestine*. Abdul-Wahab Kayyali in 1977 wrote a historical analysis of Zionism as a movement emerging at the intersection of the Jewish question, the national question, and the colonial question. Edward Said located Zionism in the longer history of European imperialism and settler colonialism in 1979's *The Question of Palestine*. Joseph Massad later built on this tradition in his 2006 collection of essays, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*.

14   Wolfe also made this statement earlier in the opening pages of his 1998 book, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology*, which is cited much less frequently.

15   Some of the most noticeable effects of the settler colonial turn were not on Palestinian thought, which in some senses had preempted this turn, but rather on the scholarship that actively avoided these frames. On the one hand, in obvious terms, it has upended the work (Rabinowitz 1997; Monterescu 2015) that obscures or ignores the settler colonialism of Zionism through idioms of *ethnicity* or *nationalism*—which have only ever functioned to displace the racial as an analytic. A generally well-received book explicitly brackets "colonialism" as just one more parallel but optional frame of reference to argue that housing is an arena for competing "national claims" (Allweil 2016). It's precisely the kind of elision that allows someone to describe Zionism as a "massive housing regime" that settler colonial studies sought to challenge—no, Zionism was an *un*housing project before and precisely so that it could become a housing project; if anything, it is an ongoing unhousing/housing regime. This kind of crude elision is—and rightly—less tenable than it used to be. On the other hand, the settler colonial turn has also shown the limits of what we can call "the school of occupation studies," a cluster of critical scholarship attentive to the spatial forces of colonialism in Palestine but that tends almost exclusively to restrict itself to studying the 1967 occupation of the West Bank and Gaza, unwittingly reinforcing a separation between the occupation and the wider regime from which, all these scholars agree, it is inseparable (Weizman 2007; Gordon 2008; Ophir et al. 2009; Handel 2014; Berda 2017). Invaluable, in both political and scholarly terms, as this work has been, it contributes to a reoccurring process in which the political border (the 1967 Green Line) becomes an epistemological boundary. This too, in light of the turn not just to the settler "origins" but to the settler *present* of Zionist colonization across historic Palestine, seems just all that less feasible.

16   For example, as Lisa Ford (2010) has shown, once Anglophone colonies in the United States and Australia had been established around mass settlement and the effective exclusion of Indigenous labor, they did not need, in contrast to other moments in colonial governance, to govern through Indigenous hierarchies; these settler polities moved instead to models of jurisdictional-territorial sovereignty that were premised on the intolerability of Indigenous self-government.

17   Lorenzo Veracini (2011b) in an article titled "On Settlerness" develops settlerness as a conceptual category to account, as he has it, for the specificity of the settler colonial situation. He identifies three structuring differentiations of "settlerness" to distinguish it from colonialism: triangular relationships, disavowal, and libidinal economies. Here, I use settlerness

very differently to get at the temporal quality of colonial settlement as it is shaped primarily by the forms of struggle settlers encounter.

18   I refer here to the village of al-'Araqib in the Naqab in southern Palestine, which to date has been demolished and rebuilt/reinhabited over 210 times.

19   For a broader engagement with how the open conflict of colonial dispossession is translated into closed juridical terms, including "real estate disputes," see Mor (2024).

20   The very recent appropriation by Zionism of a discourse of Indigeneity (what some have called "brownwashing") is telling; the point is not only how badly this appropriation misunderstands the politics of Indigeneity (which it transmutes into a racial myth of origin), but how much it indexes the temporal drive and anxiety around transition and self-supersession. Zionism, again, is hardly unique in this case (even if it adds an ideological messianism that somewhat sets it apart). Albert Camus's infamous outburst at the 1957 Nobel Prize press conference is usually remembered for his blunt piece of rhetoric: "If I had to choose between justice and my mother, I would choose my mother." But the expression of consummately settler desire that followed is equally instructive: "The Algerian French are likewise [like "the Arabs" of Algeria], and in the strongest meaning of the word, natives" (cited in Prochaska 2004, xvii).

21   Settler colonialism almost always involves a transformation of the natural world, in which the removal and replacement of Indigenous bodies is closely connected to a process of agricultural unplanting and replanting, or unrooting and rerooting. See Mastnak et al. (2014) and, in the context of Palestine, Tesdell (2017).

22   Allweil, for example, writes of the Zionist perception of "housing's role in *re-rooting* Jews as 'natives' in the homeland" (2016, 5, emphasis added). But if we consider this with Farred, much more attuned to the political center of gravity in settler colonies, the image also identifies settler anxieties about time, the past, and origin.

23   Zvi Efrat reproduced the plan in full in his 2018 book, *The Object of Zionism.*

24   Farred briefly brings his reading to bear on Palestine: "That is why, try as it must with all its military might, Israel can never live as anything but a state violently ill at ease with itself; a state dis-eased by the death that is sixty years later, still alive in the memory of al-Nakba, 'the catastrophe' that was the ethnic cleansing of the resident Palestinian population" (2008, 799).

25   Rosemary Sayigh's (1977, 1979) work, combining ethnography, oral history, and a keen attentiveness to the question of political identity, was pioneering in the study of encamped Palestinian refugees and remains relevant. Ilana Feldman (2008, 2012, 2015) has consistently combined ethnography with archival work to study the intersections of humanitarian-

ism and politics in Palestinian refugee lives, with particular attention to the effects of bureaucratic rule and administrative categories. Julie Peteet's (2009) *Landscapes of Hope and Despair: Palestinian Refugee Camps*, which also combines archival and ethnographic work, remains one of the most compelling anthropological accounts of Palestinian refugee camps to take seriously questions around the production of space. Diana Allan's book *Refugees of the Revolution* (2014), which ethnographically engages Shatila Camp's refugees in the aftermath of the collapse of the national liberation movement, urges us to reconsider some of the established terms through which we have apprehended the refugee experience. Similarly, Ruba Salih's (2018) ethnographic work has pushed for a reading of Palestinian refugee politics beyond national frames and the figure of the rights-bearing subject. Sylvain Perdigon's (2015) work on Palestinian refugees in Lebanon, around themes of kinship, poverty, solidarity, and worldliness mixes a fine-brushed ethnographic texture and a theoretical suppleness that sets it apart. The spatial and material turns in social science have also left their mark on studies of Palestinian refugee camps. Adam Ramadan (2009, 2013) has written on concepts of urbicide in a study of Nahr al-Barid Camp in Lebanon, and on the necessity of thinking through the intersections of everyday life and geopolitics in camps, with a compelling case made for assemblage thinking. Nell Gabiam (2012) has studied how UNRWA's shift from "humanitarianism" (to which I would argue it always had an atypical relation) to "development" in the refugee camps forced a shift in Palestinian political narrative. Lucas Oesch (2017) has made the case for thinking through the Palestinian refugee camp as a space of ambiguity and plural subjectivities.

1 The Camp, Inevitable

1 Letter from Michael S. Comay to Pablo Azcarate, UNCCP, March 17, 1949, file: AB-14-4633, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Hakirya, Israel State Archives (hereafter ISA), emphasis added.
2 Statement to the Special Political Committee of the United Nations General Assembly, Abba Eban, November 18, 1955, Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/ForeignPolicy/MFADocuments /Yearbook1.aspx.
3 Letter, Comay to Azcarate, ISA.
4 The historian Nur Masalha (2003, 69) notes that by 1950 the slogan coined by senior Israeli Foreign Ministry officials with regard to the refugee question, "If you can't solve it, dissolve it," underlined the logic at play: dissolving politics into economic, or employment-based, instruments.