



Interventions

THE EU, HAMAS AND THE 2006 PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS

A PERFORMANCE IN POLITICS

Catherine Charrett



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The EU, Hamas and the 2006 Palestinian Elections

This book addresses how institutional and diplomatic rituals shaped the European Union's sanction of Hamas after the latter's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Through a lens of performance and performativity it explains how socialisation and the duress of performative rituals shapes agency and prevents the possibility of being creative with policy initiatives when confronted with difficult decisions.

Interviews with senior Hamas representatives, EU bureaucrats, members of the European External Action Service, and electoral observers from Palestine and Europe, in addition to ethnographic research in Gaza and in Brussels, recreate the details of the failed diplomacy between Hamas and the EU. The book explores the social and visual cultures and discourses that shape the recognition of contemporary subjects, and it presents Hamas's response to being treated as a terrorist movement. It advances queer and postcolonial understandings of European-Palestinian political encounter by interrogating the bureaucratic and professional pressures that shape the political agency of EU civil servants and the recognition of Palestinian politics.

This is a performative and interdisciplinary text; it juxtaposes empirical investigation, with critical theory, performance art and everyday experiences. It will appeal to students of International Relations, Interdisciplinary Studies, Middle-East Area Studies, Foreign Policy and Diplomacy Analysis and Gender Studies.

Catherine Charrett is a Lecturer in International Politics in the School of Politics and International Relations at Queen Mary University of London. The author completed a PhD in International Politics at Aberystwyth University, an MSc in International Relations from the London School of Economics and a BA in International Relations from the University of British Columbia. The author received an Independent Social Research Foundation Research Fellowship for an interdisciplinary approach to researching politically and socially salient topics. The author has produced a performance piece on the topic of this book entitled: "Politics in Drag: Sipping Toffee with Hamas in Brussels", which can be viewed through the *Review of International Studies*. This research has also been published with the *European Journal of International Relations*.

Interventions

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 **Routledge**
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

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British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalog record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-138-08978-5 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-1-315-10901-5 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman
by Wearset Ltd, Boldon, Tyne and Wear

Contents

List of figures

Acknowledgements

Introduction: a performative account of Hamas in Gaza and the EU in Brussels

- 1 Bodies in spaces: entering, belonging and being in Gaza and in Brussels
- 2 ‘Don’t look at me like that’: un-recognising Hamas’s political performance
- 3 Democracy performed: Hamas and the EU performing change through the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections
- 4 ‘Perform or else’: the EU’s ‘failure’ to respond to Hamas’s success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections
- 5 The performativity of threat: the EU and Hamas through the violent policy of conditionality

Conclusion: post-performance policy proposals

Index

Figures

- I.1 Stelarc, *Prepared tree suspension event for obsolete body number six*, Black Mountain, Canberra, 1982. Photograph by gelatin silver spoon
- 1.1 European Union External Action Service building, Schuman Place, Brussels
- 1.2 Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar's family home, Gaza
- 1.3 Croatia information stand, outside the European Parliament, Place Luxembourg, Brussels
- 1.4 "Temporary Permission Form" for three-month residence in Gaza, Palestine
- 1.5 Hamas's 25th Anniversary Party, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza
- 1.6 European Parliament Meetings Room, Brussels
- 1.7 Kitty (left) and Laura (right) kiss, *The Hours*, "Bitch Flicks"
- 2.1 Hamas's 25th Anniversary Celebration, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza
- 2.2 Hamas's 25th Anniversary Celebration, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza
- 4.1 Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar, in his family home, Gaza
- 4.2 Interview with Minister of Health, Besam Naim, Bourj Tower, Gaza
- 5.1 Dissertation cover, image from the film, *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924
- 5.2 A pair of surgical gloves courtesy of Kwik-Fit, Aberystwyth, Wales

Acknowledgements

The empirical research for this book was completed during my time as a doctoral student at Aberystwyth University in Wales. I was hosted institutionally by my colleagues in the Department of International Politics, supported financially by Aberystwyth University, and supported energetically by the town of Aberystwyth; thank you for the space you provided to make this work possible. A sincerest thank you to my supervisor, Professor Jenny Edkins, who earnestly supported my creative approach to research. The Performance and Politics Research group played an essential role in opening my thinking to the world of performance; this has been an amazing trajectory in my intellectual journey. Thank you.

To my family, John, Juliane, Chris, Tony, Cindy, Abigail, and Benji; what a special team we have created in the world. I have always felt supported by your interest in my work, your political curiosity and your excitement for my engagements. I know at times this must not have been easy, but you never failed to offer encouragement. My heart is filled with gratefulness for your support.

To Gaza, Palestine. A place I was able to visit during a brief moment of easing in its continuous struggle against the Israeli-led occupation. I was hosted by the Centre for European Palestinian Relations during my research there in 2012. They kindly supported my investigation work institutionally and professionally. Thank you to Ramy Abu, Mohammed Mushtaha, and Ramzy Hassouna. My gratitude for the Abusalama family grows every day. You treated me like a sister and a daughter, watching out for me, for my life and for my heart. I love you sincerely. To the al-Ghoul family. You gave me company, friendship, professional advice, and amazing Palestinian breakfasts. I continue to think of you often. A last enormous thanks to all those whom I interviewed, thank you for giving your time and your stories, without which this work would not have been possible.

Thank you to those I interviewed in the European Parliament and the European External Action service. You spoke with me openly and candidly, which facilitated the investigation this project. Thank you to those who enabled my entry into the institutions of the European Union. Lastly, I am grateful for my participation in an envoy of European Parliamentarians that entered into Gaza after it was bombed in 2012. It was important to re-enter Gaza, Palestine, without which my understanding of the situation would not have progressed.

Many people supported me during my years of research and writing; I would like to thank you now. Jason Porter, Aidan Condrón, Neil Holland, Miguel Ortuño Sanchez, Erzsebet Strausz, Hannah Hughes, Catrin Wyn Edwards, Alistair Shepherd, Richard Jackson, Vicki Jones and the generous administrative staff in the Department of International Politics at Aberystwyth University. It is nice going through life knowing that the support you felt will never fade.

Introduction

A performative account of Hamas in Gaza and the EU in Brussels

At 3:00 am on 30 September, 2012 I got into a large car that was taxiing a group of people from Cairo to Rafah crossing. The journey took seven hours. I slept the whole way. It took another four hours to cross the border from Egypt into Gaza.

At 7:30 am on 9 December, 2012 I arrived at the UN School for the Blind in Gaza City. I was meeting a special convoy, which had been urgently arranged to evacuate people from Gaza. People holding a non-Palestinian passport were able to flee Israel's bombardment of Gaza. It took one hour to get to the Rafah crossing. I cried the whole way.

At 5:00 pm on 18 June, 2013 I sat down in a park close to the European Commission. I took out my notebook to write down a few thoughts following an interview: *this is why the drag performance is necessary. We are all too good at behaving properly, correctly. This way, you get the answers you are looking for instead of asking new questions. We need to be queer to be able to ask new questions.*

At 5:00 pm on 23 June, 2013 I lay down in a park close to the European Parliament. I took out my notebook to write down a few thoughts following an interview: *I am in another stupid park. I just had a meeting with a racist asshole. I am crying. I feel like shit. In the end the voice which was the lowest common denominator was this one. Hamas are terrorists; this is the discourse which won.*

This book is about 'mistakes', it is about 'failures', about political disasters. It investigates a single political event and it asks how it could have gone otherwise. Following Hamas's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections the European Union (EU) moved to diplomatically and financially sanction the newly elected government. The implications of this refusal to deal with Hamas members of the Palestinian Legislative Council had serious consequences for Palestinian politics and the viability of life in the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPTs).

Despite the EU's monetary and financial support for the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, which the EU Elections Monitoring Team for the West Bank and Gaza, henceforth EU EOM declared had been free, fair and democratic, the EU expeditiously sanctioned those who had won these elections.¹ Former negotiators and political analysts argued that not only had the EU worked against their own efforts of democratic reform, the EU also "outmanoeuvred itself from having an effective role in mediating Palestinian politics".² While the EU EOM and other EU institutions stated that the elections had been an important milestone for the peace process,³ they pursued policy decisions that actively closed down constructive and positive outcomes from this process.

Two years following the elections, in the autumn of 2008 I was confronted with the confusion that surrounded the European decision to boycott Hamas, principally, that everyone thought it was a really bad idea. I was working at the International Catalan Institute for Peace in

Barcelona, Spain. In this role I co-organised a series of public conferences and closed workshops on the topic of Israel and Palestine. At these conferences, EU representatives, Israeli diplomats, Palestinian historians, and NGO workers all agreed that to progress towards ending violence and achieving a viable Palestinian political and social life, Hamas had to be engaged with. Diplomats from across the spectrum argued that *it did not make sense* to ignore Hamas, and that the collective punishment of the Palestinians following the electoral outcome was counterproductive to dialogue and positive change. Over a decade after the elections these conversations continue. I meet with representatives from the humanitarian sector and from European think tanks who were working in the OPTs around the time of the elections and we share a collective shock, disillusionment, disappointment. *How could the Europe Union have got this so wrong?*

A common answer to this question is that the EU was following its *strategic interests*. It followed an American and Israeli state practice of treating Hamas as terrorists who needed to be sanctioned and, which incidentally meant that the Palestinians needed to be punished for voting in a terrorist organisation. There are, however, several points of tension with the response of ‘strategic interests’, and the facility with which this justification is given. Namely, the *unease* that EU bureaucrats seem to feel and express about their own supposed ‘strategic interests’, and that following ‘strategic interests’ could lead to such *disastrous* politics.

The unease that EU bureaucrats felt about their governments’ position towards the outcome of the elections is expressed in several ways. The Hamas leaders I interviewed explained that their European counterparts would confess to them in secret that they disagreed with their governments’ position on sanctioning Hamas. I personally have only met one individual in my years of researching this topic who has come out and said this was a *good* policy decision (the unfortunate person quoted on page one). Rather, during my discussions in the European Parliament and the European Commission it felt as though my interviewees were unburdening themselves; they expressed the dismay they had towards the EU’s position (*their own position*) on Hamas. A senior EU representative explained, we know that Hamas are not dogmatic and that the Palestinian nation are not conservative or pose a terrorist threat; it would have been better to let Hamas lead, and should it fail in government be voted out.⁴

In order to defend the sanction of Hamas a senior EU bureaucrat must explain it like this:

There was a fairly clear consensus that we had to do all we could to support the good guys, whether or not they were the ones who won the election. That reflects badly on our commitment to universal democratic principles but there was also the generally held belief that Hamas, while providing obviously appreciated services and support for the Palestinian population, which no doubt contributed to their popularity particularly amongst the disadvantaged people of Gaza who were and still are living in of course appalling situations. That the fact, that Hamas were unable to commit themselves to the Quartet principles, particularly their recognition of the state of Israel and renouncing terrorism and violence that ... there were big questions about whether that sort of party emerging from any sort of election was a proper electoral process. So I don’t think there was really any discussion whether we should be giving matching support to Hamas or is what we are doing somehow distorting the democratic process in the Palestinian System.⁵

This representative follows his justification by saying that supporting the Quartet’s conditions and sanctioning Hamas was the only *realistic policy*. He does not say that it was a good, wise idea, but that it was the only realistic policy.

What does it take, therefore, to recognise that an institutional practice may have serious

implications, but to go along with it anyways? What does it take to enact a diplomatic decision you know to be wrong? This book suggests there was a failure to think creatively about how to respond to the surprise of Hamas's success. Instead, the EU's position emerged from a reliance on ritualised discourses and practices that limited an open and reflective response. Dominant theories in the field of International Relations (IR), Realism, Liberalism, even Social Constructivism put forward a rational actor model. Whereby states or state actors identify their interests and maintain a cost benefit analysis to determine what actions might best serve these interests. The disciplines of Anthropology and Performance Studies provide an interesting critique of this assumption.⁶ David Kertzer explains,

This image of 'political man' as a rational actor who carefully weighs his or her objective circumstances and decides on a course of action based on an instrumental calculation of self-interest leaves out culture and all that makes us human.⁷

Through a close empirical reading of EU–Hamas relations following the 2006 elections, this book shows that *fear* and *foreclosure* directed individual and institutional decisions and practices. It explores how rituals shape the fear actors have in taking risks with policy decisions, and how policy options are ritualistically foreclosed from the realm of possibility. Kertzer argues that the role of rituals in socialisation is to let participants know how to behave. They create social standards, an idea of common sense and the constitution of a social reality through the appearance of normalcy or harmony.⁸ As rituals are part of what socialise participants into communities, to not perform the rituals associated with a given social or institutional space means to somehow *not belong*. Performance theorist Jon McKenzie fleshes this out in the 2001 text *Perform or Else! From Discipline to Performance*.⁹ McKenzie offers an extensive account of the pressures to perform and to conform in various cultural, business, technological and bureaucratic fields. Institutions and workers alike feel pressures to maintain the dominant practices of their fields or risk being marginalised, fired. Perform or Else! McKenzie says. It is a fear of not belonging or of losing one's job that directs individual and institutional action. As such, rather than pursuing an idea of the good, or what feels right, or what you believe to be correct, *actors act out of fear*.

An understanding of social and institutional rituals contributes to an awareness of how certain policy options are deemed impossible or unrealistic. Social and cultural rituals constitute an idea of common sense or reality. This common sense works to foreclose (remove from the table) policy options or opportunities. While strategic interests may present themselves as a choice, my research shows that they are enacted through *a belief in a lack of choice*. Judith Butler's work reminds us that what is exteriorised can only be understood through an acknowledgment of what is barred and foreclosed.¹⁰ Through discussions of gender this book analyses diplomatic practices as particular manifestations of masculine and heteronormative anxieties, which involve the foreclosure of alternative iterations of politics. Through explorations of gender this book offers the possibility that politics can be enacted with greater sensitivity and care. It argues, to enact aggressive and malicious politics, which is of the case with Palestine involves the foreclosure of enacting an alternative form of politics, one that may be more caring and perhaps a better reflection of *genuine interests*.

This book is equally interested in mapping out what it means to be the recipient of bad political endeavours. What does it mean to receive aggressive political decisions? Tarak Barkawi and Mark Laffey present the critique that "Eurocentric security studies regards the weak and the powerless as marginal or derivative elements of world politics, as at best the site of liberal good

intentions or at worst a potential source of threats”.¹¹ Through empirical investigation, including interviews with senior Hamas members, this book explores Hamas’s own expectations from their participation in the elections and from their role in government. It addresses the hopes and desires that Palestinian politicians and analysts had for a different kind of response from European actors, and it explores how these expectations were delegitimised through a ritualised discourse of terrorism.

Hamas, and the discourse of terrorism associated with Hamas reduces the complexity of Palestinian resistance. It replaces an intelligent engagement with Palestinian politics with reductive corrective measures. Derek Gregory explains that in the post 9/11 political landscape Israel was remarkably successful at linking the Palestinians and Hamas to the wider ‘war on terror’.¹² Following Hamas’s participation in the elections, European leaders did not recognise and respond to a political party. Instead, they remained attached to a rhetoric and reading of Hamas as a terrorist movement. The conditions enacted an either/or framing that consumed all nuance in the EU’s position towards the newly elected government. Rather than using the post-election period as an opportunity to ‘get to know Hamas’, to see which ministers the EU might engage with, or to wait and to see how the newly elected government might act, the conditions worked to reproduce a reading of Hamas as *already illegitimate*.

The ritualised reproduction of knowledge closes down opportunities for seeing or hearing difference. It performs a static and unmoving recognition of the Other. Hamas leader, Etimad Tashawa explains that after the imposition of the conditions, encounters between the EU and Hamas were shaped by the EU’s peculiar investigation into whether or not they could decipher if the Other was a terrorist or not. She describes the EU’s reading of them as ogres. “It wasn’t an official meeting. More like Q&A about Hamas’s ideology. But it wasn’t a discussion”.¹³ This sentiment is echoed by several Hamas representatives who explain that the European comes with *already taken decisions*. There was never a need to get to know Hamas because the European diplomat already ‘knew’.¹⁴ All ‘diplomatic’ encounters between EU and Hamas representatives became consumed and subsumed by the conditions. This again led to poorly construed policy initiatives that did *not make sense*.

The conditions as a policy was non-operationable. A senior representative from the European External Action Service explains that because the conditions did not have clear benchmarks, and because of the EU’s common practice of ‘no-contact with Hamas ministers’, it was near impossible to identify whether Hamas was ‘making progress’ or compromises on the conditions.¹⁵ Khalil al-Haya, a senior member of Hamas and participant in the Palestinian Legislative Council explains that Hamas did offer concessions on core elements of the conditions, which went ignored.¹⁶

This book uses auto-ethnographic techniques to reflect on the rituals that directed the daily practices and decisions of the EU, and the forms of knowledge that shaped EU–Hamas relations after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. EU diplomats and bureaucrats are not the only actors who pursue actions that are in contradiction to their stated interests or desires. They are not the only ones who enact decisions that may go against what they think is right, correct or good. In this book I reflect on the events that surrounded my research into Palestinian politics, and also on the events that surrounded my writing of this research. Cecilie Basberg Neumann and Iver Neumann describe the utility of auto-ethnographic methods to observe and test theoretical positions.¹⁷ I reflect on important decisions in my life, which may have been directed by an attachment to social rituals, and which may have prevented me from pursuing what I felt was good, correct or right. I suggest that engaging with these personal stories provides better

theorising and provides an opportunity to connect with my readers. While at times the juxtapositions between the rituals of my life and those of diplomacy may feel jarring, it is perhaps this jolt that is needed to provoke alternative and imaginative critiques of the EU's position towards Palestinian politics.

I also turn to performance art and other aesthetic works to explore opportunities for taking risks and enacting creativity with daily practices and decisions. Cultural performances, including theatre, drama and performance art offer societies a space, both physical and epistemological to reflect on the rituals that bind them, and to potentially break away from these rituals. While performance art is bound by the materiality of embodiment, it seeks to stretch the limits of what is possible, of what can be possible. Performance scholar, Peggy Phelan says, "Performance art usually occurs in the suspension between the 'real' physical matter of the 'performing body' and the psychic experience of what it is to be embodied".¹⁸ Victor Turner explains performance as a safety valve, through which societies express emotions or feelings that may be foreclosed from an attachment to rituals.¹⁹ Within this book aesthetic work plays a crucial role in injecting creativity and imagination into ritualised policymaking and diplomatic practices.

A performative account of agency

This book tackles fundamental questions about agency. What are the social and institutional pressures that shape the enactment of political decisions, and how do these decisions in turn shape political identities, relationships and future policy decisions? Following the theoretical overtures made by John Austin, Jacques Derrida, and Judith Butler, this book advances a performative understanding of agency. A performative account of agency addresses the discourses, and social and cultural apparatus that shape the possibility for action, while it maintains that actors may reflect and enact their social being differently. Within the disciplines of IR and Geography, Bialasiewicz *et al.* suggest Butler's work involves "a comprehensive engagement with agency rather than a presumption of pre-given subjectivity".²⁰ Nash writes, "for Butler the concept of performativity is an attempt to find a more embodied way of thinking the relationship between determining social structures and personal agency".²¹ Such an engagement with the constituting discourses and rituals that shape the possibility for action offers an empathetic understanding of the limits on agency. Butler states that agency begins through an awareness of the limits on sovereignty.²²



Figure I.1 Stelarc, *Prepared tree suspension event for obsolete body number six*, Black Mountain, Canberra, 1982. Photograph by gelatin silver spoon.

Source: image from National Gallery of Australia. Accessed 23 September, 2014.

Butler addresses the discourses that shape the possibility for action, but argues that actors may perform these discourses differently. Derrida explains this through the concept of iterability: “a standard act depends as much upon the possibility of being repeated, and thus potentially being mimed, feigned, cited, played, simulated, parasited, etc”.²³ The responsibility of the speaker does not consist of remaking language *ex-nihilo*, but rather of negotiating the legacies of usage that constrain and enable that speaker’s speech.²⁴

In order to flesh out this conceptualisation of agency this book turns to a fuller understanding of performance. The anthropological study of social rituals and the field of Performance Studies reflect on how rituals allow for both the *maintenance* and the *transformation* of society. Moore argues that social processes should be understood through the relationship between regularisation, situational adjustment and indeterminacy.²⁵ Performance is understood as an oscillation between maintaining social relations and the possibility for transforming them. “Performance gives us an occasion to ‘change in some ways while remaining the same in others.’”²⁶ The interjection of performance draws attention to the constant process of *opening and closing*, that defines and explains social and institutional action. Performance acts “as a forum for examining, challenging and transgressing the relationships, rites and rituals of everyday life, with real changes in status, it is a place where identities may be created, shaped, contested and changed, where new agendas are set”.²⁷

Politics as performance

Performance artist and theorist, Mike Pearson describes performance as a “matrix of places, objects, activities, of performer and context, worker and workspace, agency and structure”.²⁸ Through ethnographic research methods, supplemented by extensive qualitative interviews and document analysis this project attends to the institutional and social settings in which EU–Hamás diplomacy takes place, and does not take place. Performance remains as a “*cluster of narratives*,

those of the watchers and of the watched, and of all those who facilitate interaction”.²⁹ This book reconstructs the event in question, the 2006 elections, in order to investigate the opportunities for change in EU– Hamas relations, and where those opportunities for change were closed down.

Through detailed descriptions, this book brings Europe and Palestine, Brussels and Gaza into conversation with each other. It presents how Palestinian politics exists within the walls and resolutions of the European Parliament, and it asks how does this institutional writing of Palestine relate to experiences on the ground in Gaza, Palestine? This remark invites a further question, what is the possibility for diplomacy between the EU and Hamas, or between Europe and Palestine more generally? Samson Opondo’s work has discussed the colonial spectre that haunts diplomatic practices. Opondo presents a crucial critique of European diplomacy, as the processes through which the alterity of the Other is mediated into a knowable subject. The diplomatic practices through which international recognition is performed, requested and awarded explains Opondo, “remain silent on the foundational violence and ongoing exclusions that create the conditions of possibility for such practices”.³⁰ This book interrogates the ritualised mechanisms, sites and spaces through which the EU performed a diplomacy towards Palestine; it discusses the colonial shapes of these rituals and how this limited actually seeing or hearing the democratic decision of the Palestinians.

I spent three months in Gaza from September 2012 to December 2012. I interviewed Hamas members from different levels of seniority, which included Hamas members in charge of youth activities, women’s issues, prisoner affairs, and religious affairs. I met with key figures such as the Minister of Internal Security, the Minister of Health, former Minister of Foreign Relations, and a former Hamas spokesperson. I also interviewed academics, political analysts, other independent members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, members of Fatah, members of the Palestinian Front for the Liberation of Palestine, as well as the director of the Central Elections Commission for Gaza. These elite interviews allowed me to access the expectations Palestinians and members of the Hamas movement had with regards to the 2006 elections, and how these expectations aligned with external responses.

In this book I also describe the sounds of bombs dropping, the strength in humour that resists these sounds, the failure of the UN to respond politically to these sounds and the repeated European disregard for the pain and destruction caused by the effects of these sounds. What happens, for example when you place the experience of the Palestinian political prisoner being released from an Israeli jail after 19 years, next to a European Parliament discussion on the rights of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails? What are the varying rituals that describe and enact these moments, events, discussions and how are these rituals constitutive of different political experiences and expectations?

In June 2013 I travelled to Brussels and spent a month in the European Parliament. I interviewed members of the EU EOM who had travelled to the Occupied Territories in 2006 and who had met members of Hamas’s Change and Reform party. I interviewed European Commissioners who were involved in European foreign relations around the time of the 2006 elections. I interviewed representatives from the European External Action Services who were involved in implementing the conditions. I also interviewed MEPs who were part of the Delegation to the Palestinian Legislative Council, as well as former negotiators and political analysts familiar with EU– Hamas relations. These elite interviews allowed me to address the expectations key figures had of their engagement with the Palestinian elections, and whether they were able to act on these expectations.

This book also describes the EU buildings in which political meetings take place, the rooms

that host meetings, the objects that surround these meetings and the feelings or lack of feelings that permeate these meetings. I ask, what are the ritualised practices and discourses that constitute these sites as those which are for making political decisions, policy choices? How do European actors perform themselves within these spaces? By paying attention to the subtleties of these sites and spaces, I suggest we may account for their performative apparatus, and interrogate how they shape the direction of agency, political decisions. Turner reminds us that we cannot assume to know the emotional and social investments participants place with their rituals.³¹ I visited these research sites as an outsider. I used interviews to support my observations, but I also reflect on not fully belonging. This not fully belonging, however may offer a particular viewpoint on the institutional and discursive practices under investigation.

The event

The 2006 Palestinian legislative elections and the sanction of the Hamas government that followed detrimentally altered the course of Palestinian politics. This event deteriorated the democratic conditions in the OPTs and facilitated violent attacks on the Gaza Strip. There is a dramatic oscillation between *what did happen* and *what could have happened*, which is perhaps what draws emotional and shocked responses from participants, witnesses and analysts. The following statements begin to reflect this oscillation between hope and disappointment, between opening and closing, which define this event.

Chief observer for the EU EOM, Véronique de Keyser, stated in a press conference held on 26 January, 2006.

The Palestinian leadership took the risk of going ahead with these elections despite widespread opposition in order to give priority to democracy. The People of Palestine responded to this opportunity with great enthusiasm and dignity by coming out in large numbers to cast their ballot in a peaceful manner. I hope that the winners and losers of these elections will accept the results with the same political maturity that their supporters showed on election day.³²

Jamil al-Khalidi, head of the Central Elections Commission for Gaza, explained in an interview:

I believe if the Europeans particularly dealt with Hamas as a winner in the elections, or if they accepted the coalition government that included ministers from Hamas and Fatah, I think this was a precious opportunity that the EU had foregone. And if this had happened, it would have been possible to reach common grounds between the Europeans and the coalition government that included Hamas. This would have saved the region lots of troubles and it could have been possible to reach at least an interim solution that can be the beginning to a comprehensive solution.³³

Since the 2006 democratic elections, Gaza has become a site of increased Israeli violent attacks.³⁴ Since Hamas became the government everything has become a 'legitimate' target for Israel in Gaza. In the following leaked conversation between Israel Defense Intelligence Director, Major General Amos Yadlin and American Ambassador Richard H. Jones, held on 12 June, 2007,³⁵ Yadlin expresses the utility that Hamas's coming to power has for Israel.

[Yadlin] commented that if Fatah decided it has lost Gaza, there would be calls for Abbas to set up a separate regime in the West Bank. While not necessarily reflecting a consensus GOI [Government of Israel] view, Yadlin commented that such a development would please Israel since it would enable the IDF [Israel's occupying forces] to treat Gaza as a hostile country rather than having to deal with Hamas as a non-state actor.³⁶

The external response to Hamas's success in the elections contributed to a political climate in which Hamas members and Palestinians living in the Gaza strip could be more easily targeted. The classification, of hostile, explains Lisa Bhungalia, acts as "a warning notice to the world that Israel intends to treat the Gaza Strip differently than it has until now and to apply measures it has not used before".³⁷

Bhungalia's work has effectively laid out the importance of the discursive strategies Israel uses in order to legitimise its attacks on Gaza. "Gaza has been constructed in preparation for escalated war".³⁸ Bhungalia reviews how the categorisation of 'hostile territory' collapsed the distinction between civilian and the combatant by arguing that anything affiliated with Hamas is a legitimate target. Neve Gordon and Nicola Perugini describe the IDF's semiotic warfare, whereby linking Hamas with human shields legitimises and attempts to legalise the killing of civilians.³⁹ Alastair Crooke commented that while Israel has always used collective punishment against the Palestinians, what is new is the European support for this practice.⁴⁰ In the post 2006 period Hamas has been used as a symbol and performative utterance to justify attacks on Gaza, and as a site to blame for the continuation of failed talks and rapprochement between Fatah and Hamas. While the EU's position towards Hamas and Palestine should not be treated as a panacea, it is crucial to identify where its policies have supported the continued military occupation of Palestine and have limited a transition towards further autonomy and self-governance.

Following the elections former interlocutors and analysts argued that Hamas's participation in the elections could be read as signs of the movement's pragmatism, willingness to compromise and desire to be engaged in more formal politics.⁴¹ These accounts align with existing literature on the movement that argue for an interpretive reading of Hamas. An interpretive understanding of Hamas, explain Shaul Mishal and Avraham Sela, recognises "Hamas as a movement that is operating within an ever-changing historical context, aware of practical constraints, sensitive to its surroundings, attentive to circumstances, and subject to considerations of cost effectiveness".⁴² From his interviews with Hamas members, Jereon Gunning argues that viewing Hamas as a 'spoiler' fails to recognise the group's sensitivity to its social support and its desire to be recognised as a political actor.⁴³ Through his comparative review of Hamas's 1988 Charter and Hamas's 2006 electoral platform, Menachem Klein writes that, "[Hamas] has demonstrated a willingness to change its positions on fundamental issues and even take public stands in contradiction of its Islamic Charter".⁴⁴

This book is less interested in offering a more accurate reading of Hamas or claiming to know or speak for Hamas. Rather, it is interested in explaining how European interventions controlled the opportunity for Hamas to present itself following the elections and constrained the possibility for Palestinian politics to unfold through its own democratic procedures. Numerous EU reports and public statements confirmed that Hamas's success in the elections constituted *an entirely new development*. This new development may have been an opportunity to promote positive change and dialogue. However, the EU "lost no time" in "painting Hamas into a corner" and saying we are not going to "deal with people who had been involved in terrorism and violence".⁴⁵ The members of the Quartet, the EU, the UN, the US, and Russia argued that Hamas

must align itself with three broad conditions in order to be considered legitimate and avoid sanction.

The peculiarity of the EU's full endorsement of the conditions is found in the EU's dismissal of its *own* efforts in institutional and democratic reform and the active distortion of Palestinian governance. Following the elections, the EU withheld the salaries of any civil servants that would agree to work with a Hamas government. Rather, all funds were transferred through a Temporary International Mechanism to bypass institutions now held by the sitting government. EU actors acknowledged that such external favouritism could heavily distort Palestinian politics and prevent a rapprochement between the parties, but they backed such diversion of funds and diplomatic support anyways.

Feeling through gender

This book uses gendered performances and performances of gender as departure points from which to analyse political rituals, and the possibility for rearticulating those rituals. The EU's decision to support Israel's and the US's securitisation of Hamas can be viewed as the continuous reiteration of masculinities that see the world through a paranoid fantasy of the 'nature of man and politics'. Di Stefano, cited in Carver comments on the self-originating and self-driven dynamics of politics imbued in Hobbes's depiction of life and the need for sovereign control. Hobbes's writing emerges from a *fantasy of masculinity and men*, whereby "men [are] magically sprung like mushrooms, unmothered and unfathered".⁴⁶ This book pays attention to the political arrangements that emerge from this paranoid fantasy, and it asks what alternative arrangements are foreclosed or barred from international politics because of this fantasy. Heteronormative and patriarchal discourses reiterate that: 'this is just how the world works'.

Queer methodological practices highlight the tensions and anxieties that circulate around accepted ideas of normalcy⁴⁷ and the expectations to fulfil social and cultural roles. Butler observes how gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. "Discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals with contemporary culture: indeed we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right".⁴⁸ The exteriorisation of a coherent gender is expressed through an anxious attachment to hegemonic ideas of success and belonging, which forecloses alternative iterations of the self and of politics.

My intervention analyses the anxieties, challenges and demands associated with passing as a 'normal' diplomatic actor, or 'strategic' policy maker. It explores the knowledge practices and daily rituals attached to these public roles. It emphasises the kind of language, tone or sentiments that are foreclosed from international diplomacy because of several logics of attachment, such as an attachment to aggressive or tough masculinity, or an attachment to a ritualised discourse of strategic thinking. In this book queer performances, lives and literature offer alternative accounts of belonging, community, and care. These discussions inspire a critique of how social and cultural beings exert great effort into trying to belong. This desire or need to belong may come at the expense of performing a more genuine or caring self.

Side stories and poetic juxtapositions

In *Black Skin White Masks* Frantz Fanon tells a story about physicians working in the public health services. It goes like this,

Twenty European patients, one after another, come in:

‘Please sit down.... Why do you wish to consult me?... What are your symptoms?...’

Then comes a Negro or an Arab:

‘Sit there, boy.... What’s bothering you? ... Where does it hurt, huh? ...’⁴⁹

Fanon tells stories. Fanon tells powerful stories. Fanon tells powerful stories about colonialism, race, power, and subjugation. Through Fanon’s powerful imagery and narration we are drawn into his theoretical observations. We feel as though we are subjects within his theory. Our imaginations are in the doctor’s office. Our imaginations are with the words of the physician. There is a particular performative affect to Fanon’s writing. There is a particular performative affect which does not simply make a case or provide an argument. Through Fanon’s stories, we *feel colonialism*.

In this book I will also tell you *side* stories. I will tell you about who served the coffee in the European Parliament. I will share a story about a celebration for released prisoners. I will share a story about the neglect for those still in prison. I will tell you about how a pair of latex gloves ignored the pain of a person. I will tell you about the German negotiator who ignored the pain of a nation.

These side stories, I suggest allow us to feel politics differently. The *form* of this book *is* an iteration of its politics. Vikki Bell’s writings on performativity alert us to the importance of the politics behind our own methodological decisions.

The promise of performativity therefore must also be that those who utilize it reflect upon how their interventions themselves perform within a contemporary context of power relations. The political question does not come after the analytic therefore; they are entwined at the outset.⁵⁰

I propose that it might not be a lack of knowledge about Palestinian politics that is the problem. I am concerned with what we do with that knowledge, or what that knowledge moves us to do. The use of a performative writing style in this book is an incitement to movement, or to be moved. Within the field of IR Aradau and Huysmans have described how methodological practices can be used to disrupt and provoke new ways of approaching political problems. Methodologies are not just a link between the writer’s ontology and epistemology, but are themselves theoretical, performative and ethical moves.⁵¹ This book challenges the rituals of academic writing to allow for a more creative perspective on Palestinian politics.

The performative form of the book is conducted through a moving back and forth between different forms of texts. This oscillation between different texts mirrors the openings and closings of the theory of performativity. This book performs a form of telling that leaves space for feelings, for feelings of disappointment or loss, for feelings of frustration or refusal. This endeavour is echoed by Toni Morrison who writes, “Language remains alive when it refuses to encapsulate or capture, the events and lives it describes”.⁵² In this book, I move between theoretical discussions and empirical discussions, so they may bleed into each other. I intertwine ethnographic observations from my fieldwork and my own auto-ethnographic experiences. Through the juxtapositions of different texts new narratives emerge, which do not close down interpretation through reiterating dominant discourses.

In *The Colonial Signs of International Relations* Himadeep Muppidi writes about a museum, a zoo, classroom and Guantanamo Bay. Through the movement between these sites Muppidi

tells the story of a violent colonial history. He tells the story of a violent colonial history found in the relics of the museum, in the specimens at the zoo, in the medical care system of Guantanamo. The stories in the text are in conversation with one another. They speak to each other of the founding violence that formed them, of the discourses of oppression that continue to frame them. Through the assemblage of these sites Muppidi renders visible that which may remain invisible or sanctioned in the normal discourses of these sites. The conversation interrupts the coherency and stability of their discourses, drawing in new observations and critical questions.⁵³ This book relies on montage to tell a different story. “Montage is the cutting and reassembling of fragments of meanings, images, things, quotations, borrowings, *to create new juxtapositions*”.⁵⁴ The texts sit next to each other on the page. A residue from one text can be found on the next. An exuded feeling from one experience can seep into the next. A critical reflection of one event may make its way onto the next. “The interruption of illusion and distraction by collage sets off allusions through the juxtaposed, montaged elements. So new understanding comes through *contaminated representation* rather than pure reference to the depicted subject-matter”.⁵⁵

In this book aesthetic works are put in direct conversation with the empirical material. These artistic interventions are called up to both reflect on the rituals that constrain our critiques of politics and to inject creativity into these critiques. In *Studies in Trans-Disciplinary Method*, Mike Shapiro states,

Aesthetic experience has a political effect to the extent that ... it disturbs the way in which bodies fit their functions and destinations.... It has a multiplication of connections and disconnection that reframe the relation between bodies, the world they live and the way in which they are ‘equipped’ for fitting it.⁵⁶

Bleiker suggests that an engagement with art in the study of world politics can open up towards new questions, or new ways of seeing. The interruption presented by the turn to aesthetics provides an alternative approach, or a site for healing against previously normalised or taken-for-granted ways of doing Social Science.⁵⁷

This book takes the ‘what could have been possible seriously’. Through a performative practice this book invigorates a discussion on what could have been possible following the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Rancière’s argues that moving between and in-between politics and aesthetics allows for a stretching of the boundaries of plausibility.⁵⁸ Through Aristotle, Rancière undoes the dividing line between history and story, between what happened and *what could happen*. The poetic arrangement inspires ideas of *what could be possible*.⁵⁹ Performance and performance art occupy an important place in the stretching of expression and plausibility. Performance holds a unique position in blurring the boundaries between fiction and non-fiction; between history and story and here it offers an alternative account of what could have been possible for Palestine in 2006.

Chapter outline

In Chapter 1 I narrate my fieldwork experiences to offer an account of the various rituals that constitute the Hamas government in Gaza and the EU institutions in Brussels. I observe the sense of belonging or comfort proffered by being able to correctly perform the rituals of these governing spaces. I critique the order imposed by the demand to *correctly* perform the rituals of these spaces. In *Queer Phenomenology* Sara Ahmed encourages us to dismantle the ‘already thereness’ of a space, through which this chapter explores the hierarchies and histories that constitute and relate Gaza and Brussels. I critique how Palestine exists through the writing of EU resolutions. I critique the EU’s neglect of the founding violence that creates the need for resolutions.

Chapter 2 focuses on the way in which the EU already recognises Hamas as a terrorist movement, and it describes the EU’s attachment to this mode of making Hamas intelligible. By coupling various tropes in Butler’s work on intelligibility and the psychic internalisation of power with my interview material, this chapter describes Hamas’s move to deny the way in which it is recognised through a discourse of terrorism. Referring to the performative practices of ‘passing’ and ‘coming out’, this chapter takes issue with the structures of power present in the need for Hamas to seek recognition from a discursive space of ‘European external acceptance’. The chapter leaves space for alternative iterations of political identities by discussing queer performances of ‘not belonging’.

Building off Turner’s investigation of liminality within a ‘rite of passage’, Chapter 3 investigates the transformative potential of the 2006 elections – an event, an encounter that may have allowed the EU and Hamas to reconstitute their political relationship. I provide a detailed account of the EU’s documented explanation for supporting the elections, which proffer the desire to advance democratic reform, institution building and assist Palestine on its road to statehood. I also describe Hamas’s performance in the electoral race, which secondary reports describe as a significant pragmatic shift in Hamas’s engagement with politics. As such, this chapter begins immersed within the expectation that the elections had liminal potential, a potential to shift political subject positions. It then addresses the limits on the transformative potential of the event, commenting on the context of the Israeli Occupation, and that democratic rituals are not inherently open to inversions of social and political change. Rather, the chapter encourages an awareness of the liminal potential within all performances, and it addresses how both the EU and Hamas were performing expectation of political and social change.

Chapter 4 begins after Hamas’s success in the 2006 elections, and it offers a detailed account of the institutional processes and practices through which the EU placed the conditions on Hamas. While external observers argued that the EU missed an opportunity to engage with Hamas, this chapter draws on Halberstam’s work to trouble regimes of success and failure. This chapter looks at the institutional pressures that shaped the EU’s engagement with Hamas’s success. It discusses the demands for speed, a cultural belief that states either support Israel or Palestine and the imposition on civil servants to follow orders that shape policy making. The ‘demand to know Hamas’ through the conditions meant that Hamas could not be left as an ambiguous subject, which in turn shaped the possibility for transition.

How did the conditions and the reiteration of Hamas as a terrorist movement close down opportunities for an alternative diplomacy between Hamas and the EU after the 2006 elections? This last chapter explores how the performativity of threat interpellates political actors and marks

the boundaries of their relationship. Under the weight of a discourse of threat their conversations are pushed into hidden spaces and consumed by the need to respond to the conditions. This chapter is concerned with the kinds of relationships that *can* take shape under the violence of the performativity of threat. Drawing on Toni Morrison's critique of Hemingway's writing of blackness, I argue that the EU is unable to see or hear Hamas because the EU remains attached to a fantasy of who Hamas is, and who the EU is in relation to Hamas. This chapter reviews evidence provided to the House of Lords EU Committee from senior EU officials regarding Hamas's attempt to form a National Unity Government with Fatah in 2007. This evidence demonstrates the EU's neglect of compromises offered by the Hamas government, including a restructuring of the cabinet to include moderate and independent leaders. The chapter is concerned with the EU's inability to fully see and engage with Palestinian politics outside of the performativity of threat. It ends with a discussion of how poetic arrangements and queer imaginatives offer the possibility to perform politics beyond a regime of threat.

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1 Bodies in spaces

Entering, belonging and being in Gaza and in Brussels

How do the rituals of a space limit what can be said, done, expressed?

By narrating my entering into and being in Gaza and the EU, I present the varied rituals that make up these spaces, and I show how these rituals are performative of and performed by bodies.

Spaces provide an opportunity for bodies to meet, to discuss, to offer ideas. However, the rituals of a space also constrain action and the possibility for critique. Bodies feel compelled to perform the rituals of the spaces they inhabit. The rituals of a space, therefore, maintain a particular order, a particular hierarchy, a certain history. In this chapter, I observe how ritualised orders may close down opportunities for doing things differently. As such, we begin to wonder what is lost in the ordered alignment of bodies and spaces. In this chapter, we will observe the gendered and postcolonial shapes of the spaces of EU– Hamas encounters, and we will interrogate how this constrains action on Palestinian politics. This chapter critiques how Palestinian politics is reproduced ritualistically in European Parliamentary politics. It observes the various committee meetings, resolutions and human rights discussions that attempt to address the Palestinian question. It asks, how do these rituals reproduce a particular knowledge about Palestine, and importantly how do they omit different initiatives.

The first part of this chapter takes us into Gaza and into the EU through a narration of my entering into these spaces and some of the rituals of entry this entailed. While I do not belong to either of these spaces, I observed the social and cultural rituals that allowed bodies, including my own, to move around and be in these spaces. We will begin to observe how bodies perform spaces as reflections of particular shared knowledges and collective social understandings. The presence of certain objects and architectures presents what kinds of spaces these are and shapes how bodies interact within these spaces. The experiences I encountered in these spaces, such as being subjected to war in Gaza versus talking about war in the EU, offer an idea of the differing experiences that constitute these spaces.

Once we have entered these spaces, we will turn to a narration of what it may mean to belong to a particular space. We observe rituals as proffering a sense of excitement, as bodies are able to properly fulfil the rituals of their space. Here, for example, we interrogate how the EU performs an idea of its own usefulness through the passing of resolutions. We observe how performing rituals involves a reaching out to the familiar, as such we may witness how rituals provide comfort, a sense of belonging. Bodies, however, get stuck through a reaching out to what is always already within reach. Lastly, we therefore turn to an understanding of how rituals may maintain a particular order. What kinds of conversations, experiences or forms of recognition are not bestowed because of the correct alignment of bodies to the social, cultural and political expectations of a given space?

The third part takes a closer look at the kinds of spaces Hamas and the EU inhabit and

reproduce. Through ethnographic description of the artefacts and hospitality of these spaces, this section scrutinises the ‘already thereness’ of spaces. It observes how certain spaces work to forget their constitutive and colonial histories. It asks how does this forgetting implicate the kinds of conversations that can be had. While all bodies must perform in order to belong, the gendered and heteronormative ‘coherence’ of a space allows certain bodies and voices to fit more comfortably. Again, this shapes the kinds of actions and initiatives that take shape. In order to upset this coherence and make space for alternative encounters, this section comments on moments and art works that disrupt the alignment of bodies and spaces. It ends with comments from Sinn Fein’s meeting with the Deputy Director of UNRWA in Gaza in December 2012 and the disruptive question, ‘why didn’t you speak up during the most recent attack on Gaza?’ as well as the performance art piece, *Nothing to Declare* that brings attention to the old Hijaz railway.

Part one: entering spaces and rituals of entry

Moleskine journal entry, 1 October, 2012,

I have just arrived in Gaza. Am I causing problems already? But here I am learning fast to be in this place. I am finding a balance between my own doing and my own following and being in this moment, following the world around me.

* * *

Performances occur within particular spaces. These spaces are bounded by physical or social apparatus. Entering a new space may be obvious as it demanded the crossing of a particular physical border or threshold. Or perhaps the entering of a new space was revealed through the taking up of new actions or the use of a different discourse. Performance artist and theorist Mike Pearson explains that a “performance space may be delineated, cordoned off, set aside: marks, surfaces, structures, both planned and improvised. Activity may be confined to and conditioned by a particular area, volume or architectural feature”.¹ Sara Ahmed understands the formation of space through the orientation of the bodies who take up, and move within a particular space; “orientation involves aligning body and space”.² As such, when a body enters a new space, physical or social, it begins to align itself with the social forms and norms arranged before it. The objects or persons around the body are part of a distinct composition. Ahmed cites Diana Fuss, who states that “the theatre of composition is not an empty space but a place animated by the artefacts, mementos, machines, books, and furniture that frame any intellectual labour”.³ There are objects, people and ways of doing of Hamas in Gaza and the EU in Brussels, and what story does this composition tell?

Tall, cylinder buildings

It is 18 June, 2013. I am entering the European External Action Service (EEAS). It is a tall, cylinder building located in Schuman Place, Brussels. I enter this tall, cylinder building and I am immediately faced with a security desk; *to be expected I suppose*. Two women occupy the desk in front of me. They ask me who I am there to see and if I have any identification. I exchange my passport for an EEAS visitor’s sticker and a security swipe card, later to be used to enter and exit the building. I am told photographs of the entranceway are not allowed. I sit and wait to be escorted into the building. I sit and wait to enter into this tall, cylinder building, the European External Action service: the “European Union’s diplomatic corps”.⁴



Figure 1.1 European Union External Action Service building, Schuman Place, Brussels.
Source: photograph by the author, 17 June, 2013.



Figure 1.2 Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar's family home, Gaza.
Source: photograph by the author, 5 December, 2012.

As I sit and wait behind the security check in the lobby of this tall, cylinder building, I observe the various security rituals of this entranceway. I cannot help but smile to myself when I recall the various security apparatus that surrounded my visits with Hamas leaders in Gaza.

* * *

It is 5 December, 2012. I am visiting Mahmoud al-Zahar. I am visiting Mahmoud al-Zahar in his family home. I am escorted into his family home along with my translator and friend, Majed Abusalama, by a bearded gentleman who I assume to be a bodyguard, but who doubles as a driver and coffee maker. We enter the simple entranceway and find ourselves in a very large room with beige plush chairs arranged in a square shape. We choose one of the twenty-some chairs arranged in a square shape and sit down. Mahmoud al-Zahar is wearing a *jalabiya* and is sitting in front of a large poster of his three martyred sons (I recognise the martyred-sons-poster as a constant artefact in all my meetings with Hamas leaders in Gaza). After the interview, al-Zahar takes us outside to show us the various bullet holes in the walls of his house and the various bomb-damaged windows and awnings.

Al-Zahar is one of Hamas's founding members. He was former Minister of Foreign Affairs and is known for being one of Hamas's most radical leaders.

I visited Mahmoud al-Zahar in his family home. My entry into his home was not controlled by x-ray machines, visitors' stickers or passport checks. Indeed the interview was arranged through a phone call – a phone call to a cell phone.

* * *

I had in my possession the cell phone numbers of various Hamas leaders in Gaza. I had access to their cell phone numbers.

These cell phones, however, were turned off, when they went into hiding. These cell phones were turned off out of fear of being killed by an Israeli drone; *to be expected I suppose?*

Welcome Croatia! Welcome Mesha'al!

Through the television series *Mad Men* we enter into 1960s New York. Through the mise-en-scène genre of *Mad Men* we enter into a particular idea of 1960s New York. Through style and narrative, Matt Weiner, *Mad Men*'s creator presents the 1960s New York advertising agency lifestyle. He fashions a story about white men in tall buildings and well-kept white ladies in New York's suburbs. "*Mad Men* is set in the sleekly sophisticated go-go world of Madison Avenue in the early 1960s",⁵ says Edgerton in the introduction to a collection of essays on the widely acclaimed show.⁶ In this collection, Jeremy G. Butler analyses in detail the mise-en-scène characteristics of *Mad Men*. The objects, style, colour, decor, gestures, and composition of frame are not simply of a period but they tell a story about that period of time; they are "material details replete with history".⁷

Fluorescent lights. Fluorescent lights to tell a particular story about a particular space at a particular time. The use of a grid of fluorescent lights in the office space in *Mad Men* replicates the feeling of the "workplace as a scene of naked ambition, rigid conformity, despair, alienation and ennui".⁸ The lights are not just of that space, they work to tell us about what that space was like.

* * *

Ahmed relies on a phenomenological reading of how bodies relate to spaces in *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others*. Ahmed explains that, "phenomenology helps us to explore how *bodies are shaped by histories*, which they perform in their compartment, their

posture and their gestures”.⁹ Within a defined space, bodies orientate themselves to particular objects and towards other bodies. Ahmed argues that a space is already defined by certain social and cultural practices, “public spaces take shape through the habitual actions of bodies, such that the contours of space could be described as habitual”.¹⁰ Spaces and bodies take shape through repeated social action. This repeated social action continues to reflect particular ideas about a shared sense of belonging. These acts continue to perform that idea of a shared history.

Judith Butler remarks that rituals are “as a given temporal duration within the entire performance, ‘acts’ are shared experience and ‘collective action’”.¹¹

The space *Mad Men* endeavours to represent is bound by certain social norms and ritualistic configurations: incessantly pouring alcoholic drinks, cracking jokes about homosexuals, smoking excessively, complaining about one’s wife. These ritualised behaviours are a reflection of shared collective feelings of belonging. These acts continue to perform that idea of a collective experience.

* * *

The European Union loves itself.

Enormous “Welcome Croatia” banners in ‘all’ European Union languages are mounted above one of the entranceways to the European Parliament building.

I am visiting the European Parliament at an exciting time; its 28th member, Croatia, is about to be brought into the club. Little white-tent-stands have been set up outside the European Parliament so that those passing by can learn a little bit more about Croatia’s industry, native floral types, gastronomy products and tourist hotspots.



Figure 1.3 Croatia information stand, outside the European Parliament, Place Luxembourg, Brussels.

Source: photograph by the author, 18 June, 2013.

Welcome Croatia!

(I recall the conversations in the undergraduate “Intro to European Politics” module I taught this year. There were many anxious comments surrounding EU enlargement).

But here all the banners read, Welcome Croatia!

* * *

The European Union loves itself.

The elevators that reach up to the top floors of the various sections of the European Parliament building are coloured green, blue, and red.

There is large cafe in the entrance way nicknamed the Tractor Cafe because the seats are made of recycled tractor metal.

The European Parliament is covered in art, from different parts of the world, representing different cultures and different historical periods.

The European Parliament has its own branded coffee mugs and napkins.

These objects and styles are of a space. They are of a space which has composed itself in reflection of a shared collective understanding of itself.

These objects, styles and gestures continue to perform this idea of a shared history, a collective feeling.

* * *

We are standing on chairs to get a better look at the people on stage. We are standing on chairs to get a better look at the men on stage. Hamas leaders, Hamas members, and their supporters have gathered for Hamas’s 25th Anniversary celebration. I am surrounded by women; all of whom are wearing *hijab*; most of whom are sporting a form of green token or waving a green flag. A song breaks out; people cheer. A group of men chant a powerful song from the stage.

A song of victory.

A song of freedom.

People cheer. They know the words to the song.

A man delivers a speech.

A speech of victory.

A speech of freedom.

People cheer.

Spaces and the habitual actions that comprise them perform ideas of a shared collective way of being. Spaces and the rituals of spaces reflect and continue to perform a shared sense of belonging.

* * *

Khaled Mesha’al appears on stage and people cheer louder than ever. This is the first time the leader of Hamas’s external politburo has been able to visit the Palestinian territories since he was exiled by Israel in 1975. This is the first time he has been able to stand in front of his Gazan supporters. This is the first time he has been able to stand beside the other men in the Hamas

movement and speak to his supporters in Gaza.

* * *

Men make speeches about *victory*. They welcome Mesha'al from exile for a one-day visit.

EU banners welcome Croatia. The white tents outside do not discuss issues surrounding EU Enlargement.

Bodies make their spaces in reflection of a shared idea, of a shared history.

This 'common history' is found in the objects, rituals, styles of that space.

These rituals are a continuous reminder of that idea of a shared common history.

These rituals continue to perform that idea of a shared collectivity.

The lack of a tall, cylinder building

Pearson tells us that the work of theoretical architect Bernard Tschumi "suggests that spaces are qualified by actions just as actions are qualified by spaces".¹² There is a two-part manoeuvre in the relationship between bodies in spaces, which I would like to discuss. Bodies enter a space. That space is already bounded by certain rituals of being and doing. Bodies perform the rituals of that space. The space and its rituals are then performative of those bodies who have entered.

Bodies perform spaces and spaces are performative of bodies.

Pearson and Shanks state, "it is not a question of knowing which came first, movement or space: they are caught in the same set of relationships, only the 'arrow of power' changes direction".¹³

* * *

Bodies perform the rituals of spaces.

In Butler's 1988 piece "Performative acts and gender constitution: An essay on phenomenology and feminist theory", Butler turns to the work of anthropologist and performance theorist Victor Turner. Through this turn we begin to imagine a space demarcated by routine and habit, which has emerged through particular forms of *repeated social performance*.¹⁴ When one enters a space an existing set of rituals already inhabits this space, and the bodies who enter and occupy this space conform to its established rituals.

* * *

I am in a taxi. It bumps around on the dirt road in Gaza City. I am headed for the Ministry of Interior. The taxi driver looks at me and tells me to cover my head. I reach for the scarf in my bag; I am about to enter a Hamas government building. There are no x-ray machines lining the entrance into this short fat building. There are no visitor badges offered upon entry into this short fat building. I am led into a small office with four men at four desks. I hand them my papers to make it clear what I need. The boss of the group takes my papers and invites me to sit down. He looks at me and laughs, "take that off you look like an Afghan peasant". I remove the scarf from my head. *Ooops*.

One week later I am presented with a "Temporary Residence Permission". Hamas occupies

the position of government in Gaza. It controls who enters and who exists Gaza (kind of). It approves the entry of foreigners and denies the exit of many Gazans.

(I am quite certain that by the time I had met with Mahmoud al-Zahar, the government was quite aware of who I was. Different forms of controlling entry; *to be expected I suppose*).

* * *

THE PALESTINIAN NATIONAL AUTHORITY
Ministry of Interior & National Security
Residences and Foreigners Affairs General Administration

السلطة الوطنية الفلسطينية
وزارة الداخلية
والأمن الوطني
إدارة العامة للإقامة وشؤون الأجنبي

Temporary residence permission: التصريح إقامة مؤقتة
2012020869
* يسمح لهذا التصريح بـ رقم ا...

الإسم بالعربية: CHARRETT
Full Name: CATHERINE WINIFRED
Nationality: بريطاني
رقم جواز السفر: 705471359
Passports No: 705471359
Spouse's name: RAMI
تاريخ الإصدار: 2012/11/08
مكان الإصدار: غزة

* Allows the bearer of this authorization to reside and move in areas of the Palestinian national authority for (90) days.
* في حال هذا التصريح يتم إطلاع الإدارة العامة للإقامة وشؤون الأجنبي.

General Director of Residency and Foreigners Affairs
مدير عام الإدارة العامة للإقامة وشؤون الأجنبي

Figure 1.4 “Temporary Permission Form” for three-month residence in Gaza, Palestine.

Source: scanned by the author, October, 2012.

This “Temporary Residence Permission” form made me smile. I thought to myself, despite being denied international recognition as the government of Gaza, Hamas took up and performed its position as government. Despite being denied acceptance by the Palestinian Authority in Ramallah, Hamas entered the Palestinian Authority government buildings. It used the Palestinian Authority logo. This “Temporary Residence Permission” form is filled with stamps, symbols, colours, and signatures of a working government. Symbols used by a working government of a non-state that lacks international recognition.

I entered a short fat building and a government was there. I entered a short fat building and a government was there doing the things that governments do; *to be expected I suppose*.

Legal chanting

In Jeremy Butler’s reflections on *Mad Men*, Butler states, “the formulation of the body as a mode of dramatizing or enacting possibilities offers a way to understand how a cultural convention is embodied and enacted”.¹⁵ A particular way of doing and being is embodied in the performing subject. As such we can observe the actions and discourses of bodies as performances of a space,

a particular social space, which has *been embodied by the performer*.

Spaces become embodied in the stylised repetition of acts.

Spaces are performative of bodies.

A style of language, a particular dress code, an architectural arrangement, a technological service reside within a particular space. The bodies within this space then speak its language, wear its clothes, play with its objects, move around its architectural design and rely on its technological services. Ahmed writes,

bodies are submerged, such that they become the space they inhabit; in taking up space, bodies move through space and are affected by the 'where' of that movement. It is through this movement that the surface of spaces *as well as* bodies takes shape.¹⁶

* * *

The Palestinian political prisoner.

The following two passages describe different rituals pertaining to two different sorts of spaces. While both spaces are of Palestinian political prisoners, different sorts of rituals perform the political prisoner. Through these narrations we may observe the kinds of rituals that are of these distinct spaces. We may observe how these spaces are perhaps performative of various ritualised ways of being and doing with regards to the Palestinian political prisoner.

I am in the European Parliament in Brussels. I am in a very large room with carefully crafted wooden desks and comfy chairs. Each desk has a microphone, live interpretation equipment and an empty coffee mug and teacup. I am at a Joint Delegation Meeting on the situation of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails.

It is June, 2013 and it is the first meeting of its kind. It is the first joint meeting, whereby the European Delegation to the Palestinian Legislative Council and the European Friends of Israel are both present. (This seems shocking to me that this would be the first meeting of its kind.) The room feels busy but most of the chairs in this enormous space remain empty. The first speaker to offer a report on this subject sits at a large wooden desk at the front of the room. The first speaker is a former Israeli 'Occupying' Force prosecutor. The IOF prosecutor speaks English. The IOF prosecutor speaks English in a legal tone. The speaker refers to the West Bank as Judea Samaria. He denies the existence of political prisoners in Israel; rather, he refers to the prisoners as terrorists or murderers. He explains that "Administrative Detention", is left-over from the British Mandate and is used only as a measure of last resort to prevent future crimes from occurring. His discussion generates a series of questions from the floor. Representatives from Ireland, Greece, and France ask about the detention of minors, the use of torture, and the widespread use of Administration Detention, as a means to detain individuals without any evidence for months at a time.

Next to speak is a Palestinian lawyer from Addameer (Palestinian Prisoner Support and Human Rights Association). She offers various stories of detained children and adults. She explains to the room in the European Parliament that every Palestinian family has at least one person who has been in prison or who is still in prison. She explains the limits on visitation rights as the prisoners are located in Israel and the families must pass numerous checkpoints to arrive. She discusses the sexual abuse of prisoners and the denial of the human rights. She explains how thousands of prisoners are detained without charge through Israel's use of Administrative

Detention.

Various members of the audience, most of whom are Members of the European Parliament, ask questions. Further evidence is given. The meeting concludes with a declaration on the need for a fact-finding mission. It ends with an observation on the need to allow Members of the European Parliament to visit Israeli prisons. This Joint Delegation has shown the necessity of expediting the implementation of the resolutions already passed on the situation of Palestinians detained in Israeli jails.

* * *

I enter the exhibition centre and a row of men are standing at the entrance. I am greeted by the Tawfiq Abu Naim; I recognise him because I had an interview with him the day before. He is the head of Hamas's Prisoners' Association. He was released from prison after being detained for 24 years. He stands next to the other recently released prisoners. They stand in a straight line greeting the visitors; they put their hand to their heart and bow their head slightly as I walk by. I am at the One-Year Anniversary Celebration for the 1,027 Palestinian prisoners who were released in exchange for a captured Israeli soldier.

I sit in the audience on the left-hand side of the stage. I approach my translator for an interpretation of the events taking place. Hamas leader and Prime Minister, Ismail Haniyeh sits up on stage next to a woman. I am told the woman is the mother of the resistance fighter who led the operation that captured Sergeant 1st Class Gilad Shalit. The room is decorated with banners and symbols of the resistance forces. Masked al-Qassam fighters hand out coloured booklets with information on the prisoners released and other various activities of al-Qassam. On the right side of the room there are mothers, sisters, and daughters. They hold poster-size-pictures of their sons, brothers, and fathers. They hold pictures of detained Palestinian men.

Prime Minister Haniyeh delivers a speech from the stage, "What happened in the attack until the day the prisoners were freed is a pure victory for Hamas; first, for the ability it showed in doing this operation and second, for the ability to hide Gilad".¹⁷

Then a group of released prisoners dressed in black pants and white shirts come out on stage and start singing. They proceed with their deep chanting. Haniyeh, the mother and the other men on stage stand, link arms and chant.

Spaces for talking about war: spaces preparing for war

The telling of the personal life dramas of the characters on *Mad Men* offers a perspective into the kind of space 1960's Madison Avenue was.

Edgerton writes, "the series uses the language of myth – the conventions of the domestic and workplace – to represent the sorts of places where friends and relatives in the not-so distant past lived and worked".¹⁸ The narration of the lives on screen tells a story of the greater economic, political, social, cultural and gender relations of a time and space lived.

I am in Gaza. I am in the European Parliament.

What kind of spaces are these?

What rituals belong to these spaces?

What may these rituals tell us about these spaces?

May these rituals offer a glimpse of the political contexts of these spaces?

The European Parliament is an exciting space full of conversation, debate and exchange of ideas. The Parliament building is located between Place Luxembourg and Rue Wiertz in

Brussels. It is full of different-sized rooms to host different-sized meetings. They appear to be the perfect spaces to host meetings about politics.

There is a poster board on the main floor that outlines the different events taking place in the Parliament that week. Meetings attend to the current conflicts taking place in different parts of the world. There is something on Syria. Something on Egypt. I write down the various items that grab my attention. There is a Subcommittee Meeting on Human Rights. There is a Joint Delegation on the situation of Palestinian prisoners detained in Israeli jails. There is a Foreign Policy Committee Meeting where Catherine Ashton, the High Representative of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, will be speaking.

I'll for sure try to go to that – that sounds interesting.

It is evening. We are sitting in one of the conference rooms in al-Mataf hotel on the Gazan Coast. We are watching a Norwegian film. Representatives from the Swedish and Norwegian Consulate in Jerusalem have made a day trip to Gaza to share several films entered in a Norwegian film festival with us. We are sitting in a conference room on the Gazan Coast watching a Norwegian film. A phone rings. Someone answers. People's whispers surround me. Majed leans over and informs me that Ahmed al-Jabari, leader of Hamas's military wing, has just been assassinated in his vehicle along with his bodyguard by an Israeli drone attack. Someone turns the film off. We all stand up. We talk a bit about the film. People start making phone calls. People start receiving phone calls. We don't finish the film. We leave.

There is going to be a war.

There is a group of us making the walk back from the coastal hotel to Gaza city. I am the only girl. I can see light flashes in the sky; these are bombs dropping. We stop at a restaurant on our way back. We are the only guests. We eat, laugh, and take photos. Each friend receives a phone call while we are eating; their parents are wondering why they are not back home yet. Majed receives a phone call.

“Yes Cata is with me. Yes, we will pick up bread on our way home”.

The line-up at the bakery reaches around the block. At first I thought this line-up was for the cash machine. I am learning the procedures of entering a war. The family will need bread and lots of it, to last who knows how long.

We enter a shorter line for women. We argue about the number of pita breads we are allowed to have. The bakers invite me into the bakery to take a look. *A tourist observing the hurried and mass baking of bread in time for the beginning of a war.*

I write down the various political items that grab my attention.

We go home.

Part two: belonging to a space

We meet, she hurls herself at me and I catch her: perhaps on some instinct, perhaps because that is what we always do, perhaps because we planned to do it, perhaps because we were instructed to do it. We have a history: we have a contract to suspend our social differences; we have an agreement to engage in extra-daily behaviours together, in a particular style, code or sub-code. So we touch and are touched upon; we operate and are operated upon.¹⁹

* * *

I write the following words in my Moleskine journal after attending Hamas's 25th Anniversary celebration.

I have been worked upon by the green forces of Hamas. The word of the trip is Mukawama (resistance). That is what matters here. I repeat the words 1967, political process, EU help, two-state solution, one-state? They respond ... Mukawama.

* * *

I am currently in an office with a beautiful view. I am interviewing Patrick Child, currently the Director of Human Resources and Administration for the European External Action Service, former Director of the External Service, Directorate-General for External Relations, and before that he was Head of Cabinet for Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy. We are in an office with a beautiful view of Parc Cinquenaire in Brussels. I am listening carefully to his opinions on how the EU responded to the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. I am listening to his comments, his arguments, his defences of EU policy. I listen carefully.

When my questions cease Child asks me what I thought of the EU's response to Hamas's success in the elections. I offer my own opinions, discussions and accounts. I offer my own ideas (*kind of; I think*). I hear myself respond in an eloquent, carefully crafted, *diplomatic* manner.

I am in the top of *a tall cylinder building*, in an office with a beautiful view.

* * *

Spaces are marked by rituals. Domestic spaces, workspaces, diplomatic spaces, war spaces, talking about war spaces are all marked by ritualised practices. Spaces have certain expectations. The rituals of a particular space demand conformity. When a body enters a space it moves to fulfil the rituals of that space. When a body *belongs* in a space it works to perform the rituals of that space.

Learning to belong

I stand on a chair to get a better view of the men chanting on stage. There are already bodies who occupy these chairs. The bodies on these chairs point me in the right direction. These women bodies are already standing on these chairs to get a better view of the men on stage. While I have

only just entered this space, these bodies were here before me. They have stood on these chairs before. They have practiced this ritual before.

I enter the meetings room. I enter the meetings room to take a seat and listen to those sat at the big wooden desks at the front of the room. There are already bodies sat in this room. These bodies point me in the right direction. These bodies have sat in comfy chairs listening to evidence about political prisoners before. While I have only just entered this space, these bodies were here before me, they have sat in these comfy chairs before; they have practiced this ritual before.



Figure 1.5 Hamas's 25th Anniversary Party, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza.

Source: photograph by the author, 8 December, 2012.



Figure 1.6 European Parliament Meetings Room, Brussels.
Source: photograph by the author, 19 June, 2013.

New bodies enter and notice the marks left on the seats. They notice the grooves left on the seats, and they manoeuvre themselves into these grooves. The marks allow the bodies to align themselves correctly. Spaces are imprinted with the grooves of repeated social action. The grooves continue to speak about the kind of space one is expected to fit into. The imprints tell us of the rituals of that space.

* * *

I wake up to the sound of bombing. (I have come to recognise this sound after being in Gaza only a month.) At first I have my doubts, but no I am quite sure this is the sound of bombs dropping close to the Abusalama family home where I am staying. I feel nervous. I open my Facebook searching for a sign of encouragement. I see a Palestinian friend on-line; he is out of Gaza visiting Jordan to promote a film he and his brother are making. I tell him about the bombing. He reassures me that everything will be fine and that we are all in his prayers. *He has been through this many times before.* I continue getting ready for my day. I have an interview with the Minister of Prisoners at 11:00am, so I collect my recorder, my camera, and my notebook. I go downstairs and see Abu Majed, the father of the family sitting in the lounge. We enjoy our usual coffee with cardamom together. I wonder whether he also heard the sounds of the bombs this morning. I am certain he must have, *because how could you not.* He says nothing. So I say nothing. I leave the house and catch a taxi to the Minister of Prisoners' office. *He says nothing. So I say nothing. I am learning what it means to be in a space of war; in a space of constant war. A loud explosion is heard. We drink coffee. Another loud explosion is heard. We go to work.*

* * *

Just one day ... and in that day, her whole life.

Spaces expect certain rituals. Belonging to a particular space means learning and performing the rituals of that space.

The film, *The Hours* offers an idea of how bodies perform particular rituals as a way of belonging to a particular space. *The Hours* produced by Scott Rudin and directed by Stephen Daldry is an adaptation of Michael Cunningham's novel *The Hours*.²⁰ The novel was written into a screenplay by David Hare.²¹ *The Hours* is the story of "just one day... and in that day, her whole life"²² of three women set in three different time periods. The film moves back and forth between the different temporal spaces offering the audience a glimpse into the domestic and workspaces of three women: Virginia Woolf (1923), Laura Brown (1951) and Clarissa Vaughan (2001).

This film presents the possibility to observe the way bodies interact with the rituals that comprise their lives. Through its narration of the women in their homes, with their husbands, with their children, with their friends, with their servants, at their desks, we can see and feel the different rituals that comprise their lives. We can see, and feel what it means for these women to belong to the spaces they inhabit. The protagonists successfully perform and clash with the habits of belonging in different and similar ways. *The Hours* shows the way women may learn the rituals of domesticity in order to belong to the domestic space. The domestic space comes with a particular history, a certain story. It comes with its own expectations.

Excited to belong

European Parliament President, Martin Schultz is going to attend and speak at the Subcommittee meeting on Human Rights in the European Parliament.

This is exciting.

We are sitting in the Altiero Spinelli (5G-3) room in the European Parliament. It is Day One of the Subcommittee Meeting on Human Rights and President Schultz addresses the room. President Schultz makes a speech. He takes questions. Representatives from the different European Parliament parties express different concerns. "We should address the issue of democracy in Russia". "We should be in dialogue with Turkey". "The EU should do more to promote LGBT rights".²³

I think to myself ... yes these are all excellent concerns!

I take my notebook from my bag. I put on the headphones to listen to the live interpretation.

The discussion moves on to a more detailed reporting of North Korea. Ambassador Robert R. King, US Special Envoy for North Korea Human Rights Issues is present as a special guest to offer his expertise on the topic. *How fascinating!*

We end with a report on the current situation in Burma; we are told that things are not improving there so we should expect to see Burma on the agenda of the next Subcommittee Meeting.

I feel for the first time in my life I could go into politics. I feel energised by this space. I am excited by the conversations, debates and exchange of ideas about the political contexts and human rights situations in these various places around the world. I ponder the possibilities for dialogue between Turkey and the EU. I contemplate the situation in Burma. I feel that I am a part of politics and I enjoy it. I look forward to the next Subcommittee meeting.

* * *

The heavy bombardment of Gaza by Israeli forces has been going on for several days now. We haven't left the house since the day Ahmed al-Jabari, second-in-command in Hamas's military wing, was assassinated on 14 November, 2012. We stay within the walls of the family home. *Where would you go? Where could you go?*

Every minute we hear a loud explosion. Every minute the house shakes. Sometimes the bombs are so close we scream. We close our eyes. We hold our breath. We open our eyes again. We look around. Still here.

It is night-time. We take our laptops outside and sit under a large tarp. We sit under a large tarp so the drones don't see the lights from our laptops and confuse us for something else. I hear the buzzing of the drones above my head. I recognise this sound. I recognise the sound of bombs dropping. I recognise the sounds of F-16s and Apache helicopters. *I learnt to recognise these sounds.* We smoke *sheesha*. Another bomb drops. Too close to the house. Everything shakes. We close our eyes and hold our breaths.

Still here.

That evening we hear news that the resistance fighters have taken down an Israeli drone. We share the news amongst the family and celebrate. We repeat the story on Facebook and Twitter. *We feel excited. I feel excited.*

Comfort in belonging

Ahmed discusses 'whiteness' as a form of orientation, whereby spaces are already marked by 'what it means to be white'. Ahmed writes,

whiteness may function as a form of public comfort *by allowing bodies to extend into spaces that have already taken their shape*. Those spaces are lived as being comfortable as they allow bodies to fit in; the surfaces of social space are already impressed upon by the shape of such bodies.²⁴

As bodies continue to perform the rituals of space, and spaces continue to be shaped by these rituals, spaces provide a particular comfort to those bodies that fit-in. "Following lines also involves forms of social investment. Such investments 'promise' return [...]. Through such investments in the promise of return, subjects *reproduce the lines that they follow*".²⁵ Bodies become attached to the particular rituals of a space. These rituals provide comfort. They provide a sense of belonging. In fulfilling these rituals the body belongs to a space.

* * *

It is Day Two of the Subcommittee Meeting on Human Rights and the room is hosting another conversation; this time on the situation of Bedouins residing in Israel and Israeli occupied territories. MEPs, guests, speakers, a chair, translators all enter the room. They all enter the room and take their seats. They pull out their notebooks and put on their headphones.

Various speakers at the front of the room offer evidence regarding the hurtful oppression of the Bedouins in Israel. They mention the demolition of their homes and the construction of Jewish-owned homes in their place. One of the MEPs expresses his views on the situation of

ethnic cleansing of the Bedouin population, which he states is carried out through tactics, such as the closure of schools and the dismantling of water infrastructure, that make it unbearable for this minority to subsist in Israel.²⁶

Evidence and questions are shared and discussed. More questions and more evidence are given.

MEPs cite previous resolutions passed in the European Parliament on this issue of the Bedouins. The room agrees that serious action is needed: “Martin Schultz should write a letter to the Knesset”. “We should talk to our counterparts, the European Friends of Israel”. “We need to address the Member States of the EU directly”. “And we should have another working group meeting after the summer to discuss further violations”.

More questions and more evidence are exchanged.

Bodies follow the rituals of their daily lives. They enter rooms, ask questions and express the need for resolutions. The performance of these actions belongs to the European Parliament space. The performance of these actions belong to the ‘Palestinian issue space’. Bodies carry out the rituals that a space has already provided for them. Bodies continue to align themselves with these personal, social and work routines, perhaps as an expression of their collective identity, perhaps as an investment in return, perhaps because it is what is familiar and comforting.

* * *

Flowers in sad places. Flowers as empty gifts. Flowers to lift the spirits. Flowers because I knew she would like them. Flowers because there are supposed to be flowers. Flowers to provide comfort.

The use of flowers in the opening scenes of the film *The Hours* proffer a feeling of how certain objects, and habits surrounding these objects provide comfort in a space. The openings scenes of the three eras 1923, 1951, and 2001 all begin with flowers in a domestic space.

The three protagonists are seen waking up, dressing and preparing for the day. Each has a look of deep thought, almost despair imprinted on their face (although perhaps less noticed on the face of Clarissa).

There are flowers. There are flowers in each of the scenes. The presence of flowers in each of the three scenes appears to offer the space a sense of normalcy, brightness to a dark space, *alluring comfort*.

Flowers in 1951,

LAURA: Oh, Dan Roses. On your own birthday. You’re too much, really. [...] It’s your birthday.

You shouldn’t be out buying me flowers.

DAN: Well, you were still sleeping.

LAURA: So?

DAN: Well, we decided it would be better if we let you sleep in a little. Didn’t we?²⁷

Richie, Dan and Laura’s son, looks up and nods. The large bunch of yellow roses is of a normal domestic birthday scene; however, with a more profound glance the flowers embody the attempt to provide comfort and normalcy to an otherwise ‘abnormal’ scene. Laura is still in bed. She doesn’t feel like getting up. Her husband gets the flowers himself.

* * *

After the various experts offer evidence on the situation of Bedouins in Israeli controlled territories and the room expresses the changes needed in order to improve the situation of the Bedouins. The chair of the Subcommittee on Human Rights reminds the room that for such changes to happen they would need a majority in the European Parliament.

The room laughs.

The room laughs. The sound of the laughter is familiar. I guess they are accustomed to never being able to pass their resolutions through parliament.

* * *

Flowers for comfort.

Resolutions for comfort.

Bodies repeat the expected rituals of a space. Bodies feel comfort in performing these rituals. The ritualised action of spaces becomes the familiar, and bodies continue to reach towards the familiar.

Bodies get stuck.

Ahmed explains that “our body takes the shape of this repetition; *we get stuck in certain alignments as an effect of this work*”.²⁸ The repetition of actions works upon our body; it imprints itself on our body, and our way of being so that we get stuck in this repetition of certain actions. We follow these routines as they become part of who we are and an expression of the spaces we inhabit. To somehow not pursue these rituals suggests that one does not belong.

* * *

If certain action is repeated simply as a means of belonging to a particular space, as a means of fulfilling the rituals of that space, then perhaps we can begin to wonder what is lost in the repetition of certain actions. What is not performed because of the ritualised alignment of bodies and spaces?

The ordered space

As spaces are comprised of rituals, and belonging to a space means aligning with the rituals of their space, then perhaps we can begin to imagine how rituals demand conformity, how rituals impose on bodies.

Butler argues that gender maintains its form through the stylised repetition of acts, and Butler remarks, that

it seems clear to me that an account of gender as ritualized public performance must be combined with an analysis of the political sanctions and taboos under which that performance may and may not occur within the public sphere free of punitive consequence.²⁹

There are consequences for not performing the expected rituals of gender. The failure to perform these rituals confers that the body does not belong.

Rituals work to maintain ideas of what it is proper, acceptable, normal. Rituals function to

ensure that bodies adhere to what is proper, acceptable, normal.

* * *

Laura Brown in *The Hours* is going to make a cake for her husband. Laura is going to make a cake for her husband because it is his birthday. Laura is going to make a cake for her husband to show him that she loves him. “That’s right. We’re baking the cake to show him we love him”.³⁰

Laura’s capacity to make this cake for her husband confers her ability to properly belong to the domestic space in which she resides. She is required to fulfil this norm in order to belong. “So, I’m going to make a cake. That’s what I’m going to do. I’m going to make the cake for Daddy’s birthday”.³¹

But... Laura struggles to fully belong.

Hare’s screenplay presents the scene like this:

Laura is still in her dressing gown, but now with an apron tied over it. She is sitting frowning at a recipe book on the surface in front of her. Beside her she has assembled all the elements of cake-making [...].

LAURA: Let’s think.

RICHIE: You grease the pan, Mommy.

LAURA: I know you grease the pan, sweet one. Even Mommy knows that.³²

* * *

Gender norms present themselves as coherent and continuous. Gender is categorised into distinct binaries, male–female; gay–straight. Each of these categories is filled with its own socially dominating attributes, characteristics, expectations. The performing body works to fit itself into these demarcations. The rituals pertaining to gender impose themselves on the performing body. As such, a failure to be able to perform these identifications consists of a failure to properly belong to the expectations of gender.

The domestic space; the workspace; the diplomatic space are marked with rituals. These rituals impose upon bodies, such that there are punitive consequences for not performing the expected rituals of a space; *you do not belong*.

* * *

The cake is a failure. The cake is a failure; it doesn’t come out looking right.

Laura’s neighbour Kitty knocks on the door and enters the space. The two women are standing in the kitchen.

One woman is looking well put together: hair done, dress on, make-up applied. *She appears to belong*. One woman is still wearing her nightgown.

KITTY: Oh look – you made a cake.

LAURA: I know. It didn’t work. I thought it was going to work. I thought it would work better than that.

KITTY: Honestly, Laura, I don't know why you find it so difficult.

LAURA: I don't know either.

KITTY: Anyone can make a cake.

LAURA: I know.

KITTY: Everyone can. It's ridiculously easy. Like I bet you didn't even grease the pan.

LAURA: I greased the pan.³³

* * *

In *The New Violent Cartography: Geo-analysis After the Aesthetic Turn*, Sam Opondo wishes to open up the ritualised discourses of humanitarian diplomacy. Humanitarian diplomacy tries to portray itself as an unpoliticised space, in and through which care is provided. Opondo explains that humanitarian diplomacy rests on principles of commensality, exclusivity, and knowledge specialisation. Opondo is concerned with how the diplomatic comportment involves a particular taxonomy of estrangement and classification of particular forms of allowable violence and death. As such, humanitarian diplomacies rely on a universalising knowledge from a particular moral community, which allows the diplomatic voice to prescribe and negotiate the life of the Other with little introspection or self-critique.³⁴ The ritualisation of this comportment forecloses alternative ways of being and doing, which has made certain forms of violence or death allowable. As these practices have been normalised through repeated action critique of such norms are limited. Rather, to not conform to these knowledge practices and ways of doing confers that you cannot belong to this ordered space that cares so evidently for humanity.

* * *

After the various speakers offer their evidence on the situation of the Bedouins. After they have a good laugh at themselves for not being able to actually do their jobs; after more evidence is given and more questions are asked and responded to, I hear the very eloquent British accent of the man sitting in front of me. He is white. He is a he. He has white hair. He is British. He is from the European External Action Service. He is from the European Union's diplomatic core. This is what he offers as a closing statement on the position of the European External Action Service on the continued persecution of the Bedouins in Israel:

Can't say exactly what is being done, but there are concrete things being done on the ground. We'll have to wait and see what will work and see what will happen in the Council.

The opacity of this comment amazes me. However, what astonishes me more is how the room accepts this comment as legitimate. The room appears to feel bashful in the presence of this white, eloquent accent.

The diplomatic voice has spoken. The diplomatic tongue has sung its paternal song. And the room listens. The room listens and says nothing.

What does it mean to belong then?

We hear the sounds of bombs dropping but go to work anyways.

We write reports on human rights and laugh at the possibility of change.

* * *

As in Virginia Woolf's classic novel, *Mrs Dalloway*, *The Hours* wishes to draw out the feeling of being in a space of 'insanity' or 'mental disease'. All three temporal plots are focused around the lives of a person who is 'unwell'. Virginia Woolf, Laura Brown, and Richard are all accounted to battle with a form of physical or mental illness. These characters thus struggle to perform the rituals of normalcy. Importantly, however, their account of their own situation of 'insanity' also functions to critique the moves made by their caregivers to order and control their seemingly collapsed lives. The encounter between the insane space and the sane space, works to critique the 'sane' space. It poses a challenge to the rituals of normalcy, by questioning the very rituals these bodies that 'don't fit' are being made to fit into?

* * *

Clarissa (2001) enters Richard's apartment. Hare describes Clarissa as confident and cheerful; Clarissa belongs. Clarissa enters Richard's apartment, "where the man at the window is sitting, pale, stick-limbed, in a rotting armchair, which is covered in towels".³⁵ Richard has AIDS. Richard has won a poetry prize. Clarissa is Richard's caregiver and friend. Richard is sick and dying. Clarissa is throwing a party. Clarissa is throwing a party, 'for him'.

RICHARD: Who's this party for?

CLARISSA: What do you mean? Who's it *for*? What are you asking? What are you trying to say?

RICHARD: I'm not trying to say anything! I'm saying.

CLARISSA is panicking now.

RICHARD: I think I'm only staying alive to satisfy you.

CLARISSA is looking at him, aghast.

CLARISSA: So? Well? That's what we do. That's what people do. They stay alive for each other.

The doctors told you: you don't need to die. The doctors told you that. You can live like this for years.

RICHARD: Well exactly.³⁶

* * *

Tears fall to the pages of The Hours screenplay lying in front of me.

My own tears fall between the lines written on the pages in front of me.

My mom died of cancer several years ago.

Mom and I are sitting at the kitchen table. We are talking. It was late. Mom was talking. I was listening. It was late.

CATHERINE: It's late. I think we should go to bed.

MOM keeps talking.

CATHERINE: I think we should go to bed. It's late and you need your rest.

MOM looks disappointed

CATHERINE insists.

People who are about to die don't want to sleep.

RICHARD: I'm not trying to say anything! I'm saying.

* * *

Those voices that are not listened to. Those voices that are not listened to because they disrupt the 'normal'; they disrupt order. Those voices who are not allowed to speak, because they may challenge the coherency, the normalcy of a given space.

So we may wonder what kinds of conversations are *not* allowed in a space? Who is not allowed to speak within a particular space? What is *not* allowed to be said, because it may disturb the particular order of a space?

How is Palestine already supposed to fit into the EU institutional space? How does this limit what is allowed to be said about Palestine?

* * *

Why did I want my mom to go to bed?

Why does it feel so important to maintain these rituals?

What are we so afraid of?

RICHARD: Oh Mrs. Dalloway, always giving parties to cover the silence....³⁷

VIRGINIA: You do not find peace by avoiding life.³⁸

What are we missing out on by not being able to perform our spaces differently? What other ways of doing and being are lost to the preservation of rituals. What is lost to the demand to maintain the order of a space?

What if we didn't write resolutions?

The opening and closing of a kiss

A kiss. A kiss between two women. A kiss between two married women. A kiss both women gave into it. A kiss so full of energy and realness.

In *The Hours* Kitty had gone to ask Laura if Laura would watch over the house and dog while Kitty went into the hospital. The two women are around the kitchen table talking. The two women are around the table talking about a serious matter. The two women draw close.

KITTY'S face is against Laura's breasts. She seems to relax into her. LAURA lifts KITTY'S face, and puts her lips against hers. They both know what they are doing. They kiss, letting themselves go a moment.

Then KITTY pulls away.³⁹

A kiss that is out of the ordinary. A kiss that is out of the ordinary, but that is shoved back into the rituals of the 'everyday'.

KITTY pulls away and says....

KITTY: You know the routine, right? Half a can in the evening, and check the water now and then.
Ray will feed him in the morning.



Figure 1.7 Kitty (left) and Laura (right) kiss, *The Hours*, “Bitch Flicks,” accessed 14 September, 2014.
Source: www.bitchflicks.com/2013/04/the-hours-worth-the-feminist-hype.html#.VBXYpJRdWmM.

KITTY has got up to go.

LAURA: Kitty, you didn’t mind?

KITTY: What? Didn’t mind what?

LAURA stands, anxious.⁴⁰

Anxious I imagine as Laura is shoved back into a world, abandoning a new one which had been opened up, which had been opened up however momentarily. A moment of realness beyond the daily routine. A moment of realness through an unexpected kiss. A moment of openness.

But a moment closed down. A moment closed down by order.

You know the routine right?

RICHARD: Oh Mrs. Dalloway, always giving parties to cover the silence....

VIRGINIA: You do not find peace by avoiding life.

* * *

What if we didn’t try to cover up the silences? What if we didn’t try to cover them, but rather let them draw out? What new images may be conjured in the silences? What new ideas may be thought of in the silences? What new experiences may be had when we are not trying to avoid life?

What if we didn’t write resolutions?

CATHERINE: Yes. It’s late, but we don’t *actually need* to go to bed.

Part three: failing to belong

I have been in Brussels for two weeks now. I have been entering the institutions of the European Union for two weeks. I have been attending its committee meetings, listening to its discussions, walking its halls. I have been present at its celebratory cocktail parties and Thursday evening Place Luxembourg drinking fests. I have attended several events surrounding Palestine. I have listened carefully to several conversations about Palestine (and many other places as well). I have heard the words human rights, torture, death penalty, terrorism, women, slavery uttered many times. I have heard the words human rights uttered many times.

The excitement of this space is beginning to fade.

* * *

The bombing of Gaza has been going on for seven days now. The television in the living room is constantly lit. It shows the news (in Arabic so I can't understand most of it). It also shows the resistance forces' propaganda videos. Most of them are from the al-Qassam Brigades. They show images of rockets being launched from under bushes. They show masked men in uniform training, marching, practicing. All the images are accompanied by very tuneful and powerful chanting music. These videos confuse me.

The propaganda images of al-Qassam fighters do not excite me.

* * *

I entered these spaces. I entered Gaza. I entered the institutions of the European Union. I observed and performed the rituals of these spaces: the war space; the talking about war space. For a moment I felt like I belonged. My reactions of excitement, entertainment, solidarity and compassion were genuine. But I did not belong in either of these spaces. The rituals and habits that comprised these spaces were not mine. As such, I believe the feelings of belonging faded. As such, I believe the excitement attached to these rituals faded.

But what are these spaces that I entered? What are these spaces that I felt I didn't belong to?

The EU has its own branded coffee mugs, but who is serving the coffee?

Ahmed's work emphasises that spaces and the rituals that take place within and compose these spaces are not neutral. The objects, the people, the conversations that are of a space are not to be naturalised.

Rather, Ahmed's theoretical work shifts our attention to *the kinds* of people or *the kinds* of objects that reside within and continue to comprise spaces. We are therefore directed towards asking questions such as, how did these objects arrive here? Or, what needed to take place in order for such bodies to 'appear' here? Ahmed writes, "Objects appear by being cut off from such histories of arrival, as histories that involve multiple generations, and the 'work' of bodies, which of course is the work of some bodies more than others".⁴¹ Through following Ahmed's theoretical openings we are drawn towards observing *the kinds* of people within a space. We ask after the types of rituals which have been normalised within a particular space. We inquire into the stories and histories of those who belong and those who appear not to.

The EU has its own branded coffee mugs, but who is serving the coffee?

* * *

It is Day Two of the Subcommittee Meeting on Human Rights. We [they] are receiving a full report on the human rights situation in the Sahel region. We [they] are considering a special draft report on the situation. We [they] hear various accounts by several special rapporteurs and representatives. Issues concerning accountability, good governance, the situation of women, the issue of slavery and homosexuality are raised.

It is coffee and tea time and the service people dressed in white shirts and black pants come out of a back room and begin moving back and forth between rows of wooden desks. These bodies move up and down and stop at each desk.

“Coffee or tea?”

“Coffee or tea?”

Bodies in comfy chairs flip over their mug or cup.

The EU has its own branded coffee and tea mugs, but who is serving the coffee?

* * *

In Himadeep Muppidi’s text *The Colonial Signs of International Relations*, Muppidi offers the following story about those responsible for managing the prison at Guantanamo. The Joint Task Force Guantanamo relays the ‘services’ they provide the detainees.

We provide outstanding medical care to every detainee [...]. To date, we have completed more than 300 surgeries, including an angioplasty, and more than 5,000 dental procedures. We provide eye care and issued almost 200 pairs of glasses last year.⁴²

Muppidi compares the Task Force’s attempt to account for the care they provide the detainees with similar rituals of making care visible in The Colonial Museum in Belgium and in the Zoo. The Museum, the Zoo, and the Camp (Guantanamo) share the desire, or need, to make visible the collection of specimens, and the ‘care’ being offered to these collected bodies.

These ritualised form of ‘care’ in these spaces makes a particular story apparent while keeping another story hidden.

“This need to display, to make visible” says Muppidi,

runs alongside the need to contain, to frame, that which is displayed, frame it in a way that that which is displayed does not escape the boundaries of that frame: run away, kill itself, spill over, move beyond the range of measure and surveillance.⁴³

In the offered observations on captured bodies that make-up the Camp, the Zoo, or the Museum space, Muppidi stresses “the need to hide, to keep invisible the ‘founding violence’ involved in making the specimen available for our grasp”.⁴⁴

Muppidi continues with his story,

Harry Harris [Joint Task Force Guantanamo] waxes and wanes about the ‘facilities’ at

Guantanamo but is silent about the initial accumulation of captives: How were they acquired? What is the justice of that seizure? Such questions are deflected and deferred by the constant production of a seeming newness in the nature of the institution, the Camp, the Museum, or the Zoo; seemingly new differences, new projects, new knowledge, new threats, new dangers, new ethics, new ways of saying sorry and yet continuing with the same.⁴⁵

New ways of saying sorry and yet continuing with the same.

Bodies occupy spaces. Bodies take up the rituals of a space. But these spaces are not neutral. There is a particular history that shaped the rituals of this space. A history that often remains silenced or sidelined within a particular space.

Tea or coffee?

We should be concerned with the spillover effects of human rights issues across borders.

* * *

The EU Parliamentary meetings discuss how to bring good governance and LGBT rights to the Sahel region.

In all of the committee meetings I attended on human rights and foreign policy within the European parliament I did not hear the word colonialism mentioned. I did not hear the word colonialism mentioned; not even once.

Some bodies are not here, and the colour of the bodies present is very clear.

In all of the discussions that circulated around the discussion of Palestine; the issue with its political prisoners; the discrimination against the Bedouins; the concern with Israel's continued overuse of Administrative Detention, not once did the EU implicate itself in these discussions. Not once was the founding violence behind these discussions raised.

The founding violence behind certain rituals remains silent. The founding violence behind the permissibility of particular conversations over others remains silent.

There is a need, a desire, to make visible certain forms of care, while ignoring the presence of particular bodies, while ignoring the arrival of certain conversations.

New ways of saying sorry and yet continuing with the same.

Working to keep spaces not neutral

What bodies '*tend to do*' are effects of histories rather than being originary.⁴⁶

Ahmed turns our attention towards observing how repetition takes us in certain directions; how we orientate ourselves towards certain objects more than others, towards certain feelings and not others, towards certain decisions, omitting others.

Moreover, a certain amount of work, often considerable work, is done to maintain the particular order of a space.

* * *

Maurice Yacowar reminds us that the *mise-en-scène* genre of *Mad Men* works as much as a

critique of the past as it does a reflection on the time the piece was made; “in any period fiction the time in which the action is *set* occupies only the level of the plot. The major themes reflect the time the work is *made*”.⁴⁷ “Here is the twist”, Yacowar says, “if our awareness makes us feel superior to the characters we fall into Weiner’s trap”.⁴⁸ ‘The trap’ Yacowar is referring to is a sense of superiority the viewer of *Mad Men* may feel in relation to its characters or towards the temporal situatedness of the characters. If we feel that we have indeed moved beyond a time of sexism, racism, or commodification we have misperceived the direction of *Man Men*’s critique.

However, perhaps Weiner fell into his own trap.

Mimi White is keen to point out the way gender and sexual politics are dealt with in the series *Mad Men*. *Mad Men*’s creator, Weiner, assumes a particular representation of women in the 1960s, which White argues, continues to propel an extremely stereotypical idea of women and women’s lives. It fails to offer them much depth or agency.⁴⁹
The work done to maintain the non-neutrality of a space.

White provides a narrative of why the women on *Mad Men* have a lot to be *mad* about, whether it is the constant sexual harassment by men, the continuous in-fighting and jealousy between the female characters or the hysteria inflicted upon them as a result of the stifling domestic scene. *Or perhaps they are mad about being represented in this way.* With regards to the men in the series, White writes,

ultimately, the exposure of troubled masculinities alleviates the blandness of the stereotypical one-dimensional men in gray flannel suits without disrupting their privilege. [...] By contrast, whether women are stereotypically complacent or wilfully transgressive doesn’t make much difference. They are still apt to have the rug pulled from under them.⁵⁰

Is *Mad Men* still overshadowed by a very stereotypical, almost pathetic understanding of women, both in attempting to represent their lives in the past and connecting to their lives in the present? Is there still a particular orientation towards the representation of women that continues replicate particular social and cultural orders? What kind of work is still being done to maintain a certain ritualised understanding of gender?

Whether *Mad Men* accomplishes a critique of the misogyny of the 1960s, it still provides a discourse that “rigorously tugs at US cultural longing for prescriptive feminine roles, and to borrow from Michel Foucault, ‘holds up well, owing no doubt to how easy it is to uphold. A solemn historical and political guarantee protects it.’”⁵¹

* * *

The issue of women’s rights is raised often in the European Parliament. With regards to the Maghreb region, and the Sahel region and Egypt and Syria, the need to protect women and women’s rights is noted, discussed, and written into reports.

I conducted over a 20 interviews with representatives from the EU; only one interview was with a woman. I did meet with two other women; they were filling in for their bosses who could not arrive.

Weiner attempts to portray a particular misogynistic oppression of women, however, he fails to reflect on his own reproduction of such an orientation.

Catherine Ashton, the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy for the European Union, sits at the front of the room. Catherine Ashton holds a very senior position in

EU foreign policy. Ashton sits at the big wooden desk at the front of the enormous room. Catherine Ashton offers a summary on the EU's external initiatives.
A white man with white hair sits next to her. A white man with white hair whispers in her ear.

* * *

I conducted over 30 interviews in Gaza. I spoke with three women, all of whom held important political positions. Two were female members of Hamas and one was an independent parliamentarian.

I am at a Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine meeting. A crowd has gathered to celebrate the arrival of Leila Khaled. Leila Khaled has not been in Gaza for many years. She is giving a talk to one of her main support bases in Gaza, a left-wing resistance and political movement. Khaled is a female resistance fighter who was very active in the 1970s. She is considered a Palestinian hero. She is giving a powerful speech on resistance and the continued struggle for Palestinian rights. She is talking about Palestine's struggle for freedom.

She is giving a talk to a segregated room. She is speaking to a segregated room, men on one side and women on the other. Leila Khaled and I are the only women in this room not wearing a *hijab*.

What work is still done in order to continuously reproduce the gendered norms and hierarchies a space? How does the alignment of bodies and spaces continue to reproduce certain orders of exclusion?

* * *

During my conversations with women Hamas leaders in Gaza, I asked about their position within the Hamas hierarchy. I asked them whether they felt that women's voices were well represented in the government. They asked me, "why is that whenever Europeans come to visit they want to talk to us about women's issues. They don't want to talk to us about our struggle for Palestine; they always want to talk about the representation of women".

What kind of work is still being done to maintain a certain ritualised understanding of gender?

Can white men cry?

To say that all bodies have to pass is not to neutralize the difference between bodies.⁵²

Some bodies fit better than others. Some bodies are able take up the rituals of a space more comfortably. *All* bodies perform the rituals of a space in order to belong. If the rituals of a space are not performed then the body appears not to belong to the space. As such, all bodies are performing rituals that they themselves did not fully elect, but by entering and belonging to a space certain rituals are imposed upon them. Ahmed reminds us that often the repetition of the rituals of space "do not always present themselves as life choices available to consciousness".⁵³ Bodies follow the rituals before them, perhaps out of comfort, perhaps out of habit, but often without a form of election. All bodies must pass.

* * *

In *The Hours* Clarissa Vaughn (2001) is represented as the orderly, well organised, and well situated performer within her space. At first, glance Clarissa appears to belong perfectly. She is the caregiver. She is the strong character. She said, 'she was going to buy the flowers herself'. As the plot proceeds, the audience begins to observe cracks in her ritualised behaviour; she is performing the rituals of her life fully and yet they do not appear to be fulfilling her. In the narration of her 'life within a day' we see her struggle to feel excited, struggle to feel comfort.

Clarissa utters,

CLARISSA: Why is everything wrong?⁵⁴

CLARISSA: I don't know what's happening. I'm sorry. I seem to be in some strange sort of mood. I seem to be unravelling....⁵⁵

The rituals of a space make demands on *all bodies*. But these rituals don't appear to be fulfilling those bodies who perform them.

* * *

Why is Don Draper so unhappy?

In his review of *Mad Men*, Siska draws our attention to the irony of the situation, in which Don is shown as being unhappy with the 'fulfilment' of his own life. Don is an advertising salesman; he spends his time trying to sell happiness to the average American customer. He is part of the apparatus that has convinced the American consumer that a particular car, a type of soft drink or brand of cigarettes will bring them happiness. This begs the question therefore, "why are the Drapers so unhappy? The Drapers who have the big house, the two kids, financial security. Why is their dream come true not enough?"⁵⁶

* * *

Bodies work to fulfil the rituals of their space in order to belong; but is successfully belonging enough?

Madame de Keyser begins to signal towards the vacancy of the rituals of the European Union.

Madame de Keyser is at the meeting on the situation of the Bedouins in Israel. Madame de Keyser is a member of the Group of Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats in the European Parliament. She is a long-time supporter of Palestinian rights.

She thanks the room for reminding her of the problem of the Bedouins. All of these issues, however, have already been included in a policy report, which already carefully outlined the discrimination of the Bedouins. She says, we need resolutions which are binding. We need to be more forceful. Madame de Keyser seems dissatisfied with the rituals of the European Parliament. She has heard it before.

Madame de Keyser's words demonstrate a frustration at the futility of some of the actions carried out with regards to the situation of the Bedouins. Like many MEPs whom I spoke with in Brussels, they are aware that while reports are written and fact-finding missions are sent, the situation in Palestine does not improve.

Disrupting the alignment of bodies to spaces

A derelict train line which connects Beirut to Damascus.

Perhaps we can turn to site-specific performance art as a way of observing a disruption between the ordered alignment of bodies and spaces. Site-specific performance art challenges the existing ritualised orders of spaces. By re-visiting common sites and injecting them with new bodies, new stories, new objects the space is transformed. Its history can be told anew. Its contours can be stretched. Its hidden elements can be exposed.

* * *

The performance and research collective Dictaphone Group initiated a project that sought to bring the past into present spaces by exploring current spaces as they have encountered time. In the project *Nothing to Declare* the journey begins at a derelict train station in Beirut. Each artist continues along one of the three main tracks that previously connected Beirut to other Arab cities. Through tracing the railway tracks the Dictaphone Group's work pulls in a narrative of an old map of the Arab world, one that "shows border-crossing train tracks spanning the region". "The old Hijaz Railway, which connected Damascus to Medina, once transported Muslim pilgrims through what is today Syria, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia without the need for visas. Today, the non-operational Lebanese Railway appears as a rupture".⁵⁷

The past is invited in to trouble the present. The site-specific performance invites a history, when borders, visas and divisions were not present, in order to disturb the coherency of the present.

* * *

A disruption to the normalised space.

I am sitting in the Foreign Affairs Committee of the European Parliament. It is close to the end of my trip in Brussels. I am listening to the room. The room is discussing Syria. The room is talking about Egypt. The room, as per usual, is asking questions about EU policy towards Israel and Palestine.

I wonder to myself. What would happen if we filled this room with all of the people that we are sitting here talking about?

What kind of invitations may disrupt the naturalised and normalised space? What kind of bringing the past into the present may trouble the coherence of the EU's narrative towards Palestine? What kinds of conversations may disturb the EU's normalised narrative of Palestinian issues?

* * *

The following is a conversation I had with some younger male cousins of the Abusalama family who had come to visit us at the house.

They ask me, "How many children do you want?"

After a pause and hesitation, "I answer zero or four".

"Do you want girls or boys?"

(I don't really care) But I answer, "Three boys and one girl and I want one of the boys to be gay".

Shock; we laugh; shock. (I believe I disturbed the manness of the men in our presence today).

They looked at me with such peculiarity. But it was an honest and real comment, and I believe it touched an honest and real spot. I believe I interrupted this otherwise normal conversation, a conversation that takes places ritualistically in Gaza, 'how many children do you want' with an interjection of difference. I believe such a comment disturbed the order of the space. Through the look of entertaining shock on their faces, I believe I not only perplexed their relationship to the idea of gay, but the response also disrupted the line of questioning, opening up the direct relationship between the question and the response.

Perhaps these things happened. Perhaps the moment of difference only lasted a second. But in that moment an order between bodies and the rituals of space were disrupted; I believe, I felt it.

Pearson states, "interpenetrating narratives jostle to create meanings. The multiple meanings and readings of performance and site intermingle, amending and comprising one another".⁵⁸

* * *

I am sitting around a table at The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) headquarters in Gaza. We have just been given a quick tour of the facilities and we are sitting down with Scott Anderson, the deputy director for UNRWA's Gaza Field Office. I am sitting around a table with Members of the European Parliament, members of Sinn Fein's political desk and several representatives from an Irish based charity. This European 'envoy' arrived in Gaza shortly after Israel's 2012 attack on Gaza.

Mr Anderson, begins his discourse.

UNRWA currently runs 245 schools in Gaza and 125 clinics. UNRWA currently receives around \$500 million yearly. It has 12,000 area staff and is able to reach 99% of the refugee population in Gaza. UNRWA takes care of garbage collection, poverty mitigation, gender inequality, and the delivery of basic food items such as rice, meat and flour to the refugee population here in Gaza. The biggest issues we face here are youth unemployment which is at 45% and female unemployment at 50%.

Pat Sheehan, Sinn Fein MLA, asks a question. He asks a particular question and tension fills the room. You can sense the gravity of the interruption. You can witness the strain on Mr Anderson's face. You can feel the anxiety in Mr Anderson's, deputy director for UNRWA's Gaza desk, heart. *At least I noticed all of these things.*

Pat Sheehan asked why UNRWA did not make a political statement during the most recent bombardment of Gaza.

Pat Sheehan asked why UNRWA, or Mr Anderson personally, did not offer a public statement during the most recent Israeli attack and say that the targeting of civilians is wrong.

An interruption. A disruption.

Mr. Anderson responded, "our mandate gives us the opportunity to do things but also puts us in a box".

Mr Anderson, deputy director for UNRWA's Gaza desk, felt comfortable, almost excited

delivering his UNRWA speech. He felt comfort in discussing all of the important tasks that the UN was completing as part of its responsibility to the refugee population of Gaza. He could offer these comments with habitual familiarity. I witnessed the confidence with which he proffered that the biggest issue they faced was youth unemployment. I witnessed this confidence fade away when this ritualised discourse was challenged.

* * *

The possibilities in a moment. The possibilities in a moment of disruption. The possibilities in disrupting the alignment of bodies and spaces.

Ahmed states,

after all, phenomenology is full of queer moments; as moments of disorientation that Maurice Merleau-Ponty suggests involve not only ‘the intellectual experience of disorder, but the vital experience of giddiness and nausea, which is the awareness of our contingency, and the horror with which it fills us’.⁵⁹

RICHARD: I wanted to write about it all. Everything that’s happening in a moment. The way those flowers looked when you carried them in your arms –this towel, how it smells, how it feels – this thread – all our feelings, yours and mine. The history of who we once were. Everything that’s in the world. Everything mixed up. Like it’s all mixed up now.⁶⁰

Conclusion: tall, cylinder buildings with beautiful views

I visited Patrick Child, Director of Human Resources and Administration for the European External Action Service, in his office at the top of a tall, cylinder building with the most amazing view of Parc de Cinquantenaire in Brussels.

I visited Ahmed Youssef, Hamas leader and member of the movement’s Shura Council, in his office at the top of tall cylinder building, with the most amazing view of Gaza’s coast and the Mediterranean Sea.

Men occupy nice offices at the top of tall cylinder buildings with beautiful views.

A diplomatic space?

A shared diplomatic space? A common space where diplomatic conversations may take place? Perhaps we can imagine a diplomatic meeting between EU representatives and Hamas leaders. Perhaps we can imagine a meeting between Gaza and Brussels.

Men occupy nice offices at the top of tall cylinder buildings with beautiful views.

Perhaps there is a meeting space in which the diplomatic encounter *can* take place.

Perhaps the rituals that comprise this possible meeting space still require disruption.

Men occupy nice offices at the top of tall cylinder buildings with beautiful views.

Notes

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2 'Don't look at me like that'

Un-recognising Hamas's political performance

Acid Brass was the conceived project of performance artist, Jeremy Deller.¹ Deller combined the musical inclinations of the brass band horns with acid house tunes. A *traditional* brass band played *Acid House* music.

The Fairey Brass Band, under the direction of Rodney Newton was first put together in 1997 and has since performed in many venues including the Tate Modern in London and the Louvre in Paris.²

Members of the brass band recall the experience,

The first time we played it we didn't think it was any good. We thought it was rubbish. Very repetitive.³

Director Newton,

But once they saw the audience's reaction they started to warm to it.

One band member recalls,

It's the atmosphere that makes these gigs. People are dancing. One of the big points about it all is that we remained as a brass band. A traditional brass band: i.e. we sit where we should sit; we wear what we should wear; we play the instruments we should play. And then you can see people like 'what's going on?' And then we play these Acid House anthems. They really love it. They tune into it like that. And they were all dancing. Barriers in front of the stage. It was crazy. Bjork was there. She was dancing in the aisles.⁴

* * *

Don't look at me like that.

Judith Butler and Sara Ahmed explain how subjects are vulnerable to the discourses that have come before them. Like gifts, wanted or not, explains Ahmed, regimes of recognition allow subjects to make sense of themselves and others. These discourses have colonial and heteronormative histories that shape the possibility for recognition. This historical and contextual distortion forms the kinds of diplomatic practices that emerged between Hamas and the EU. These performed modes of recognition, however, are not fixed or static, as subjects often struggle to make others fit, to feel satisfied with their reading of the Other (they know they got it

wrong), and subjects may also resist against the forms of recognition on offer. These sites of failure or tension provide space for difference to emerge.

The subjects encounter each other and call each other into being through a gaze of recognition. This gaze of recognition both engenders and annihilates the subjects.

Don't look at me like that.

Since 2006 Hamas has been invoked as a powerful symbol to control alternative discussions around Palestinian politics. Israeli, American, and European state and mainstream media actors use Hamas as a signifier to close down serious political discussions around the continued Occupation of Palestine. As such, it is crucial to interrogate how Hamas is provoked and interpellated through existing discourses, which shape the ways in which the movement's recognition is ordered.

This chapter tells of the various forms of recognition exchanged between European and Hamas actors post 2006. I describe how forms of recognition enacted within regimes of coloniality impart a distorted, perverse and reductive reading of the Other. I suggest that such readings involve various layers of denial; denial of alternative iterations of self, of the Other and of successful iterations of being. First, I take us through the appearance of the subject. I describe the grids of intelligibility through which subjects are marked and noticed by the social world. I also describe how these discursive readings *fail* to capture subjects, as such these forms of recognitions are denied. A discourse of terrorism circulates around the recognition of Hamas; this chapter addresses how its members respond to this interpellation and move to reject it. It describes the ways in which Hamas members know how a discourse of terrorism closes down alternative readings of the movement.

This chapter then witnesses the disappearance of the subject through the desire to make the subject recognisable within a dominant matrix of intelligibility. I address attempts by European actors to make Hamas conform to their own markers and criteria of legitimacy. This section comments on the inherited histories of success and belonging that continue to shape social and cultural spaces. It addresses the implications this inheritance entails for recognition. Here the chapter addresses the European subject's attachment to a certain version of the way in which they recognise the Other, which in turn shapes practices of diplomacy and recognition. It asks what is lost in the demand to know the Other through hegemonic modes of making intelligible.

In part three, the subject will re-appear by noticing where alternative versions of subjects *already* exist. This chapter discusses the fluidity and difference of subjects who fail to conform. This difference, I propose, should not be measured against or be given the opportunity to be included within a liberal European version of acceptance. Rather, such difference can be regarded as *already* an opportunity for political engagement. This chapter comments on the expectations demanded of Hamas, and it critiques the hierarchies of knowledge and identity this offering performs. The chapter ends by introducing queer aesthetic practices of dis-identification as a performative resistance against these regimes of making intelligible; "Disidentification resists the interpellating call of ideology that fixes a subject within the state power apparatus".⁵

Part one: making and refusing intelligibility

This is how you already see me

James Luna's *Artifact Piece*:

Performance artist James Luna put his body on display. James Luna put his body on display in a museum casing along with various artefacts he felt composed his being in the social and cultural space of contemporary America.⁶ Museum goers would circle the *Artifact Piece* display. They would circle the display and question the aliveness of the subject.

This body was placed in a museum casing *as its observers expect to see it*.

Luna's performance art challenges the discourses through which the 'native' is recognised. This performance forces the public onlooker to reflect on the processes of identification they typically call upon to make sense of the subject performed in the art piece.⁷ This work critiques how the North American public has idealised the indigenous history of the 'Native American', ignoring its vicious colonial past. 'This is how you would rather recognise me; as this body, in this costume, with these artefacts'. Through this powerful work Luna critiques the manner in which the native subject is undone by the cultural and political narratives imposed upon the native, and enacted by the observer. Luna puts these discourses on display through his live performance piece. Luna critiques how the native body is always already recognised.

Luna challenges the way in which his body is always already recognised.

In another art piece entitled *History of Luiseno: La Jolla Christmas*, Luna puts himself on display in a flashy, neon American Christmas setting. He sits there alone. He sits there alone, with a can of beer next to him.⁸ The lights are flashing. Luna is drunk.

Luna is aware of how American social and cultural discourses view the indigenous person. Luna's performance piece critiques how his body is recognised through American political and cultural narratives. He performs this recognition. He performs how the native subject hovers between narratives that idealise his cultural heritage and condemn his contemporary alcoholic, bad behaviour.

This is how you always already recognise me.

He puts these narratives on display for the audience and asks the audience to question the identity markers the observing subject uses to decipher and make sense of the native body. Luna's art brings (mis)conceptions to the forefront in order to challenge, mock, investigate, burrow how such conceptions (missed or not) form the way the public make sense of Indian bodies and how Indian bodies are always already performed through a colonial matrix of intelligibility.

This is how you see me, always already here; as this subject.

* * *

Hamas representative Etimad Tashawa shares the following story with me.

Tashawa describes already being recognised as a particular subject.

A Dutch journalist had come to conduct an interview with her. After the interview, both Tashawa and the journalist leave the building. Tashawa proceeds to get into her car to drive home. The Dutch journalist yells, "Wait, stop! I want to get a photo of a Hamas woman getting

into a car”.⁹

Jasbir Puar reminds us how forms of identification are sticky, in that they are read from the body and endowed on the body.¹⁰ The visiting Dutch journalist believes they already recognise Tashawa by calling forth an existing normative framing that the journalist uses to undo Tashawa. The journalist reads Tashawa through this matrix of intelligibility, which is already at work to recognise Tashawa *as a particular subject*. These discursive markers of identification were believed to already be present on Tashawa, and thus they were endowed upon Tashawa.

* * *

Perhaps we can begin to imagine how Hamas is already recognised. Perhaps we can begin to think of distinct discourses that float around Hamas’s intelligibility.

How do you think of Hamas? How do you perform a particular recognition of Hamas?

What images, events or identity markers come to the fore when I ask you to think of Hamas?

Perhaps write down a few words.

What if I show you this photo?



Figure 2.1 Hamas’s 25th Anniversary Celebration, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza.

Source: photograph by the author, 8 December, 2012.

What about this one?



Figure 2.2 Hamas's 25th Anniversary Celebration, Al-Azhar Park, Gaza.

Source: photograph by the author, 8 December, 2012.

Hamas is already recognised in a particular way. Hamas and its members are already encountered and recognised. Cultural and political discourses float around the possible recognition of Hamas. These discursive markers arrive, shaping a particular recognition of the movement and its member.

How do you recognise Hamas?

What processes did you go through in order to make sense of the photos above?

Which discourses allowed you to decipher the images shown?

Why did I select these photos? Did I continue to perform a particular mode of already recognising Hamas? Did the photos disturb, confirm, ignore existing images you already had of Hamas?

* * *

In *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, Puar discusses how identity recognition involves a temporal movement. Whereby 'the lesbian identity' already exists within the trope of a heterosexual discursive framing, which always already informs future encounters with the 'lesbian' based on the historical connotations of the idea of lesbianism. Calling upon Massumi's observations, Puar states that retrospective identity formation annihilates the complexity of the subject in exchange for an assumed stillness; a "retrospective ordering" that can only be working backwards from the movement's end. Massumi states that "gender, race and sexual orientation also emerge and back-form their reality.... Grids happen. So social and cultural determinations feed back into processes from which they arose".¹¹ Subjects rely on this retrospective ordering to recognise 'new subjects' through the grids of intelligibility already present in their social and political worlds.

* * *

As I prepared for my fieldtrip to the Gaza Strip in September, 2012, thoughts entered my mind and feelings entered my body; I was getting ready to go and meet members of Hamas. I was getting ready to go and meet Hamas leaders. I was getting ready to go and meet what I thought were some of the most conservative men in this world (which of course they are not). And I

didn't really fear this, or perhaps I did; or perhaps I just acted as if I did.
They told me to take my tongue ring out.

In preparation for my fieldwork I consulted various contacts. I consulted Palestinian friends and journalists. I discussed my project and my objectives with friends I could identify with, with friends I could identify with but who had experience in speaking with and writing on Hamas.
They all told me to take my tongue ring out.

They told me to dress conservatively. They told me to be polite and courteous.
They told me to keep my gaze down and be careful not to shake their hands.

So I borrowed long skirts and bought long shirts. This was my 'Hamas dress' for the next two months. The family I was staying with always knew when I had an interview with a Hamas leader:

The Hamas dress came out.

* * *

During my last interview with Hamas leader Khalil al-Haya, his friend and Hamas religious leader, Merwan Abu Ras, entered the room. Khalil al-Haya stood and kissed him. My translator, Majed Abusalama, stood and shook his hand. I couldn't be bothered to stand, bow my head and hold my hand to my heart to pre-empt his refusal to touch me. So I stayed where I was looking down at my paper. Majed said to me in English, "this is Merwan Abu Ras, father of a martyred son and leader in Hamas". I replied "I know; I already interviewed him".

Subjects are constantly playing into the normative assumptions of how they feel they are expected to act towards others. As subjects living in socially and culturally defined spaces, subjects take up and perform what they internalise as appropriate forms of being and doing. These performances *always already assume* what the space and the other subjects within the space expect.

"Bodies remember such histories, even when we forget them".¹²

Sara Ahmed,

If history is made 'out of' what is passed down, then history is made out of what is given not only in the sense of that which is 'always already' there before our arrival, but in the active sense of the gift: as a gift, history is what we receive upon arrival. Such an inheritance can be re-thought in terms of orientation: we inherit the reachability of some objects.¹³

When we encounter others we use this 'gift', wanted or not, authentic or not, it is bestowed upon us so that we may make sense of the world around us. Ahmed discusses the inheritance of whiteness, as an inherited history that once internalised by the subject, it forms their orientation to the world. The inherited history forms the subject's orientation to others. The inherited history shapes the way subjects recognise others. When I meet you I use the gift of a particular social history to make sense of you. My recognition of you is a performance of *my already internalised history of me, and of you.*

What 'inherited discursive gift(s)' shape how European actors encounter Hamas and

Palestinian politics? What Orientalist stories shape the encounter, first allowing the European to comment on the democratic procedures of Palestinian politics, to act surprised by their lack of violence, but then to hold onto a filter of terrorism through which to condition them.

‘We are not what you think we are’

In recognising Tashawa in this way the Dutch journalist enacted an image of Hamas women or perhaps Islamic women in general, but denied an alternative recognition of Tashawa. Tashawa moved to deny this conveyed recognition: “What they think that women in Gaza can’t drive?”¹⁴

* * *

Similar to Ahmed, Judith Butler reminds us that we are not in control of the discourses that shape regimes of intelligibility. We did not invent them. They were given to us. The discourses used to make sense of others are already there before the encounter, demarcating the possibility for recognition.

Butler poignantly remarks that:

 this isn’t a romantic idea that I speak and my words exceed me and immortalize me through time, it’s not so much that. It’s actually about being, as it were, always already lost to or always already expropriated by a past discourse that I do not control, and a future discourse that I do not control.¹⁵

The discourses inherited to make sense of ourselves, and others are not of our choosing. We can therefore begin to think how such discursive modes of making intelligible may be denied by those they move to define.

We are not what you think we are.

* * *

In my interviews with Hamas members and leaders they expressed their awareness of how they were recognised by the EU. These Hamas representatives moved to reject the way in which they were being recognised.

We are not what you think we are.

Hamas leader and Minister of Prisoners, Atallah Abu al-Sebah stated,

 Europe refuses political Islam and they got the idea that its terrorism. I think it’s because they were affected by the Zionism propaganda and it’s a very sad thing. They were supposed to know Hamas through Hamas itself not through the media. And if they would do that they will see how much our movement respects truth, rights and democracy, they’ll see that we’re not terrorists, we’re a civilized society, we’re well educated and this country is not a terrorist. Let me ask you how long you’ve been here in Gaza? Did you see any terrorism?¹⁶

Hamas member and public relations officer Ahmed Majdi stated,

The image of Hamas which Israel tried to spread out is that Hamas are terrorists and that they are just looking for blood. They didn't look at the other sides of Hamas, which call for tolerance and humanity. I wish the EU thinks again and again about listing Hamas.¹⁷

Hamas leader and figure in religious affairs Merwan Abu Ras stated,

I think they don't deal with us because they think that we are members of a terrorist movement. But they should discuss with us and know our point of view. And even the delegations that come to Gaza, all of them have the same idea that we are terrorists.¹⁸

Hamas member and youth leader Hani Meqbel stated,

Too many workshops discussed the way we should deal with the west. We are misunderstood. All of them receive some mistaken reports that tell them that we are terrorists. If you want to see the real image of us you have to meet us; you have to listen to us. We have been succeeding in too many fields: charity, resistance, financially etc. ... and this means that we are not terrorists.¹⁹

These accounts offered by various Hamas members relay an awareness of how a certain group, a group that dominates many elements of world politics and certainly imposes itself on Palestinian politics, views them. They are aware that the European diplomat views them as terrorists. They are conscious of how they are recognised through the discursive matrix of intelligibility, which exists between them and their observers. However, while these discursive framings are evident to all involved, they are denied by Hamas members, in a very overt fashion. *We are not what you think we are.*

Recognising me, in you

Subjects perform themselves in accordance with internalised expectations. They perform their encounters with others through these internalised expectations. The performed encounter between subjects is already subsumed by the particular discourses that exist between them. The performed recognition between subjects is already demarcated by the discursive expectations between them.

The subject is compelled to repeat the norms by which it is produced.²⁰

In *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection*, Butler observes the psychic internalisation of social and cultural discourses that demarcate the possibility for recognition. Subjects feel compelled to perform the ritualised discourses of their own intelligibility. Social and cultural discourses are internalised, shaping how subjects recognise themselves; *they also work to order how subjects recognise themselves in recognising others*. These defined social and political rituals of recognition are performed back out functioning to replicate ordered forms of making intelligible. The subject is compelled to maintain a certain discursive recognition of themselves through their recognition of the Other.

* * *

In the performance piece, *Take a picture with a real Indian*, Luna offers audience members the choice of taking a picture with him wearing 'ordinary clothes' or with him wearing traditional Indian regalia.²¹

Take a picture with a 'real' Indian.

This performance asks that audience members reflect on how they usually make sense of the native subject. It encourages the audience to investigate *which* discursive processes of making intelligible they use to encounter the native.²²

The performance piece perhaps illustrates *how the subject recognises themselves in performing a particular recognition of the native*. 'Take a picture with a real Indian. Which "Indian" do you want? Which "Indian" feels *real* to you?' It may invite the audience to reflect on the psychic internalisation of particular social, cultural and political discourses the audience member has embodied, and through which they perform a particular recognition of Luna.

* * *

Alastair Crooke, a former intermediary between the EU and Hamas offers a narration about the EU's encounter with Hamas. Crooke observes that many European leaders wished to develop a less militarised position towards Hamas, which would have allowed them to engage diplomatically with the movement. However, a militarised discourse arrived to control the way in which the EU felt it could recognise Hamas.²³

Crooke's distinct position within political circles offers him a particular insider's view on discussions taking place in the EU around the time of Hamas's election. In "Permanent Temporariness", *London Review of Books*, Crooke argues that the discursive weight of the 'War on Terror' played heavily on the EU's possible performed recognition of Hamas. The message was clear, from the Americans and the British, explains Crooke, "the Islamic resistance in Palestine was to be neutralised, and psychologically defeated".²⁴ "The Palestinian conflict was seen not as a problem in its own right, but as a subset of a war against 'extremism'", and Hamas was regarded as a virus to be eradicated.²⁵

Hamas was to be recognised as a virus to be eradicated.

The EU internalised and performed a particular discourse that it used to make Hamas intelligible. The EU encountered Hamas through these discourses, and in doing so the EU maintained a particular ordered form of recognising Hamas. Moreover, the EU performed a particular recognition of itself in recognising Hamas in this way. Perhaps it understood itself to be reacting to an idea of terrorism in a particular way, or to an idea of itself supporting the US in a particular way. Perhaps the EU felt compelled to reproduce this ritualised discourse in which the EU was already expected to recognise Hamas as an illegitimate terrorist movement. The EU was committed to performing this particular recognition itself through its recognition of Hamas.

The new commitment to counter-insurgency meant that there was no prospect of exploring the political possibilities of Hamas's win.²⁶

The new commitment to counter-insurgency denied the possibility of recognising Hamas otherwise.

Through this mode of recognition the EU denied possible alternative recognitions of Hamas. The

EU also denied possible alternative recognitions of itself.

* * *

Butler tells the following story in an interview:

One's desire formed as it were through cultural norms that dictate in part what will and will not be a loveable object, what will and will not be a legitimate form of love. To the extent that there are racial foreclosures on the production of the field of love, I think that there is culturally instituted melancholic because what that would mean is there is a class of persons whom I could never love or for whom it would be unthinkable for me to love, and they are constituted essentially as unthinkable, the unlovable, the ungrievable, and that then institutes a form of melancholia which is culturally pervasive, a strange ungrievability.²⁷

Perhaps there are particular foreclosures on the possible recognitions the EU could perform of Hamas. There are particular prohibited desires involved in the EU's recognition of Hamas. The EU's attachment to a particular militarised recognition of Hamas denied possible alternative recognition of itself and of Hamas.

The anxious denial of a kiss

Can we think of diplomatic representatives in this way? As subjects who are denied the possibility to love another as they wish? I say, 'yes we must!'

There is a dominant international political culture, which through repeated rituals shapes subjects and fashions how the encounter between them can be done. I suggest there may be a melancholic attachment to a recognition of one's self which already implies a denial of other versions of the self and other versions of the other. In order for the EU to fulfil itself to themselves they must react to Hamas in a particular way. They perform their own desire to know Hamas and perform a knowledge, however fleeting over Palestinian politics. This is an anxious performance, as alternative readings of Hamas attempt to filter in. They must deny possible alternative recognitions of Hamas in order to maintain the already structured boundaries of who the EU is and is allowed to love, to sympathise with, to recognise. This particular ordering upholds an internalised dominant discourse of who the EU representative recognises themselves to be. This anxious attachment to this mode of recognition denies the possibility of an alternative encounter between Hamas and the EU. Hamas becomes a substitute to disavow recognition of Palestinian resistance and suffering. This reading is anxiously held onto, for if it is lost, it means the EU institutional actor must actually recognise the pain and loss of the Other.

* * *

*I will be destroyed if I love in that way.*²⁸

The subject performs the reproduction of themselves, with all its losses and ungrievable objects of loss, with all its rage and melancholy. The subject performs this denied alternative recognition of themselves. The subject performs this denied alternative recognition of the Other. Subjects continue to reproduce themselves (and as such others) in a way which continues to reaffirm a particular ordered discourses of intelligibility. Subjects develop anxious attachments to ritualised

ways of recognising themselves in recognising others, whereby an attempt to challenge this is regarded as to amount to the death of the subject.

*I will be destroyed if I love in that way.*²⁹

* * *

Crooke continues with his observations on EU deliberations around the time of the Palestinian legislative elections.

The changing dynamic in EU thinking was made very clear to me one day in 2007, when I had a meeting with various EU officials, all of whom expressed deep misgivings about the course of EU policy but despaired of convincing any member states to change direction. Later the same day, Javier Solana, then the EU foreign policy chief, gave a new and different reason for following the US line. When I suggested that the EU could not endlessly continue to support the regional status quo but must acknowledge new forces, Solana asked me what at the time seemed an odd question: “But if we were to do that, what would happen to my friend Hanan Ashrawi? Would she continue to be able to wear lipstick, and to enjoy an occasional glass of wine?” It was my first intimation of Europe’s feeling of its own vulnerability.³⁰

My first intimation of Europe’s feeling of its own vulnerability.

If we recognise Hamas in another way ... *but if we do that ...*

Is the EU denying a possible alternative recognition of Hamas? Is the EU denying a possible alternative recognition of Hamas through the EU’s anxious attachment to their own idea of a European identity?

* * *

Palestinian political analyst Atef Abu Saif offered me the following analogy in his playful description of Hamas’s political deliberations.

You know sometimes you want to do something but you are afraid ... you are afraid of the people seeing you – like kissing in the pub ... you get drunk and ... this is like Hamas, they want to do something, but they are afraid.³¹

Why would you be afraid that someone may see you drunk, kissing in the pub?

You are most likely afraid of what your observer may think of you. As such there is already an internalised idea of the social rituals that demarcate this scenario. These rituals are performative of the encounter, whereby you embody the potential connotations that the action of kissing may have.

So what happens? You embody the existing expectations of your performance, which already involve assumptions of how others might recognise you. There is therefore a disciplining of the self within demarcated social and political interactions. This disciplined self continues to perform these ritualised expectations and as such, maintain a certain order of recognition. This order of

recognition, however, involves various layers of denial: a denied version of oneself who may want to kiss the other and a denied version of the onlooker, who may not care that you are kissing the other. And, of course, the subject who never gets kissed.

Part two: invisibility through desire

The words of a Palestinian poet:

No, I don't want to normalize with you. I don't want to hug, have coffee, talk it out, break bread, sit around the campfire, eat s'mores and gush about how we're all the same. [...] I will not fight for your privilege, nor will I seek to normalize it. [...] In case you missed the hint, I don't want to pretend all is okay. [...] Did I hurt your feelings? Should we hug after the show?³²

The words of an American gay black drag performer:

This is white America. Any other nationality that is not of the white sect knows this and accepts dis to the day they die. That is everybody's dream and ambition as a minority to live and look as well as a white person. It is pictured as being in America. Every medium you have from TV, to magazines, to movies, to films I mean the biggest things minorities watch is Dynasty and the Cobbies, All My Children, soap operas. Everybody have a million dollar bracket. When they show you a commercial for Honeygramb, to Crest, to Lesstoil, or Pinesol, everybody's in their own home. The little kids with Fisherprice toys they are not in no concrete playground, they're riding around the lawn; the pool is in the back. This is white America. And when it come to the minorities, especially black, we as a people for the past 400 years is the greatest example of behaviour modification in the history of civilisation. We have had everything taken away from us and yet we have all learned how to survive. That is why in the ballroom circuit it is so obvious that if you have captured the great white way of living, or looking, or dressing, or speaking, you is a marvel.³³

The words of the Palestinian Minister of Health:

There were always sub-official relations. There were always contacts here in Gaza with some European countries, most of it was not open- non-official. But sometimes there were official meetings. Like with Russia. And with Turkey, Switzerland. There was always a kind of dialogue, but most of the time it was non-official and most of the time it was not trying to hear the position of Hamas. But to dictate policies. They came with already taken decisions: you have to renounce violence, recognise Israel and follow all existing agreements. I think it was more or less a continued policy of trying to contain Hamas.³⁴

'Then how should I look at you?'

Subjects desire to be recognised. Subjects desire to be recognised in a particular way by others. In this section, we will observe how subjects attempt to manoeuvre themselves into recognisable forms. We will observe how subjects attempt to manoeuvre others into recognisable forms. But what happens to the subject as it manoeuvres itself into particular recognisable forms? Does the subject disappear into the grid of intelligibility?

The kiss never takes place. The subjects observed each other and acted correspondingly.

* * *

Don't look at me like that
Then how should I look at you?

The observed desires to be recognised as something else. They recognise the observer looking at them and undoing them in a particular fashion, which they deny.

'We are not what you think we are'.

However, what sort of recognition is the observed searching for? And, why are they even requesting a form of recognition from the observer?

* * *

As I prepared for my encounters with Hamas leaders, friends and colleagues told me to take out my tongue ring.

But if I take my tongue ring out then who do I become?

I was told to behave and present myself in a particular way so that Hamas interviewees would feel comfortable with me. But if I act polite, courteous, timid, if I cover my head and keep my eyes down then what happens to me? Do I become an invisible subject within the grids of this defined discursive interaction?

I wrote the following words in my journal before leaving for Gaza. *How does it work to be required to be somebody else, to perform somebody else in order to be recognised? And if I perform this someone else then what happens to the other me? And if I perform this somebody else than what kind of normative structures is my performance preserving?*

Fitting in

As I listened to my interviews from Gaza over again I could hear my own voice repeating the questions: "Did you show signs of flexibility towards the EU?" "Did you demonstrate your capacity to engage in politics?" In these meetings I continuously hunted for signs that through or after the elections there was the possibility that Hamas could change. "Did you demonstrate to the EU observers that you were willing to co-operate?"

From my research into Hamas I already knew that they had; I already knew about the cease of violent action prior to the elections. I already knew about the hudna (truce) affirmed and kept by Hamas prior to the elections. I had already read Hamas's political party, Change and Reform's election manifesto, which Khaled Hroub describes as being Hamas's most encompassing political platform. "It could be said that the document was designed to carry out exactly the kinds of reforms that had been demanded by Western governments and financial institutions".³⁵

Yet my questioning of Hamas leadership demanded further reassurance, that yes indeed they were flexible; that yes indeed Hamas were capable of engaging in 'normal politics'. I am still not sure what I was looking for in this questioning. What kind of subject was I looking for in my encounters with Hamas? What reassurances was I in need of finding? And what performance of myself, and existing discourses of recognition did I enact?

Please be this [...]; I need to see you as this [...].

* * *

Stephen Greer, in *Contemporary British Queer Performance*, offers a discussion on how identities are generated and reaffirmed through an encounter with the community. Greer observes how an identity is noticed, marked, and accepted, or not accepted, in relation to the social and cultural discourses that exist between a subject's identity formation and the community in which this process unfolds. The encounter between the subject and the community, and the process of recognition are already defined by the social apparatus between them. Greer is focusing on the act of 'coming out'. A 'coming out' discursive format arrives into an already formed heterosexual matrix of intelligibility. Whereby the gay identity is still marked as that which is otherwise not normal, once hidden and therefore requires a 'coming out' to be noticed and made intelligible within the heterosexual regulative discourse. Further to this, Greer observes how the act of 'coming out' may continue to beg a form of acceptance from a communal space. Greer says, what appears as an act of agency, is still marked by the manner in which the 'coming out' encounters those upon whom acceptance still hangs.³⁶ Identities and how these identities are performed and recognised continue to be structured around dominant discourses of heteronormativity. These dominant discourses continue to demand a certain 'fitting into', and this 'fitting into' is acted out through the performance of 'coming out'.

* * *

Palestinian political analyst Abu Saif offers the following story,

Newly elected Palestinian Foreign Minister, Mahmoud al-Zahar wanders the halls of a diplomatic space. He is in a space where he may run into other diplomatic figures. He knows he is supposed to try to talk to the Spanish foreign minister, who is also wandering these halls. He knows what sort of role he is supposed to perform in order to fulfill his diplomatic requirements. He is supposed to meet and engage in a proper diplomatic conversation with these other political figures. He anxiously attempts to perform this role.³⁷

There is a desire to be recognised by these diplomatic figures, as a fulfilment of the ritual of being a diplomatic representative. Acceptance still hangs on being able to fit into a particular mode of recognition, to be able to fit into the position of the accepted diplomatic figure.

From my time in Gaza, I remember several conversations concerning the peculiarity of Hamas's decision to select Mahmoud al-Zahar as Foreign Minister. Al-Zahar is one of Hamas's most conservative and radical leaders.

Abu Saif said to me "why would [Hamas] select someone who cannot even speak English".³⁸

I already knew from my own interview with al-Zahar, that indeed he had the most distinguished English out of all the Hamas leaders I met.

However, why are we using this as a judge of his acceptability?

What sort of discourses form the critique of why Hamas would select al-Zahar as Foreign Minister? What form of 'fitting in' is being demanded?

* * *

Lynda Hart recalls the 1990 performance *Anniversary Waltz* by the theatre duo Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw.³⁹

A big band was playing soft music. The audience had already been ushered to their seats and had been offered a piece of anniversary cake. The space was decorated with pink and lavender balloons and “the cabaret tables were adorned with stand-up bride and groom paper dolls on which Lois’s and Peggy’s faces were superimposed”.⁴⁰

*What were these photographed faces superimposed onto the bride-groom doing?
What story were they trying to tell? What story did they fail to tell?*

The audience sat, drank and ate until the comfort of the space was disturbed by the presence of Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw dressed in full wedding regalia.

Hart remembers,

as the lights began to dim, we heard the words of a wedding ceremony in progress – “Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together in the eyes of god to witness this man and this woman joined in the bond of holy matrimony”.⁴¹

But, of course, this performed wedding was not taking place in a church, the normal location for the eyes of god. And the two characters celebrating their love, while dressed in drag, were not those bodies typically associated with the ideal marriage.

This was a celebration of lesbian love.

* * *

Did this performance work to disturb a particular dominant discourse? Did this performed marriage trouble the heteronormative framing? Or did it work to reconfirm the dominant narrative that marriage remains the formal avowal of one’s love? Some critics of the performance felt that Shaw and Weaver had “normalized” lesbianism, in that “they made it seem as familiar as a heterosexual relationship of a particular type”.⁴²

Does gay marriage subsume gay bodies and gay love into a heteronormative matrix of intelligibility? Does the liberal gay rights agenda, which wishes to present the sameness between heterosexual and homosexual lives, promote a disappearance of the otherwise queer subject? By superimposing Lois and Peggy’s face onto the bride-groom model do their lesbian bodies disappear (again) into a sea of heteronormative normalcy?

Hart suggests that perhaps “within these strategies ‘lesbian’ has no content outside the representation of heterosexuality, which remains the norm, the neutral, substantive position that makes marginal position visible only as alterity”.⁴³ When the lesbian body encounters the matrix of heteronormative legitimacy it *struggles* to perform itself in a way that manoeuvres around this structured framing. The norms of heterosexuality continue to form the recognition of the queer body and continue to define the ways in which it belongs or does not belong. The subject struggles to be recognised in a way that does not relate to those normative and discursive structures that still dominate.

* * *

Ahmed Yousuf, Hamas leader and advisor to the Palestinian Prime Minister, wrote a letter to the US Secretary of State, Condoleezza Rice.

This letter seeks a particular kind of recognition. It asks for recognition for the Palestinian cause. It asks for the recognition of Hamas's legitimate representation of this cause. The letter speaks in a diplomatic tone. It inhabits the rituals of diplomacy and it asks for recognition.

How do we read the letter and make sense of its language? Does it appeal to, relate to particular norms of legitimacy in the diplomatic space? In what ways does it seem not to belong?

Lois Weaver and Peggy Shaw superimposed their faces onto the model of the bride and groom. Weaver and Shaw expressed their love through a performance of a marriage.

Ahmed Yousuf wrote a letter to the US Secretary of State. Yousuf asked for recognition of the legitimacy of the Palestinian struggle. Yousuf asks for recognition of the legitimacy of Hamas.

In what way does Hamas struggle to be recognised beyond those dominant discursive structures which are still present in international diplomacy?

In what way do ideas of gay marriage struggle to be recognised beyond dominant discourses which continue to associate marriage with heterosexual love?

*The Honourable Secretary of State
Ms. Condoleezza Rice
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520*

Dear Secretary Rice,

I am writing to you in light of the conference in Annapolis to fulfil our obligations to the Palestinian voters who have overwhelmingly legitimized our governance. Your administration cannot want peace more than the Palestinian people want and need peace. However, peace initiatives and conferences are ineffectual if the basic ingredients for success are not present. Meaningful steps toward a resolution cannot take place while the legitimacy of the elected government in Palestine continues to be ignored by your administration. Not only is the policy to isolate Hamas unethical it is ineffectual as well. Your administration ignores the realities on the ground. The Change and Reform Party, the name of the new political party we formed for the Palestinian elections, won an overwhelming majority in the occupied territories. To pretend otherwise is not only futile but detrimental to US interests in the region for many years to come and likely to add to the anti-American sentiment throughout the Middle East and the Muslim world. You cannot preach about exporting democracy in Iraq and Afghanistan and ignore the democratic process in Palestine.

Many people make the mistake of presuming that we have some ideological aversion to making peace. Quite the opposite; we have consistently offered dialogue with the US and the EU to try and resolve the very issues that you are trying to deal with in Annapolis. Our conflict with the Israelis is a grievance-based conflict. We want to end the occupation of our land and the systematic human rights abuses that our people suffer from daily. We do not have any ideological problems with living side by side with Christians and Jews. When we have not been occupied we have successfully done this for thousands of years. However, they cannot live in peace and security in a land that was usurped. Indeed if you asked a Jewish person where they would have been safest to live over the last two millennia, with Arabs or Europeans, the answer would be obvious. Nor do we have any ideological arguments with the West. We are not anti-American, anti-European or anti-anyone. The root of the problem which neither Israel nor the US is willing to acknowledge, let alone address, is the dispossession of the Palestinian people upon the creation in their homeland of Israel in 1948.

It would come as no surprise to us if this letter were to be met with dismissal, in keeping with this administration's policy of not dealing with 'terrorists', despite the fact that we entered the democratic process and held a unilateral ceasefire of our own for over two years. But how do you think the Arab and Muslim worlds react to this American hypocrisy? Even our growing ranks of western supporters complain about US narrow-mindedness and the bullying of its allies to tow the American line. The State of Department should be looking for new solutions instead of reinforcing old stereotypes. On a personal note we found it amusing that a black person empathizes with Israeli deaths on the one hand and Palestinian segregation on the other if media reports are accurate. It is a military occupation Ms. Rice. [...]⁴⁴

Dr. Ahmed Yousuf is a Senior Political Advisor at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Gaza; he is top advisor to Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh.

Particular discourses continue to control the space in which 'acceptance still hangs'.

Particular hierarchies still control this space to which Hamas seeks legitimacy. There is a particular 'community' to which Yousuf is appealing to be recognised as a legitimate subject; a particular community upon which 'acceptance still hangs'.

Be like this ... and then disappear(!?)

Palestinian political analyst and advisor to the government Atef Abu Saif,

I remember; I was working in the foreign office when al-Zahar was foreign minister. He asked me how do Europeans think? I told him, when you talk to Europeans, don't talk about the crusades ... You can't talk to these foreign powers, Spain, Greece about The Crusades if you want their support.⁴⁵

When you go and visit Hamas you can't wear tight blue pants.

When you are a politician in the 'international' diplomatic space, you can't talk about The Crusades.

These actions and (non)-actions exist in a discursive space defined by acceptability and non-acceptability. The defining boundaries of recognising that which is acceptable and that which is not are not arbitrary. These processes of recognising replicate dominant discourses of legitimacy. Butler and Foucault observe that a regulatory ideal functions to demarcate acceptable bodies and non-acceptable bodies; to demarcate legitimate ways of life and non-legitimate ways of life. A certain regimented voice is marking the boundaries of legitimacy.

* * *

Through Jenny Livingston's 1990 documentary *Paris is Burning*⁴⁶ we are given the opportunity to meet individuals who know too well the boundaries of acceptability in American social and cultural discourses. The lives narrated in this documentary reveal a desire to be recognised; they display a desire to fit in (but also perhaps not; I can't really know).

Livingston takes us to Harlem, New York. Livingston takes us to a particular drag scene in Harlem, New York. We meet young coloured bodies. We meet transgender bodies. We meet Peppa Labeija. We meet Venus Xtravaganza. We meet Dorian Corey. We meet Willi Ninja. We meet Octavia Saint Laurent. We meet bodies who struggle to be recognised as those who belong. In the 'ballroom', through the drag performance, these bodies may perform that which does belong.

Dorian Corey discusses a scene in the drag ball, the 1980s male executive.

In a ballroom you can be anything you want. You are not really an executive but you are looking like an executive. And therefore you are showing the straight world that I can be an executive. If I had the opportunity I could be one because I can look like one.⁴⁷

Through their drag performances the young transgender bodies of various minorities perform alternative recognitions of themselves. These bodies, dressed in spectacular outfits, often perform fantasies of other versions of themselves; ones which may be accepted. These bodies are perhaps performing a desire to be accepted.

The ballroom tells me that I'm somebody. But when ballroom is over and you come home

you have to convince yourself you are somebody.⁴⁸

In the documentary Livingston asks some of the performers about their dreams and aspirations for their futures.

Octavia Saint Laurent shares her dreams about her ideal future, “I want to live a normal happy life; whether it is being married and adopting children or being famous and rich”.⁴⁹

Venus Xtravaganza shares hers,

I want a car; I want to be with a man I love; I want a nice home away from New York up to Pickhills or maybe Florida. (I want my sex change). I want to get married in church in white.⁵⁰

What do these attempts to belong and be recognised as successful reveal? The subjects who inhabit these uneasy lives struggle to belong to a world; a social world already demarcated by what counts as being successful. As such, these subjects continue to recognise their ways of being with regards to the demarcated social world around them. This social world announces before them what it means to belong and these subjects have embodied these expectations in recognising their legitimacy in the world.

This is white America. And when it come to the minorities, especially black, we as a people for the past 400 years is the greatest example of behaviour modification in the history of civilisation.⁵¹

So what happens to those other ways of living? What happens to those other ways of being and doing? As these subjects embody dominant discourses of what it means to be successful and they recognise themselves through these discourses, what happens to those other versions of the subject?

This is white America; if you have captured the great white way of living, or looking, or dressing, or speaking, you is a marvel.⁵²

* * *

In Ahmed’s observations on “passing” Ahmed provides a similar caution to Greer in asking the following question, “how do ambiguous bodies get read in a way which further supports the enunciative power of those who are telling the difference?”⁵³ Ahmed is discussing the black body that attempts to pass as white. The attempt to pass involves strategies and techniques such as alterations in hair, fashion, speech and style in order to approximate (as close as possible) to an image that resides in a discursive normative space of ‘what it means to be white’.⁵⁴ The act of passing already points to social differentiations within cultural and social spaces, whereby there is something called whiteness that subjects attempt and want to take up and perform.

While Ahmed does not reject the potential for resistance in mimesis she alerts to the possibility that passing may support the idea that there are identity markers which are more desirable and the process of passing is still marked by structures of power.

Ahmed remarks,

the violence of the ‘copy’ which undercuts the originality and authority of the original,

demonstrating that the identity of the original is already stolen, remains read and seen through the apparatuses of knowledge and vision *that inform colonial privilege*.⁵⁵

Successfully passing continues to reinforce a particular colonial privilege.

* * *

‘ Hamas needs to work on its PR ’

‘ Hamas needs to work on its PR ’.

This is a comment I hear often with regards to how Hamas, or Palestinians in general, should present themselves to the media, or how they should perform themselves to their Western observers.

Hamas needs to work on its PR.

Why? So others (in the West) can relate to it better and perhaps even sympathise with it?

Hamas needs to work on its PR, so that Hamas may successfully pass?

What kind of performance does this statement desire to see?

What does this statement reveal about the orders of power and hierarchies that continue to demarcate the encounter between Hamas and its external observers?

And if Hamas performs accordingly, in order to fit in, then does Hamas simply disappear into those grids of acceptability promulgated by the Western voice?

And then what happens to the otherwise Hamas?

If the subject is forced to fit in then what happens to the otherwise subject?

* * *

In my interview with Hamas founder and Minister of Interior Security, Ismail al-Ashgar, he made the following comment, “With the EU, what do they want us to do, have green eyes or blue eyes and change our clothes and change our skin”.⁵⁶

I think to myself; ‘yes this would probably help’.

Not necessarily because we could therefore simply see the Other as a Western subject; but perhaps we could reaffirm *that they are like us*. We could confirm to ourselves that they too desire the same things as us. In altering the subject into a more acceptable form I can reassure my own aspirations in the world. To see the Other through your own regimes of intelligibility reaffirms the world to yourself.

* * *

Was it this desire that drove my questions of Hamas leaders; a desire to find in them a version of me?

Did you show the EU you were flexible?

Did you demonstrate you were willing to compromise?

A desire for them to fulfil what I already wanted them to be. A desire for them to uphold my own expectations of who I thought they should be. A desire to see that they shared my own

expectations of them, so that I could confirm myself to myself.

* * *

In Butler's discussion surrounding the transgender performance of Brandon in the 1999 film, *Boys Don't Cry*, Butler observes the play on desire and identity in Brandon's taking up of the boy form in order to pursue their desire of the female and to be the object of desire of the female. When the two bodies are joined in sex, Butler exposes the following problematic expectation of the viewer:

Would it be easier for us if we were to ask whether the lesbian who only makes love using her dildo to penetrate her girlfriend, whose sexuality is so fully scripted by apparent heterosexuality that no other relation is possible.⁵⁷

Butler wonders whether the viewer attempts to impose their own heteronormative desire upon the bodies observed. The viewer attempts to locate their own recognition of a fulfilled sexual encounter on those bodies that are regarded as perhaps already not fitting in.

A particular dominant discourse continues to work upon the recognition of those who appear to challenge the matrix of intelligibility. A particular fitting in is still requested.

* * *

But if this 'fitting in' takes place, what happens to the other versions of the subject? Is the otherwise subject slotted back into a particular order? Where a recognition of what is there, is regarded as a failure, or not seen at all.

The words of Palestinian poet, Rafeef Ziadah:

Today, my body was a TV'd massacre that had to fit into sound-bites and word limits filled enough with statistics to counter measured response.

And I perfected my English and I learned my UN resolutions.

But still, he asked me, Ms. Ziadah, don't you think that everything would be resolved if you would just stop teaching so much hatred to your children?⁵⁸

Part three: re-appearing through difference

*Don't look at me like that.
Then how should I look at you.
Look at me otherwise.*

* * *

Subjects move to deny being recognised through particular discourses that reduce them to the grids of a normative matrix of intelligibility. The subject's desire to be recognised, and their desire to recognise others often force subjects back into dominant discursive framings of legitimacy.

But look at me otherwise.

Perhaps there is a way to invite the subject back. Perhaps there is a way to invite the subject back without demanding that it conform to dominant grids of intelligibility in order to be recognised. Perhaps there is a way to remark subjects without marking them; to see without undoing; to recognise without making sense.

Is there a way for the EU to encounter Hamas without demanding that Hamas conform to the EU's discourse of legitimacy? Is there a way for the EU to recognise an alternative subject; an alternative Hamas? Is there a way to read Palestinian politics in a way that does not demand that they conform to a European regime of discipline and suitability?

Who else may be going on?

Queer subjects already exists in the social world; however their identity continues to be subsumed by regulatory discursive framings. These repeated and regulated modes of encountering and recognising attempt to undo and redo the queer subject in accordance with dominant assumptions and stereotypes.

Puar challenges the prevalent thinking on how "regardless of complex affinities with Islam, Arab nation-states, and Muslim identity, the agency of all queer Muslims is invariably evaluated through the regulatory apparatus of queer liberal secularity".⁵⁹ Puar argues that this Western liberal thinking reproduces an apolitical reading of what might be possible in the Islamic world, whereby the "the queer agential subject can only ever be fathomed outside the norming constrictions of religion".⁶⁰

Within this liberal gay rights discourse Islam is regenerated as monolithic, and is portrayed as unyielding and less amenable to homosexuality than Christianity or Judaism. The Muslim gay body is recognised as already oppressed by culture and faith through these discourses. The gay Muslim is recognised as oppressed and in need of rescuing.

Puar explains that, "my interest is not to determine the truth or falsity of these claims, but to examine the resilience and stranglehold of this discourse, its operating logic, the myths and realities it manufactures".⁶¹

* * *

Khalil al-Haya, a senior Hamas official, shares the following story with me,

Hamas gave lots of flexibility in lots of places. We had things that were strategic and things that were fixed. For example, we had that programme with all the factions of Gaza and Palestine, we agreed for it. And until now the EU did not catch this initiative, and see that Hamas was already very flexible. And we have the agreements with Israel with the other parties and we accept 1967 borders, with the right to return. And this is big.⁶²

Khalil al-Haya continues,

But this did not affect them; it did not move them. Because they know that Hamas will not recognise Israel. We have this flexibility, even when they ask us about human rights, about gender – about everything, we were flexible; giving them answers that they wanted, within the Islamic community/vision. The delegations that came were very surprised to see Hamas and the flexibility of Hamas. They thought that it was more fundamentalist; but then they saw.⁶³

Hamas exists as a particular subject. We see through al-Haya's words, that it is performing itself in relation to particular discourses. It presents itself in relation to ideas of human rights, gender rights; it presents itself in relation to a desire to be recognised as being flexible. Is there a way to recognise Hamas's desire to be recognised without forcing it back into a dominant Western discourse of acceptance and legitimacy?

Perhaps Hamas already exists as an otherwise subject.

* * *

The liberal discourse loves to subsume difference into its grids of acceptable intelligibility. Butler and Athanasiou observe how the liberal discourse functions to reproduce unequal regimes of power and imaginaries of cohesion. Under the liberal discourse of multiculturalism

indigenous subjects [for example] are called on to perform an authentic self-identity of prenational, 'traditional' cultural difference ('provided [they] ... are not to repugnant') as the ground for a viable or felicitous native title claim and in exchange for the nation's recognition and the state's reparative legislation.⁶⁴

The liberal discourse loves to perform itself as one of openness and acceptance, while it continues to reproduce those forms of life that are to be affirmed and those which are to be denied. The gay Muslim body is offered recognition within the liberal discourse, but only as far as the subject is detached from an otherwise sectarian regime.

The EU is willing to accept Hamas, if Hamas acquiesces to the EU's idea of legitimacy. This discourse ignores the possibility that Hamas may already perform different iterations of legitimacy. This discourse ignores the idea that Hamas may exist as an alternative kind of subject, which escapes the EU's matrix of intelligibility, which escapes the EU's discourse of legitimacy.

* * *

Ahmed reminds us that the black body is forced into modes of recognition that reproduce the dominant narrative of a white version of belonging and success. Does this mean that every appeal to a seemingly dominant form of success entails that the subject must be subsumed into a white form of wanting? If the gay couple desires marriage does this mean that they are necessarily reproducing a heteronormative avowal of love?

Like Puar I wish to show the resilience and stranglehold of particular discourses. Diplomatic spaces dominated by western voices demand that subjects conform in order to be recognised as legitimate actors. I also wish to show, however, the possibility for an alternative mode of recognition. Perhaps Hamas may be recognised without demanding that it conform to a particular dominant discourse of acceptability. There may be a way to listen to how the Other presents itself, and presents its own version of recognition.

* * *

The following is a conversation between me and Hamas representative, Ahmed Yousuf.

I asked, “What would happen if they [EU representatives] had decided to be more open?”

Yousuf responded,

They would have a better understanding of Hamas and its issues. If we sit and talk face to face and come to a common ground then we can develop dialogue to more steps forward. But if we do not talk to each other and keep with accusation then this complicates the relations. Not all the Palestinian people are Fatah, Hamas. There are people from different affiliations. Why punish everyone for Hamas?

He continued,

We must discuss what issues you have reservation about? Where we abided or violated international law – I think this will enhance the relation and make Hamas more discipline and improve relations with the international community.⁶⁵

What is it that Hamas is asking for? How does Hamas wish to be recognised?

The space of encounter between the EU representative and the Hamas official is still demarcated by particular hierarchies. The encounter, through which Hamas is asking to be recognised has a particular historicity, and it is still marked by an imposing discursive regime of acceptability. While Hamas must negotiate its recognition in relation to these discourses, I believe that we may observe how Hamas *is performing itself*. We may observe how Hamas is performing its own desire to be recognised in its own way.

* * *

In Butler and Athansiou’s discussion on the possibility for subjects to be recognised without being further operated upon or subsumed by liberal forms of ordering, Athanasiou poses the following question, “is there a way that non-normative subjects, lives, and intimate ties could be legally, culturally, and affectively recognized but also lived beyond the normative propriety and exclusionary proprietariness that govern the operations of liberal recognition?”⁶⁶ Athanasiou further proclaims that,

to ask these questions is not to demand that liberalism open up its horizon of encompassment and live up to its promises and ideals, but rather to allow for the possibility of exposing the regulatory forces that cohere and sustain these ideals.⁶⁷

In working out this problematique and the possibilities within it the authors explore the space for radical strategies of resignification and subversion. In this effort Butler and Athansiou point to an unsettling of the norms that *already exist to demarcate the normal*; as such the objective is to disturb “the normalizing power of both the law and kinship *as always already heteronormative*”.⁶⁸

May we conclude that discourses of peace, pragmatism and human rights *do not belong* to those European figures observing Hamas?

The discourse of peace does not belong to the European observer

My mother is a drag queen.⁶⁹

Within the ‘ballroom’ circuit represented in Livingston’s documentary young, gay black individuals find themselves without family, without money, without social support. These bodies move to (re)create the family structure within the trans-space of the ballroom. They move to (re)create particular social bonds. Within their own social space they (re)create the house under the care of a mother. Peppa Labeija, an older and more senior drag artist, acts as a caregiver and mother to the younger and more fragile persons of the ball circuit. They (re) create a family in a house, the House of Labeija. Willi Ninja is the mother of the House of Ninja.

The home does not have to belong to the white, heterosexual, nuclear family.

* * *

In the 2009 film *Strella* directed by Panos Koutras, Butler and Athansiou locate a scenario that not only demonstrates how discursive strategies fail to capture diverging subjects. It also exposes how normalised framings, which attempt to demarcate acceptable subjects, are as always already failing.

In *Strella* a transgender person (once man and now woman) encounters her father. The two subjects have a love affair. The father is not aware of the former identity of his partner. When the secret is exposed the audience is prepared for tragedy, says Athansiou. However,

the riveting scene of the revelation of the transgender secret – a scene that plays cinematographically with the light and shadows, bodies and spectres – de-mythifies and re-mythifies a desire for recognition that lays bare the limits of the representable and effaceable and defies the elementary structures of kinship intelligibility.⁷⁰

Butler and Athansiou write that the scene of revelation does not emerge as a liberal calculation of being able to open up its recognition and acceptance to other forms of bodies and types of desires. Rather, the expression and doing of desire, and the different subject relations presented through the love affair disturb the primary laws of kinship and desire in the first place. The primary laws of relationality already embody losses. The encounters of the love affair in the film attempt to recover these losses; “it seems from the start the taboo is already broken and that

the recovery of what is lost is most primary”.⁷¹

* * *

Regulating European discourses that work to make sense of Palestinian politics, and recognise certain subjects as legitimate or not are already failing.

The discourse of peace and acceptance, through which the EU attempts to classify and categorise Hamas, is already failing. Hamas is already performing itself as an otherwise subject. Hamas is already uttering its desire to be recognised as a pragmatic and flexible actor. Hamas does not need to be made acceptable through the EU’s discursive recognition of legitimacy.

The discourse of peace does not belong to the EU.

Marriage does not have to belong to the heterosexual.

The strategies of recognition, which work to present Hamas as unyielding, uncompromising and essentially violent, are perhaps already failing. As such, Hamas’s desire to be recognised as an otherwise subject does not have to be regarded as a desire to fit into the discourse which already encounters it as a violent terrorist movement. Hamas is already there, performing itself as a different kind of subject. Perhaps a subject that the EU can still decide to engage with. Perhaps a subject that the EU can still recognise as being open to dialogue; but this move of recognition does not have to disappear Hamas back into the dominating grids of the EU’s idea of legitimacy.

Space for difference to emerge

Despite continuous attempts to manoeuvre ourselves and others into the grids of acceptable intelligibility, spaces for difference are always present. While we remain attached to those discourses that have given shape to our intelligibility, there may exist the possibility of performing recognition otherwise. We may have the opportunity to perform ourselves recognising ourselves differently. We may have the opportunity to perform our recognition of others differently.

Now a decade after the 2006 elections (at the time of writing) Hamas continues to be upheld within many Western diplomatic framings as a sign of the failure of Palestinian politics. Hamas is interpellated as the uncontrollable violence of the Other. This reading involves an Orientalist performance of knowledge over the Other, and of the Palestinian right to perform their own resistance.

Is it possible that the European observer may just not know or understand?

* * *

Butler utters the following,

The norms by which I recognize another or, indeed, myself are not mine alone. They function to the extent that they are social, exceeding every dyadic exchange that they condition. Their sociality, however, can be understood neither as structuralist totality nor as a transcendental or quasitranscendental invariability. Some would doubtless argue that norms must already be in place for recognition to become possible, and there is surely truth in such a claim. It is also true that certain practices of recognitions, or indeed, certain breakdowns in the practices of recognition *mark a site of rupture within the horizons of*

normativity and implicitly call for the institutions of new norms, putting into question the givenness of the prevailing normative horizon.⁷²

* * *

They told me to keep my eyes down. They told me to act respectful. They told me to take out my tongue ring.

After my first few interviews with Hamas members and Hamas leaders, my research assistant and translator (also a former member of Hamas) turned to me and said,

“Why are you acting so quiet and timid?”

He said, “You need to act strong and confident”.

He inquired, “Why do you keep looking down?”

* * *

As subjects we attempt to make ourselves fit in and we attempt to make others fit in. We attempt to make ourselves recognisable and make others recognisable, and we call upon existing discursive frameworks of intelligibility to make this happen. However, attempts to manoeuvre into the grids of intelligibility and the assumptions of recognition upon which these moves rely are incomplete and thus they fail.

Subjects exist in excess to the modes of intelligibility that attempt to define them. Parts of the subject remain hidden from the discursive framings that attempt to control them.

* * *

Willi Ninja, from the House of Ninja, offers classes. Willi Ninja offers classes to the ‘hardened New York woman’. Willi Ninja, a fabulous drag vogue dancer, offers classes to teach these women how to be more ‘feminine’.

Willi Ninja, “Give more movement in your hips naturally; don’t exaggerate”. Willi explains, “if she is in a man’s world she has to learn to manipulate men. She can still have her rights, but learn to manipulate her man using her feminine charm. She can’t manipulate them looking like a man”.⁷³

You may recognise him as a ‘man’, but there ‘he’ is teaching the observable ‘woman’ how to be more feminine.

A rupture. A rupture in the regulating discourses of intelligibility, which attempt to seamlessly classify and categorise.

* * *

Etimad Tashawa said, “What they think women in Gaza can’t drive?”

Tashawa asks me a question at the conclusion of our interview,

As a European, why do you think, where do you get this information, that Eastern or Gazan women are not free? That she is in a black tent, and that she does not participate in the political life. Why do you think this?⁷⁴

Tashawa makes an appeal for a different kind of subject. One that lives in excess to or is hidden from the western gendered discourse that attempts to ‘make sense of her’, from the discourse that attempts recognise her by making her fit into its own grids of intelligibility.

Connecting subjects

Butler asks, “Is there in this affirmation of partial transparency a possibility for acknowledging a relationality that binds me more deeply to language and to you than I previously knew?”⁷⁵

Here we can think of the discourses that bind the European and Hamas. When they meet they must negotiate the terms of recognition that impose upon them, and deny the possibility for recognition.

Butler reminds us that as subjects of this social world “the very terms by which we give an account, by which we make ourselves intelligible to ourselves and to others, are not of our making”.⁷⁶ As such, subjects for ever remain in a peculiar state of unfreedom, whereby we can only recognise ourselves by using a language external to ourselves. We can only recognise others by calling upon a language external to the encounter. We therefore remain partially unknown to ourselves, and the other must also remain partially unknown. If all subjects are partially unknown, as a result of being constituted through discourses which they did not create, then perhaps there remains a possibility for a connection through this ever present opacity.

Butler suggests this partial unknowingness develops into a form of *mutual vulnerability and shared dependency*; “if we are formed in the context of relations that become partially irrecoverable to us, then that opacity seems built into our formation and follows from our status as beings who are formed in relations of dependency”.⁷⁷

We are all dependent on prior discourses to shape our encounters; as such, perhaps we are connected through this shared vulnerability.

Willi Ninja did not fashion the demarcations which built and made him recognisable as a man. The hardened New York woman is not responsible for her intelligibility as not feminine enough to be able to manipulate a man. But there they find themselves, in a dance studio trying to fulfil (while they simultaneously disturb) the rituals of their recognition. The encounter between these subjects reveals what is otherwise hidden from or in excess to dominant gendered norms. Following from this there may be a kind of shared vulnerability that binds the subjects as they encounter one another. Willi Ninja and the women who seek his feminine assistance are vulnerable under the dominant discourses of normalcy that demarcated the unfulfilledness of these subjects. Here they lie connected by their shared vulnerability.

* * *

Both Hamas and the EU may be vulnerable to the discourse of terrorism that exists between them. This discourse of terrorism imposes upon the EU’s capacity to be able to recognise Hamas otherwise. The discourse of terrorism imposes itself upon Hamas’s desire to be recognised as a legitimate actor. May we imagine that both subjects are vulnerable under the discursive weight of the discourse of terrorism? Under the discourse of terrorism that shaped the possibility of their encounter?

* * *

Perhaps there is a form of intimacy that may be generated by encountering the other through a shared sense of vulnerability. Perhaps an awareness of this shared vulnerability fashions a kind of intimate bond, an intimate bond through which a connection between the encountering subjects may be created.

‘I feel your observation of me; I already know what it entails. I am aware of the discourses which allowed you to undo me. I am aware that you think of me as a terrorist; and I recognise that it may not be entirely your fault that you think this way. Indeed, I understand how my being may appear in this way. However, there is more to me than this, and I believe that you already feel this.’

* * *

As the social and political discourses, which attempt to control the encounter between subjects, are undone perhaps alternative subjects may be available. Perhaps alternative ways of recognising may be present. We may start to uncover hidden parts of the subject that in the first instance were not so readily recognisable through the dominant grids of intelligibility. We may start to notice those excesses that we were denied through the regulating matrix of intelligibility. This connection with the hidden or the excess may further an intimate relation between subjects. Through observing that which may have been denied or made invisible an alternative practice of recognition may be available.

Perhaps in order to access the possibility of an intimate relation between subjects a particular undoing of the self as the observer is required. In order to perform an alternative form of recognition maybe a letting go of one’s recognition of oneself is needed. A subject may observe themselves as an otherwise subject, permitting an alternative recognition of the other.

Butler draws upon Fanon to explore how a kind of self-undoing may allow for different forms of recognition to emerge; “only when a self can recapture and scrutinize itself can the ideal conditions for a human world come to exist”.⁷⁸ Fanon asks, “Was my freedom not given to me then in order to build the world of the You”.⁷⁹ The ‘self-questioning’ in Fanon, explains Butler, is not merely an inward turn, but also a reformatted mode of address, which may regard “each and every consciousness as an open door”.⁸⁰ Perhaps this undoing of the self, which offers an opening of consciousnesses, allows for recognising otherwise.

Encountering otherwise

In “‘The White to Be Angry’: Vaginal Davis’s Terrorist Drag”, Muñoz explores the possibility for the social discourses of the self and of others to be collapsed.

Disidentification is a performative mode of tactical recognition that various minoritarian subjects employ in an effort to resist the oppressive and normalizing discourse of dominant ideology. Disidentification resists the interpellating call of ideology that fixes a subject within the state power apparatus.⁸¹

Muñoz looks at the various performances of drag superstar Vaginal Crème Davis as openings of resistance against the mainstream co-option of the subject into identifiable categories. Within these performances Muñoz locates the possibility for identification to be reworked in ways which “promise narratives of the self that surpass the limits prescribed by dominant culture”.⁸²

Muñoz cites Felix Guttari's discussion on the "potential political power of drag" in the militant theatre production, *Mirabelles*,

They resort to drag, song, mime, dance, etc., not as different ways of illustrating a theme, to 'change the ideas' of the spectators, but in order to trouble them, to stir up uncertain desire-zones that they always more or less refuse to explore. The question is no longer to know whether one will play feminine against masculine or the reverse, but to make bodies, all bodies break away from representations and restraints on the 'social body'.⁸³

* * *

Vaginal Davis's work inhabits spaces already present within and between the grids of intelligibility. Davis's drag performance stretches, distorts, explodes and exposes the way dominant discourses attempt to close down possibilities for being and for being recognised otherwise.

Muñoz relays seeing Vaginal Crème Davis on stage.

The towering black transgender body (man to woman) is dressed in boy drag; is dressed in military fatigues. In this piece Vaginal Davis inhabits the subject place of the white supremacist male. She shrieks in a high-pitched voice that she finds white supremacist militiamen to be really hot, so hot that she decided to dress up as one. Davis's work exposes the extreme subject formation of the white supremacist and distorts it with the presence of her own black, transgender body. She dramatically takes up the anxieties of the white supremacist male, who is attached to his own essentialised recognition of himself as a homophobic, racist and sexist subject. Davis's drag inhabits these phobic images in order to perform the homophobia of the white supremacist and to disrupt it. The performance resists against her own oppression under these discourses. It challenges the way she is already recognised through these oppressive discourses. The parodic drag performance disrupts this oppressive discourse.

Muñoz shares with us the following: "By figuring the militiaman through the vehicle of the black queen's body, Davis's whiteface interrogates white hysteria, miscegenation anxiety and supremacy at their very core".⁸⁴

Vaginal Crème Davis performs the following song in her drag performance. She plays with the white supremacists' militarised identification in a homoerotic fashion. She plays with the markers of identification through which the subject may recognise themselves, and she inverts them, disturbing the practices of recognition between the subjects.

Vaginal Crème Davis,

I don't need a 'zooka
Or a Ms. 38
I feel safer in New York
Than I do in L.A.
You keep your flame thrower
My shotgun is prettier

Sawed off shot gun
Sawed off

Shotgun

My shot gun is so warm it
Keeps me safe in the city
I need it at the ATM
Or when I'm looking purdy
In its convenient carrying case
Graven, initialled on the face

Sawed off shot gun
Sawed off
Shotgun
Yeah... Wow!⁸⁵

Muñoz states,

it is important to note that this humour is not calibrated to police or moralize against cross-racial desire. Instead it renders a picture of this desire in its most fantastic and extreme form. By doing so it disturbs the coherence of the white militiaman's sexual and racial identity.⁸⁶

* * *

So...

How may we disrupt and re-inhabit processes of recognition which attempt to hide excesses in exchange for ones that reveal what is hidden?

How can we envisage a dramatic challenge to the phobias, stereotypes, reductions of Hamas as a subject? Can we imagine a 'Hamas political figure' in the place of Vaginal Davis? What performance might they offer in order to confront and disrupt the normative discourses used to frame them?

What performance might the EU diplomat give of the expectations placed upon them? What versions of themselves may they feel compelled to perform in their drag performance? How might this expose their anxious attachments to particular forms of recognition?

Perhaps the best place to begin thinking about the potentialities of the drag performance to redo modes of recognition is with a dismantling of the self through drag practices. What might a drag performance of the self entail? Whereby I perform the markers of my own identification, but exaggerate them until they lose meaning. How might I perform how others already envision me and close me down, so that I may open up these processes of recognition to new forms of meaning or no meaning at all? How might I perform my own un-recognition?

* * *

Perhaps the taking up of difference can be an even more subtle experience than that. Perhaps within the daily routines that perform certain recognitions of ourselves and others we can perform ourselves differently and therefore perform our encounters with others differently as well.

On my last day in Gaza I managed to get an interview with Hamas founder and member of the government, Khalil al-Haya. With the great help of my research assistant I met with the third most influential man within the Hamas hierarchy. We met in his office on East Shuhada street in Gaza city.

I wore tight blue pants.
And I never took out my tongue ring.

Conclusion: wait, what about the material world?!

Palestinian academic, Mkheimer Abusada,

At Oslo, Yasser Arafat as the Chairman of the Palestinian Liberation Organisation, recognised the right for Israel to exist, and in exchange what did Arafat get? Recognition of the PLO as the sole representatives of the Palestinian people. Israel did not recognise Palestine's right to exist in a state. They did not recognise a two state solution.⁸⁷

Transgender, Venus Xtravaganza's body was found strangled under a bed. Her penis most likely gave her away to an unsuspecting date.

Excerpts from my Facebook posts during the 2012 Israeli attack on Gaza,

'I now know what the new drones sound like... a small buzzing way up there ... unfortunately ... I now also know what the bomb of a new drone feels like, as a bomb drops too close for comfort ... what does comfort feel like ... here in the Abusalama home, smoking sheesha outside with Majed ... I hope that other Gazan families are finding similar comfort in their own homes, as we are ... again unfortunately all too familiar with the feeling of dropping bombs.

A bomb ... sounds similar to thunder ... I believe that Gazans would say thunder sounds similar to a bomb.... The attacks continue – and the sound of silence is but an eerie waiting space for another noise to hit the ear drum – an F16, a drone, a bomb, a rocket ... the ear's waiting space fills the body with uncomfortable sadness.

The sound of an F-16 overhead ... the sound of tires screech nearby ... I wonder if it is the resistance ready to launch an attack ... but the bomb was dropped elsewhere – not sure where yet ... just hoping that no one has been killed or injured.

Suddenly all sounds take on a new shape. A new meaning ... and the imagination, attached to a damned reality is born.

Is that a garbage truck or a fighter plane?

Stars look different when you are afraid to look up because it might be a drone.'

* * *

Our conversation on recognition has meandered into a discussion on the possibilities for observing alternative subjects or processes through which space can be fashioned for allowing subjects to perform themselves and others differently. I would like to conclude with a few comments on the existing consequences of being a subject who fails to be encapsulated by the current matrix of intelligibility of what it means to be a human. Butler and Athanasiou write, “I think it is important to note that established norms of recognition bear material consequences as much for those who are intensely interpellated as for those who are partially interpellated or not interpellated at all”.⁸⁸

Butler calls forth Hegel to reaffirm the material importance of recognition within the liberal normative framework. “There is no possibility of separating the life and death struggle from the struggle for recognition”.⁸⁹ The subject who is denied recognition as human or denied being a subject with rights, lives in a state of precarity. However, Butler also observes the situation in which inclusion into the realm of intelligibility may offer a right to life. The precarious body affected by its non-recognition under the dominant norms of a prevailing order may require and should be awarded the recognition of a human deserving of shelter and protection.

* * *

Drag queen, Peppa Labeija,

I’ve been a man and I’ve been a man who emulated a woman. I’ve never been a woman. I’ve never had that service once a month. I have never been pregnant. [...] A lot of kids that I know, they got the sex change because they felt ‘oh I’ve been treated so bad as a drag queen; if I get a pussy (scuse the expression) I’ll be treated fabulous’. But women get treated bad. You know, they get beat. They get robbed. They get dogged. So having the vagina doesn’t mean that you’re gonna have a fabulous life; it might in fact be worse.⁹⁰

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3 Democracy performed

Hamas and the EU performing change through the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections

European Union Election Observation Mission, West Bank and Gaza 2006, *Final Report on the Palestinian Legislative Council Elections*,

Executive Summary:

The successful conduct of the 25 January 2006 elections to the Palestinian Legislative Council reflected an open and fairly-contested electoral process that was efficiently administered by a professional and independent Palestinian Central Elections Commission. These elections marked another important milestone in the building of Palestinian democratic institutions, which is a fundamental component in the peace process foreseen in the 2002 Road Map.

Overall, the elections saw impressive voter participation, demonstrating, as with the 2005 presidential election, an overwhelming commitment by the Palestinian people to determine their political future via democratic means. This was in spite of the uncertain conditions in which the elections took place involving a background of delay, unacceptable levels of pre-campaign violence, and an occupation that placed restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms related to elections.¹

A performance.

A performance of democracy.

Democracy performed.

A performance of transformation?

This chapter takes us into the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. It takes us into a performance of democracy. It observes 'democracy performed' as an alternative performance space; a space filled with its own rituals, and a space in which Hamas and the EU encountered each other. It observes how Hamas performed in the elections as a candidate. It observes how the EU participated in the elections as an electoral observer. This chapter observes 'democracy performed' and it wonders....

It wonders about the transformative potential of this performance. It wonders how the Palestinian legislative elections may have provided an opportunity for Hamas and the EU to reconstitute their political relationship.

It also wonders about the limitations of this transformative potential.

* * *

Alastair Crooke, former advisor to Javier Solana and former mediator with Hamas, offers his opinion on the EU's position prior to Hamas entering the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.

Crooke begins like this,

It was in 2003 that I realised something fundamental had changed.²

Hamas's political wing was placed on the EU's terrorist list in 2003. "Officially, the EU remained committed to a political solution", but it had succumbed to American pressure. Under the direction of two key member states, Britain and Germany, the EU would follow America in pursuing a security-led repression of Hamas.³

"The shift in the British position, under American pressure, sabotaged European policy", explains Crooke. "It undermined the EU's commitment to promoting Palestinian unity". The EU would 'talk the talk' of encouraging Palestinian unity and trying to encourage a political discussion, while some of its members were 'walking the walk' of a militarised, security-led approach.⁴

* * *

This chapter is provoked by a particular curiosity regarding the transformative potential of the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, through which the EU and Hamas may have been able to reconstitute their political relationship. It explores the openings for reconstitution present in performing the rituals of democratic elections. It asks, did the 2006 elections provide an opportunity for Hamas to be engaged with differently? Taking the EU and its statements of democratisation and state-building in the OPTs on their own terms, the chapter identifies the political possibilities for change laden within the EU's institutional role in supporting the elections. Clara O'Donnell from the Centre for European Reform critically reflects upon the EU's position towards Palestinian politics,

Although the EU still only has a supporting role, it can make a tangible contribution in the international peace effort. The EU has been long committed to ending the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, because of its sense of historical responsibility; its geographical proximity to this destabilising conflict; and its growing ambitions to be a global player. Through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU has extensive bilateral ties with both Israel and the Palestinian territories. Most importantly, the EU can act as the 'other' voice which makes the idea of engaging Hamas more acceptable to Israel and the US.⁵

This chapter presents the kinds of political performances that expect change and transformation, and it interrogates the closing down of these opportunities for change. Part one of this chapter shows the entrance of Hamas and the EU into the performance space of democracy performed. It draws on Victor Turner's observations on rites of passage, as liminal performances, transitional phases, that invite the possibility for change and transformation. As we observe the decisions to enter into the democratic electoral space, Hamas's campaign and the EU's engagement with this campaign, we will query whether the 2006 elections entailed a liminal performance. Does performing the rituals of democracy act as an in-between phase of becoming, which may have allowed the actors to reshape themselves and their political relationships?

Part two explores the possibility that the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections *did not* offer Hamas and the EU the opportunity to reconstitute their political relationship. It addresses the possibility that democracy performed may not be a liminal, transformative space. Or that liminal performances, such as elections, which are intended to bring about the possibility for change are still be marked by contextual limitations. We will address the ways in which democracy performed in the OPTs was still conditioned by relations of hierarchy and power, and thus were not a performance through which genuine change could emerge.

In part three we continue with our observations of the rituals of democracy performed. We observe Hamas's political platform for the 2006 elections and the EU EOM's summarising reports of the elections. At this point, I push a performative reading of political relationships and practices, whereby ritualised behaviour is open to being altered. While we may wish to reject the 2006 democratic elections as a distinctly liminal space, we are given the opportunity to view performance, in general, as a continuous opportunity for transgression. As such, we will observe how Hamas and the EU *were performing* themselves differently, and therefore, perhaps reconstituting their political relationship through these performative encounters.

* * *

Part one: democracy as a liminal rite of passage

Through his extended study of the Ndembu tribe in Zambia anthropologist and performance theorist Victor Turner observed performance as a possibility for social and cultural transformation. Turner investigated various 'rites of passage' in these societies and recognised how the performance of these rituals entailed a process of change. The bodies enter into liminality (an in-between phase), and within and through the performance of the rite of passage the acting subjects may undergo a particular transformation. The concept of liminality, explains performance theorist, Jon McKenzie, became central to the study of performance. It allowed "participants to reflect, take apart, and reassemble symbols and behaviours and possibly, to transform themselves and society".⁶ This chapter interrogates whether the 2006 elections may be regarded as a rite of passage, whereby performing those rituals associated with the social process change may occur.

* * *

In March 2005, several representatives from various Palestinian political factions gathered in Cairo to deliberate on some of the tensions between them. These groups decided to hold legislative elections in Palestine. The various parties agreed on certain ground rules and parameters for the elections. They made amendments to Palestinian electoral law. They set a date for the elections, 25 January, 2006.⁷

The EU Council of Ministers gathered to discuss the Middle East Peace Process. The Council welcomed the holding of multi-party elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council foreseen for 25 January, 2006. The European Commission planned to deploy a monitoring mission to oversee the Palestinian legislative elections, called the European Union Election Observation Mission, West Bank and Gaza, EU EOM. The EU allocated €17 million in preparation for the elections.⁸

There is going to be an election.

Hamas's leadership held a consultative meeting within their governing Shura Council. They agreed that Hamas would participate in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.⁹

There is going to be an election, and Hamas is going to participate.

Following an invitation from the Palestinian Authority to the European Parliament on 30 March, 2005 the European Union Conference of Presidents authorised to send an additional European Parliament observation delegation to monitor the elections.¹⁰

There is going to be an election, and the EU is going to participate.

May we view the entering into the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections as entering into a liminal rite of passage similar to other rites of passage, the death of a family member, losing one's virginity or a first day at school? Liminality marks a form of passing, whereby within the boundaries of the threshold subject positions and social hierarchies may be undone. Does democracy performed constitute a liminal rite of passage?

An alternative performance space

A threshold. A border. An entrance. A margin. A limen. A passage into ...

Victor Turner sites the work of Van Gennep in identifying three phases in a 'rite of passage':

separation, transition and incorporation. A rite of passage explains Turner, involves the physical and temporal removal from, or obstruction to the daily routine.¹¹ Bodies are removed, separated, shifted away from their normalised routine. Bodies enter into an alternative performance space.

Hamas had boycotted all previous ‘national’ elections regarding them as an illegitimate product of the unjust Oslo negotiations. While Hamas had participated in union elections and in the 2005 municipal elections, it had never participated in elections at the legislative level.

The EU expressed doubt whether this was the best time to hold elections in OPTs. Hamas appeared on the EU’s terrorist list and there was concern that their success in the elections could complicate relations. In addition, Fatah, the EU’s favoured candidates was not strong at this time and their popular support was decreasing.

Hamas decided *not* to boycott the elections. Hamas decided that it would participate in the 2006 elections. Hamas would form a party to participate in the elections, and Hamas would run. They would enter into an alternative performance space. They would enter into democracy performed.

Despite the hesitation voiced by some, the EU decided to support the Palestinian legislative elections. The EU EOM would deploy over 185 observers from 23 EU member states, as well as from Norway, Switzerland, and Romania.¹² The EU EOM would send the largest monitoring team to the OPTs for the elections. The EU EOM would enter into an alternative performance space. They would enter into democracy performed.

A threshold. A border. An entrance. A margin. A limen. A passage into ...

The bodies enter into a different space. The EU and Hamas enter into *democracy performed*. There will be a lapse in time and place as Hamas engages with elections as a candidate and the EU engages with them as observers. Hamas and the EU may meet each other in this alternative performance space.

Does this entering into an alternative space begin to offer an idea that the space of this performance is one that offers the possibility for change? Does this disruption of the normal present an opportunity for transformation, for reconstitution? Perhaps we can imagine that it was not usual for Hamas and the EU to share a space. We can imagine that it was not common for Hamas and the EU to take part in the same event.

There is going to be an election. These will be the first legislative elections in Palestine since 1996. Rather, than boycott the elections, as they had done previously, Hamas is going to participate as an official candidate. The EU welcomed the holding of these elections. It agreed to finance the elections and to send an observation mission.

The liminal expects change

A liminal space is understood as a realm of ‘in-betweenness’. In the liminal the body sheds something of the past. The body sheds something of the past and prepares to emerge into something new.

A first day at school; the loss of one’s virginity, the death of a loved one.

Turner describes liminality as an “undoing, dissolution, decomposition” “accompanied by processes of growth, transformation, and the reformulation of old elements in new patterns”.¹³

My brother and his wife are about to have their first child. The birth of a child may be received as a distinct rite of passage. It is a performance of change and transformation. There is an anticipation that the arrival of this new life will bring about change. *The event expects a transformation.* As my brother and his wife enter into preparation for the rite of passage there is

an expectation that there *will be* a dissolution of particular orders and the reformulation of new ones; an expectation that relationships *will* change, the family *will* alter; the work routine *will* transform.

A performance that expects change.

In an interview with authors Milton-Edwards and Farrell, Gazan political analyst Ibrahim Ibrach offers the following remarks on Hamas's entry into the political race.

Ibrach states,

From this point it [Hamas] decided to log into the Palestinian political system. It felt besieged by the outside world. They froze all their money and stopped all its institutions. So they started seeking new legitimacy through the ballot box and decided to enter the electoral process. Not, I think, because they believe in democracy, but because they want legitimacy, to say to the world that they are a party or a movement that represents the Palestinian people through democratic elections.¹⁴

Author Azzam Tamimi offers the following description of Hamas's decision to partake in the 2006 legislative elections.

Hamas officials admit in private that one of the motivations for its decision to play a part in the democratic process was to oblige the international community to abandon its boycott of Hamas. They calculated that their officials, once elected, would have to be recognized internationally as the legitimate representatives of at least some parts of the Palestinian community in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip.¹⁵

A performance that expects change.

The 2006 elections were to be the first Palestinian 'national' elections that Hamas would run in. Khaled Hroub notes that the decision to participate in the elections signified an important shift in Hamas's thinking and practice.¹⁶ Perhaps this decision to participate in the elections is well reflected in the comments of Khaled Mesha'al, chief of Hamas's political bureau. In an interview Mesha'al explains, "there is no political horizon if Hamas is not included as a legitimate element of the Palestinian people".¹⁷ Ismail al-Ashqar, a senior Hamas member, states "We wished to obtain popular legitimacy for the resistance and legal legitimacy".¹⁸

Hamas's narration of their own participation in the elections, presents *their own account* of the possibilities for change laden within the performance of democracy. They discuss the possibility that their participation in the elections would offer them popular legitimacy. It would end their isolation and signal that they desired to be engaged in political deliberations; that they no longer wanted to be ignored.

On 21 November, 2005 the EU published a statement regarding the support they planned to offer for the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. The summary describes the financial support they are going to provide for the elections. It outlines the objectives for the EU EOM, explaining that the observation team will assess the whole electoral process, including the legal framework, the political environment, the campaign, electoral preparations, voting and counting as well as the post-election period. The stated desire of the observation mission is to determine whether the electoral process is conducted in accordance with international standards.¹⁹ The summary affirms that the EU Commission welcomes these elections as a further step in democracy building within the Palestinian Territories on their road to statehood.²⁰

In the summary of the EU's support for the elections, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, stated,

Free and fair elections are essential steps on the way to a viable Palestinian State as foreseen in the Road Map. Impartial observation can help create confidence in the democratic process and highlight areas where further improvements are necessary. By working with the Palestinians in this way, the EU is helping to lay the foundations for a modern accountable administration and a more peaceful future for the Palestinian people.²¹

Ferrero-Waldner's statement performs a particular expectation that the Palestinian elections are an important step in increasing confidence in democratic reform. Her words perform an idea that the EU plays a part in this democratic reform. There is an expectation that the elections confer legitimacy.

On 28 December, 2005 the Quartet published a statement regarding the Palestinian legislative elections set for 25 January, 2006.

The statement issued describes the elections as a "positive step toward consolidation of Palestinian democracy and the goal of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict".²²

While the Quartet states that they remain concerned regarding the participation of groups, who engage in militant or armed activities, in the elections, they express hope that the elections would be free and fair and be conducted in a secure environment.²³

The Quartet, a body that brings together the EU, US, Russia, and UN, displays a hope that the elections will be free and fair. They utter a desire that the elections will assist Palestine on its road to statehood through democratic means.

Democracy performed, as a space which expects change.

* * *

Turner describes the liminal as a "realm of pure possibility whence novel configurations of ideas and relations may arise".²⁴ The liminal is a space of becoming. The bodies who enter the liminal are in a state of contingency, a realm of pure possibility. And in the realm of pure possibility old orders may give rise to something new. New ideas and new relations may emerge in the liminal.

A realm of pure possibility.

On 23 December, 2013 my brother and his wife give birth to their first child. A lapse in time. A lapse in space. The normal routine is disturbed. Normal relationships are moved. The acting bodies are move into the liminal space. It is not clear what will happen. The entering into the liminal expects that previous relations will be disturbed. The liminal expects that a shedding of the past will occur and give rise to....

It is not yet clear.

The liminal space is betwixt, in that it remains unclear what will arrive. It is unclear what changes will arrive. But a process of becoming is present. A process of transformation is present in the liminal. Hamas and the EU entered into democracy performed. They entered into an alternative performance space. They entered into a space which expects change. EU accounts of the elections, Hamas accounts of the elections perform an idea that the 2006 elections is a space in which change can occur.

Bodies perform the rituals of liminality

In a rite of passage the actors become temporarily disassociated with otherwise normal values. Bodies and their attachment to their otherwise rituals are disrupted. The norms, sentiments, techniques, the positions or categories they hold within their society or culture are temporarily and spatially suspended. Liminality for Turner, explains Cusack and Digance “is a state that temporarily frees individuals from ‘the hierarchical secular roles and statuses which they bear in everyday life’”.²⁵ As bodies enter into performances of liminality they are able to challenge or interrogate their place in society and society itself.

The liminal space is one that presents change.

The baby is born. The baby is born and nothing else seems to matter. Normal ideas of work, sleep, eating *are* suspended. The liminal space *is* defined by these new rituals. It is defined by new rituals of feeding (every two hours). Parents struggle to find time to eat and sleep. They *are* performing the rituals of a liminal space. These rituals *are of change*.

A rite of passage is a phase filled with its own rituals, ceremonies, and micro-performances. As the bodies enter the performance space different roles and rituals compose this liminal phase. Types of clothing, sacred rituals, the instruction of a secret language, ceremonies calling upon the deceased, the cosmos, and the animal world may all represent the symbolic rituals of a liminal phase.²⁶ The performance of these rituals entails a performance of the liminal. The bodies perform the rituals of liminality, of transgression, of transformation.

* * *

Hamas entered into the liminal space of democracy performed and took up the rituals of that space. How may the EU have observed Hamas’s performance?

Hamas decided to run in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections under the name ‘Change and Reform’. Analysts Malley and Agha explain that

[Hamas] candidates campaigned not under Hamas’s banner but under the slogan ‘Change and Reform’, a phrase that was not intended to fool anyone but that played well to popular sentiment. Fatah’s corruption estranged even the most secular-minded Palestinians, and not a few of them cast their vote for the Islamists in the hope that they would wipe the slate clean.²⁷

Given Hamas’s traditional projection of itself as an uncompromising resistance movement, and the popularity it had derived from its resistance to the Israeli occupation, its choice of ‘change and reform’ as the theme of its campaign and name of its electoral list may initially appear surprising; however, it rather cleverly draws attention to the failure and corruption associated with its rival Fatah.²⁸

Hamas decided to run in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections under the name Change and Reform. In the liminal phase of democracy performed Hamas fashioned a specific political party intended to convey *change* and *reform*.

* * *

Democracy performed may have been a liminal space, which offered those actors performing with it the opportunity to take-on different roles and positions. The following accounts of Hamas's performance as an electoral candidate offer an idea of what it may have meant for Hamas to perform in democratic elections.

Hamas's publicly announced its decision to take part in the Palestinian legislative elections and "the very next day, according to one of Hamas's leaders, the movement began to meticulously plan its campaign".²⁹

Once it had decided to run, Hamas united behind the new strategy. It deployed thousands of highly educated Islamist managers, media professionals, opinion-formers, teachers, engineers, doctors, political scientists – male and female – who gave it an organizational sharpness and sophistication far superior to its more politically experienced, but fatally complacent, rivals, [Fatah].³⁰

Democracy performed offered Hamas the possibility to engage in the rituals of that space. The rituals of that rite of passage were those of democratic participation. The rituals of democracy performed invited the possibility for shedding previous orders and engaging in alternative activities.

Hamas's public campaign officer, Nashat Aqtash, "adapted a three-week formula devised by 1960's American advertising guru Rosser Reeves, which stipulated a different plan for each week of the campaign".³¹ Milton-Edwards and Farrell explain first-hand accounts of how Hamas's "art and design department clearly went into overdrive to produce variations of campaign posters, literature and propaganda for the Change and Reform candidates".³²

Hamas's performance in the election is one defined by clever campaigning tactics and "great electoral savvy in maximizing its resources", explains Hamas researcher, Jeroen Gunning. By developing a "greater organisational presence in towns and refugee camps" Hamas's Change and Reform campaign reached out to those were sick and tired of incessant corruption and perpetual lawlessness, which had become relentless under the Fatah regime. Hamas heeded the popular vote, showing "acute awareness that gaining power in an electoral system depends on winning the grassroots vote".³³

* * *

We are presented with accounts of Hamas as a particular political actor; one running a campaign in democratic elections. Analysts and academics describe Hamas's campaign as an outstanding performance in elections. Hamas is accounted to have "ran a remarkable disciplined and professional campaign, putting together an impressive list of academics and professionals, many unaffiliated with the group, some Christian and some female".³⁴

Hamas performed the rituals of the democratic space. Democracy performed may offer actors the possibility to engage with rituals outside of their normal routine.

* * *

The EU also performed the rituals of the democratic space.

Leonard Moll, EU Presidency and Head of the Austrian Representative Office noted that the preparations for these elections were taking place in a climate of uncertainty; there were doubts

about Hamas's participation. However, he pointedly remarked that Hamas signed the Code of Conduct for taking place in the elections, which was a political condition for all parties to run in the elections. The EU decided not to challenge Hamas's participation in the elections.³⁵

The EU EOM explained how Israel and other international actors condemned the eligibility of Change and Reform to be registered as a candidate, because of the Oslo Accords Annex, which stated that any parties who advocate racism or attempt to pursue their aims by unlawful or non-democratic means will be ineligible to run in 'national' elections. However, the EU EOM concluded that this stipulation was overruled by the superseding Road Map, which envisaged a "free, multi-party process". The *Final Report* concludes that "as well as being a significant political force that had already participated in municipal elections, Hamas candidates met all legal requirements for candidacy".³⁶

Deputy Chief Observer of the EU EOM, Richard Chambers explains in an interview that EU EOM leader, Véronique de Keyser was keen on developing an inclusive method to observing the elections. While there were obvious restrictions to meeting with *all* of the candidates (Chambers explains that EU officials could not be seen shaking hands with Hamas delegates), Chambers describes an honest attempt on part of the EU EOM to engage openly with the campaign. Chambers explains that the EU Council of Ministers actually passed a decision allowing the EU EOM to have direct engagement with Hamas, whereas before this was restricted.³⁷

The EU EOM states that its mandate "was to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process in accordance with international principles for genuine democratic elections".³⁸

The EU EOM performed the rituals of the liminal democratic space. It arrived in Palestine and decided to meet with *all* of the candidates. One of the EU's principle governing structures decided that within the democratic electoral space, the EU would engage with Hamas, as candidates, as candidates in a political race. The rituals of democracy temporarily suspended hierarchies and ritualised attachments, and offered a space in which new relations and ideas could be entertained.

The EU EOM, was later joined by an ad hoc European Parliament delegation. European Parliament Vice-President Edward McMillan-Scott led this 30 member delegation. The delegation arrived in Palestine just prior to the 25 January election date. In Jerusalem, on 23 January, 2006 the European Parliament delegation received various updates on the electoral process by several acting observers. John Kjaer, Head of European Technical Assistance Office for the West Bank and Gaza Strip, explained that in terms of political reform this would be the first time that the principle two competitors in Palestinian politics, Hamas and Fatah would be running against each other.³⁹

The EU EOM fulfilled its own role within democracy performed. They performed the rituals of liminality. Their performance of the 2006 elections speaks of the electoral space as one which offers legitimacy and change in Palestinian politics.

A shared space for transformation

The 2006 elections appeared to offer a space for Hamas and the EU to meet; to engage; to share a space.

Hamas, while it had been involved in domestic politics for several years, had not yet been a principle player with regards to international discussions. Certain members of Hamas felt discouraged from taking part in the elections because of the "overall unsympathetic international political environment" following the event of 9/11.⁴⁰

The EU had been formally committed to encouraging democratic reform in the region.

Through the European Neighbourhood Policy, the EU performed a particular desire to promote democracy. Youngs explains, however, that there was a strong perception in the Middle East that the EU was not really committed to democracy. Many in the region felt there was an unwillingness on part of the EU to offer any major incentives for democratic reform. EU initiatives were ad hoc rather than a coherent strategy for political reform, which failed to “support independent and socially-rooted reforms on the ground”.⁴¹

As Hamas’s popularity grew in Palestine, and Fatah’s decreased, particular external observers and analysts began to feel that Hamas needed to be included in negotiations. Crooke states that, David Manning, former British foreign affairs advisor, “believed strongly that there could be no solution to the Israel-Palestine issue without Hamas involvement and had firmly supported inclusive peace-building”.⁴²

In a co-authored article, Crooke and Milton-Edwards describe Hamas’s desire to be involved in democratic governance in Palestine.

They state that Hamas

repeatedly called for more democratic structures in the political arena and greater representation in moulding the national position on a final peace with Israel. At the same time, it worked on consolidating its position within the Palestinian community through its social and welfare projects. It also concentrated on its survival which meant withstanding security campaigns orchestrated against it by Israel throughout the 1990’s, as well as by the Palestinian Authority responding to external pressures.⁴³

The EU began to recognise the short-sightedness of their decision to ignore Hamas and marginalise it from the political track.⁴⁴ EU actors began to show dismay at the targeted assassinations of Hamas leaders by Israel.⁴⁵

* * *

Perhaps there was even a political desire, on both sides to see change. Perhaps the performance itself utters a desire for change, whereby the actors engage and become intertwined through the performativity of hope and the possibility for change.

In liminality, profane social relations may be discontinued, former rights and obligations are suspended, the social order may seem to have been turned upside down.⁴⁶

The EU monitoring bodies and Hamas members entered into the liminal space of democracy performed, and appeared to have temporarily allowed for social categories and political positions to be inverted and disturbed.

If the EU performed such a desire for the elections to promote democratic reform in the region, if the EU observed itself meeting with Hamas through democracy performed, if the EU observed Hamas performing as a political candidate in democracy performed, then were these not opportunities for the EU and Hamas to reconstitute their political relationship? Were these not openings for change?

Democracy performed.

A performance of transformation?

Part two: limits to ‘democracy performed’ as a liminal space

Alarmed by Hamas’s success in the 2005 municipal elections the Israeli government, under the direction of Ariel Sharon, issued a threat that if Hamas was successful in the legislative elections, Israel “would have no option but to call off their planned withdrawal from the Gaza strip”.⁴⁷ Tamimi describes how both the Israelis and the Americans were apprehensive about Hamas’s participation in the legislative elections. Following his meeting with Mahmud Abbas, President George Bush declared that Hamas is a terrorist movement and it should not be allowed to participate in the elections. Tamimi affirms that Israel and the US were worried that should Hamas win “they might have to deal directly with its officials”.⁴⁸ The European Union, “which had put Hamas on its own list of terrorist organisations in 2003 at the behest of the US and Israel, had similar concerns”.⁴⁹

* * *

Graham St John addresses critiques of Turner’s idea of the liminal space as being one of openness and ambiguity.⁵⁰ Rather than regarding the liminal as a fluid space in which structural norms or relations of power can be inverted, Turner’s critics understand the liminal as still fixed to a particular normative regime. With regards to change and transformation in the economic space, St John presents the following critique:

Turner’s fixation with antistructure generated models of transformation/integration uninterested in ways the ‘symbolic means of production’ is controlled and managed or how the ‘indicative’ of ‘fixed world’ (capital, morality, the state) is mirrored in special rituals/ceremonial frameworks, and in processes of commodification and self-governmentality that may alter the *limen* itself.⁵¹

The rite of passage may not constitute a temporal or spatial rupture. The rite of passage may still be situated within particular historical, social or political contexts, which continue to impose upon the rite of passage.

Chris and Cindy give birth to their first child. Baby Abigail is born. There are moments of vulnerability, rupture and change. Abigail’s parents, like most parents I imagine, feel temporally panicked, naked, and uneasy. They have just brought their new baby home and they are not sure what to do. I believe my older brother made eight trips to the store within the first few days of Abigail’s life (perhaps this is an exaggeration). But he was constantly out of the house, making trips to the shops. A particular neo-liberal regime continues to demarcate the rite of passage. A particular attachment to commodification continues to impose itself on the ambiguous space. While the ‘rite of passage’ may cause uncertainty, ‘how do we feed the baby?’, ‘how do we keep the baby warm?’, ‘how do we clean the baby?’, the market is there to respond to these questions.

What can we buy?

The rite of passage may constitute an alternative performance space. However, this space is still structured around particular discursive norms. The rituals of the liminal may mirror those orders and hierarchies which exist prior to or around the liminal experience.

* * *

Turner's critics resolve that the liminal is not a betwixt space of openness and ambiguity. Rather the liminal is still marked by particular orders and hierarchies. The liminal may still be defined by particular hegemonic, patriarchal or other forms of disciplinary power, "or indeed what might be deemed the politics of performance".⁵²

* * *

Analysts Malley and Agha state the following in their review of the 2006 elections. "Through the years, the US and Europe compounded their neglect of Palestinian suffering with degrading lectures about how they should behave and whom they should elect, and with threats to cut off aid if they did not oblige".⁵³ Malley and Agha, experienced negotiators, observe that perhaps the EU was not open to engaging with Hamas and Palestinian politics openly.

The EU and Hamas entered into democracy performed, but can we observe this space as a liminal rite of passage, which allowed the actors to challenge and transform the hierarchy of relations between them? Did the rituals of democracy performed provide an opportunity for Hamas and the EU to reconstitute their relationship? Did the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections present the possibility for the EU to recognise Hamas as a political actor and to engage with it differently?

And if not...

Then why did the EU decide to support the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections?

Democracy performed under occupation

Saree Makdisi, author and Professor of English and Comparative Literature at University of California, Los Angeles, writes the following in the *San Francisco Chronicle* following the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections:

Leaving aside the question of what it means to hold a 'national' election when the majority of the nation doesn't have the right to vote, even the process of holding elections while living under military occupation is highly problematic for those who are eligible to vote. Campaigning candidates have to run not only the regular gauntlet of Israeli checkpoints, patrols and roadblocks, but also must navigate politically motivated interference of the kind that in last year's presidential elections guaranteed that only Abbas – Israel's chosen candidate-was allowed free movement. Other candidates were often detained and sometimes physically abused at Israeli checkpoints.⁵⁴

The 2006 Palestinian legislative elections took place within a particular historical and political context, that of the continued occupation of Palestine and its people by Israel. The rite of passage does not break away from this context. The rite of passage does not constitute a temporal or spatial rupture to this 'normalised' regime.

Richard Chambers, Deputy Chief Election Observer for the EU EOM, describes the work of the EU monitoring team in an interview. He offered accounts of EU EOM meetings with the candidates. He discussed electoral reform in Palestine; the EU EOM wanted to ensure that the elections were accessible and transparent. Chambers clearly stated, however, that "the primary issue was the occupation". "You cannot have a democratic election in an occupied country", he

said.⁵⁵

The EU EOM wrote,

These elections took place under the continued military occupation by Israeli forces of the West Bank and the effective blockade of Palestinian-controlled Gaza. The occupation and relations towards Israel are the dominant issues in Palestinian politics. [...]he occupation and related activities, such as the building of the ‘separation barrier’, created serious political and operational problems to the electoral process.⁵⁶

We have observed EU statements that suggest that the 2006 elections were an important milestone in Palestinian institutional reform and democracy building. We have heard that these elections would assist Palestinians on their road to statehood. We have observed that Hamas entered into the 2006 electoral race as a political candidate, and they stated that they sought legitimacy and reform in Palestinian society.

Did the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections constitute a performance space which was otherwise to that of the normalised routine? Or did the continued physical and political occupation of Palestine impose itself upon the liminal potential of the rite of passage? If the Israeli occupation of Palestine is the dominant issue in Palestinian politics, then how may the 2006 elections have been a rupture to this political context?

* * *

The EU EOM offers a full description of how Israel’s occupation of East Jerusalem in particular, impacted upon the carrying out of the elections in an open and free way. The report also points to how these restrictions were directed specifically at Hamas.

Until 8 January, 2006, only weeks before the election date, Israeli authorities publicly stated that they would not permit voting to take place in East Jerusalem.

On 9 January, 2006 the Knesset decided that campaigning would be allowed in East Jerusalem but only under strict conditions. Press reports implied that the Israeli authorities would ban any reference to Hamas during the campaign, placing restrictions on the symbols and images used in campaigning and names on the ballot papers during voting.

On 15 January, 2006 the Israeli Cabinet announced that it would allow a limited degree of voting in East Jerusalem but it still did not clarify the exact modalities for the electoral process.

In the end voting would take place in East Jerusalem. *But* only 6,300 voters would be permitted to cast a vote and it had to be done through six selected post offices.⁵⁷ The EU EOM understands that “post offices are used as polling locations because of the Israeli wish to see polling as, in effect, ‘absentee voting’ as if in another country”.⁵⁸

Israel and the violent logics of occupation impose themselves on the performance of democracy. Israel’s arbitrary assertions of power over voting locations, its control over the symbols of the elections, its management of the movements of the voters and in particular its regulation over the Hamas campaign, continued to order the electoral space.

Hamas was not able to campaign freely in East Jerusalem. Hamas’s candidates could not move openly around the West Bank. Voters could not move freely around East Jerusalem. The liminal is intended could be a space for possible transformation. However, the liminal space is still governed by the logics of occupation.

Hamas is still marked as that which is illegitimate. Israel continues to perform Hamas’s

illegitimacy. While Hamas enters into democracy performed the possibilities for its engagement with the potentially transformative rituals of democracy performed are still governed by the occupation. The possibilities for difference are closed down by the context under which these elections were held.

Hierarchies and orders within the liminal

The rituals of the rite of passage are still marked by a certain structural apparatus and a particular governing order. The rituals of that space are occupied by those forces of order. A particular hierarchy continues to demarcate the rite of passage. Certain ordered symbols continue to demarcate the rite of passage. A graduation ceremony is potentially a liminal space, however, only certain kinds of bodies are invited to speak. Only a usual kind of speech is allowed to enter the graduation ceremony space. A marriage, also potentially a liminal space, however, certain traditions, expectations, symbols, orders continue to mark the liminal experience.

* * *

A particular hierarchy between the EU and Palestinians remain in the rite of passage.

The EU arrived in Palestine to monitor their legislative elections. The EU provided significant financial support for the elections. A team of European observers from EU institutions were paid to go to the West Bank and to go to Gaza to ensure that Palestinian elections were carried out in a 'free and fair' way. The EU EOM and the European Parliament Delegation were there to determine whether these elections met 'international standards'.

McKenzie states that forces of power in performance are situated in *the power to affect and the power to be affected*. Following from Nietzsche, McKenzie explicates that within performance "there is an emergence of forces which doubles history".⁵⁹ Within the performance space some actors are in a position to affect or be affected; their role within the rituals of the performance exudes a particular force. The actors enter into the liminal performance space, and the power of the performing actor to affect or be affected is doubled in the performance space.

The EU maintains a particular relationship to Palestinian politics. This was not challenged in democracy performed. The acting bodies entered into the performance space and they brought their histories with them. McKenzie calls upon Nietzsche's observations that within social and cultural spaces some actors carry the force to affect and be affected. McKenzie writes, "The truths found in gestures and voices carry with them distinctive tonalities of affect".⁶⁰ The *affective categories* within performative spaces include "to allocate", "to classify", "to make efficient", and "to make effective".⁶¹

Within the performance space of the 2006 legislative elections particular positions of power continued to order the electoral space. Some of the actors had the power to affect, to classify, to allocate.

The EU EOM arrived in the Palestinian territories to adjudicate *their* elections. Their mandate was "to conduct a comprehensive assessment of the electoral process in accordance with 'international principles for genuine democratic elections'".⁶² Their criteria included items such as observing the correct legal framework for the elections and establishing whether it had a proper appeals court. The EU EOM reviewed how the candidate lists were compiled and how registration for the 'national' party lists was carried out.⁶³ The EU EOM monitored the involvement of civil society. The EU EOM scrutinised the transparency of the media. They observed the participation of women, both at the candidacy level and the voting level. They

addressed whether polling and counting were conducted efficiently and effectively, according to 'democratic principles'.⁶⁴

Who is open to transformation through their participation in the elections?

Who is expected to *conform* through their participation in democracy performed?

* * *

In an interview entitled, "Rituals of Exclusion", Foucault observes the potential transformative space of the university.

There is the first function of the university: to put students out of circulation. Its second function, however, is one of integration. Once a student has spent six or seven years of his life within this artificial society, he becomes 'absorbable': society can consume him. Insidiously, he will have received the values of this society. He will have been given socially desirable models of behaviour, so that this ritual of exclusion will finally take on the value of inclusion and recuperation or reabsorption.⁶⁵

The liminal space continues to be ordered around particular social and political demands.

Is the graduation ceremony intended to be a space which allows for the students to challenge existing structural orders and experience something new? Is the marriage a space that invites a certain vulnerability, a certain openness to change? Were the elections a space through which the EU could observe the transformative potential of Palestinian politics? Or did their role as adjudicators prevent this?

The symbols and rituals of the liminal rite of passage are infused with their own order, with their own classifications and categories. Hierarchies and social expectations remain in the rite of passage. This ordering may close down the possibility for difference. The rite of passage may be working to prepare those bodies to become subsumed back into the ordered space of the social and the political. This ordering may close down the possibility for difference.

Hamas is being expected to conform through democracy performed. The EU's position is to observe and adjudicate this transformation. If such relations of hierarchy are maintained in democracy performed, then may this rite of passage allow for the reconstitution of the relationship between them?

The politics of performance

Delegates of the EU EOM performed a particular desire that the elections constituted an important opportunity for transforming the Palestinian politics space. Hamas performed an expectation that the elections could bring about the possibility for change.

Particular actors continued to perform attachments to the importance of supporting or participating in democratic elections.

Why?

* * *

The politics of performance.

Why did the EU decide to support the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections?

Why did the Council of Ministers decide to send an observation mission to the West Bank and Gaza?

Why?

In “Democracy’s Performance” McKenzie presents Nietzsche’s fierce attack on democracy. Nietzsche argues that democracy is monopolised by the modern nation state, which reduces the powers and energies of the populace *to supporting established orders*. Nietzsche’s comments draw attention to the *inability to create* within structured institutions. Subjects perform their roles within society (often roles they did not choose freely). These ritualised performances continue to protect an ordered way of doing and being.⁶⁶

Here we are invited to critique the politics of the performance of democracy. We are invited to wonder whether democracy performed was indeed a space that offered the possibility for creative undoings. Did the performance of the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections offer Hamas and the EU the possibility to reconstitute their relationship?

Was it supposed to?

McKenzie, through Nietzsche, states that humans have fallen victim to their own “good performance”. A *good* performance is equated with maintaining the current order of the social and political world; whereby creativity, spontaneity, ingenuity are absent, or perhaps present, but they do not serve to undo the current order of things.⁶⁷

Democracy performed may have allowed actors to engage with its coded value system of ‘proffering legitimacy’ and perform its rituals of ‘intended change’, but democracy performed did not serve to challenge the existing social and political relations between the performing actors. *Democracy performed was not actually a performance intended to bring about change.*

Nietzsche describes a certain male European *cocky faith* found in democratic ages.⁶⁸

Those actors engaged in the performance of democracy may be occupied by their own ritualised expectations. While the Palestinian populace took up this opportunity for democratic elections with earnest commitment, I argue that the EU monitors were stuck in their ritualised faith in the democratic process. The EU enacted the elections as technical fix, and as a display of their own commitment of democracy. The elections allowed them to perform this prescribed role, but it was not a position of liminality. The *EU* was not prepared to be transformed through the democratic process.

* * *

In my interview with Lord Patten of Barnes he describes his experiences as European Union Commissioner for External Relations. With regards to the EU’s position within Palestinian politics Lord Barnes stated the following,

And there was also, I think ... a ... a hunt for reasons for not being more proactive and involved. Rather than a hunt for ways in which we could be more involved.

I asked him why?

I think partly because some member states allowed themselves to be convinced that if we took a position which was regarded as hostile or unhelpful in Israel or Washington we would play ourselves out of the game. I always believed that it was impossible to, or it

should have been impossible, to accept that EU Foreign Policy should be determined by the Israeli foreign ministry. And that it would be actually quite helpful to those in America that were in favour of a more active policy to distance Europe a bit from the Americans.⁶⁹

Rather than looking for ways in which the EU could be more engaged, more active in engaging with Palestinian politics, the EU was looking for ways to remain sidelined. The EU did not want to disturb the political order in which the US and Israel continued to dominate.

So why support the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections?

Why send all those observers to monitor the elections? Why send all that money to fund the elections?

Why?

Makdisi offers the following observations on the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections,

All the talk of elections is part of an attempt to impose a sense of normalcy on a highly abnormal situation: not just the endless occupation, but the unresolved future of the Palestinian people, two-thirds of whom are excluded from the electoral process because they do not live in the occupied territories but rather in refugee camps or in the diaspora, or as second-class citizens of the state of Israel. And none of this will be changed by the elections.⁷⁰

Makdisi states,

The point of the elections is to maintain the illusion that there still is a political process that will eventually lead to Palestinian 'statehood'.⁷¹

If the elections were intended to preserve a particular order, then perhaps the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections did not offer the possibility for the EU to change the way in which it engaged with Hamas. Although, the EU appeared encouraged by their role in monitoring the elections; and the electoral observers seemed energised by Hamas's participation in the elections, democracy performed acted to maintain a particular order.

A wolf in sheep's clothing

The following two passages relay accounts of the EU's involvement with Hamas during the 2006 campaign.

Richard Chambers was Deputy Chief of the EU observation mission, explains,

At the lower level- what we actually realized after a week or two is that Hamas weren't really keen on meeting with us either. They very much understood our situation. They weren't likely to be exploiting our presence to give them some sort of legitimacy. I don't think they frankly looked for that kind of endorsement, so they didn't seem that bothered in not meeting with us. So we began to worry a lot less about it and we also changed our policy to allow lower level observers to meet with Hamas candidates; to contact them. And a lot more contact probably took place perhaps than the mission actually initially envisioned as a result of that.⁷²

Ignasi Guardans Cambo was an electoral observer located in Nablus, Palestine, describes,

The meeting with Hamas was very interesting, because the guys didn't hide their intentions. They did not mention Israel in terms of violence; that would have been complicated to do. It would have ended the meeting. But indeed yes, you could see that it was not exactly the environment in which dialogue would be taking place with Israel if these guys were in charge. You could definitely understand that from moment one. You cannot say from Hamas that (I believe this is an important political statement) that it is the sort of people who hide their positions and then they win the elections, and then they reappear with their real intentions. Which is a typical phenomenon in some cases. That was not the case with Hamas. They were very responsible, and serious in the conversation, I recall them as very well documented. You could not call them demagogic, as in out of touch with reality, throwing away empty sentences, that was not Hamas. Of course they are dogmatic, they had their principles and they said that they would stand for them.⁷³

Guardans Cambo continues,

They definitely wanted to be in discussion with EU people. That is a very good point. They definitely showed openness with us. They showed the idea that if it was up to them they would be perfectly willing to keep working with the EU.

I don't recall them being thankful to the EU. Like, thank you for paying our police or water, like all the things that the EU has paid for, that was not the mood. It is sometimes the mood with Fatah, whether they believe it or they pretend, certain recognition for this is the mood, but not with Hamas. But it was not violent. It was not insulting. It was, 'here we are, this is what we believe, this is what we want to do and you don't really understand what is going on here.'⁷⁴

These narrations of the EU's encounter with Hamas may direct us towards a feeling that even though Hamas may engage in democratic elections, this does not mean that the group is going to be open to political conversations. Or, perhaps we feel that despite being attached to certain principles or ideals, Hamas is willing to engage politically with external diplomatic actors.

So can Hamas be a political actor?

Can the EU regard Hamas as a political actor?

Do these encounters describe a group with whom the EU can engage politically?

Where are these questions coming from?!

Perhaps I am still performing a particular mode of recognising Hamas, through my investigation into whether the elections provided an opportunity for *Hamas* to transform.

What kind of transformation is expected of Hamas?

What changes do I desire to see?

* * *

Crooke writes extensively on Hamas's politics and ideology of resistance in *Resistance: The Essence of the Islamist Revolution*. Crooke explains that "resistance represents a refusal to 'normalise' injustice. It is a refusal to continue quiescent".⁷⁵ He explains that Hamas's stance of resistance against Israel and against the states who support it can be understood as a refusal to be

domesticated by them.

Fanon writes of the colonial subject's encounter with the paternal ordering of the colonial space. The Negro is adjudicated upon their capacity to assimilate. Fanon discusses the necessity to learn French, the language of the imperialist, in order to be regarded as 'civilised'. The black body arrives into the white scene. "All round me the white man, above the sky tears at its navel, the earth rasps under my feet, and there is a white song, a white song. All this whiteness that burns me".⁷⁶

Fanon cites a conversation with a neighbour in the university,

"Understand, my dear boy, colour prejudice is something I find utterly foreign.... But of course, come in, sir, there is no colour prejudice among us ... Quite, the Negro is a man like ourselves.... It is not because he is black that he is less intelligent than we are ... I had a Senegalese buddy in the army who was really clever ...".⁷⁷

It is important to recall that Hamas participated in these elections to challenge corruption, to offer an alternative voice in domestic politics, to be involved in local governance, to pursue resistance through political means, to offer an Islamic agenda in government. Hamas's participation in the 2006 elections is not dictated by their relations with external actors. Their performance in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections should not be interpreted through the white, external gaze.

* * *

After several interviews with Khaled Mesha'al, leader of Hamas external politburo, Crooke relays how Hamas's resistance is opposed to the narrative of legitimacy Israel and its Western supporters impose on it. "[Israel] wants to impose its pre-conditions of required Palestinian 'good behaviour'; it then demands the right to evaluate for itself that 'good behaviour', and thinks that is enough".⁷⁸

* * *

Milton-Edwards and Farrell present an interesting observation on how one may interpret Hamas's performance in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.

Even Hamas's opponents conceded that its choice of electoral label – 'Change and Reform' – was inspired, capturing the pent-up desire among Palestinians for a new broom. The election manifesto also downplayed Hamas's implacable external agenda, making no mention of its ultimate goal of eradicating Israel. Instead it spoke of 'resistance to the occupation' and 'balanced' relations with the West.⁷⁹

The authors follow this explanation with ...

It was a wolf in sheep's clothing.⁸⁰

Part three: performing rituals otherwise

It was a wolf in sheep's clothing.⁸¹

But if it is acting like a sheep then why can't we view it as a sheep?

* * *

The gendered body is a performative accomplishment; "it has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality".⁸² A performative ontology shifts attention towards the *enactment* of social and cultural iterations of the self, and argues against an inherent and unchanging core identity.

In a 2002 article Shual Mishal, Tel Aviv University, and Avraham Sela, Hebrew University of Jerusalem, offer an idea of what it may have meant for Hamas to participate in the elections and to potentially participate in a power sharing arrangement with Fatah.

The very willingness of Islamic movements to take part in varying levels of state-controlled, limited democratic rule demonstrates concretely the Islamists' conviction that they can attain influence and promote their objectives by operating within the existing political order. In this respect Hamas and other Islamic movements in the Arab world escaped a binary perception regarding their relations with ideological rivals and political opponents. They took care not to depict their social and political reality as a cluster of mutually exclusive, diametrically opposed categories, characterised by 'either-or' relations. And they refrained from portraying themselves in terms of fixed identities, distinct boundaries, and stable, well-established preferences. In short, they recognised the limits beyond which they could not go on pursuing an 'all or nothing' policy to advance ultimate political goals.⁸³

* * *

It was a wolf in sheep's clothing.

But if it is acting like a sheep then why can't we view it as a sheep?

This is what 'she' is made of

Gender is a norm.

Gender is a performative accomplishment.

Gender is the stylised repetition of acts.

There is neither an 'essence' that gender expresses or externalises nor an objective ideal to which gender aspires.⁸⁴

Rather than regarding the performance of gender as expressing a true or inherent identity, Butler argues that the performance of gender is constitutive. "In other words, the 'coherence' and 'continuity' of 'the person' are not logical or analytic features of personhood, but rather, socially

instituted and maintained norms of intelligibility”.⁸⁵ Butler contends that gender is constituted through the ritualised performance of the normative understanding of what gender entails. Through the daily performance of gender roles and behaviours, gender identities become sedimented. Gender, according to Butler, is performative; it does not exist prior to the *stylised repetition of acts* that populate the illusion of something generally accepted as ‘gender’: man(ly), woman(ly), gay(ish), lesbian(ish).

* * *

There are no wolves. There are only performing subjects.

Mishal and Sela’s comments on Hamas’s move into politics through ‘state-controlled’ democratic elections draw attention to the fluidity of Hamas as a movement. They draw attention to the reluctance of Hamas to be attached concretely to a particular identity. “They refrained from portraying themselves in terms of fixed identities, distinct boundaries, and stable, well-established preferences”.⁸⁶

Rather, Mishal and Sela explain that Hamas desired to retain a certain manoeuvrability in its actions. Hamas wanted to maintain the capacity to reform and adapt its direction. “They took care not to depict their social and political reality as a cluster of mutually exclusive, diametrically opposed categories, characterised by ‘either-or’ relations”.⁸⁷

Mishal and Sela have argued elsewhere that Hamas is a movement that is sensitive to its social and political environment. The group is not wedded to an essentialised understanding of itself. Gunning has also argued that Hamas may be understood as a social movement who is receptive to its wider social support and to its local context.⁸⁸

If Hamas may be viewed as an actor who is changing, evolving, who recognises itself as potentially transformative, then perhaps it is worthwhile to observe how Hamas was performing itself around and through the 2006 elections.

* * *

Butler offers an understanding of how the subject is constituted through the acts they perform. The subject does not have an inherent identity or a natural coherence; rather, the actions constitute the subject. As such, we direct our attention to the performances of the subject. Through Butler we may observe how these performances are performative of the subject; these performative acts constitute the subject.

Hamas at and through the elections

Malley and Agha write that: “In the days just after the election, Hamas suddenly sounded more modest, restrained and dependent on third parties”.⁸⁹

Butler explains that,

Performativity turns to a “radical use of the doctrine of constitution that takes the social agent as an object rather than the subject of constitutive acts”.⁹⁰

If these acts are performative of the subject, and the subject is *not* attached to a ‘naturally occurring identity’, then the subject may perform themselves differently; the subject may constitute

themselves differently through their actions.

In 2005, Hamas's Shura council took the decision to participate in the Palestinian legislative elections. Following this decision to partake in the electoral race Hamas's political party, Change and Reform, produced an electoral platform. Hroub states that "the fourteen-page Electoral Platform for Change and Reform constitutes without a doubt the broadest vision that Hamas has ever presented concerning all aspects of Palestinian life".⁹¹

How is Hamas performing itself through these documents?

The following is a passage from the Change and Reform's Electoral Platform. It is located under the heading "internal politics".

The organizing system of the Palestinian political action should be based on political freedoms, pluralism, the freedom to form parties, to hold elections, and on the peaceful rotation of power. These are the guarantees for the implementation of reforms and for fighting corruption and building a developed Palestinian civil society. [Change and Reform will] adopt dialogue and reason to resolve internal disputes, and will forbid infighting or the use or threat of force in internal affairs. [Change and Reform will] emphasise respect for public liberties including the freedom of speech, the press, assembly, movement and work. [Hamas] forbids arbitrary arrest based on political opinion. It will maintain the institutions of civil society and activate its role in monitoring and accountability. [Change and Reform] will guarantee the rights of minorities and respect them in all aspects on the basis of full citizenship ... [P]ublic money belongs to all Palestinians and should be used for comprehensive Palestinian development in ways that fulfill social justice and fairness in geographical distribution without misuse, squandering, usurpation, corruption, and defalcation.⁹²

If the subject is constituted through the acts they perform, then how may we observe Hamas's political platform? How may this text be performative of Hamas as a particular kind of subject?

Hroub states,

It could be said that the document was designed to carry out exactly the kinds of reform that had been demanded by Western governments and financial institutions.⁹³

Menachem Klein, a Senior Lecturer at Bar-Ilan University, Israel explains how the electoral platform acts as a dramatic shift in Hamas's engagement with politics. Klein states that Hamas's political texts surrounding the 2006 Palestinian elections present Hamas as "pragmatic and action-directed, rather than theological and ideological".⁹⁴

Klein continues,

Hamas emphasises its commitment to society's prevailing mores – democracy, aspects of technological-Western education, defense of the rights of Christians, gender equality, separation of powers, and freedom of speech.⁹⁵

Hamas is not a wolf. Hamas is not a sheep.

The aim is not to determine whether Hamas are terrorists or not. The objective should not be to conclude whether Hamas is a partner for peace or not. At the time of the elections, this is how Hamas was performing itself.

Was the EU paying attention to this performance?

Hroub presents a thorough observation of Hamas's political platform in the 2006 article, "A 'New Hamas' through its New Documents". As the title explicitly conveys, Hroub suggests that through the various documents that surrounded the 2006 elections we can observe a change in Hamas.

Hroub comments on Hamas's political platform,

Even more surprising is the virtual absence of military resistance from the platform; there is simply no comparison between the weight and detail given to civilian aspects of governance promised by Hamas and the weight accorded to resistance.⁹⁶

Hroub states that the document only references armed struggle once, and its "emphasis is on the right to end the occupation 'using all means, including armed struggle'".⁹⁷

This is how Hamas was performing itself at the time of the elections.

Did such a performance proffer the idea that the EU and other external actors could engage with Hamas as a political actor? Does this performance offer the possibility of engaging with Hamas otherwise?

Hamas writes that it wishes to protect political freedoms, freedom for the press and protect minority rights. Hamas writes that it hopes for a peaceful rotation of power. It performs a particular energy towards good governance, rather than violent resistance.

May this performance have offered the EU the possibility of engaging with Hamas? Were these openings through which the EU could manoeuvre itself to engage with Hamas politically? Did Hamas's performance offer the possibility for the EU to alter its recognition of Hamas?

The EU and Hamas at and through the elections

Deputy Chief Election Observer, Richard Chambers explains the following in an interview,

One of the main issues that we addressed were EU relations with Hamas – because Hamas had played such a pivotal role in reaching the Cairo agreement and because they had been so involved in the electoral process we were very keen to see this election – to see this as a sign of them wanting to take control in the parliament – there was an expectation that Hamas would play a political role.⁹⁸

The EU EOM states very clearly in their *preliminary observations*, and repeats in their *final report*,

These elections were notable for the participation of candidates linked to extremist or radical groups that have advocated violence as a means to solving problems in the Middle East. It is hoped that this participation is an indication of the movement of such groups towards engaging in a truly democratic process, which would be in fundamental contradiction with violent activity.⁹⁹

The EU monitoring body performed a particular desire to see Hamas engaged with politically. The EU appeared to be performing a possibility for the EU to recognise and engage with Hamas differently.

Was the EU paying attention?

Did the EU observe its own declaration that they hoped Hamas's participation in the election pointed towards the movement's desire to be engaged with politically?

* * *

Chief observer, Chambers met with members of Fatah. He met with members of Hamas. He was present in Palestine during the electoral race. Chambers offered the following anecdote regarding incidents of violence during the campaign.

Just ahead of the elections, in Gaza in particular, observers were threatened. And in Hebron and Nablus our observers were threatened by al-Aqsa – and there were a series of other threats against us – we of course found this very ironic, that the al-Aqsa Brigade, connected to the guys that we were freely allowed to engage with, whilst the group that we were less free to engage with then offered to protect us. And we got the bizarre scenario that we were having offers of security protection to our observers from both the Israelis and from Hamas. This places us in a unique position in history.¹⁰⁰

The EU EOM offers written evidence in support of Chambers anecdote.

The initial incidents of violence took place on 12 and 13 December 2005 and were explicit attempts by the Fatah-affiliated al-Aqsa Martyrs Brigade to disrupt the candidate registration process ahead of the 14 December deadline. Later, attacks occurred ahead of the brief time extension on 28 December and during the early stages of the campaign period and again, responsibility appeared to rest with the al-Aqsa Militia groups.¹⁰¹

The EU monitoring body explains that Hamas was committed to suspending acts of violence in order to participate in the elections. The Final Report writes that Hamas was not reported to have undertaken any acts of terrorism or violence during the period leading up to the elections.¹⁰²

The general feeling from the EU EOM summary of the 2006 electoral space seems to account for Hamas *as a candidate in an electoral race*. They perform Hamas as a competitor in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Further to that the EU monitoring bodies express how the elections may provide an opportunity for radical groups to become part of the political process in Palestine.

The EU report notes how previously, radical political movements that had objected to the Oslo Accords and the Road Map had boycotted elections in Palestine. The EU appeared to be publicly pleased that this time Hamas had decided not to boycott the elections. In contrast to the 1996 elections, the 2006 elections “provided voters with a real choice from across the Palestinian political spectrum”.¹⁰³ Hamas played a crucial role in contributing to the competitive nature of the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections' democratic race.

* * *

If the acting subject is constituted through their actions, then the actors continuously constitute themselves through their performances. If political relationships are constituted through the way in which they are performed, then such political relationships may be reconstituted through

performing them differently.

Hamas and the EU, by performing themselves this way, through the elections, may have been able to reconstitute their political relationship. The EU performed a desire to see Hamas as a political actor. Hamas performed a desire to be regarded as a political actor; perhaps these were openings for change and transformation.

Context and intention

The terms through which we constitute our identities, social relations, or relations of desire may turn against their own constitutive historicity.¹⁰⁴ Performance offers the possibility for actors to reshape themselves. While the acting subject may have a particular constitutive history, the acting subject can perform in a way that turns against this history. Derrida writes on the concept of iterability: “a standard act depends as much upon the possibility of being repeated, and thus potentially being mimed, feigned, cited, played, simulated, parasited, etc.”¹⁰⁵ Derrida observes that the context in which writing and performance takes place cannot be fully controlled by the author/by the performer. Social and cultural contexts do not act as structural determinants upon the possibility to perform. Derrida observes how the intention of the author cannot be fully determinate of the performative effects of their performance.¹⁰⁶

* * *

We can imagine that certain members of the EU’s audience, Israel and the US, were not open to the transformation of Hamas. Indeed, I am sure we can imagine they were strongly wedded to the idea that Hamas should not be allowed to engage in politics. The US and Israel discouraged Hamas’s participation in the elections. Also some EU Member States were reluctant for Hamas to participate in the 2006 elections. However, I don’t believe that this should control our desire to see the elections as a possible site through which the EU and could have moved to engage with Hamas politically.

If there was no possibility that the elections could bring about productive change to Palestinian politics, then what was the point?

If the EU felt that there was no potential that the elections could create space for Hamas to come into political discussions, then why write that in your reports?

Why spend all that money and waste all that energy if the elections could not assist Palestine in democratic reform?

* * *

Despite the political context in which the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections took place there continued to be a desire for the elections to bring about change and transformation. Political analysts, former negotiators, academics were also hoping for the elections to promote a kind of dialogue in Palestinian politics.

Butler reminds us that we must negotiate with the discourses that have shaped us.

There is no self that is prior to the convergence or who maintains ‘integrity’ prior to its entrance into this conflicted cultural field. There is only a taking up of the tools where they lie, where the very ‘taking up’ is enabled by the tool lying there.¹⁰⁷

We may not (re)perform gender and other political and social identities and relationships ex-nihilo, rather the acting body must 'take up the tools where they lie', and through this taking up change is still possible.

These elections took place within a particular historical and political context, namely the continued occupation and US strategic support for Israel; however, this situatedness was not determinate of the possibilities for performing otherwise. Democracy performed continued to provide possibilities through which the EU and Hamas could have reconstituted their relationship.

* * *

The EU monitoring body noted that although the elections took place in a climate of uncertainty, namely, "a background of delay, unacceptable levels of pre-campaign violence and an occupation that placed restrictions on the exercise of fundamental freedoms related to elections",¹⁰⁸ the 2006 elections were genuinely 'free and fair'. The EU EOM stated, "These elections saw impressive voter participation in an open and fairly-contested electoral process".¹⁰⁹ Certain figures within the EU governing bodies may have expressed hesitation regarding Hamas's participation in the elections. However, these figures did not dispute the legitimacy of the elections. Chambers explained that the EU EOM was given autonomy over their report. They were not directed to cast Hamas in a bad light or to try to portray the elections as mismanaged or illegitimate, which Chambers, an experienced observer, explains can happen with elections in conflicted situations.¹¹⁰ Indeed, here it appears there was a desire to let the elections run their course.

Maybe the EU did want the elections to bring about a kind of change.

The utterances of EU officials and high level representatives signal that the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections was an event that may have allowed social and political transformation.

The observers accounted that "voting on 25 January proceeded smoothly and peacefully with an impressive turnout of 77% of total number of registered voters".¹¹¹

The Final Report states, "These elections marked another important milestone in the building of Palestinian democratic institutions, which is a fundamental component in the peace process foreseen in the 2002 Road Map".¹¹²

The consensus of the EU EOM was that "As with the 2005 presidential election, the Palestinian people have demonstrated an overwhelming commitment to determine their political future via democratic means".¹¹³

Repeating otherwise

Butler writes,

As in other ritual social dramas, the action of gender requires a performance that is repeated. This repetition is at once a re-enactment and reexperiencing of a set of meanings already socially established.¹¹⁴

In the understanding and writings of gender as performance, Butler observes performance as potentially subversive or transgressive. McKenzie explicates how Butler generated a particular thinking about the liminality of performance from Turner's study of ritual social drama, but

Butler developed it with a twist. “By pushing the pedal on performative citationality”,¹¹⁵ says McKenzie, Butler was able to generalise the transformative potential in ritualised performance. Working from Derrida’s understanding of the ‘iterability’ of utterances, Butler regards social action as always being a form of repetition. Butler suggests that no speech or act originates with the performer; it is always in some sense a *repeated* act. Performative acts are by necessity citational; they gain their authority and forcibility from reiterating previous acts. Butler cites Derrida, who asks, “Could a performative succeed if its formulation did not repeat a ‘coded’ or iterable utterance ... if it were not identifiable in some way as a ‘citation’?”¹¹⁶ “And the ‘act’ by which a name authorizes or deauthorizes a set of social or sexual relations is, of necessity, a *repetition*”.¹¹⁷ If the performance of the social space is a (re)-iteration or ritualised social behaviour, then Butler argues, all such performances entail the possibilities for change and transformation. These reiterations, are never simple replicas of the same.¹¹⁸ There exists a continuous opportunity for such repetitions to be performed differently. Butler argues that through repeating otherwise normative identities and relations can be transformed.¹¹⁹

* * *

Within every repeated action there is the possibility to repeat otherwise. And in repeating otherwise the subject emerges anew.

Klein offers a comparative review of Hamas’s founding Charter, 1988 and the 2006 Electoral Platform.

Hamas’s Charter, 1988, is regarded as a “classically radical and fundamentalist document”,¹²⁰ explains Klein. The Charter is an ideological text, which is focused almost entirely on prophecy and war. It uses Qur’anic quotes and religious texts to justify armed struggle as a means of resistance and it places great emphasis on jihad – holy war – to resist against the occupation.¹²¹ Hamas’s Electoral Platform, 2006, continues to oppose normalisations with Israel and it declares that the occupation must be resisted by all means.¹²² However, Klein stresses that the “the authors of the platform chose only to hint at military actions and the armed struggle, and also left the door open to legitimizing the diplomatic process – something unthinkable to the authors of the Islamic Charter”.¹²³

Hamas never revoked the Charter; Hamas leadership declare that it is an important historical document for the movement.¹²⁴ However, Klein notes that it cannot be ignored that Hamas does not cite the Charter in any of its political texts.¹²⁵ He states that in 2006 Hamas leadership regarded the movement’s 1988 Charter as “anachronistic”, “outdated”, and “ahistorical;” they agreed that it had lost much of its political relevance.¹²⁶ “The differences between the party’s platform and the Islamic Charter” says Klein,

do not represent an attempt at deception or the empty and unconsidered use of words. They are a product of a change and modification of lines of thought as a part of the process by which Hamas has become a political movement.¹²⁷

They are a product of a change and modification.

* * *

“The task”, Butler writes, “is not whether to repeat, but how to repeat or, indeed, to repeat and,

through a radical proliferation of gender, *to displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself".¹²⁸ In performing ourselves and our relationships differently change and transformation is possible. In performing otherwise the subject may reconstitute the discourses which inform them. In repeating these discourses otherwise, social and political relations are altered.

These disturbed relations, these relations otherwise, when we are really paying attention perhaps open-up to new possibilities, new conversations, new feelings, new experiences to come in.

Abigail was born on 23 December, 2013. Christmas was there. The rituals surrounding the Christmas holiday were there. But they were there with a twist. The location for Christmas dinner changed. The games following the dinner changed. The transformative potential around Abigail's arrival did not require a dramatic rupture in space and time (although this probably occurred). The rituals surrounding the Christmas holiday were performed otherwise. And I believe these *small changes* allowed the family to be together otherwise. These small changes provided an opportunity for a different kind of care; a different kind of attention. Through repeating the rituals of Christmas otherwise, relationships were different. In repeating otherwise openings for change and transformation were present.

In repeating rituals otherwise openings for change and transformation are present.

In repeating rituals otherwise openings for change and transformation are always present.

* * *

Through the performance of the elections the EU engaged with Hamas differently. Through the elections the EU was able to perform itself differently towards Hamas. These altered performances may have been performative of an alternative relationship between Hamas and the EU. This performance of difference may have been transformative of the way in which the EU engaged with Hamas.

We should always be looking to enact small changes.

The Chief EU EOM observer, Véronique de Keyser, stated the following in a press conference held on 26 January, 2006.

The Palestinian leadership took the risk of going ahead with these elections despite widespread opposition in order to give priority to democracy. The People of Palestine responded to this opportunity with great enthusiasm and dignity by coming out in large numbers to cast their ballot in a peaceful manner. I hope that the winners and losers of these elections will accept the results with the same political maturity that their supporters showed on election day.¹²⁹

In a news conference in Jerusalem on the 26 January, 2006 Edward McMillan Scott, Chair of the 27-member EU parliamentary delegation stated,

The clamour for choice and change was on the streets in Palestine; we heard and we welcome the noise of democracy. The political environment has changed and the Quartet, which meets on Monday, will need to take stock. As we predicted after last year's presidential vote, the Palestinian people have provided a model for the wider Arab region in the conduct of this election. The parliamentary dimension of the EU's neighbourhood has

been amplified, in particular through the Euro-Mediterranean Parliamentary Assembly in which members of the Palestinian Legislative Council and the Knesset uniquely participate.¹³⁰

* * *

There is no hesitation here. The Vice-president of the European Parliament states that the elections provide a model for the wider Arab region. The Palestinian have taken risks, and have performed a democratic election. Democracy performed provided an opportunity to shed old identities and relations, and emerge anew. The acting bodies make speak prior to, or different than institutional clamour; they speak of desiring and enacting change.

Conclusion: liminal everywhere!

Was the EU capable of transforming the way in which it recognised Hamas?

Were the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections a space though which the EU could change the way in which it engaged with Hamas, and perhaps change the way in which Israel and the US viewed Hamas?

Did democracy performed provide an opportunity for the EU and Hamas to reconstitute their relationship?

Within *every* performance there exists the possibility to perform otherwise.

Within *every* ritualised action, there exists the possibility to perform this ritualised action differently. The feeling of the liminal may be continuously present. The moment, rupture, space of liminality may be present in every action.

A moment of ambiguity.

An opening in the order of things.

A gap in structural relations.

A fissure in the hierarchy.

Liminality and the possibility for transformations, however small are a continuous possibility within every performance.

* * *

In terms of mood. The mood was there. Everybody was very mobilised. Citizens were excited. Everybody was excited. You did have this feeling that it was important moment. An important moment because this was unchartered territory or an important moment because it would mark a deadline, it was not very clear. Citizens are not political analysts. But there was this concept that this was big, that something big is going to happen, that was clear. You could see that talking to candidates, you could see that talking to people.¹³¹

Intermission: Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections

Hamas won 74 seats out of a possible 132.

Fatah won 46 seats.

Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.

Although Hamas's Change and Reform party only consolidated 44% of the national 'vote',

the media and political reports were calling this ‘a landslide victory for Hamas’.

Hamas won the majority of the seats in the Parliament.

Everyone was in shock. “The streets in Gaza were emptier of traffic than normal, and even pedestrians moved slower, stopping every few yards to talk through the whys and what nows with everyone else”.¹³² “It was immediately obvious that Hamas’s election was seismic in proportion”.¹³³

It shocked governments, generals, humanitarian workers, bankers, intelligence agencies and Palestinian and Israeli citizens alike.

Hamas had taken a clear majority in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Hamas was set to take over most of the institutions of the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, Gaza and Jerusalem.¹³⁴

* * *

Now what?

A pause, a moment, a rupture?

What could be possible?

What kind of response is possible?

What kind of response to Hamas’s success is possible?

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4 ‘Perform or else’

The EU’s ‘failure’ to respond to Hamas’s success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections

Political analyst on EU–Mediterranean relations, Richard Youngs,

The reaction to the Hamas election was a disaster. It was a disaster, because it just played into all the skepticism that the international community would actually be willing to follow-through on the results of genuinely democratic elections.¹

Deputy Chief Election Observer for the Palestinian legislative elections, Richard Chambers,

There could have been a much more effective way to engage with Hamas. Wait and see how that government proceeds. Wait and see which ministries the EU can engage with.²

Journalist for the *Le Monde Diplomatique*, Alain Gresh,

Hamas is, without doubt, popular in both the West Bank and Gaza. It is part of the political landscape. As in many Arab countries, it is illusory to think that progress to democracy can be made without including the Islamists.³

European MP and member of the EU’s elections observation mission, Margrete Auken,

It was a terrible mistake not to respect the elections. It was not logical; it showed a lack of political will and an absence of the rule of law. It was absurd. Everybody knows that it was absurd.⁴

* * *

In the *Queer Art of Failure* Halberstam disturbs the idea of what it means to *fail*.

“Failure, of course, goes hand in hand with capitalism”,⁵ explains Halberstam. There is an economy of winners and losers within the capitalist system. In order for there to be winners there must be losers. But what does it mean to fail within a capitalist regime? What does it mean to succeed within the capitalist system? How does failing comment on particular regimes of success? Halberstam observes how the queer life, or a queer understanding of societal norms of progress, success and a fulfilled life challenge the idea of failure.⁶

What does it mean to fail? What does it mean to fail within a particular regime of success?

Halberstam states,

We can recognize failure as a way of refusing to acquiesce to dominant logics of power and discipline and as a form of critique. As a practice, failure recognises that alternatives are already embedded already in the dominant and that power is never total or consistent; indeed failure can exploit the unpredictability of ideology and its indeterminate qualities.⁷

As such, perhaps failure, within particular regimes of success may be understood as a mode of resistance, as a way of challenging certain dominant structures. Failure may be an opening towards new possibilities. Failing to conform may invite opportunities for diversified ways of being and doing.

* * *

Perhaps we can take this disturbance of what it means to fail and what it means to succeed as a starting point from which to observe the EU's response to Hamas's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections. Hamas, a resistance movement, Hamas a labelled terrorist movement, won democratic elections. First, this chapter addresses how Hamas's electoral victory disturbed particular normative expectations. While the EU supported the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections, there was a dominant belief, and also expectation that Fatah would win. Part one interrogates the diplomatic style and language of EU expectations, and it explains how Hamas presented a disruption to this order. Hamas, which had not yet conformed to the normalised diplomatic practices that had come to shape European–Palestinian Authority relations, presents an interesting critique of a politics that has perhaps not served the Palestinian interest. The unexpected result of Hamas's success may have opened up opportunities for change, transition and newness, as Hamas moved from resistance movement to elected government. While such a transition is difficult, it may have offered opportunities for alternative political arrangements.

However, the EU's response to Hamas's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections tells a very different story. The EU placed three conditions on the recognition of Hamas as the new government in the OPTs, and has since mostly adhered to an official no-contact policy with the movement. This response has been hailed by many as an opportunity lost, a disaster, a failure. But how did such a 'mistake' occur? Did the EU really *fail* to engage with Hamas's success? Part two of this chapter interrogates whether the EU's response was not a *failure* but the outcome of a performative apparatus of various bureaucratic and cultural performance pressures. As such, the EU successfully enacted itself. But what does it mean, therefore, to *successfully conform* to various institutional and political pressures? Can we begin to ask what is at stake in *successfully complying* with multiple imperatives to perform? Through Jon McKenzie's concept of 'perform or else' or the imperative to perform, this chapter investigates the EU's institutional and cultural rituals, which it argues led to the sanction of Hamas. Rather, than entertaining the possibility for transition, this chapter observes how EU rituals closed down an engagement with such opportunities.

Finally, this chapter addresses the demands placed on Hamas's performance, and how the movement had to manoeuvre around a discourse that already regarded it as illegitimate. The either/or, all or nothing framing of the conditions limited the recognition of compromises offered by Hamas. The conditions themselves reaffirmed the power of those 'who are telling the

difference', of those in charge of identifying whether Hamas's performance was appropriate enough, conciliatory enough. This chapter ends by addressing the implications of failing to leave Hamas as an ambiguous subject, and rather knowing it as threat.

Part one: 'failing' to conform

*One of these things is not like the others.
One of these things just doesn't belong,
Can you tell which thing is not like the others
By the time I finish my song?⁸*

I explain to my father that I am in love. I tell him that I have found love; the best kind of love. And I am loved back in a most equal and beautiful way.

This cute look appears on his face; a look, which unfortunately finds me cute.

Hamas's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections came as a shock. It was a surprise for many within Hamas, who mostly thought they would fare well in the elections, but did not expect to take the majority of the seats. It came as a shock to those international observers, who perhaps had come to accept Hamas's participation in the elections, but who did not expect for the group to win. Hamas's success in the Palestinian legislative elections disturbed various normative ideals surrounding the elections and the expected outcomes of 'democratic procedures'.

Disturbing the normative ideal

The wrong guys won.

It was immediately obvious that Hamas's election was seismic in proportion. It forced governments, generals, intelligence agencies, bankers, humanitarian organizations and ordinary Palestinian and Israeli citizens into a radical rethink of decade-old assumptions and working practices.⁹

"As preliminary results came in, it soon became apparent that Hamas had performed far better than most commentators had anticipated".¹⁰ In January 2006 Hamas's party, Change and Reform, won 74 of 132 of seats in the Palestinian legislative council. Fatah came in second place with 45 seats. Hamas's political party would form the new government of Palestine. A Hamas leader would take on the position of prime minister and in co-ordination with the president's office, held by Mahmoud Abbas, Hamas would decide upon the positions of the ministers within the Palestinian Authority.

Hamas, the Islamic Resistance Movement, won democratic elections, which were monitored and declared to be 'free and fair' by the European Union.

Patrick Child, Head of cabinet for Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighborhood, shared the following thoughts surrounding Hamas's election.

The general hope was that the elections would produce a different result. But when we were walking around in Gaza, and you could see all the colourful flags in the street it was very clear that Hamas had a very strong level of support. And then when the results of the elections came out. It was obviously very difficult to deal with politically, certainly not

what anyone in the EU was looking for in terms of results. But that was something as commissioner that Benita had seen coming from her visit. And then of course that threw the whole discussion into turmoil “how to respond to all of that?”¹¹

How to respond to all of that.

How to respond to all of *what*?

* * *

A regulatory ideal, explains Butler, maintains the coherence and continuity of a particular normative discourse. It “works in a performative fashion to constitute the materiality of bodies and, more specifically, to materialize the body’s sex, to materialize sexual difference in the service of the consolidation of the heterosexual imperative”.¹² The regulatory ideal functions to order bodies in relation to a discourse of normalcy. Certain bodies are read as intelligible, because they appear to act in accordance with the norms that have already inscribed the possibility for being recognised. These bodies do not cause any immediate surprise or shock because they reconfirm the regulatory ideal already at work. These bodies *make sense*.

The general consensus in Brussels was that ‘things would have been a lot easier had Fatah won the elections’.

Fatah and the EU had learnt to like each other. They had learnt to get along.

MEP Richard Howitt explains, “The whole European policy is to be in bed with Fatah and to make Abbas successful”.¹³

The EU hoped that Fatah would win the elections.

Howitt continues,

It is a judgment that has been made in Europe, by European leaders in the EU, that Abbas was the only game in town to be an acceptable partner for peace for Israel and what we had to do was build him up.¹⁴

It would have *made sense, or at least been a whole lot easier (for the EU)* for Fatah to have won the elections.

There was a fairly clear consensus that we had to do all we could, to support the good guys, whether or not they were the ones who won the election.¹⁵

The wrong guys won.

A successful Fatah government would have allowed the EU to carry on with ‘business as usual’. A successful Fatah government would have been a coherent and continuous political subject, leaving the normative expectations from a European sponsored electoral process alone.

But Fatah didn’t win the elections; Hamas did.

One of these things is not like the other.

One of these things just doesn’t belong.

Unintelligible Hamas

The wrong guys won.

Hamas's success invoked a certain unintelligibility, which subsequently seem to require the EU to reassert a certain reading over the movement and its success.

Journalist Mohammed Omer,

“Politics”, said Shakespeare in *The Tempest*, “makes strange bedfellows”, and few alliances are stranger or more unexpected than those within the present Palestinian government. [...] Having long branded the Hamas movement as terrorists, Israel and the West are issuing predictable threats about refusing to work with a Hamas-led Palestinian Authority. But stranger still is the situation within occupied Palestine where former political prisoners and pariahs now occupy the halls of power with the same men who not long ago were their jailers.¹⁶

One of these things is not like the other.

One of these things just doesn't belong.

After Hamas's victory was announced, Ismail Haniyeh, the new prime minister designate, was mobbed at his home in Gaza. Scores of journalists and well-wishers crammed into his home in the Shatti refugee camp.¹⁷ *I imagine it is normal for a newly elected prime minister to be mobbed at his home. I imagine it is not normal for this home to be found in a refugee camp.*

* * *

Through my research and interviews it remained unclear whether the EU had a particular problem with Hamas's Islamic political agenda.

MEP, Margrete Auken stated in an interview,

The EU in general does not have a particular stigma towards political Islam. It was not phased by an Islamic party winning and it understood that in general Palestinians are not a conservative social group.¹⁸

A senior EU official in the European External Action Service commented that the EU recognises that Hamas and Palestinians in general are not conservative or radically Islamic. This was not the problem.¹⁹

However, Alastair Crooke, comments,

The rise of anti-immigrant, anti-Muslim sentiment in Europe has become another factor impeding the EU's ability to respond to the Islamist challenge.²⁰

Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Jameel Majdalawi,

They don't like Hamas because Hamas is a religious force.²¹

What did become clear through my research is that....

Hamas was made to be taboo.

In an interview with a current leading representative from the Middle East Desk for the European External Action Service, she said to me ... "It's all about Hamas".²²

It's all about Hamas.

Hamas was taboo.

The unintelligible subject is that which does not fit neatly into the normative framework through which it is intended to be understood. The unintelligible subject shocks, surprises; it challenges the regulatory ideal. It is that which is both discontinuous and incoherent.

In 2006 Hamas, a labelled terrorist organisation, won democratic elections.

A research paper prepared by the House of Commons Library writes the following on responses to the elections:

The international community is faced with a dilemma. It provides crucial financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority and has supported free and fair elections in Palestine, but is now faced with the prospect that Hamas, a movement that both the EU and the US view as a terrorist group, will play a major role in the next Palestinian government".²³

This was understood as a problem.

The EU Council of Ministers underlined that violence and terror are incompatible with democratic processes. The EU's own regime of intelligibility (which here controls an understanding of what counts as violence and democracy) presents these practices at odds with each other.

One of these things just doesn't belong.

Hamas, a labelled terrorist organisation by the EU and its allies, won democratic elections.

A child is born. A child is born who is neither obviously female nor male.

* * *

Butler states that "the cultural matrix through which gender identity has become intelligible requires that certain kinds of 'identities' cannot 'exist'".²⁴ Those bodies who cannot be categorised in a simple binary fashion are read as unintelligible. Particular subjects appear as *failures* because the cultural matrix of intelligibility cannot make sense of their contingency.

Hamas was marked as that which is illegitimate, and as such it was considered to be opposed to political conversations and diplomatic endeavours. The democratically successful Hamas *failed to conform* to a regulatory ideal, which sought to already recognise it as illegitimate. Hamas, the labelled terrorist movement, was not supposed to win democratic elections.

Crooke writes,

As these Islamists 'new barbarians' are defined as living beyond the 'garden walls', beyond the scope of civilisation, civilised rules need no longer apply to them: if 'they' win elections, they still cannot be part of 'us', the civilised West.²⁵

Is it a boy or a girl?

Is it a boy or a girl?!

Do they want democracy or violence?

The elections must have been a mistake.

MEP Hannu Takkula, “The big mistake is that the EU allowed a terrorist organization to take part in the elections”.²⁶

Hamas’s success was so inconceivable that many EU representatives concluded that the elections must have been a mistake. Holding these elections must have been a mistake, because Hamas was not supposed to win. Hamas’s success in the elections, and therefore failure to conform to the governing apparatus of intelligibility troubled how the EU felt it could respond. It disturbed the EU’s normalised discourse, which sought to demarcate Hamas as that illegitimate terrorist other.

* * *

However, perhaps such a ‘mistake’ offered an opportunity for an alternative engagement with the group? Perhaps this unexpected outcome may have offered the EU an opportunity to engage with Hamas otherwise? Perhaps Hamas’s ‘failure’ to conform to the EU’s expectations opened up the possibility of engaging with Hamas’s contingency.

A new development

Indeed, precisely because certain kinds of ‘gender identities’ fail to conform to those norms of cultural intelligibility, they appear only as development failures or logical impossibilities from within that domain. Their persistence and proliferation however, provide critical opportunities to *expose* the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility and, hence, to *open up* within the very terms of that matrix of intelligibility rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder.²⁷

The existence and persistence of those subjects that challenge the dominant binary divides show precisely that the frame of intelligibility is incapable of accounting for and understanding all political subjects.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, began her address to the European Parliament Plenary in April, 2006 with: “The election victory of Hamas in January presented the EU with *an entirely new situation*”.²⁸

When Javier Solana, EU High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, appeared before the European Parliament on the 5 April, 2006, he expressed: “Apart from aspects relating to the Middle East peace process, the coming to power in Palestine, in free, democratic elections, of a movement affiliated to the Muslim Brotherhood represents *an entirely new development*”.²⁹

An entirely new development.

* * *

Hamas’s success in the democratic process can be viewed as troubling the discursive modes of ‘making intelligible’ which sought to demarcate Hamas as illegitimate. This ‘new development’ may have shown that the frame of intelligibility that wanted to see Hamas as opposed to a

political process and to dialogue, was mistaken. This rupture in the system of intelligibility may have opened-up new opportunities for political engagement with Hamas.

Political analysts at the time were calling for a re-evaluation of the EU's normative relationship towards Hamas.

Ahmad Khalidi, Senior Associate Member, St Antony's College, Oxford University,

I would like to see the EU engaging with Hamas [...] and be willing perhaps even to take some risky actions in this domain, because the pay-off, in my opinion, is very big, so I would like to see the EU take a clear and positive role in terms of engagement with forces that are generally considered to be on the extreme side.³⁰

Alastair Crooke, advisor to Javier Solana,

Clearly the arrival of Hamas in government will challenge many assumptions of western policy. It will not be easy, but if Hamas does succeed in delivering tangible results to the Palestinian people, the impact will extend far beyond Palestine. It may define the future of Islamism and help to open an alternative to those revolutionary Islamists who believe that 'only by burning the system, can a new start be begun'.³¹

* * *

Hamas's success in the 2006 elections disturbed the EU's discourse, which sought to already demarcate Hamas as illegitimate. However, perhaps this rupture in their attempt to categorise Hamas could have offered the EU an opportunity to engage with the movement. Although Hamas appeared to confuse, were there not alternative ways to engage with that which confuses, to form political relationships through engaging with that which troubles the regulatory apparatus which seeks to make sense of it?

'Happy limbo' of a non-identity

Foucault's romantic retelling of Herculine Barbin's story.

"In editing and publishing the journals of Herculine Barbin, Foucault is clearly trying to show how an hermaphroditic or intersexed body implicitly exposes and refutes the regulative strategies of sexual categorization".³² Through this narrative Foucault offers the possibility for *new meanings* and *relationships* to be situated in a 'failure' to conform to the regulating normative apparatus. Herculine Barbin was a nineteenth-century French hermaphrodite, who was assigned the sex of 'female' at birth, and then in h/er early twenties s/he was legally compelled to change h/er sex to 'male'. Alexina, as she was called, lived and studied in a convent in France and was constantly surrounded by female attention and consideration. Foucault's reading of Barbin's memoirs finds the *delights* in Alexina's non-identity or "in not having entirely the same sex as the girls among whom she lived and whom she loved and desired so much".³³ "And what she evokes in her past", writes Foucault, is the "*happy limbo of non-identity*".³⁴ Foucault's reading of this text performs a possibility for a proliferation of new sexual feelings, desires and pleasures, when the body is situated "outside the framework of intelligibility enforced by univocal sexes within a binary relation".³⁵

A happy limbo of non-identity.

Foucault observes that Alexina's presence generated a different form of mystical excitement or pleasure surrounding h/er peculiar being. Foucault writes,

one has the impression, at least if one gives credence to Alexina's story, that everything took place in a world of *feelings* – enthusiasm, pleasure, sorrow, warmth, sweetness, bitterness – where the identity of the partners and above all the enigmatic character around whom everything centered, had no importance. It was a world in which grins hung about without the cat.³⁶

In being that which cannot be defined, Foucault locates possibilities for new relationships to be formed. Through challenging coherent identity categorisations new meanings and feelings can emerge. Other attributes appear to matter less and a new form of 'mystical excitement' surrounds the peculiarity of that which does not conform.

* * *

Hamas's success, and as such failure to conform, presented the EU with *an entirely new development*.

Following the elections, Gabrielle Rifkind, Oxford Research Group writes,

Engaging with these groups will be tough and exacting. It demands we suspend some of our expectations, which are shaped by our experience of living in stable societies. Societies that have been exposed to continuous conflict are not going to operate according to the same code of conduct as we do. But if we are to engage in serious dialogue with groups such as Hamas, mediators need to work to win their trust and confidence – even when this may be antithetical to our instincts, particularly if they have been men of violence.³⁷

A possibility, an opening to engage with a new development.

A possibility, an opening to explore new avenues.

A possibility, an opening to fashion an alternative political relationship.

Hamas, from resistance to government

Political analyst, Mkhaimar Abusada,

In 2006 definitely they [Hamas] didn't know they were going to win that big. They had no idea they would win this landslide victory.³⁸

Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Jameel al-Majdalaoui comments,

Yes of course they were ready even if they were surprised by the election results. But directly after they formed the government and they communicated with Europe.³⁹

Senior Hamas representative, Usama Hamdan explains,

The result was a shock for us ... we decided to go for elections, but we were not expecting that any great significance would come from it.⁴⁰

Hamas's win came as a surprise to them also. While it is unclear whether they had forecast their victory, their success in the elections was a change. *It was a new development.*

* * *

Had they lost the elections Hamas could have taken-up the position of the official opposition, which Malley and Agha explain would have allowed them to maintain their primary role as a party of resistance. However, this was not the case. Hamas won the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections and they were now responsible for forming the government in co-ordination with the other Palestinian political parties. Malley and Agha, "Hamas suddenly finds itself on the front line, with decisions to make and relations to manage with the world, international donors, Israel, Fatah, and indeed its own constituents".⁴¹ "Hamas was propelled straight from political wilderness to political power".⁴²

Hamas entered into a *new* role as the elected governing body of Palestine. While Hamas had been engaged with politics at the local level, Hamas's move into the Palestinian Legislative Council was a dramatic step for the movement. Perhaps in this shift there were openings to recognise and engage with Hamas otherwise.

* * *

A child comes into the world. A child comes into a world, a world that is already marked by norms, rules and boundaries.

A child stumbles, fumbles and plays, because a child has not already conformed to the rule bounded world. A child has not yet learnt to conform to these norms.

Palestinian political analyst, Atef Abu Saif,

Hamas found itself climbing up a tree that it put no effort into planting. How did they find themselves at the top of the Palestinian Authority? They don't even know how it worked.⁴³

Hamas didn't know how it worked.

A child comes into a world they did not create.

I met with Atef Abu Saif on 9 December, 2013 in Gaza. We met outside the Abusalama family home at about 11:00 pm. We shared a sheehsa pipe and some tea. Abu Saif, a leading political analyst and advisor in Gaza, candidly shared with me his thoughts on Hamas's first days in government.

Hamas thought the 25 January is the beginning of history. When they won – this is their mentality, that nothing existed before. They wanted to start everything from there – not working from what was there before.⁴⁴

Abu Saif continued,

According to Hamas, "Nothing existed before Mohammed ... the prophet except poetry because Mohammed liked poetry. Nothing existed before Islam- no civilisation. Same thing with Hamas".⁴⁵

They were asking for things that did not make sense.⁴⁶

A child fumbles and stumbles.

* * *

Chickens can't fly.

Hamas were asking for things that did not make sense.

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam observes how cinema directed at the childlike audience offers compelling narratives of interacting with that which appears to 'not make sense'.

Halberstam explains,

In the film *Chicken Run* an "anarchist's utopia" is realised.

The chickens eschew their 'natural' state of being and fly out of the chicken coop using their wings. The chickens reject the individualist solution offered by Rocky the Rooster (voiced by Mel Gibson). The chickens work cooperatively to liberate themselves from the farm. The chickens break away from their position as egg layers and they fashion the utopic place; a stateless territory, without farmers or fences, in an all female society (as they are all chickens). And they achieve a control over their own labour.⁴⁷

The anarchist utopia is realised.

Chickens can't fly.

Certain things don't make sense.

A child fumbles and stumbles, because they are new to the world.

But perhaps their fumbles and stumbles should not be so easily dismissed.

Halberstam rejects a reading of the narratives presented in these films as simply childish and thus unimportant. Rather, Halberstam argues, that we should challenge the temporal order, which assigns dreams of transformation to the child domain and an acceptance of the dysfunctional present to normative adulthood.⁴⁸ In doing so, these films offer a crucial critique to the realm of the acceptable; they challenge the ordered state of mature relations.

Halberstam writes,

Animated films nowadays succeed, I think, to the extent to which they are able to address the disorderly child, the child who sees his or her family and parents as the problem, the child who knows there is a bigger world out there beyond the family, if only he or she could reach it.⁴⁹

'Childlike' narratives speak back to the realm of the 'plausible', the 'acceptable'. These narratives challenge the regulating norms because the 'childlike' has not already accepted that 'this is how the world works'. The child can therefore still strive for that which appears out of reach. The child voice can therefore still demand for change, for a better world, for diversified relations.

Pixar remembers that 'children are not coupled, they are not romantic, they do not have a

religious mentality, they are not afraid of death or failure, they are collective creatures[and] they are in a constant state of rebellion against their parents’ – their films are ‘successful’ precisely because they subtly react against the very concept.⁵⁰

The narratives in these films already work to subvert those regulating norms, which have been normalised in the ‘matured adult space’. The narratives of the child space offer a crucial critique to that which has been accepted as normal in the ‘adult space’. The child narrative, which still dreams of a different world, can work to offer an important critique against the regulating norms of the matured space.

* * *

Hamas, of course, is not a child. It is coupled. It does have a religious mentality. And I imagine it is afraid of failure. However, as Hamas emerged to form the government in 2006 it was taking up a role which it had never performed before. It was emerging into a space to which it had not already adapted. Perhaps Hamas has something to offer from this new, un-bounded position.

* * *

Many of Hamas leaders, including the newly elected prime minister, had never been outside of Gaza. Hamas was a government whose members had never been allowed to travel outside the parameters of Occupied Gaza.

Hamas representatives were perhaps not yet fully attuned to the mechanisms of the external political space. Perhaps, they had not yet conformed their thinking and their practice to the normative limitations of ‘accepted’ ‘international’ diplomacy.

Abu Saif,

Hamas didn’t understand that running a mosque or running a charity is not the same as running a country. Because running a mosque is just for the local – but when you turn a state it is totally different. They have to address the foreign and not just the local. The atmosphere is different; they are forced to answer certain questions from abroad and not just from inside.⁵¹

Hamas, a movement which since its inception was dedicated to resistance and running charitable and religious events on a local level, now found itself with an entirely new set of demands, responsibilities, expectations, hopes and issues before it. Perhaps this position of not yet knowing provided an opportunity for a new form a politics to emerge. Perhaps this position of ‘not yet knowing’ acted as an opening for a different kind of engagement with Hamas.

* * *

So what was Hamas asking for at the time of their election? What was this unruly voice demanding?

I was told Hamas did not have a foreign policy when they entered into government.

So I decided to ask them,

Did Hamas have a platform for foreign relations?

Hamas leader, Ahmed Yousuf, responded,

Yes, at the time I actually was one of the political advisors to the Prime Minister and we decided to open the door to those European members who wanted to meet with Hamas. We had an open door policy. Open door diplomacy, not to reject meeting with anybody.⁵²

Rosemary Hollis, former Director of Research at Chatham House explained in a public lecture, that following the elections Hamas was open to dialogue and discussion.⁵³ Hollis was in Egypt at the time of the elections, and following the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections and Hamas's success, Hollis travelled to Palestine.

This was an important event. This was an important moment.

Hollis travelled to Palestine to meet with Hamas.

Hollis explained that she encountered a Hamas who wished to be engaged with. She encountered a Hamas who wanted to participate in political discussions and negotiations. She encountered a Hamas who was willing to talk.

But who was prepared to listen?

The animated animals of *Chicken Run* speak about ideas of “humanness, alterity, and alternative imaginaries in relation to new forms of representation”.⁵⁴

But who is prepared to listen?

How do we invoke the ‘childlike’?

Bonus version of the well-known children's tune from the widely acclaimed television show *Sesame Street*,

Three of these kids belong together
Three of these kids are kind of the same
But one of these kids is doing his own thing
Now it's time to play our game
*It's time to play our game.*⁵⁵

Palestinian Sesame Street was cancelled after the US stopped their UNESCO funds in response to the Palestinian Authority's appeal to the UN for statehood.⁵⁶ *Playing with the big boys.*

* * *

Hamas retained expectations or hopes which appeared as ridiculous. There was a perception among some that they had *no idea* how to behave, especially if they wanted to established relations with foreign powers. It was not yet accustomed to the *style of politics* which already dominated between the big boys, namely Israel, the US and the EU. Fatah had learnt *the big boy language* and style and was thus allowed to sit at the big boy table. Hamas was new to the diplomatic space; it had not yet learnt the ‘appropriate’ language of the *big boy diplomatic space*.

* * *

Hamas had not yet learnt the proper order of the diplomatic space.

A child emerges into a world not of their making, but what is that childlike voice saying?

I say to my father, “I am in love and he loves me back”.

This cute look appears on his face; a look that unfortunately finds me cute.

Don't worry you are still young and innocent; you will soon discover that there are more important things in life.

Like work?

I explain to him, perhaps in the words of a child and perhaps with child-like energy, that I refuse his intervention.

“Why shouldn't I live in a world where love is the most important thing?” What kind of world would I be accepting if the value of my life was measured in my productive output?

I kindly refuse.

* * *

The big boy table.

David Quarrey, Deputy Director, Foreign and Commonwealth Office,

Every time President Abbas has been able to bring Hamas close to a deal in negotiation they have frustrated those negotiations, for example, by inserting a clause about only accepting agreements deemed to be in the Palestinian national interest, which would render meaningless the acceptance of the Quartet principles.⁵⁷

How ridiculous that they should demand that any agreements be in the Palestinian national interest. That's not how it works.

A child emerges into a world not of their making. But perhaps they have something important to say about that world to which they have not yet conformed.

Mahmoud al-Zahar, charged with being Hamas's most radical leader asked the following questions,

The people before us, the Palestinian Authority, negotiated with them for many years and reached lastly a deadlock. So why should we be a new copy like Fatah, wasting time and money of the people negotiating with Israel for nothing?

He asked, “What is the project of Israel for the Palestinians? Up to this moment no projects, no offers, no intention of giving the Palestinian people their legitimate demands”.⁵⁸

He has a point.

* * *



Figure 4.1 Hamas leader, Mahmoud al-Zahar, in his family home, Gaza.

Source: Photograph by the author, 5 December, 2014.

In the film *Finding Nemo* Halberstam finds that the character of Dory (voiced by queerly marked Ellen DeGeneres) represents a different sort of knowing. “Dory’s character explores different ways of relating to others and alternative ways of existing in the world”.⁵⁹ In the Pixar film, *Finding Nemo* Dory’s different way of knowing is celebrated. “Dory is a key figure within the narrative, a figure whose different way of knowing and forgetting is instrumental in the rescue of Nemo”.⁶⁰

Perhaps that which challenges the ordered space offers a necessary critique.

Perhaps that which does not yet belong asks the necessary questions.

A BBC correspondent asked Khaled Mesha’al, leader of Hamas’s external political bureau, the following question in an interview a month after the elections,

Q: So does that mean then that you are not going to change the Hamas Charter as the *big donor* countries have requested?

A: Why doesn’t the international community ask Israel to determine its borders? Why doesn’t it ask Israel to recognise Palestinian rights? Why doesn’t the international community put pressure on Israel to implement agreements it has signed with Palestine?”⁶¹

* * *

Perhaps those which disrupt the regulating discourses of the normal, the appropriate, offer a different kind of knowing. They offer the possibility of a different kind of relating.

Perhaps Hamas’s ‘immature’ demands, that EU representatives come and meet with them, merited listening to. Perhaps their request that the EU abandon its double-standard engagement with Israel was not absurd. Perhaps Hamas, who had not yet conformed, was uttering important critical remarks.

But who was prepared to listen?

* * *

Hamas was at a moment of transition and change. This transition and change may have provided openings through which the EU could have engaged with Hamas. The EU could have manoeuvred itself to respond more openly to Hamas, as a subject with some legitimate claims and with a legitimate claim to representation.

Ahmed Khalidi,

The only way Hamas is going to be rationalised, as it were, is to bring them into the process, give them responsibility and make them understand that if they bear responsibility in a responsible way there are rewards for them, and if they do not they cannot survive.⁶²

How do we invoke the childlike?

At the time of the elections, what did you expect that EU leaders thought of Hamas?

Hamas leader and spokesperson, Ghazi Hamad responded,

I expected them to deal with us normally (sad voice) as an elected government. This would have encouraged us to move forward, to make changes. In Gaza, we spent 30 years under siege, under blockade. We are not in touch with the world, so we expected these people to come and educate. Give us experience, to help us to achieve democracy, prosperity. But really the situation got worse. On the other side, it was really bad. We felt that these people are just supporting the policy of Israel and they don't want to see Islamists in the government. We were upset and frustrated.⁶³

Part two: the quartet's conditions and the Challenger explosion

In *The Queer Art of Failure*, Halberstam discusses the activist approach of Google-bombing, which ties certain web pages to particular phrases. Hackers managed to link George W.'s page to the phrase *miserable failure*. Halberstam, however offers the following remark,

we would all agree that George W. deserves to enter the annals of history under the category of failure, and yet failure is a lofty word for Bush, since it implies that he had a plan and then failed to execute it.⁶⁴

Halberstam troubles the idea that we may observe Bush and his policies as *failure*. Rather, if we regard that Bush's politics were the outcome of particular intentions, then to this extent such policies were a *success*.

* * *

Gabrielle Rifkind from the Oxford Research Group made the following appeal for a more open engagement with Hamas after the 2006 elections.

At present there is no substantive dialogue with Hamas on the part of Western governments, not even of a discreet and confidential nature. This is dangerous: the belligerent rhetoric which is mostly for domestic consumption hides some of the more responsible aspects of the Hamas programme. It is only through real engagement that we get beyond the platitudes.

Recent responses demonstrate how governments are viewing the Islamic victory entirely through a Western optic. An opportunity may be being missed to deepen understanding of how these groups think and why they are so popular, and to engage with the evolution of their opinions. The only way to do this will be through contact. This may involve listening to ideas that we do not like or agree with, but it will be necessary if we are to make a real contribution to the peace process.⁶⁵

An opportunity was missed to engage with Hamas. There was an opportunity to engage more openly and more constructively with Hamas following its success in the 2006 elections. There was a possibility to perhaps listen to Hamas, assist Hamas in its transition into government. An opportunity to meet and discuss with Hamas. *But this did not happen.*

The EU would come to place a policy of conditionality on Hamas. Hamas had to abide by three conditions in order to be recognised as the governing party of Palestine. Hamas was told it had to one, recognise Israel; two, renounce violence; and three, agree to all previous agreements between the parties. If Hamas did not fully accept these three conditions, then it would not be recognised as the new government of Palestine. If Hamas failed to meet these three conditions then it would continue to be sanctioned, politically, legally and financially.

The EU refused to engage with the new governing party of the Palestinian legislative assembly who had just won democratic elections. *An opportunity was missed.*

But how was such an opportunity missed? Did the EU 'fail' to engage with the new government? Did the EU 'fail' to recognise the democratic results of elections they had

monitored and accessed? Or was this response the outcome of certain imperatives to perform? Did particular pressures manifest in the missing of opportunities to engage with Hamas? Did particular imperatives to perform close down possibilities that had been opened from Hamas's participation and success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections?

Was an opportunity *missed* at all?

The challenger explosion

This part of the chapter takes us through McKenzie's account of the various 'mistakes' that led to the Challenger Spacecraft 'disaster' in the mid-80s in the US. McKenzie draws on ethnographic research to describe the various bureaucratic, cultural and technological pressures that may have led to the disaster.

It was a bitterly cold morning in Florida on 28 January, 1986 when the Challenger space shuttle was launched from the Kennedy Space Centre. Teacher-in-Space, Christa McAuliffe sat aboard the Challenger shuttle along with six other crew members that freezing morning in Florida. The shuttle was NASA's latest embodiment in a series of high performance space vehicles. From a technological perspective the Challenger was unprecedented in design. NASA had a long-standing reputation as a high performance institution. (This was the group that had met President Kennedy's challenge and had sent a man to the moon.) The seven-person crew represented all colours of American life (the event was an excellent public relations campaign). The highly publicised 'Teacher-in-Space launch' endeavoured to inject new confidence into the nation's education system. Eyes across the nation awaited Challenger's take-off, so that teacher McAuliffe could deliver her 'lesson from space'.⁶⁶

But the students here on Earth never saw McAuliffe's lessons, for seventy-three seconds after lift-off, Challenger's external fuel tank exploded in the Florida sky. With a mile-high flash and a long plunging fall to the sea, the mission ended with the deaths of the Teacher-in Space and her six crew mates, with the loss of spaceship Challenger, with its twisting smoketrail disintegrating across the upper atmosphere.⁶⁷

Various sites were targeted as the cause of this 'accident'. Technically speaking "the 'disaster' was caused by the failure of a 'high performance field joint' on the right Solid Rocket Booster; more specifically, a rubber 'O-ring' had failed to properly seal the joint".⁶⁸ Others blamed individual engineers and managers "who had known about the O-rings' anomalous performance in cold weather and yet 'failed to act decisively'".⁶⁹ NASA's flawed decision-making process was also found to be a potential area of error.

Sociologist Diane Vaughan's investigated the decisions, events and mechanisms at work leading up to the launch of the Challenger. Vaughan's research, *The Challenger Launch Decision: Risky Technology, Culture and Deviance at NASA*, is a thick ethnographic description of the decision-making processes which informed the design, testing and construction of the shuttle's Solid Rocket Booster joint.⁷⁰ "It was one of these joints that the infamous rubber O-rings failed to seal on that cold January morning in 1986".⁷¹

Vaughan's work concludes that the Challenger explosion resulted from 'performance pressures' that affected the Solid Rocket Booster workgroup. Vaughan's findings trouble the idea that the Challenger explosion can be regarded simply as an accident or the unfortunate mistake of individuals. Rather, there was a particular *conformity* to the cultural and bureaucratic demands to perform within the workspace that may have led to certain 'oversights', 'poor

judgements', 'mistakes'.

McKenzie's narration of the various imperatives to perform in Vaughan's research will guide our reading of how the EU came to place the three conditions on the recognition of Hamas. While critics of the EU's policy of conditionality claim that an opportunity was missed to engage with Hamas, we will observe whether particular imperatives to perform directed the EU's political position towards Hamas. We may begin to wonder whether the EU's decision *not* to recognise the democratically elected party was a failure, or if it was indeed the intended outcome of particular cultural, political and institutional pressures to perform. As such, the chapter comments on how institutional rituals prevents actors from fully taking into account the implications of their decisions and practices.

The conditions

On 30 January, 2006, five days after the elections, 'representatives' from the four members of the Quartet, the US, the UN, the EU and Russia, met in London to discuss the outcome of the Palestinian legislative elections. The following announcement opens the Quartet's public statement following that meeting.

SECRETARY GENERAL ANNAN: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen. We had a very useful and constructive meeting on the situation in the Middle East. We congratulated the Palestinian people on the electoral process that was free, fair and secure. The Quartet believes that the Palestinian people have the right to expect that a new government will address their aspirations for peace and statehood and it welcomed President Abbas's affirmation that the Palestinian Authority is committed to the roadmap and previous agreements and obligations between the parties and the negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli–Palestinian conflict.

It is the view of the Quartet that all members of the future Palestinian government must be committed to nonviolence, recognition of Israel and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations, including the roadmap. We urge parties to respect their existing agreements, including on movements and access.⁷²

Committed to non-violence.

Recognition of Israel.

Acceptance of previous agreements.

All members of the future Palestinian government must be committed to these three conditions.

In that same meeting Javier Solana, General of the Council of the European Union and High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy, affirms the EU's support for the conditions.

HIGH REPRESENTATIVE SOLANA: Well, you know the conditions are clear and it says very clear in the statement that is for the new government. [...] What I would like to say on behalf of the European Union is that once these conditions are fulfilled, the European Union will stand ready to continue to support the Palestinian economic development and democratic stability, but it has to be compliant with all these conditions which are here.⁷³

One month later, on 1 February, 2006, the European Parliament adopted a resolution in response the results of the elections. EU President, Austrian Minister Winkler expresses the EU's position

on the newly elected government quite definitively.

The election took place in due order, the result reflects the will of the people. There is nothing to contest there. The Presidency responded directly and the Council and the Quartet have stated identical principles. We made clear to the international community that we continue to talk about the recognition of Israel and the conditions for lasting conclusion to conflict. We expect unequivocal support for the principles listed – international support for the Palestinian Authority is linked to espousing these principles.⁷⁴

EU support, financial and political, became attached to whether the new government in the Palestinian Authority could abide by the three conditions.

* * *

The principle question which drove most of my field work in Brussels was *how*? How did the EU come to decide that placing these conditions on Hamas was the best policy available? How was this decision reached? Where was it reached? What were the governing rituals and practices that led to the move to sanction Hamas? And what do these rituals say about agency and change within bureaucratic spaces?

Workgroup attitude and ‘natural’ divisions

There are simply some states that support Israel and others that support Palestine.

The development of the Solid Rocket Booster field joints had been outsourced to Thiokol, an engineering firm associated with NASA. The Solid Rocket Booster workgroup was responsible for the development of the field joints for the space shuttles. This workgroup consisted of highly trained engineers and managers. They were highly trained professionals who “entered management positions only after years of training and experience in laboratory environments”.⁷⁵

European Members of Parliament, EU commissioners, EU support staff are professionals. Many of them have been elected into these positions. Many of them have years of training.

These highly trained engineers and the managers were closely involved with the development of the field joints for the space shuttles. They had been observing the performance of these joints for years; “joints whose problems of erosion and breakdown had been known since the mid-1970s”.⁷⁶

Many of these civil servants have been involved with the EU’s policies towards Palestine and Israel for years. Many EU representatives have been dealing with the erosion and breakdown of Palestinian–Israeli politics for years.

Vaughan observes a distinct work culture within NASA’s hierarchy. There was a distinct scientific paradigm, whereby norms, procedures, ad hoc judgments and assumptions were wrapped up in repeated daily engineering thinking and practice. McKenzie writes, “The micro-Techno Performance paradigm that crystallized around the booster joints also embodied the larger technical cultural associated with NASA’s famous ‘can do’ spirit’ and the aggressive attitude it takes towards meeting technological challenges”.⁷⁷ Vaughan observes how this ‘can-do’ spirit guided the Workgroup’s response to the challenges posed by the O-rings. If an error was found there was an overwhelming drive that it could be fixed. There was an overwhelming assurance in the technological solution. “If one-O-ring seal failed a second would back it up”.⁷⁸

A particular ‘can do, no problem’ *attitude* guided the workgroup’s thinking.

* * *

Patrick Child narrates a particular *working culture* amongst EU member states when addressing issues relating to Palestinian politics. This working culture I suggest becomes a substitute for actually confronting the political situation, or new developments in Palestinian and Israeli politics. The working culture, as it were, becomes a ritualised apparatus that closes down the possibility for politics.

Basically we have some Member States, either because of their historical relationship to the US, or because of their history with Israel and the Jewish population, feel a *natural* tendency to be on the Israeli side of the argument, and others for different historical reasons have more loyalties and sympathies for the Palestinian cause, with the general outcome, that we find it or have found it, within the EU very difficult to take a position which is noticeably distinctive from the American position, while remaining credible.⁷⁹

There appears to be a ‘natural’ division amongst the member states when it comes to issues surrounding Palestinian and Israeli politics. This division appears to be most simply addressed by adopting the same policies as the US.

A particular *working attitude* becomes sedimented over time. A particular spirit is naturalised and it guides the possible political performance.

Normalisation of deviance

On several occasions, in the Solid Rocket Booster workgroup’s post-flight examination (when they would review the performance of their technology following a flight) found cases of erosion in the rubber O-rings designed to seal the field joints.

However, such deviations from design were concluded not to pose enough risk to warrant totally redesigning the joint. Instead *minor alterations* were made in order to better monitor the joint’s performance. There was an eventual “normalisation of deviance”, whereby the joint’s deviant performance became normalised. Through several decision-making processes and the technical challenge to perform or else, “deviant performance gradually became normalized through its own repetition”.⁸⁰ Minor alterations are made in order to avoid reworking the system.

I inquired with a representative from the European External Action Service, Middle East Desk, how was it that the EU Council would have decided upon agreeing to this policy of conditionality towards Hamas.

The lowest common denominator.

The lowest common denominator was her response.

The representative explained,

EU foreign policy requires consensus. It is difficult to arrive at a consensus within the Council of Ministers. A practice of the lowest common denominator guides the Council’s capacity to make decisions. The three conditions acted as a helpful guideline. The European Council of Ministers could agree that following the conditions could be an efficient and effective policy. They could all agree to the conditions. The conditions were the lowest

common denominator.

The lowest common denominator, becomes the normalisation of deviance. Whereby a ritual of following the lowest common denominator becomes a substitute for engaging in political discussion or creativity.

* * *

Test results indicated that Solid Rocket Booster joint deviated from performance predicted by design. [But] because no precedent existed for the joint design, no precedent existed for responding to the problem.⁸¹

No precedent existed that indicated that the group should change their design, so they carried on as usual. Institutional pressures and large bureaucratic practices make it difficult to respond to unexpected events.

Hamas won the elections in 2006; one could perhaps call this event unprecedented in Palestinian politics. It was an entirely new development that Hamas should participate in elections. And certainly unprecedented that it should win. No precedent existed for responding to Hamas success in these elections, so the EU carried on with particular practices which had become normalised: using the lowest common denominator to arrive at a consensus. A normalised practice of lowest common denominator, of the three conditions allowed them to respond to the unprecedented event of Hamas winning democratic elections.

Although the booster joint's performance deviated from design it did not warrant complete redesign.

Spectacle of the boardroom and the obedient civil servant

The EU's decision to place to the conditions on Hamas was taken in the Council of Ministers.

Vaughan research highlights how a reshuffling of NASA's bureaucratic organisation in the mid-1980s led to a complex bureaucratic hierarchy with formal mechanisms put in place to transfer information. The result was that "a much thicker layer of bureaucratic accountability was folded over on top of the original technical culture".⁸²

The decision to place the conditions on Hamas was taken in the Council of Ministers.

I was not able to visit the Council during my trip to Brussels. During my trip the Council of Ministers was in session and therefore, the entire building and the street leading up to the building were sealed off for 'security reasons'. A colleague in the European Parliament told me not to feel left out; "no one ever gets into the Council" he said.

A thick layer of bureaucracy is folded on top of the original technical culture.

The decision to place the conditions on Hamas was taken in the Council of Ministers.

I wonder how many of these foreign ministers have visited Gaza or the West Bank.

I wonder how many of them have met with a Hamas representative.

I wonder about the technical expertise of those sitting in the Council of Ministers.

A thick layer of bureaucracy is folded on top of the original technical culture.

* * *

Benita Ferrero-Waldner, chief Commissioner for EU External Relations was present in some of the Council of Ministers meetings. Benita Ferrero-Waldner had visited Palestine. Benita Ferrero-Waldner may have had certain technical expertise in addressing Palestinian politics.

I was curious about the details regarding the conduct of the meetings of the Council of Ministers.

I asked Patrick Child, the head of Ferrero-Waldner's cabinet, to offer remarks on the Commissioner's involvement in the decision making process of the Council.

Child responds,

And then of course, the External Relations Commissioner, Benita, would be participating very fully in those discussions in the Council. But then she would come back to the meeting of the Commission, and she would *not* say "do we all agree on what the Council has decided is the EU position on the Middle East Peace Process", she would come back and say "*well look we have decided that the best response to the recent elections in Palestine is to put a lot of emphasis on support for the Ramallah based structures of government, behind whoever it was at the time, Abu Mazen, Fayyad that these are the actions that we should be supporting and these are the mechanisms that we will be using and now will you please support me in agreeing this financial package*". Then perhaps that may trigger a debate among commissioners, well no ... perhaps things should be done differently, bla. *But in the end the operational result of the decision of the commission, is yes let's do this in this way and lets provide these funds, and let's see how we go ahead together.*⁸³

A thick layer of bureaucracy overlays technical expertise.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner had visited Palestine, but I wonder whether the Council invited her opinions on the matter.

* * *

NASA's organisational structure required that the Solid Rocket Booster workgroup submit their technical recommendations to a Flight Readiness Review process (this is where any technical issues would be raised with senior managerial staff). McKenzie jokingly calls this overlapping, multi-layered, review procedure a confusion between masochism and sadism.⁸⁴ Based on a first-hand account of the Flight Readiness Review process Vaughan describes the ritualistic and ceremonial characteristics that surrounded the review process meant to oversee any technical issues. The anecdotal account explains,

The Flight Readiness Review meeting is held in a humongous conference room that looks like an auditorium. It is a very intense atmosphere. Serious work goes on here. The image of the institution is at stake in these board meetings. Individual reputations are at risk. "You don't leave the Center to give a significant briefing unless the Center's senior management is aware of what you're doing". And you don't go the [Flight Readiness Review] with a technical issue if its "only one-chart deep". You need scientific backing from all areas to raise a technical issue with the [Flight Readiness Review] board.⁸⁵

A Spanish MEP who acted as an election observer and who was member of the same party as Javier Solana, the EU's foreign policy chief at the time of the elections, offers his opinions on the possibility that Solana could have suggested an alternative response to Hamas than the policy being offered by the Council of Ministers.

Guardans Cambo shares his opinions,

Solana, a socialist at the end of the day, was trying. Definitely, I could bet that. Solana was a diplomat, and one day he will write his memoirs. But I can say that with the biggest mouth that the total blockade, anti-Hamas policy was not Solana's design. Totally not. He implemented it because he was an obedient civil servant, but it was not his idea. It is example of one of those things that were decided elsewhere and imposed on him as an implementer of such decisions, I can bet on that.⁸⁶

An obedient civil servant.

The Flight Readiness Review board meeting is held in a humongous conference room. One hundred to one hundred and fifty people may be there. "It is a high, important, dramatic situation. There's big money at stake. There's your job at stake. There's national prestige, prestige of the Centre, all those things are at stake. So it's a lot of pressure".⁸⁷
It's a lot of pressure.

Decisions were taken as foreign policy at that moment. The foreign policy was taken at the Council level and then given to Solana to implement. And then communicated to the Commission separately. Any other decision [than to support the conditions] would have put his job at risk, and Solana would have never done this.⁸⁸

*Jobs are believed to be at risk.
Only-one chart deep.*

The Flight Readiness Review meetings were high-performance pressure spaces. If you did not have the scientific findings to support your concerns regarding a technical design, then you did not speak up. The workers believed their jobs to be at risk in these meetings. They understood and performed as if their reputations were at risk.

* * *

In an interview with a senior member of the European External Action Service I asked,

Was there an opportunity for political representatives to speak out against policies they did not agree with?

He clearly stated,

Civil servants follow instructions. Those are the facts of life and they have to deal with them.

There was a no contact policy with Hamas unless it abided by the conditions. This was a decision that was most likely generated in the Council and passed down.

Some may not have liked it but that was the decision taken. It was the decision that was accepted. It was the decision that was put into action.⁸⁹

Civil servants act as if the only thing they can do is follow instructions.

Hasty decisions

The European Parliament Delegation for Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council made the following remarks in their meeting on 31 January, 2006:

The members agreed that the election process had been transparent and democratic and that the International Community should refrain from making hasty judgments based on previous stereotypes, but rather wait and see how Hamas, as a government, would act.⁹⁰

Wait and see.

The night before the launch of the Challenger space shuttle meteorologists forecasted an unusually hard freeze that night in central Florida. Thiokol engineers were concerned about the O-ring's performance. "They feared that the extremely low temperatures could reduce the O-rings resiliency, thereby preventing them from sealing the joint properly and possibly triggering a catastrophe".⁹¹

Adel Atieh from the General Palestinian Delegation expressed a belief that Hamas had started to adopt a more moderate and pragmatic discourse and that the EU and the International Community should not rush in taking a harsh stand against Hamas, but give it a chance to develop a true political platform.⁹²

Some of Thiokol's engineers most familiar with O-ring's performance recommended delaying the launch until temperature conditions improved.

Wait and see.

Thiokol's engineers requested a last minute Flight Readiness Review meeting.

Dissenting European Parliamentarians requested that the EU should refrain from making hasty judgements about Hamas following its success in the 2006 Palestinian elections.

* * *

Thiokol's engineers requested a last-minute Flight Readiness Review.

An ad hoc Flight Readiness Review meeting was arranged last minute, before the launch, at the request of the engineers who were concerned about the potential failure of the Solid Rocket Booster joint due to the cold weather. This last-minute Flight Readiness Review was a small teleconference between various managerial and engineering teams working on the shuttle launch. The ad hoc meeting was a high-pressure event: "verbal presentations and ensuing discussions occurred over phone lines; hastily prepared charts were faxed to the widely dispersed participants; and additional information was made available via computer network".⁹³

* * *

The Quartet made its statement regarding the conditions only five days after the elections.

I asked Lord Christopher Patten, former EU Commissioner for External Relations, for his opinion on the response to the elections. "Do you think at the time of the elections, Hamas was ready to enter into political discussions?"

Lord Patten responded,

The trouble is that we lost no time in trying to paint them into a corner. I think from pretty well the moment after the election we said we weren't going to deal with people who had been involved in terrorism and violence.⁹⁴

The Quartet made its statement regarding the conditions only five days after the elections.

MEP Richard Howitt offers the following remarks on the EU's hasty deliberations over the decision to place the conditions on Hamas's recognition.

But the European Union Council did not have massive arguments and fights over the Quartet principles. It just didn't happen. It didn't happen. If you go back through all the press reports at the time, they didn't have big long meetings that fell apart then came back together. That is what they do on other issues, but they didn't do that on Palestine after Hamas was elected.⁹⁵

During my visit to the European Union in June 2013, every meeting on human rights and foreign policy included a conversation on Palestine and Israel. There were so many events pertaining to Palestinian issues that I could not attend them all. Yet, at the time of reaching a decision on how to respond to the democratic election of Hamas in the Palestinian territories, debate and discussion did not occur. Meetings did not fall apart over deliberation.

Hasty decisions.

Elite intervention

Thiokol's engineers requested a last-minute Flight Readiness Review, *but the tone for the discussions was set by political elites.*⁹⁶

President Regan praised the Teacher-in-Space program during his 1984 re-election campaign. The President stated, "when the shuttle lifts off, all of America will be reminded of the crucial role that teachers and education play in the life of our nation. I can't think of a better lesson for our children and our country".⁹⁷

"There were rumours that President Reagan planned to speak to the orbiting crew as part of his State of the Union Address".⁹⁸ Around the time of the Challenger launch NASA was facing increasing pressure to justify its costly endeavours to the public. The Challenger Teacher-in-Space Launch was intended to demonstrate NASA's technical service to the public.

Thiokol's engineers requested a last-minute Flight Readiness Review, but the tone for the discussions was set by political elites. McKenzie describes another thick layer of performance pressure, of those "who took actions that added political accountability and bureaucratic accountability to NASA's original technical culture".⁹⁹

* * *

"Immediately after the elections American officials could be seen making their rounds",¹⁰⁰ explains a senior official for the European External Action Service who was closely involved with EU relations to Palestine at the time of the elections.

"The Americans were pressuring EU officials on how they should respond to Hamas's success. Basically, the US was carrying with them Israeli Foreign Minister, Lieberman's policy and was pushing this on European officials".¹⁰¹

Who was setting the tone for European deliberations over the possible recognition of Hamas after the elections?

MEP Margrete Auken described the Quartet as being part of the problem, rather than the solution. She states that it was a disaster, placing Israel on all three sides of the table.¹⁰²

It was the ‘Quartet sans trios’.

Chris Patten stated that the Quartet was a largely ceremonial group and any policy coming out of the Quartet was being driven directly by the Americans.¹⁰³ He explained that the EU was looking for ways, *not* to be more proactive, rather than looking for ways to get involved.

I think partly because some member states allowed themselves to be convinced that if we took a position which was regarded as hostile or unhelpful in Israel or Washington we *would play ourselves out of the game*. I always believed that it was impossible to, or it should have been impossible, to accept that EU Foreign Policy should be determined by the Israeli foreign ministry. And that it would be actually be quite helpful to those in America that were in favour of a more active policy to distance Europe a bit from the Americans.¹⁰⁴

McKenzie observes the various social and cultural demands that NASA faced in maintaining its believed image in the American public.

Launch delays, cost overruns, mission problems – the political accountability of the space agency is calculated on a cultural ledger, for such debits can affect NASA’s image and legitimacy within US society at large. Thus: “top NASA administrators were absorbed with ‘myth managing’: attaining legitimacy (and resources) by projecting and living up to a cultural image of routine, economical spaceflight”.¹⁰⁵

We would play ourselves out of the game.

External pressures worked upon the EU’s capacity to take decisions. A belief of external pressures makes its way into the decision making process and appears to demand that the EU perform in a particular way.

I asked Patrick Child how he felt about the EU’s decision to promote the Quartet’s decisions. Child stated,

But that was the *only realistic policy on offer*. There was no way the EU could come with a policy which was different to everybody else, we needed to respect the Quartet principles. Because the Quartet was such a strong anchor that was what everybody was always able to agree to.¹⁰⁶

The only realistic policy on offer!

My God, Thiokol, when do you want me to launch, next April?¹⁰⁷

Ritualistically satisfying the imperatives to perform

Some of Thiokol engineers most familiar with the O-ring’s performance recommended delaying the launch until temperatures improved. However, their claims to NASA were found *not to be*

scientifically rigorous. “Their arguments concerning the correlation between O-ring resiliency and temperature variation were not supported with the appropriate research data, but instead relied on observation and the intuition that the rubber hardens when cold”.¹⁰⁸

This deviant performance of the O-ring was not noted in any previous Flight Readiness Review meeting. Although the engineers had observed such erosion in the joints before, such deviance was not raised at a previous Flight Readiness Review. The engineers working on the O-ring were under great pressure to perform to high-technological levels of expectation. While the engineers had located certain deviation in the performance of the O-ring, their continued alteration of the expected performance of the joint led to the *normalisation of its deviance*. “Whereby repeated instances of deviant technological performance gradually led to a change in the predicted performance, and thus in what the workgroup considered to be normal performance”.¹⁰⁹
Only one chart deep.

As such, once the deviant behaviour of the field joint was normalised, the issue was never raised in the Flight Readiness Review meeting. There was no ‘official’ record of the field joint being deviant in cold weather.

Normalisation of deviance.

The EU’s position was to support Fatah. All of their efforts went to supporting President Abbas in Ramallah and the newly appointed Finance Minister Salam Fayyad. The EU position was to support Fatah, whom the EU had already decided was the only alternative. The EU would support Fatah, who had incidentally lost the elections. Despite charges of corruption and mismanagement amongst Fatah members, the EU policy was to support Fatah.

Normalisation of deviance.

I was curious whether the Commission had considered the repercussions of deciding not to engage with Hamas and instead to support Fatah. I asked a senior EU Commission representative,

Was there a concern within the Commission that by continuing to fund the government who did not win, and the decision to Support Fatah, including not being able to support Hamas civil servants in Gaza; was there a discussion of how this would affect the viability of the government? I mean the elected government was Hamas.

His response,

I think that, not that I remember. There was a fairly clear consensus that we had to do all we could to support the good guys, whether or not they were the ones who won the election. That reflects badly on our commitment to universal democratic principles but there was also the generally held belief that Hamas, while providing appreciated services and support for the Palestinian population, which no doubt contributed to their popularity amongst the disadvantaged people of Gaza who were and still are living in appalling situations. That the fact, that Hamas were unable to commit themselves to the Quartet principles, particularly their recognition of the state of Israel and renouncing terrorism and violence that ... there were big questions about whether that sort of party emerging from any sort of election was a proper electoral process. So I don’t think there was really any

discussion should we be giving matching support to Hamas or is what we are doing somehow distorting the democratic process in the Palestinian system.¹¹⁰

Unconditional support for Fatah was the normalised politics.

That was the only *realistic* policy on offer.

The repeated practice of supporting Fatah became normalised whereby it appeared to have closed down opportunities for questioning this support following Fatah's loss in EU monitored democratic elections.

The field joint's deviant behaviour never made it into the logbooks.

* * *

During the rapid ad hoc Flight Readiness Review, which immediately preceded the launch, Thiokol engineers recommended delaying the launch. However, NASA engineers and managers found inconsistencies in Thiokol's verbal presentation and visual charts in the ad hoc meeting. They asked why such a correlation between cold temperatures and erosion had not been found before. Thiokol's protests were found to be *not* scientifically rigorous.

The EU would support Fatah no matter what.

The EU agreed to a policy whereby any civil servants who decided to work for the Hamas government would not receive their salaries.

Over 100,000 government employees, who were working for the Palestinian Authority under Fatah prior to the elections, refused to work for the new government. They would not receive their salaries, which are paid for by the EU, if they went to work for a Hamas government.

Still today, these employees continue to stay at home and receive their civil servant's salary for refusing to work under the Hamas government.

* * *

Some of the Thiokol engineers most familiar with the O-ring performance recommended delaying the launch until temperatures improved. But they didn't have the scientific material to back it up.

As the *performance pressure* mounted, NASA's Larry Mulloy demanded, "My God, Thiokol, when do you want me to launch, next April?"¹¹¹

* * *

After suspending the teleconference for thirty minutes to confer among themselves offline, Thiokol engineers reversed their initial recommendation and supported the scheduled launch for the next morning.¹¹²

They reversed their initial decision to delay the shuttle launch.

The only realistic policy available?

There was a fairly clear consensus that we had to do all we could to support the good guys, whether or not they were the ones who won the election.

The EU placed the conditions on Hamas, banned all financing to the Palestinian Authority if

it would reach Hamas and they sanctioned any diplomatic encounters with the newly elected government.

* * *

Experienced Palestinian politicians outside Hamas and Fatah watched aghast as it quickly became clear that the democratic process was beginning a long, slow, slide into a power struggle to be fought with any tools available: guns, lawyers, bankers, diplomats, lobbyists, tunnels, rockets and assassinations.¹¹³

The Challenger shuttle exploded in the sky 73 seconds after lift-off killing all of the crew on board. All that was left of the Challenger's spaceship was a cloud of smoke.

McKenzie contends that, "today we can read this cloud of smoke as a trace, one that resulted from a long series of compromises – or better still, one that programs an ongoing performance of *ritual satisficing*".¹¹⁴

Part three: perform or else: the ‘successful’ implementation of the conditions

Perform – *or else*.

Herculine Barbin was raised as a girl in an exclusively feminine and strongly religious milieu. Alexina, as she was known by her familiars, was finally recognised to ‘truly’ be a young man. “Obliged to make a legal change of sex after judicial proceedings and a modification of ‘his’ civil status, ‘he’ was incapable of adapting ‘himself’ to a new identity and ultimately committed suicide”.¹¹⁵

There are thousands of very good leaders who were assassinated by Fatah at the time. Everyone was feeling scared. Very big Hamas leaders were assassinated at this time, (sounded sad/scared).¹¹⁶

Perform – *or else*.

Diane’s Vaughan research concluded that the Challenger disaster was caused by various imperatives to perform, which functioned upon the workgroup’s decision-making capacity. *The imperative to perform* is a concept that guides McKenzie’s understanding of how actors and institutions are compelled to perform under social, cultural and bureaucratic pressures. McKenzie deducts that the Challenger explosion was caused by the *successful* compliance with multiple imperatives to perform.

* * *

But what is at stake in successfully complying with the imperative to perform?

The Challenger spaceship exploded 73 seconds after take-off killing all of its crew. Christa McAuliffe, the Teacher-in-Space, never got to perform her lesson plan. Reagan never delivered his State of the Union Address to the crew in orbit. NASA’s high performance vehicle was smashed into pieces. The viewing eyes of the American public never received the technological spectacle their taxes paid for. The high performance spaceship never made it into orbit. The Challenger exploded 73 seconds after take-off.

The institutional ‘imperative to perform’ demands that institutions adhere to the expectations of the system in which the institution finds itself. Institutions act *as though* they must perform the regulating demands efficiently and effectively or risk being marginalised. The imperative to perform also places demands on individuals within the institution, to perform the expectations of the institution fully and effectively. They feel *as though* they must perform the institution or risk being redeployed.¹¹⁷

Perform –*or else*

Individuals and institutions alike *feel* this imperative to perform. Institutions such as the EU feel the imperative to perform themselves efficiently and appropriately or they will “play themselves out of the game”. EU representatives feel the imperative to perform their ‘roles’ effectively, and support the performance of the institution, or risk being marginalised.

Social, cultural and institutional rituals impose a particular imperative to perform. There is a demand to fully and effectively perform the appropriate rituals of a particular regime. There is a guiding belief that if one fails to perform these demands, one risks being marked as a failure.

Perform – or else.

But what is at stake in the *successful* acquiescence to the imperative to perform.

In a book review, Elias comments,

The Queer Art of Failure aims to upend the logics of success, logics central to our contemporary moment that are also particularly resonant in light of ‘the collapse of the financial markets on the one hand and the epic rise in divorce rates on the other’.¹¹⁸

To what extent can the financial crisis or high divorce rates be regarded as failures, or rather are they products of the successful performance of societal and cultural norms? Halberstam asks what does it mean to succeed with certain logics of success and failure? And what, therefore, may be at stake in performing the demands to ‘succeed’?

Performing well is satisfying

The EU managed to reach a consensus. The principle of the *lowest common denominator* guided the EU’s response to Hamas’s election. The EU Council of Ministers managed to *quickly and efficiently* ‘decide’ that ‘the conditions’ was *the only policy available*. They had successfully managed to assuage American and Israeli fears that the EU might veer from the decision to sanction the newly elected government in Palestine. The *Council dispersed their message* to the appropriate subordinate bodies. The subordinating bodies did not challenge this decision. The conditions prevailed and a no contact policy followed.

“Crucial to Marcuse’s theory”, explains McKenzie, “is that individuals not only tolerate performative alienation; through a process of repressive desublimation they can even take pleasure in it”.¹¹⁹

Individuals embody various imperatives to perform within bureaucratic and cultural spaces. They embody the expectations of these spaces. There is a sense of satisfaction that accompanies the capability to perform one’s role successfully.

The EU successfully performed its role. *Well done!*

* * *

And to be able to successfully perform the expectations of a space means happiness, right?

Sara Ahmed offers an understanding of happiness as being equated with an affirmed orientation towards those objects which are believed to bring happiness. A judgment exists within the social and the cultural that certain objects will bring happiness. Happiness is then situated in approximating to those objects. Bodies approximate to those objects, lifestyle, ideas, which are socially associated with happiness, *because they believe that such an approximation will bring them happiness*.

Ahmed resolves that it is not the family, for example that brings happiness, but *the belief* that the family will bring happiness. ‘Happiness’ is situated with the successful performance of this belief. ‘Happiness’ is situated with performing an approximation to the idealised understanding that the family will bring happiness.¹²⁰

EU representatives became attached to performing a particular ritualistic mode of being. Within this particular ritualistic mode of being ‘fulfilment’ appeared to be associated with complying with particular performance pressures. The EU was performing and fulfilling itself, if

it complied with American and Israeli pressure. The EU was successfully performing if it maintained a unified voice in front of challenges, if it offered quick and concise responses. The ‘happiness’ of the institution and its representatives becomes connected to a belief in the appropriate performance of these rituals.

A representative from the European External Action Service explained that very quickly a ‘no contact’ practice became policy. It is not exactly clear where the ‘no contact policy’ emerged from. Most likely the Council adopted the position of not communicating with Hamas unless the three conditions were met. ‘No contact with Hamas’ became practice, and soon the no contact policy enveloped all possible relations with the newly elected government.¹²¹

‘Happiness’ became associated with how well the institution could implement the ‘no contact policy if the conditions were not met’.

* * *

In Arthur Miller’s 1949 play *Death of a Salesman* the characters perform a ritualistic belief that equates happiness with achieving the American Dream. Willy Loman is a salesman. Willy Loman’s happiness is bound to performing the rituals of the capitalist regime. Willy performs this belief, whereby, if he enacts the various rituals which are believed to approximate him to financial and social ‘success’ he will be happy.¹²²

However, Ahmed continues, there is a driving assumption that if one ‘fails’ to perform the rituals of the ‘shared good life’ that unhappiness will follow. Ahmed observes how bodies become *occupied* by the *necessity* to continuously approximate themselves to what is *believed* to bring happiness.¹²³

The only blame you can have against Solana, is that sometimes he swallowed things that he did not believe in and he did it as a civil servant. And so he was not exactly a political fighter. He thought it better to struggle within it *than just to go home*.¹²⁴

Willy performs the belief that if he is not successful as a salesman he will be regarded as a failure. He will be regarded as a failure and he will therefore not find happiness. If he does not perform the rituals that are *supposed* to be situated with happiness, he will not be happy.

This performed pursuit of happiness acts as a governing belief that comes to occupy the performer: the belief that if they fail to perform correctly they will become disorientated and lost; they will not be able to find happiness. This fear comes to occupy the performer, and thus they follow the governing rituals.¹²⁵

Perform or else....

Occupied by the demand to succeed

Everyone must perform.

MEP Richard Howitt,

To use a religious metaphor, those principles became like the bible you could not question them. And Hamas either agreed with the principles or we wouldn’t talk to them. And that what everyone said over and over again.¹²⁶

Throughout *Death of a Salesman* Willy Loman has continuous imagined encounters with a more 'successful' life, represented through his brother Ben. Ben 'made it big'. Ben is imagined to have his own business. Ben is imagined to be rich. Willy's imaginings of Ben incessantly remind him of the 'what it means to be successful'. Willy faithfully performs a belief in a capitalist regime of success.

The conditions became like the bible, there was no questioning them.

The conditions were repeated like a mantra.¹²⁷

Occupied by the demand to succeed.

Occupied by the demand to perform.

* * *

Successfully occupied by the imperative to perform.

Benita Ferrero-Waldner made the following public statement regarding the EU's response to the elections,

We supported these elections with funding and by sending 240 observers. We have made a major commitment to building democratic institutions in the Palestinian territories. Should we now abandon them because we do not like the election results? No, on the contrary, we should call for everyone to respect the outcome. We are ready to work with a government that seeks peace by peaceful means— ...

Wait for it; wait for it. Here they come....

by which we mean a clear commitment to non-violence, a recognition of the state of Israel and acceptance of the previous commitments of the Palestinian Authority, including the Road Map and the Oslo agreement.¹²⁸

The conditions worked to encompass and annihilate all of the EU's endeavours towards Palestine through the elections. Ferrero-Waldner speaks of all the hard work and effort that went into the elections. *And for what?*

The finality with which the conditions end Ferrero-Waldner's statement reveals the ritualised imperative of the EU's response to abide by the conditions, *at all costs*.

Success became equated with demanding that Hamas abide by those conditions, no matter what was at stake.

* * *

Willy Loman holds imaginary conversations with his son, Biff. These imagined encounters take Willy back to happier time. Willy is 'delusional'.

A representative from the European External Action Service shared the following pertinent remarks with me in an interview. These points were later confirmed with a representative from the British Foreign Office.

To be listed on the terrorist list does not mean that there is an automatic no contact policy.

To be on the EU's terrorist list includes a travel ban.
To be on the EU's terrorist list includes a ban on financing.
Legally, EU representatives were still allowed to speak with Hamas.¹²⁹

I tried to confirm this point in several of my other interviews in Brussels. It appeared to me that this was quite an essential point. Legally, EU representatives could have maintained contact with Hamas leaders, without having to remove Hamas from the terrorist list. They could have maintained contact with particular ministers. This coincides with the EU maintaining relations with Hamas prior to the elections, despite Hamas being on the EU's terrorist list.

So I asked senior EU officials whether they considered maintaining contact with Hamas.

They offered me a look that filled-in for their lack of response.

A sarcastic, *really?* Do you really think we could have done that?

Silly me(n).

* * *

Willy continuously talks to himself within an embattled space of desiring to be successful, pretending that he is and realising that he knows that he isn't.

Willy Loman is going 'insane'.

In evidence being given to the House of Lords, EU Committee, Lord Crickhowell, asked Robert Cooper, the EU's Director-General for External and Politico-Military Affairs, the following question,

Have up to this point any of the EU's policies or activities had the effect of increasing the divide, the factionalism and the rivalries between Fatah and Hamas? Have we by our approach so far actually made things worse?

Mr Cooper, "Certainly not intentionally, not knowingly. I am tempted to say one answer to that question, is we might have done that by encouraging elections and by monitoring them".¹³⁰

Willy Loman is going insane.

Fully occupied by the imperative to perform.

Scared of acting creatively

Through Ahmed we can situate a sense of fear that we will become disoriented or lost by the failure to perform the rituals which we have associated with happiness. We therefore feel compelled to follow *these* rituals.

So we may ask, what is lost in continuously orientating ourselves to these rituals, deemed by the social, cultural and institutional to bring happiness? What is lost in successfully performing this fear of 'failure'?

The subject may lose the ability to think or act beyond the rituals which have been deemed imperative to achieving 'happiness'. The attachment to the successful performance of *those rituals* delimits the possibility of acting creatively.¹³¹

Cooper concludes that the elections must have been a mistake. This is the only answer he feels is left to him.

Miller's play signals to alternative spaces for both Willy's, and Willy's son, Biff's happiness. Enjoying outdoor spaces, working with one's hands, planting, growing, building are all indicated

as spaces for other forms of happiness. Willy is written as being happy doing these things.

These spaces, however, remain sanctioned to both characters. The performance of these alternative lives is deemed unacceptable. For these are *not* the locations of happiness under the regulating capitalist regime. Those locations of happiness are discarded under a certain imperative to perform.

* * *

What is lost when happiness is situated with the successful performance of only those rituals which are *supposed* to bring happiness? Perhaps a loss in the ability to think creatively; to find other forms of happiness situated in other locations. To be experimental in addressing challenges.

There could have been a much more effective way to engage with Hamas. Wait and see how that government proceeds. And wait and see which ministries the EU can engage with. And if we like the way in which the ministers run the ministries – or if we like a policy a particular government puts in place – then we can see what level of engagement is wanted.¹³²

Various imperatives to perform conditioned the EU's possibility to think differently, act creatively, find new routes for happiness in their relations with the new government in power.

* * *

A senior EU representative for the Quartet's envoy to the Middle East discussed how placing the conditions restricted any possibility of actually engaging with Hamas, and as such evaluating any changes.

It was very difficult to judge Hamas's position because we were not allowed to speak with them. We couldn't tell if Hamas was changing or not because we didn't have the opportunity to talk with any of its Ministers. Diplomatically we should have kept communication channels open with Hamas.¹³³

The end

Willy Loman drives away in his car and commits suicide.

EU officials sanction Hamas, and disregard the democratic decision of the Palestinian people.

What is at stake in successfully complying with the imperative to perform?

Willy Loman didn't die because he failed to perform the demanded rituals of the 'successful' life. Willy Loman committed suicide because he fully and whole heartedly performed a belief in the 'successful' life, whereby he could not be happy if he did not successfully perform the rituals of the 'good life'. The 'good life' was equated with a particular social and economic performance at the expense of the enactment of others, which perhaps would have made Willy happier, or would have been a reflection of more genuine desires.

Willy Loman *successfully* complied with the imperative to perform the rituals of the 'good life'.

So what is at stake in successfully complying with the imperative to perform?

According to an EU representative to the Quartet's Special Envoy the problem with the conditions is that you could not operationalise them. There were no benchmarks for the conditions; as in a way to determine if Hamas fulfilled them or not.

There was no manoeuvring around them. For example on the issue of violence, Hamas offered a ceasefire. On the topic of recognition, there was de facto recognition of Israel through the PLO. With regards to remain in abidance with all previous agreements, the Arab Peace initiative offered such possibilities.

There should have been benchmarks for the conditions, so that we could gage Hamas's position on the conditions.¹³⁴

So what is at stake in successfully complying with rituals of imperative success? The inability to reflect on whether these rituals are achieving their intended outcome.

* * *

In a published interview, Christian Berger, EU representative to the Quartet, was asked the following question, "Why did Wolfensohn step down as the Middle East Envoy to the Quartet in April 2006?"

Berger responded,

James Wolfensohn, being an American citizen is subject to US legislation, which prohibits any US citizen from interacting with a foreign terrorist organisation. Since Hamas is considered to be a terrorist organisation it was impossible for him to continue working beyond April, 2006.¹³⁵

The Quartet's "three year-development" plan in Gaza came to an end. These persons who had been working on the ground to implement the project had to 'pack up and go home'. They were not allowed to speak with the new government in power, and so it became impossible to carry on.

It became impossible to carry on.

Hamas was placed on the US's terrorist list in 2002. Hamas was placed on the EU's terrorist list in 2003.

Hamas won democratic elections in 2006.

A no contact policy emerged *after* Hamas won the elections.

Willy Loman drives away in his car.

Now let's pack up and go home.

Thank you and good night.

Hamas, perform or else!

Perform or else—

In a very large office, on the fourth floor of the Bourj Tower, I sat with Minister of Health, Besam Naim. I asked him of his experiences regarding Hamas's transition following the

elections. I listened to his story. I heard the shake in his voice. I saw the disappointment on his face.

Okay, yes it was not easy to move from a resistance movement, which was completely absent from the governmental sector, to be the government and to rule the country. For example, when we came to the government, for the minister of health, we didn't have any employees related to Hamas who were at that responsibility level: like minister, or deputy minister – what we have are simple employees. We didn't have at that time enough staff to run the country at the administrative level. But because of this isolation policy, and because of the siege and our position of challenge – and because of the EU asking the employees, especially the high ranked employees to sit home and get their salaries there to push Hamas and the government to collapse.¹³⁶

Hamas was punished for not being able to respond the Quartet's conditions. Hamas was punished for failing to acquiesce to the demands of the external political space.



Figure 4.2 Interview with Minister of Health, Besam Naim, Bourj Tower, Gaza.

Source: photograph by the author, 5 November, 2012.

* * *

In Butler's examination of the regulatory ideal of distinct gender binaries, Butler observes how gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences. "Discrete genders are part of what 'humanizes' individuals with contemporary culture: indeed we regularly punish those who fail to do their gender right".¹³⁷

Perform – or else.

There are punitive consequences for not performing according to the rules.

A child emerges into a world. That world is already marked by certain normative rules and

boundaries. The child did not elect these rules. But the child is made to conform to them. If the child does not obey the child is punished. The child is made to perform correctly.

Hamas is being made to perform but not to schedules of their own making.

Hamas is being made to perform but not to conditions of their own making.

Hamas is being made to perform – or else.

* * *

In *Gender Trouble*, Butler offers a critique of Foucault's reading and writing of Herculine Barbin's memoirs. Butler cautions against the romanticised reading of this intersexed life. Foucault locates a proliferation of pleasures, meanings, new relationships and experiences of the body that live outside the binary framework of intelligibility.¹³⁸ Butler, however, critiques this understanding of the intersexed body as being freed from the regulating norms of legitimacy. Rather, the intersexed life continues to be performed upon by the repressive implementation of social and judicial review; Herculine's body and life continued to be prohibited and generated by a regulating gender discourse.

Hugues Mingarelli from the European Commission explains the EU's implementation of the Quartet's principles.

The Quartet very clearly stated that the degree of our engagement will be dependent on the new government and the modalities of this engagement will be dependent on the new Government meeting the three Quartet principles and that this new Government will be *judged and assessed* by its acts and results. This means that for the time being we have to watch very closely what is going on and on the basis of the first declaration and acts of the new Government, our political leaders will decide on the degree of engagement we can have with the new Government.¹³⁹

[Herculine] is 'outside' the law, but the law maintains this 'outside' within itself.¹⁴⁰

Hamas is being asked to perform, according to the conditions set by the Quartet.

The Quartet moved quickly to impose their conditions. They clearly stated that they would refuse to deal with any government that did not meet the three conditions. Prime Minister Haniyeh's responded in an equally defiant tone, "The Americans and the Europeans say to Hamas: either you have weapons or you enter the legislative council. We say weapons *and* the legislative council. There is no contradiction between the two".¹⁴¹

The Quartet is setting the rules to which Hamas has to conform in order to be recognised, in their view as a legitimate actor. The external actors perform an impossibility of seeing Hamas as an actor which may embody various streams of political activity.

Herculine does not fall fully outside the signifying economy of masculinity. Ultimately, two men, one a doctor, one a priest, decide upon Alexina's gendered fate.¹⁴²

The EU placed itself in a position to watch and judge Hamas. The EU's political engagement with Hamas was to dictate the conditions to which Hamas must conform, and then to judge whether Hamas fulfilled these conditions or not.

The International Crisis Group was in contact with members of Hamas around the time of the elections. The International Crisis Group's 2006 report can be read as a delivery of the 'imperative to perform' the conditions of the external political space. It delivers the regulatory

regime which demanded a particular performance from Hamas.

The report states that Hamas gave *mixed messages* in their attempt to maintain that they will not succumb to foreign pressure, while at the same time they are willing to compromise.

The observing group is not happy with Hamas's performance.

The International Crisis Group reports that,

the transition from opposition to government *demanded far more clarity*, and it was not forthcoming. Hamas and the new government failed to take the initiative by articulating clear and forward-leaning political positions that could *convincingly return the ball to their opponents' court*, sow dissent between the US and EU, or produce a common script with other Palestinian forces.¹⁴³

Hamas is already read as a terrorist. Hamas is already read as illegitimate. Hamas is being forced to manoeuvre in and around, over and above and in-between the boundaries of the regulatory regime which imposed the conditions on Hamas's performance.

Herculine's rupturing love affair is still marked by the religious and gender markings of the convent. Herculine felt humiliation and scorn for not feeling fully included within this gendered space.

Hamas leader Ghazi Hamas explains the *squeezed* position from which Hamas was forced to perform.

Yes the situation was very complicated. At that time I was the spokesperson of the government. [... stutter] We were living under hard conditions, hard situation. We were working day and night for a breakthrough in this solid wall. Because with Israel in its massive power in media and politics it tried to fight the government everywhere. We tried to contact, we did meet with some Ambassadors here, to explain. But this did not help us too much. So we changed our priorities. If the EU was smart, it should open the window for Hamas. And this will make Hamas convinced to change its policies here. But when they squeezed Hamas into the corner with the blockade, then Hamas at that time Hamas will not think about peace, or some beautiful terms like co-existence. Now Hamas will put as its priority how to feed people, how to pay salaries, how to provide fuel for people. These became the priorities for people.¹⁴⁴

In effect, [Herculine Barbin] embodies the law, not as an entitled subject, but as an enacted testimony to the law's uncanny capacity to produce only those rebellions that it can guarantee will – out of fidelity – defeat themselves and those subjects who, utterly subjected, have no choice but to reiterate the law of their genesis.¹⁴⁵

Loss of ambiguity

No mixed messages allowed.

David Reimer was determined without difficulty to be a boy at the time of birth, being born with XY chromosomes. Following a surgical 'error' at eight months David's penis was burned. Shortly after this David's parents encountered John Money, whose 'research' argued that through surgical reassignment and proper socialisation David could be raised as a girl. After David 'failed' to be 'properly' socialised into a girl, other interpretations of David's body

emerged. These other scientific voices argued that a child is born with an inherent gender. The intersexed child, who is born with the Y chromosome, shows sufficient evidence to be raised as a boy. Again surgical reassignment and proper socialisation followed.

Homi Bhabha calls upon Foucault's understanding of knowledge and power to explain how stereotypes attempt to make evident that which cannot be understood. "Foucault insists that the relation of knowledge and power within the apparatus are always a *strategic response* to an *urgent need* at a given historical moment".¹⁴⁶ When faced with a challenge the dispositif of a recyclable knowledge is available to impose upon those subjects that trouble regulating discourses of power.

When faced with that which challenges the regulatory ideal, various apparatus of knowledge are put into motion to claim that they know the subject. There is an overt move to assert power where power appears to be lost. There is a desire to correct that which disrupted the normative regime. Perhaps we can imagine that the EU moved to correct Hamas; to bring Hamas back in line. Hamas was being made to perform according to the conditions, so that the EU could reassert its control. This performed knowing of Hamas as already illegitimate allows the EU to continue to perform, without hesitation its practices and policies of regulating, of 'fixing' Hamas.

* * *

Milton-Edwards and Farrell offer a description of Hamas's performance with regards to the 'corrective measures' of the conditions.

Three months into its term, Hamas was performing *even more verbal gymnastics*. "We accept a state on the 1967 borders without recognizing the legitimacy of the occupation. They can have their state on the 1948 lands, but I don't recognize it", said Usama al-Mazini, a member of Hamas's dialogue committee. "That is not a recognition of Israel, and there is no acceptance of the two-state solution. We will not recognize its legitimacy. We will deal with them on daily matters, but not at a practical level".¹⁴⁷

Milton-Edwards and Farrell continue,

But Hamas had little chance of finessing its way to legitimacy on issues of such existential importance. Israel and the West made it clear there were not interested in wordplay, and heard only, "No, no, no" on the three Quartet demands.¹⁴⁸

When order is disturbed technical measures are used to reorder those subjects according to the hegemonic framing of intelligibility. The EU performs a desire to assert control where control appears to have been lost.

Medical and psychiatric practitioners put their knowledge into practice. They have ready various 'corrective' modes – the knife, the corrective surgery, behavioural socialisation.

* * *

The need to know removed any chance of ambiguity. Hamas could not be left as an ambiguous subject. The EU's discourse demanded a particular knowing of Hamas. The conditions removed all possibility of leaving Hamas as a confusing subject.

The conditions were such that compromise or manoeuvrability were impossible. As stated earlier on in the chapter there were no benchmarks or schemes for actually observing Hamas's moves, rather The Quartet only heard, 'no' to their three conditions.

Doctors perform surgical operations in an attempt to make the child's body identify with a particular sex, "even when surgery may deprive the person permanently of sexual function and pleasure".¹⁴⁹

The corrective knife bears down on the body.

An attempt to reassert control where control appears to have been lost. Hamas you must be this *or* that; you must be able to respond appropriately to our conditions *or* you are illegitimate.

The demand to 'know' Hamas through the regulating norms of the conditions annihilated any possibility for ambiguity. It denied any possibility for a performance of difference. The knowledge apparatus invoked through the conditions resulted in an unambiguous negative response to the three conditions.

The end

Hamas's body became the site of these 'corrective' conditions. It was regulated accordingly.

Hamas leader, Ghazi Hamad relays,

They never thought about the big issues, they put us in this cage, in the prison and they refuse to let us see the light from the sun. So our priorities completely changed and they diverted to how to make people survive here. To prevent starvation. You know at that time we had to bring the money in bags; through tunnels, with persons- because at that time; Israel, US all EU they prevented all transfer of money to the banks here in Gaza.¹⁵⁰

The binary reading of Hamas through the enactment of the conditions meant that Hamas was recognised as illegitimate, and it was subsequently punished by European, Israeli and American governments.

The scalpel touches the skin.

They put us in this cage.

Certain humans are recognised as less than human.¹⁵¹

They refused to let us see the light from the sun.

Hamas 'failed to conform'. A regime of truth continued to work upon the intelligibility of Hamas.

Certain lives are read as liveable, and others are not. The successful performance of the conditions deemed Hamas's life as non-human. Hamas could not be left ambiguous.¹⁵²

From the first moment as the elected government, we were opposed on three fronts: First, the military attacks on Gaza became more intensive, day by day – incursions, south, north. Israeli tanks entered Gaza – Israel wants to collapse the government through attacks – even attacks on government building – especially after the capture of Shalit – and they also threatened to assassinate the leaders of the government, Haniyeh and others. The situation became very dangerous for us, the leaders of the government were not able to walk in the streets or go to work. And the second point, the policy of siege- economic ... restrictions, more pressure on Gaza to prevent essential materials. They want people here to feel that

they are not satisfied and to cause an uprising. And third point, political isolation. So you found that it was a big war on the government here. From all sides, from the different fronts.¹⁵³

Conclusion 1: wait and see

Wait and see.

Advisor to Prime Minister Haniyeh, Ghazi Hamad explained,

I visited London in 2006 – I talked with different people there from different sectors – I told them you should give Hamas a chance and after that you can judge them. And some agreed with me. We will see and wait. I said you should give 6 months, and then you can decide.¹⁵⁴

Butler asks,

Does justice demand that I decide? Or does justice demand that I wait to decide, that I practice a certain deferral in the face of a situation in which too many have rushed to judgment? Might it not be useful, important, even just, to consider a few matters before we decide, before we ascertain whether it is, in fact, ours to decide.¹⁵⁵

This is what the European Parliament Delegation to the Palestinian Legislative Council were asking for; for the EU not to be too hasty in judging Hamas. This is what much of the analytical community were asking for, wait and see which ministers you can engage with. Wait and see what shape Hamas's political regime takes.

Not to rush
Not to be hasty
Wait and see
Wait and see
Wait

Conclusion 2: we don't know

Whether it is, in fact, ours to decide.

Cheryl Chase, founder and director of the Intersexed Society of North America asserts "They can't conceive of leaving someone alone".¹⁵⁶

David Reimer asks that his body not be reduced to what is between his legs. He asks *not* to be made intelligible. He asks that we accept that we may not be able to decipher his pleasure and categorise his body. He asks that we consider the idea that we may not know.

Can we begin to imagine a politics of not knowing? Is it possible to imagine a space in which the EU may have arrived at the conclusion that they are not there to judge the legibility or legitimacy of Hamas? That they do not actually understand the situation of the Palestinian voter, and such it is not up to them to criticise or judge the outcome of their elections? Is it possible, to imagine, a simple: 'we don't know how to respond'.

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5 The performativity of threat

The EU and Hamas through the violent policy of conditionality

George Orwell's recollection of the discussions that followed his shooting of the elephant in Burma, during Britain's violent occupation,

Afterwards, of course, there were endless discussions about the shooting of the elephant. The owner was furious, but he was only an Indian and could do nothing. Besides, legally I had done the right thing, for a mad elephant has to be killed, like a mad dog, if its owner fails to control it. Among the Europeans opinion was divided. The older men said I was right, the younger men said it was a damn shame to shoot an elephant for killing a coolie, because an elephant was worth more than any damn Coringhee coolie. And afterwards I was very glad that the coolie had been killed; it put me legally in the right and it gave me a sufficient pretext for shooting the elephant. I often wondered whether any of the others grasped that I had done it solely to avoid looking a fool.¹

Words that talk past, through, over each other, but which are trapped under the weight of a violent colonial discourse.

Hamas leader, Ahmed Yousuf,

They would have a better understanding of Hamas and its issues; if we sit and talk face to face and come to a common ground where we can develop dialogue to more steps forward. But if we do not talk to each other and keep with accusation then this complicates the relations.²

Patrick Child, EU Commissioner, former Head of Cabinet for Commissioner for External Relation, Benita Ferrero-Waldner,

So maybe you can say that we were being completely unfair by not allowing Hamas any wiggle room which maybe would have allowed them to renounce violence on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and we'll see how it does. But on the other hand the positions of the US and Israel in relation to their constituencies were that unless we are able to demonstrate that the Quartet's principles are unquestionably met then we cannot move forward in any sort of process of negotiation.³

Bodies unable to see each other, to be with each other, to hold conversations, move forward from within the performativity of threat.

Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish asks the following question of the Palestinian struggle in the poem, “Who am I without exile?”

What
will we do
without
exile?⁴

A performative question, a performative question that seeks to imagine an alternative future in which the subjects are not trapped under the weight of a performative colonial discourse.

* * *

What kind of conversations can be had after and through a performative utterance of threat?

This chapter explores various iterations of EU– Hamas relations after the enactment of the conditions. It begins by analysing several speeches and public discourses through which the EU marks Hamas as unlovable and unwilling to compromise. Here the chapter emphasises the interpellative force of threat, whereby political subjects are reduced and consumed by the utterances of violence that constitute their encounters. The chapter discusses the colonial context of this interaction, whereby I argue that the European is unable to hear or see Hamas’s position. Rather, I argue the EU remains attached to a fantasy of itself; it only hears *its own discourse* of adjudication of the Other, and thus it misses the political arguments for resistance in front of it. Furthermore, I suggest the European fails to fully witness the pain of the Palestinian, and rather, EU negotiators continue to perform more attention for the pain of the Israeli. The performativity of the conditions, which marks Hamas as illegitimate shapes the kinds of conversations that can be had. It pushes them into secret spaces, which limits the kind of listening that can occur. This chapters interrogates how histories of colonial, gender and sexual violence inhibit the kinds of diplomatic conversations that can occur.

The second area explored in this chapter is external responses to the 2007 Mecca Agreement and the attempt at national reconciliation between Hamas and Fatah. This part of the investigation relies on the House of Lords “European Union Committee to the Middle East Peace Process”, in which the Committee takes up the question of reconciliation. The oral evidence provided to the Committee from senior EU diplomats and bureaucrats is telling of the confused status European political affairs, whereby people in power can be cognisant their policy initiatives are wrong or damaging, but this realisation does not merit a change of direction. Again, this chapter is concerned with how ritualised discourses and practices close down the possibility for change or critical reflection.

But what if the EU had formed a different response to Hamas’s success in the elections? *What if* they had performed a more open response to the election results? Part three explores the possibility of an alternative coming together of Hamas and the EU. It wants to explore an alternative political encounter, which does not reiterate and replicate a performative discourse of threat. Part three investigates possibilities situated in the ‘what if’, the ‘not yet’, in the ‘imaginary’. I discuss the hypothetical question I posed during my interviews, ‘what if the EU had decided to engage with Hamas following the 2006 elections’. The imaginative question I suggest, allows a coming together from an alternative departure point. Part three takes us into the space of fiction, which I argue injects needed creativity into how the EU engages their

Palestinian partners.

Part one: I can't hear you; we're too close

Oppressive language enacts its own kind of violence.

Judith Butler's reading of Toni Morrison's Nobel Prize speech, 1993.⁵

"Language remains alive when it refuses to encapsulate or capture the events and lives it describes. But when it seeks to effect that capture, language not only loses its vitality, but acquires its own violent force".⁶

We are standing in line at the hardware store in town. We are waiting in a line to pay for the light bulbs I am holding in my hands. Jason, my partner, is standing close to me. We hear a loud voice from the front of the queue.

Men never listen. They are too involved in themselves to pay any attention.

Men never listen.

I can feel these words reach Jason's ears. Thick tension fills the space. I can feel his body being pulled towards her. His male body becomes wrapped up in her narration, subsumed and consumed by her words. The performativity of the woman's utterance pulls Jason towards her.

* * *

Interpellated into threat

The mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative.⁷

The following is part of a speech given by Javier Solana, European Union's High Representative for Common Foreign and Security Policy, just a few months after the Palestinian elections.

I am appearing before the European Parliament at a critical time for the future of the Middle East peace process, immediately after the forming of a new Palestinian government and the holding of elections in Israel. [...]

In the occupied territories, Hamas has taken over the *reins of government*. Its programme, as presented by Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh, is *unfortunately unacceptable* to the international community. It does not give any clear indication that the *Hamas government is prepared to respect the principles established by the European Union* [...].

Ultimately, the unwillingness of Hamas to come into line with our principles, in spite of some very light steps, along with the fact that Hamas appears on the European list of terrorist organisations, must inevitably have consequences for the EU: *the impossibility of regarding Hamas as a valid partner until it changes its stance*.⁸

The mark interpellation makes is not descriptive, but inaugurative.⁹

Through Butler's reading of Althusser's scene of the hailing policeman, we recognise the performative effects of the act of naming.

Interpellation is an act of speech whose ‘content’ is neither true nor false: it does not have description as its primary task. Its purpose is to indicate and establish a subject in subjection, to produce its social contours in space and time.¹⁰

A performative utterance brings subjects into being. It brings subjects into being in a particular way.

Hamas, unfortunately, is unacceptable.

The performative utterance reaches out to fix and freeze those subjects caught by its interpellative force.

Hamas’s is unwilling to respect our principles.

Solana’s utterance performs Hamas as a particular kind of subject; a subject that is *unacceptable and unwilling to compromise*.

Solana goes on to utter that the production of Hamas, *as this particular kind of subject*, has a distinct consequential effect.

The unwillingness of Hamas to come into line, that Hamas appears on the list of terrorist organisations ... must inevitably have consequences for the EU: ...

The performative utterance of the conditions forces itself upon the actors, instituting a particular relationship between them.

... must inevitably have consequences for the EU:

the impossibility of regarding Hamas as a valid partner.

The interpellative utterance has the capacity to delineate social and political positionalities. It demarcates the space subjects may occupy. It fashions the contours of political relationships. Solana’s discourse performs Hamas as an unruly and wild movement who has taken over the reins of the government. It is then *this* enactment of Palestinian politics, brought into being through the EU’s own discourse, that then must be brought under European control and intervention. Consequently, the EU performs a desire or need to tailor and tame, as such all financial support, diplomatic engagements, all understandings of Hamas’s were uttered to be contingent on Hamas’s acceptance of the conditions.

How may the EU and Hamas form a relationship or engage in dialogue after the EU’s performative utterance has already (re)produced Hamas as illegitimate and uninterested in negotiation? The performative utterance of conditionality sought to reach out and mark Hamas as illegitimate. It interpellated Hamas and the EU into a relationship bounded by the performative utterance of threat. The EU is now in a relationship with that *which it has said* is unwilling to negotiate. The EU is now in a relationship with that *which it has said* does not wish for a peaceful settlement.

How may the actors relate to each other from this departure point?

Shared feelings of threat

“Look, a Negro!” It was an external stimulus that flicked over me as I passed by. I made a tight smile.

“Look, a Negro!” It was true. It amused me.

“Look, a Negro!” The circle was drawing a bit tighter. I made no secret of my

amusement.

“Mama, see the Negro! I’m frightened!” Frightened! Frightened! Now they were beginning to be afraid of me. I made up my mind to laugh myself to tears, but laughter had become impossible.¹¹

Western governments seem frightened and perplexed in equal amounts by the Hamas victory.¹²

* * *

Edward McMillan-Scott, leader of the European Parliament’s Delegation to observe the 2006 Palestinian elections,

We heard the clamour for choice and change in Palestine. We heard the noise of democracy. [...] The result reflected the wish of the people. The product reflects despair of Fatah rather than love of Hamas. *Certainly the Hamas people we met were not very loveable.* We are about to see an emergence there and in other parts of the Arab world of a *new fundamentalist, Islamist politics.* We must work together, but I worry that we have imparted *a process but not the values of democracy that go with the process* – the rule of law, human rights and respect for minorities.¹³

“Injurious names have a history, one that is invoked and reconsolidated at the moment of utterance, but not explicitly told”.¹⁴ McMillan-Scott again performs the Palestinians as unruly, who have invoked a kind of politics that the EU does not agree with. There are two distinct moves here, the first is McMillan-Scott presents the EU as those who impart democracy, as though they should be given credit for the unfolding of the democratic process in the Occupied Territories. Second, McMillan-Scott performs the Palestinians as not really being able to get it right. They elected Hamas, a non-loveable, fundamentalist movement. These inaugurations of the movement stand in for the need to actually account for the movement’s politics, self-presentation and why it was successful in the elections.

* * *

Mama, look a Negro.

We see the emergence of a new fundamentalist, Islamist politics.

I’m frightened.

Who are not very loveable.

What kinds of relationships can emerge after and through a performative utterance has already precluded the possibility for love?

Judith Butler in *Excitable Speech*,

If the speaker addresses his body or her body to the one addressed, then it is not merely the body of the speaker that comes into play: it is the body of the addressee as well. Is the one speaking merely speaking, or is the one speaking comporting her or his body toward the

other, exposing the body of the other as vulnerable to address. As an ‘instrument’ of violent rhetoric, the body of the speaker exceeds the words that are spoke, exposing the addressed body as no longer (and not ever fully) in its own control.¹⁵

Jason’s body, the body of the man who never listens is propelled towards the woman at the front of the queue, stuck to her through the performativity of her injurious utterance. The woman’s body smacks into Jason’s as they become tied together through the performative utterance of threat.

Men never listen.

The woman’s body is also invoked. How may she manoeuvre, speak to, react to the man that already never listens?

“Western governments seem frightened and perplexed in equal amounts by the Hamas victory”.¹⁶ How may the EU respond to, engage with, get to know a Hamas which it has already marked as being fundamentalist and unlovable.

* * *

My body was given back to me sprawled out, distorted, re-colored, clad in mourning in that white winter day. The Negro is an animal, the Negro is bad, the Negro is mean, the Negro is ugly; look, a nigger, it’s cold, the nigger is shivering, the nigger is shivering because he is cold, the little boy is trembling because he is afraid of the nigger, the nigger is shivering with cold, that cold goes through your bones, the handsome little boy is trembling because he thinks that the nigger is quivering with rage, the little white boy throws himself into his mother’s arms: Mama, the nigger’s going to eat me up.¹⁷

We know that Hamas has been demonized and dehumanised and stigmatised with terrorism so we need to let the people meet with us face to face to change the stereotype people have about us.¹⁸

The performativity of threat cannot be fully controlled. It works upon those bodies within its reach. Both speaker and addressee are implicated in its performative force. Both actors are trembling. Both actors are vulnerable to the utterance.

What kind of conversations can take place when bodies are trembling?

How can the EU and Hamas relate to one another when the performative utterance of threat has already demarcated these bodies as threat and threatened?

A pair of surgical gloves

A friend had just completed his undergraduate dissertation. The dissertation had the following title page. A copy of the dissertation with this title page was left face up on the passenger’s seat of the vehicle. A friend took his car to the mechanic.

Vested Interests:

Orientalism and Gay Imperialism



Figure 5.1 Dissertation cover, image from the film, *The Thief of Baghdad*, 1924.
Source: shared with the author, June, 2014.

When the friend returned to retrieve his vehicle a pair of surgical gloves and a crumpled up tissue were left on top of the dissertation's title page.

A pair of surgical gloves sticks the bodies together. A pair of surgical gloves sticks the bodies together though the performative utterance of threat.

A pair of surgical gloves interpellates the bodies into a particular relationship; but what kind of conversation can be had from or after this point? How can the subjects relate to each other beyond the relationship performed through the derogatory, oppressive and threatening act?

It no longer matters that the men repaired his car. Every time we approach the mechanic we think of the gloves. The gloves are in my house; they make me feel sick. Everything becomes intertwined with the threatening utterance; with the utterance that reproduced a threat to violence between the actors. The violent and derogatory act *consumes* the encounter. The subjects, their meeting, their possible future encounters are *reduced* to the performative discourse of threat.

* * *

Javier Solana speaking at the Quartet meeting in London, 30 January, 2006,

What I would like to say on behalf of the European Union is that once these conditions are fulfilled, the European Union will stand ready to continue to support the Palestinian economic development and democratic stability, but it has to be compliant with all these conditions which are here.¹⁹



Figure 5.2 A pair of surgical gloves courtesy of Kwik-Fit, Aberystwyth, Wales.
Source: photograph by the author, June, 2014.

The performative relationship of threat consumes the bodies within its reach. All possible relations between the EU and Hamas were governed by the conditions after their performative utterance. There is, I would argue a sadness in Solana’s speech, whereby he affirms a desire to engage with Palestinian politics differently, while simultaneously admitting his supposed inability to do so.

Besam Naim, Hamas leader, Minister of Health,

There was always a kind of dialogue – but most of the time it was non-official and most of the time it was not trying to hear the position of Hamas but to dictate policies. They came with already taken decisions, you have to renounce violence, recognise Israel and follow all existing agreements. I think it was more or less a continued policy of trying to contain Hamas.²⁰

* * *

Butler’s account of the prohibitive discourse concerning homosexual self-ascription in the US presents how excitable speech overdetermines the possible relationships between speakers. To declare one’s homosexuality in the military says Butler, works to fashion a relationship between bodies through its overdetermined fantasy, whereby “the power of the magical word” fabulously misconstrues “I am a homosexual” with “I want you sexually”.²¹

Through Freud, Butler observes how the taboo, which floats around the declarative utterance of homosexuality, works to fashion a relationship between bodies and reduces the encounter to the discriminatory discourse.

Indeed, it is the incessant transferability of this desire that is instituted by the taboo, and that inform the logic of contagion by which the desire under taboo enters into discourse as a highly communicable name. If I say, “I am a homosexual”, in front of you, then you become implicated in the ‘homosexuality’ that I utter; the utterance is presumed to establish

a relationship between the speaker and the audience.²²

The discourses that exist around the misconstrued understanding of homosexuality in the military perform upon the encounter. Other soldiers will somehow figure that the self-described soldier is attracted to them. Further to that, the identified homosexual's conduct becomes reduced to and subsumed by the performativity of the discourse; everything this soldier does will be marked as being somehow gay.

What kind of relationships can be had when bodies are bounded together under the weight of an oppressive performative discourse?

Etimad Tashawa, Hamas member,

It wasn't an official meeting. More like Q and A – about Hamas's ideology. But it wasn't a discussion.²³

A Q & A about the taboo. A Q & A about that which is performed as already threatening.
Ghazi Hamad, Hamas member of government,

The problem with saying they are engaging with Hamas or talking with Hamas is that they just talk about preconditions. And I say to them, let's put all issues on the table and talk about them. Don't put red lines and say you have to recognise Israel, you have to renounce violence ... and this is not accepted by Hamas.²⁴

A pair of surgical gloves.

Consumed, subsumed, reduced to the conditions.

Hamas is already marked as illegitimate. The encounters that occur after and through the performativity of threat are already marked by illegitimacy. The meetings, conversations, policies that emanate from within this discourse are stuck within a performative reading of Hamas as the scary terrorist. There is not a desire to 'get to know' Hamas because they have already performed a knowing of Hamas; a knowing of Hamas as that which already threatens. The EU and Hamas are tied together through the performativity of threat.

Stuck in hidden spaces

Sean Dorsey's *The Secret History of Love* is a performance that tells the modern American history story of the attempt to find love in the underground bars and side street alleyways of sanctioned LGBT encounters.²⁵ The performance intertwines dance with the oral histories of LGBT elders, and it works to reveal "the underground ways that LGBT people managed to survive and find love in decades past, despite tremendous obstacles".²⁶

What kind of relationships can be forged in the dark? What kind of love can be found when the space of the encounter is already marked by illegitimacy? What kind of conversations can be had in hiding?

* * *

LGBT elder interviewed, *The Secret History of Love*,

Secrets were our greatest industry. Secrets demanded all our resources; our time; our energy; our imaginations; often times our money.²⁷

The Commissioner for External Relations, Benita Ferrero-Waldner will visit Israel and the Palestinian Territories on 19/20 June 2006. During her trip she intends to meet Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert and Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni, as well as Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas and other leading figures on both sides. *She will not meet any member of the Hamas-led government.*²⁸

Secrets were our greatest industry. Secrets demanded all our resources; our time; our energy; our imaginations; often times our money.²⁹

Hamas leader, Khalil al-Haya, explains that some official meetings did take place, but no one was to know about it.

Some of them are officials ... they come and sit down with them, but they don't want the media to know that they came down to sit with Hamas. Some of them don't want to sit with Hamas ... they can sit with members of the parliament but not as the government- because the government is Hamas.³⁰

What kind of love can be found in hiding?

What kind of conversations can be had in secret?

Mahmoud al-Zahar, former Hamas Minister for Foreign Affairs,

They said to us, we are not satisfied with the government's attitude. These are not official people. Not official people. Not official people – But that was the main contact, not official – just testing the water. Sometimes they tried to convince us to denounce the violence. We cannot say that we were in direct official contact with EU, by any means.³¹

What kind of conversations can take place in the dark, closed space of the closet?

Just testing the water.

Just here to talk about your illegitimacy.

What kind of conversation can you have when the site of the meeting is already marked by illegitimacy and controversial?

Just a Q & A about Hamas's ideology.

Just a Q & A about those we are not supposed to be meeting.

* * *

The Secret History of Love performs a moving experience of the attempt to find love within sanctioned spaces.

Several Hamas leaders expressed that in these private spaces and unofficial conversations, out of view, out of sight, EU representatives would show dismay concerning their governments' policies, concerning *their* policies. They would say: 'you are right'. They would recognise that Hamas are not monstrous terrorists.

The Secret History of Love displays stories of resistance, creativity and imaginative dissidence in the attempts to find love in the dark alleyways and subterranean bars.

Secretly, nearly all politicians have stated that it was a big mistake to have rejected the results of the elections.³²

In secret we can profess a kind of love. In secret we can say, 'I see you differently', 'I wish I could be with you differently'.

But the space of the encounter is still marked by illegitimacy.

The outside space still regards the encounter as illegitimate.

So what kind of conversations can really be had?

And they meet and they express their dismay for their state's policies towards Hamas, but it is just talking, talking, talking, but really we feel there has been no change until now....³³

The meeting is still that which needs to be kept secret.

The secretive meeting does not challenge the illegitimacy of the encounter.

* * *

All of their conversations revolved around a desire *to get out* of the relationship of threat. Every conversation was marked by a desire to 'get out' of the situation of threat, that had been instituted by the EU's claim.

A performative utterance of threat that determines all possible relations.

'Accept these three conditions or we cannot meet with you'.

'Accept these conditions so we *can* then have a dialogue with you'.

All possible relations are demarcated by the desire to 'get out' of this threatening relationship.

The EU placed the conditions on Hamas, marking it as illegitimate. Then all future relations involved trying to convince Hamas to respect these conditions in order to be no longer marked as illegitimate.

A performative utterance that destroys alternative possible relations.

A pair of surgical gloves.

A performative utterance of threat that annihilates alternative ways of being together. Consumed and subsumed by the performativity of threat.

And it all goes to shit

The car mechanics did not invent the derogatory discourse they employed to perform their violent act.

The racial slur is always cited from elsewhere, and in the speaking of it, one chimes in with a chorus of racists, producing at that moment the linguistic occasion for an imagined relation to an historically transmitted community of racists.³⁴

* * *

The following are sections of secret documents that outline conversations between Israeli and American security institutions regarding their position towards Hamas around the time of the elections.

The title of this leaked conversation between Ambassador, Israel Defense Intelligence Director, Major General Amos Yadlin and American Ambassador Richard H. Jones, held on 12 June, 2007 is:

Gaza Fighting Not Israel's Main Problem

The leaked report states the following,

[Israeli Major,] Yadlin described Gaza as “hopeless for now”, commenting that the *Palestinians had to realise that Hamas offered no solution*. Israeli Defense Intelligence analysts, he said, had predicted a confrontation in Gaza since Hamas won the Palestinian Legislative Council elections in January 2006.³⁵

Yadlin goes on to describe the situation of the fighting in Gaza.

The Ambassador commented that if Fatah decided it has lost Gaza, there would be calls for Abbas to set up a separate regime in the West Bank. While not necessarily reflecting a consensus GOI [Government of Israel] view, Yadlin commented that such a development would please Israel since it would enable the IDF [Israel's occupying forces] *to treat Gaza as a hostile country rather than having to deal with Hamas as a non-state actor*.³⁶

Israel Security Agency Chief Diskin comments on the situation in the Gaza strip in a meeting on 11 June, 2007 with the Washington state department.

Hamas had succeeded in stealing some ‘Doshka’ heavy machine guns from the Presidential Guard. [Diskin] said that this is an example of why he does not support ‘at this time’ United States Security Coordinator, Lieutenant General Dayton’s proposal to supply ammunition and weapons to Fatah: ‘I support the idea of militarily strengthening Fatah, but I am afraid that they are not organised to ensure that the equipment that is transferred to them will reach the intended recipients’.³⁷

Diskin’s aide said that the [pro-Fatah] security forces at the Rafah crossing are strong, but are demoralised with the overall situation in the Gaza Strip. [...] ‘They [pro-Fatah security forces] are approaching a zero-sum situation, and yet they ask us to attack Hamas. This is a new development. We have never seen this before. They are desperate’.³⁸

Israel Security Agency Chief Diskin, “‘It is something in their blood’, he said, ‘the leaders of the West Bank cannot rule the Palestinians in the Gaza strip and vice versa’”. “Diskin warned that Palestinian society is disintegrating, and that this bodes ill for Israel”.³⁹

The racial slur is always cited from elsewhere.

Yadlin states that Palestinians ‘have to realise that Hamas offers no option’. Yadlin’s ability to present himself as a knower of what Palestinians should or should not do marks his own

colonial arrogance. He performs a feigned knowledge of the Other, while completely neglecting the Israeli and American role in actively working to destroy the possibility for unified or at least improved shared governance. He speaks of sending weapons into the Gaza strip and yet suggests that their inability to work together is in their blood.

* * *

Orwell's description of his job as a sub-divisional police officer in Burma during Britain's imperialism and his encounters during this time begin to offer an understanding of subjects who found themselves through and under the performative discourses of imperial rule. Orwell explains, "In a job like that you see the dirty work of the Empire *at close quarters*".⁴⁰

All I knew was that I was stuck between my hatred of the empire I served and my rage against the evil-spirited little beasts who tried to make my job impossible. With one part of my mind I thought of the British Raj as an unbreakable tyranny, as something clamped down, in saecula saeculorum, upon the will of prostrate peoples; with another part I thought that the greatest joy in the world would be to drive a bayonet into a Buddhist priest's guts. Feelings like these are the normal by-products of imperialism; ask any Anglo-Indian official, if you can catch him off duty.⁴¹

The following excerpt is taken from the European Neighbourhood Policy Progress Report with the Palestinian Authority (PA), 4 December, 2006. This communication from the EU Commission to the EU Council and the European Parliament offers a perspective on the various sites and relations which emerged from the response to Hamas's success in the 2006 elections. We can observe how the threatening discourse of conditionality and illegitimacy enveloped EU–Hamas relations, directed institutional practices, performed upon bodies and turned it all to shit.

After the victory of Hamas in the January 2006 legislative elections, the EU suspended political contacts and cooperation with the Government of PA, pending its acceptance of the Quartet principles. This led dialogue to become mostly confined to President Abbas and his office aside from some other contacts with the Palestinian Legislative Council, the judiciary and some autonomous PA agencies. Only Arab donors decided to maintain direct support to the PA Government. [...]

In response to the electoral results, Israel stopped transferring tax and customs revenue collected on behalf of the PA, while some commercial banks refused to transfer money to the PA in fear of legal repercussions under US anti-terrorist legislation. Most international donors, including the EU, decided to suspend their direct support to or through the Government.

As a result, resource flows to the PA nearly dried up, throwing it into the most severe financial crisis since its establishment. Civil servants' salaries, a key source of income for a broad segment of the Palestinian population, have not been paid in full since March.

EU dialogue with the Office of the President therefore focused on how to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in the territories, especially related to setting up of the Temporary International Mechanism (TIM) under European Commission lead, which was able to provide substantial amounts of humanitarian and emergency aid to the most affected segments of the Palestinian population, without any funds transiting through the PA.

The ENP Action Plan supported the reform programme of the Palestinian Authority in 2005 and early 2006 and some specific objectives were achieved, in particular in the area of public financial management. The crisis resulting from the formation of Hamas-led Government, and suspension by the EU of political contacts and cooperation with that Government, pending its acceptance of the Quartet principles, *has not allowed to make any progress since then*. The short term agenda is dominated by the need to focus on immediate humanitarian and other welfare needs.⁴²

The EU had a plan. Or at least they wrote that they had a plan.

The EU paid for and observed the democratic elections in Palestine.

The EU stated that they were in support of democratic and institutional reform in Palestine.

EU statements argued that the elections were an important step in state and peace building.

But now *no progress can be made*. Now, after democratic elections, after Hamas's participation in these elections, after the EU's response to these elections, after the EU's policy of conditionality, *no progress can be made*.

International sanctions had not weakened Hamas but only served to augment the suffering of the Palestinian population under siege and foment more anger against Israel and its Western supporters.⁴³

Does choreographing me make you feel better?

Maybe if you choreograph me you will feel better is performance between one male audience member and one female performer. The interactive performance takes place between the street and a second story window. The audience member stares out a second story window and hears a female voice. She tells him to look out into the street. "Somewhere, among the dozens of passers-by, you will find a woman who will obey your every move".⁴⁴

Performance artist and creator of *Maybe if you choreograph me you will feel better*, Tania el-Khoury states that,

During the performance, the audience member decides what I do, effectively choreographing me. I am in the street, while he is in an adjacent building overlooking the street through a window. He dictates my movements while talking into a dictaphone, and I hear him through the use of wireless headphones.⁴⁵

Reviewer, Donald Hutera says,

This tantalising solo gives one man at a time the power to decide what she'll do and how she will do it.⁴⁶

With its built-in unpredictability this special piece is loaded with provocative political implications and *just a trace of lost romance*.⁴⁷

* * *

Segments from various recordings of the performance:

FEMALE VOICE: “Hi, look outside. I’m in the streets. Looking outside, can you tell which person is me?”⁴⁸

FEMALE VOICE: “You are about to see me passing by. I want to give you the perfect vision of a woman passing by beneath your window. It will be metaphorical, magical, cinematic, poetic, just like an Iranian film”.

MALE VOICE: “Stop. Turn around. Turn around”.

MALE VOICE: “I want you to be menacing”.

MALE VOICE: “Walk”.

MALE VOICE: “Stop. Turn. Walk”.⁴⁹

This performance piece makes obvious the relationship of oppression between the male and female. In Tania’s blog she explains that

the piece ended up being more of a critique of oppression in general. Oppressors are everywhere. They use history, science, the law of nature, the will of God, the criteria of art, as well as language and media ‘to legitimize their superiority and to ignore or minimize the identity of the oppressed’ (Paulo Freire).⁵⁰

Maybe if you choreograph me you will feel better performs this relationship of oppression through an overt interactive exchange. The performance tells the story of oppression. But it also mocks it. The oppressor is mocked through the ridiculousness of their position.

Up there in the window.

Is this what you wanted? You wanted to be able to stand up there in your window and dictate my every move?

Does this make you feel better?

El-Khoury states, “My role, while seemingly submissive, is to try to make every show my own. As Paulo Freire beautifully explains, being oppressed is a stronger position because it is a struggle for liberation”.⁵¹

The oppressor stands at the window. The EU stands in the window.

Hamas may be walking in the street below. The Palestinian actor may be walking in the street below.

“Do you feel better, standing up there? Standing up there in your window, dictating orders from above?”

“Is this what you wanted?”

“Does this make you feel better?”

* * *

But the EU can't really see or hear Hamas. The EU only hears their own voice shouting orders into the microphone. The oppressed and the oppressor are not there together. While the dictaphone draws the actors together, they do not occupy the same space. While the orders that disseminate from this oppressive relationship tie the actors together, the actors are not together. Hamas and the EU do not occupy the same space. They cannot communicate while one stands at the window and the other is walking in the street below.

Part two: bound together but worlds apart

Hannu Takkula, member of the European Parliament and member of the European Election Observation Mission for the West Bank and Gaza,

When we say democracy, they don't think about it in the same way. Because they have no democracy they just have theocracy.

When you say human rights. They don't accept. They say it is a western concept that it is not for them. So it's challenging.

It is not so that with Mr. Haniyeh you can go and grab a Starbucks and sit and talk about things. But in Israel you can contact Netanyahu, you can call Netanyahu and have coffee with him.

But on the other side you can do that.⁵²

The black body does not speak; it only grumbles and mumbles.
The white body speaks; it speaks judiciously and courageously.

When we had some discussion about this in the European Parliament people would say 'hey you have to hand it to them, democracy is new to them. They don't do it like we do'.⁵³

These comments from a European Parliamentarian divulge a reductionist and racist view of the Palestinian voter and of their participation in politics. It also idealises the European enactment of politics, which places it neatly alongside an Israeli enactment of politics.

Imagining the threatening Other

The black body does not speak; it only grumbles and mumbles.

In Toni Morrison's *Playing in the Dark: Whiteness and the Literary Imagination* we are given an illustrative critique of how racist narratives within American literature work upon the minds of readers, upon the minds of authors, and upon the bodies of those written into the texts. "The author's presence –her or his intentions, blindness, and sight –is part of the imaginative activity. [...] the readers of virtually all of American fiction have been positioned as white".⁵⁴ Morrison observes of how this white imagination is replicated in the injurious narratives which are performative of black bodies within white texts.

But the literature has an additional concern and subject matter: the private imagination interacting with the external world it inhabits. Literature redistributes and mutates in figurative language the social conventions of Africanism. In minstrelsy, a layer of blackness applied to a white face released it from law. [...] American writers were able to employ an imagined Africanist persona to articulate and imaginatively act out the forbidden in American culture.⁵⁵

Through this white positioning blackness only exists as a fantasy. Through Morrison's critique

we observe the capacity of texts to fasten bodies, author/reader, author/subjects together through the violent literary imagination of whiteness. However, as the bodies are attached through the performativity of an oppressive discourse, the black body is written only as a fantasy of the white imaginary, the bodies remain worlds apart.

A fantasy.

They don't get democracy.

They don't get human rights.

Black bodies and personas are conjured up and written into texts in order to allow the white body to be imagined in opposition or conjunction to the narrative of the black.

Hey you have to hand it to them, democracy is new to them; they don't do it like we do.⁵⁶

The white writer fantasises about the black or the brown. The white author writes about other bodies. The author writes about the black body through the white imagination. The black body is written in relation to the white in order to preserve this fantasy of the black; *but especially* to preserve the fantasy of the white. The European Parliamentarian who passes judgment on the Other's performance of democracy conjures up a fantastical idea of *their religion*, of *their iteration of democracy* in order to maintain some semblance of his own courage and ability to know what proper politics might look like.

But what kind of relations can form when the injurious performative discourse generates from and is further performative of this fantasy?

You can't go and grab a Starbucks with Haniyeh (no shit!)

You can't go and grab a coffee with Hamas and talk about democracy.

* * *

Etimad Tashawa, Hamas representative,

The EU does not know anyone from Hamas. They think Hamas are ogres. They think that Hamas is going to come and eat all of them and to end the European Union and to end Israel. And it is not – it is a flexible movement.⁵⁷

Not all EU bureaucrats maintain this position on Hamas. I would argue that technical actors, who worked on the ground in Occupied Palestinian Territories, would have a different view of Hamas, and of those who voted for it. However, we must critique the kind of thinking that came to dominate EU policy making.

Gabrielle Rifkind, Oxford Research Group,

Recent responses demonstrate how governments are viewing the Islamic victory entirely through a Western optic. An opportunity may be being missed to deepen understanding of how these groups think and why they are so popular, and to engage with the evolution of their opinions. The only way to do this will be through contact.⁵⁸

* * *

Head of Israel's National Security Council, Ilan Mizrahi,

Chairman Ilan Mizrahi stressed that process, not events, affects the spread of terror in the Middle East. He pointed to three major factors in the region that create the conditions for terrorism: the weakness of Arab and Muslim communities and states that fail to join the advances of the modern world; the erosion of the secular state and the rise of political Islam.⁵⁹

Jasbir Puar, academic and author,

Today, we find the two figures of the monster and the person to be corrected in some ways converging in the discourse of the terrorist-monster. Which is to say that the terrorist has become both a monster to be quarantined and an individual to be corrected.⁶⁰

How may the EU encounter Hamas if through and after the performativity of threat Hamas is conjured up as an evil, monstrous, terrorist other?

It wasn't an official meeting. More like Q and A – about Hamas's ideology. But it wasn't a discussion.⁶¹

It was like meeting with an ogre.

* * *

Jason and the woman are interpellated into a relationship of threat through the woman's utterance, 'men don't listen'.

But the bodies are not there together. They do not occupy the same space. The woman's relationship to Jason is through the performativity of the threatening discourse, which works to tear the bodies apart. Her relationship is with the discourse clad body. Her relationship is with 'men that never listen'.

The young boy is trembling. "The *handsome* little boy is trembling because he thinks that the *nigger* is quivering with rage".⁶² The black body is trembling from the cold. While the bodies encounter one another on the street, they do not *really* meet. The young boy only sees a black body who is going to eat him up. He does not see the black body shivering from the cold.

While their bodies remain stuck within the matrices of an oppressive performative discourse the bodies are worlds apart. Their voices do not reach other. They are not actually speaking to each other. Rather, they are talking and listening past each other. Attached to a performative framing of threat, violence and terrorism, EU representatives and Hamas leaders do not engage in political conversations.

Talking past, over, through each other

Bodies bound by a performative utterance of threat that also tears them apart.

The following statements offer varying views on Hamas. They are voices from a delegation of Members of the European Parliament in Jerusalem and Brussels, 27 January, 2006.

Elmar Brok, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, stressed the need for Hamas to renounce violence. If it did not, he said, the EU should cut off its funding for Palestine.

Emilio Menéndez del Valle, stressed the need for Hamas to foreswear the use of violence and called for an intelligent, tactful and flexible approach in order to integrate Hamas into the political framework.

Pawel Piskorski added his voice, calling for Hamas to refrain from violence and to recognise Israel's right to exist.

Michel Rocard warned that Hamas should not be pushed too hard and too fast, pointing out that Hamas itself was divided and that part of it had not wanted to take part in the elections.⁶³

While the statements present varying views on Hamas, they are all situated within a performative reading of Hamas as already illegitimate. The EU's response to Hamas continues to perform this fantasy of Hamas as a terrorist, as a monster, as that which needs to be quarantined, fixed, conditioned, made to be flexible, made to fit in. From this departure point how can the EU meet Hamas? From this departure point how can the EU hear or see Hamas? From within the oppressive performative discourse, which has situated the bodies as such, what kinds of conversations can take place?

Khalil al-Haya, Hamas founder and member of the government,

Hamas gave lots of flexibility in lots of places. We had things that were strategic and things that were fixed. For example, we had that program with all the fractions of Gaza/Palestine – we agreed for it. And until now the EU did not catch this initiative, and see that Hamas was already very flexible. And we have the agreements with Israel with the other parties and we accept 1967 borders – with the right to return. And this is big.⁶⁴

But until now the EU did not catch these initiatives.

Hamas is talking, but who is listening?

Hamas is acting, but how is it being observed?

* * *

In *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* Butler provides a critical reading of Anita Hill's confessional statement in a US Senate hearing. Hill is speaking out against sexual harassment. Hill is an African-American woman speaking out against sexual harassment. Hill is an African-American woman speaking out against sexual harassment in a white, sexualised court space. Butler exposes the Senate hearing as 'a pornographic scene' in and of itself. Hill "is the 'example' of pornography because, as black, she becomes the spectacle for the projection and living out of white sexual anxiety".⁶⁵

Butler argues that the public experience of the defence hearing misappropriates Hill's words. Hill's words cannot be taken as communicating her defence. Rather, situated within the white, sexualised court space, Hill's words appear as an enactment of her sexual guilt. Hill's response to her pornographic defamation, within the sexualised, white court space, became a further incitement of her sexual presence; "the more she speaks, the less she is believed, the less her meaning is taken to be the one she intends".⁶⁶ The African-American, female body "permits for spectacularization of sexuality and a recasting of whites outside the fray".⁶⁷

When we say democracy, they don't think about it in the same way. Because they have no democracy they just have theocracy.⁶⁸

Hill speaks but she is not listened to. Hill stands and speaks in her defence, but the sexualised and racial discourses, which perform upon her and her speech deform the scene and distort her words. The bodies standing in the court room may occupy the same space, but they are not there together. The bodies are ripped apart by violent performative discourses, which reproduce Hill as a guilty sexualised black body. They are distanced by the anxious and spectacular white imaginary of the 'judicious court space' and of the white bodies' place within it. *What kind of conversation can take place here?*

The more she speaks, the less she is believed, the less her meaning is taken to be the one she intends.⁶⁹

* * *

Hamas and the EU may meet, but can the EU really engage with Hamas? Can the EU really engage this iteration of Palestinian resistance? If their encounter is shaped by a performative discourse that marks Hamas as illegitimate and places the EU in a position to judge Hamas, then can the EU really hear, see or be with Hamas? Can Hamas actually speak for its own 'defence', speak of its own desires and really be listened to?

Hamas is talking, but who is listening?

Hamas is acting, but how is it being observed?

The dissolution of the 10th government

Prime Minister Ismail Haniyeh's resignation letter:

**Mr. President Mahmoud Abbas "Abu Mazen" May God protect him,
President of The PLO Executive Committee
President of The Palestinian Authority,**

Peace be upon you, God's mercy and blessings (Al Salam A'laikom w rahmato Allah w brakatoh)

It's my pleasure to thank you and thank the Palestinian government for the trust you handed us in order to form the 10th government which preserved the higher rights of the Palestinian people despite the hard circumstances and the unjust blockade.

And based on the Mecca agreement which had been signed between Hamas and Fatah sponsored by the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques the king Abdallah Ben Abd Al Aziz "King of the Saudi Arabia" on 21 of Muharram 1428Hijri in 8/February/2007 that included the forming of the next Palestinian government (The National Unity Government).

As I'm the current president of the 10th Palestinian government I present you my resignation so that it may proceed the constitutional procedures of forming The National Unity Government (The 11th Government), And praying to God that our people achieve what they're looking for of freedom, return and independence.

Tribute to the martyrs, prompt recovery for the wounded and a near freedom for the heroes prisoners.

Accept sincerely and appreciation.⁷⁰

Hamas is talking, but who is listening?

Hamas is acting, but how is it being observed?

The Mecca Agreement 6–8 February, 2007 was signed between the various Palestinian factions in order to bring an end to the infighting in Palestine, which has increased dramatically since the elections, and since the external support for Fatah and rejection of Hamas. The National Unity Government was a way to bring Fatah and Hamas together.⁷¹

Excerpt from the Mecca Agreement,

The Mecca agreement reflects a strategic alliance between the Palestinian Liberation Organisation and Hamas in a number of areas: the Palestinian government, the makeup of the PLO, and the conflict with Israel.

With regard to the Palestinian Authority, the agreement resolves the current crisis between Fatah and Hamas, in that it puts an end to the violent clashes between the two organizations that caused the serious damage, and provides a response to popular pressure to form a national unity government, *in the hope that doing so will bring about the removal of the West's economic and diplomatic boycott of the current Palestinian government.*⁷²

Following the signing of the Mecca agreement Prime Minister Haniyeh resigned and the 10th government, which had come into power following the 2006 elections was dissolved. President Abbas asked that Haniyeh be reinstated and that an 11th government be formed.

The 10th government, which formed after the elections was composed almost entirely of Hamas members. The 10th government was then dissolved, and the 11th government, which came to replace it with the formation of the national unity government, was composed of a mixture of Hamas, Fatah and independent representatives. 'Hardliner' Hamas leaders, such as Mahmoud al-Zahar, were removed from the list and replaced with more 'moderate' representatives. The 11th government included equal numbers of Hamas and Fatah representatives and important positions such as Minister of Foreign Affairs and Finance Minister were offered to independent leaders.

Hamas offered concessions in the development of the unity government. The power sharing arrangement can be regarded as a performance of flexibility and compromise. *But who is listening? Who is watching?*

* * *

In *Playing in the Dark*, Morrison explores Ernest Hemingway's novel *To Have and Have Not* as an example how his writing of blackness is invented in a violent white imaginary. The African-American characters in his novels only exist within this oppressive racist imaginative space. "That is", Morrison says, "[Hemingway] has no need, desire, or awareness of them either as readers of his work or as people existing anywhere other than in his imaginative (and imaginatively lived) world".⁷³ Morrison accounts of the situatedness of the black character in *To Have and Have Not* and of his relationship to the principle character Harry; Harry is white. Morrison explains that the black man remains nameless for five chapters. He is then introduced as a crewman on Harry's boat, but he is not even hired, he is simply someone "we had getting bait".⁷⁴

In Hemingway's text the black man is at last given a name, he is allowed to talk, he is allowed to act; however, his movements are written in order to serve the 'literary needs' of defining the white character. "The black character either does not speak (as a 'nigger' he is silent) or speaks in very legislated and manipulated ways (as a 'Wesley' his speech serves Harry's needs)".⁷⁵ When Harry, the principal white character, cannot be at two places at once the black man steps in. Harry cannot steer this ship because he is taking care of a customer and Eddy, his white first mate is in a pleasant stupor, only then is the black man allowed to act; there

is only the black man left to tend the wheel.⁷⁶

Morrison explains that Hemingway goes to great lengths in order to rid the black man of any possible agency or actual character traits. “The logic of the narrative’s discrimination prevents a verbal initiative of importance to Harry’s business coming from this nameless, sexless, nationless Africanist presence”.⁷⁷ Therefore, rather than allowing the black man to sight the flying fish beyond the prow of the boat, Hemingway writes, “the nigger was still taking her out and I looked and saw he had seen a patch of flying fish burst out ahead”.⁷⁸ The black man cannot speak, so Hemingway relies on the improbable syntax of trying to “say how one sees that someone else has already seen”.⁷⁹

Harry’s body and the black man’s body, within the text, are distanced by a racist narrative that invents, misses and violates the black person. Hemingway’s racist text mutates the relationship between the characters. Harry and Wesley are not actually there together.

* * *

Colonial and racist relations continue to demarcate the way in which the European diplomat sees himself making sense of Palestinian politics.

Hamas dissolves its government. Hamas agrees to a National Unity Government. The 11th government is formed. This is a moderate and balanced government. Where is the EU in relation to these actions?

How is it possible for the black character and Harry to have any kind of relationship or communicative exchange when the black character is performed only to fashion an idea of whiteness? The white discursive imaginary already produces the black body as that which cannot speak, as that which cannot have his own ideas, as that which cannot have agency.

How may the characters interact from this departure point?

Hamas expresses its desire that the national unity government will be well received; that forming this new government may allow the sanctions to be removed. Hamas expresses its desire that observers in the West will respond positively. But Hamas cannot be heard. Hamas’s actions cannot be seen. Hamas is already performed as that who is lacking proper agency and thus requires external/white intervention. Hamas’s actions are encountered through a performative imaginary, which already regards it as dogmatic and unruly, so how may the EU observe these movements of compromise? How may the EU observe Hamas’s performance?

Relating to oneself through the performativity of threat OR the rejection of the Mecca Agreement

Morrison continues with her reading of Hemingway’s *To Have and Have Not*.

In part two, Harry and the black crewman do engage in dialogue, and the black man talks a great deal. The serviceability of the black man’s speech, however, is transparent. What he says and when he says it are plotted to win admiration for Harry. Wesley’s speech is restricted to grumbles and complaints and apologies for weakness. We hear the grumbles, the groans, the weakness of Wesley’s response to his gunshot wounds for three pages before we learnt that Harry is also shot, and much worse than Wesley is. By contrast, Harry has not only not mentioned his own pain, he has taken Wesley’s whining with compassion and done the difficult work of steering and tossing the contraband overboard in swift, stoic

gestures of manliness.⁸⁰

Harry's character is built up through a fantasised idea of blackness. Harry's understanding of himself is created through an oppressive performative writing of who Wesley is imagined to be. Can Harry therefore see or know himself under the force of the performative oppressive, racist discourse? Or does Harry only encounter a spectacular version of himself?

* * *

The following are excerpts from oral evidence given to the House of Lords European Union Committee on the Middle East Peace Process, March 2007. The committee was held one month after the formation of the National Unity Government at Mecca. The following voices are from *senior officials* in EU foreign policy making. The following are remarks on the formation of the National Unity Government (but are they actually?)

The EU performs an excitement about the formation of the new government and the ability to provide assistance, but they express a need to be cautious.

Patrick Child, head of cabinet for Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy 2004–2009,

I think we are now at a very interesting and important moment with the formation of the National Unity Government. [...] We are clearly now at a point where with the National Unity Government, although we have to be cautious, the conditions are coming into place where we can advance the contacts with the non-Hamas members of the National Unity Government and therefore reengage and think about the future direction of our assistance, returning to some of the capacity-building, institution-supporting measures that we have been engaged in in the past.⁸¹

The judicious EU are there to welcome the formation of the national unity government. However, the judicious EU claim in a convoluted and improbable confusing way that Hamas should not be welcomed as part of this unified government.

Robert Cooper, Director-General, EU Commission,

We broadly have welcomed the formation of the Government for National Unity and, as Christian said earlier, we are not yet doing business with it as such but it itself is in a process.⁸²

Javier Solana, EU, High Representative, Common Foreign and Security Policy,

So I think that we have started a process – a process that may be long and that may be adapted by Hamas – to see how we can restore the relationship with the Government. For the moment we are going to maintain the same position that we have maintained in the past. We are going to make contact with members of the Government with whom we met before such as Fayyad. We are not going to cut off relations but we will maintain the members of Hamas outside of our contacts.⁸³

Hamas agreed to the formation of the national unity government. Hamas agreed to dismantle its government. Hamas agreed to a power sharing arrangement with Fatah.

*Did the EU see?
Did the EU listen?*

Or does the EU remain in a relationship with themselves; with their own spectacular idea of themselves? Do they remain in a relationship with their own idealised understanding of who they are in relation to Palestinian politics? While in theory the EU seem to note and take importance from the formation of the National Unity Government, I argue that their own fantastical idea of themselves as adjudicators of Palestinian politics leads to a muddled and confused response.

Can you even hear yourself?

The inquisitive voices from the House of Lords conducting the EU Committee meeting raise important questions regarding the risks of failing to engage with the National Unity Government. They ask of the EU's position in aggravating the split between Fatah and Hamas by choosing to engage with only one half of the government. They enquire into the EU's selective recognition policy; they demand whether choosing to finance only Fatah programmes and refusing to hold diplomatic conversations with Hamas is an unhelpful and extremely dangerous manner in dealing with the newly formed unity government.⁸⁴

Principal voices in EU foreign policy making respond to these inquiries. They respond to these worries,
but can they even hear their own ridiculous responses?

Robert Cooper,

Personally, I think we should be a little bit careful about saying we are prepared to do business with one half of the Government and not the other because we have, after all, been urging the Palestinians to form a National Unity Government and, again personally, I think that is probably a condition of the peace settlement in the end. *Yes, Yes ... this is good.*

But ... First, the Palestinians need to get their act together and then they need to negotiate with Israel. Our only reservation is that we need the Palestinians to get their act together in a way that enables a negotiation with Israel rather than one which closes it off, and that is why we are in this delicate balancing act that we are at the moment.⁸⁵

What are you even talking about?

The EU cautions on its own political response of selective engagement. The EU recognises that continuing to regard Hamas as an illegitimate actor, who cannot be engaged with, may be counterproductive to the achievement of a peace settlement. However, it is the Palestinians who need to get their act together.

Hugues Mingarelli, Director, EU Middle East Desk, attempts to respond to these remarks about selectively engaging with Hamas and Fatah,

You are right, we would be in a position to deploy again some kind of assistance programme, were we allowed to go for a selective engagement, which means that we could have political contacts with non-Hamas ministers. Having said that, I am not absolutely sure that this is the best thing we could do because we would introduce a lot of distortions

in the development patterns of Palestine, but once again, it may be that it is *la moins pire des solutions*. It is not the ideal solution.⁸⁶

La moins pire des solutions; is this what is left of EU foreign policy after the EU decides upon its policy of selective engagement? A political move that continues to perform Hamas as illegitimate and which continues to distort Palestinian political development.

Mingarelli,

Once again our purpose should be to support the democratic process and not to back the so-called moderates against the so-called extremists our objective should be to assist the democratic process. It is nevertheless true, to be frank, that it is a problem and it could produce undesirable effects if we just focus on assisting and backing ministers of one faction.⁸⁷

What are you talking about?

What is going on here?

We recognise the undesirable effects that this political decision will have, and yet we will go for it anyways.

* * *

Mingarelli says,

We are not rigid people. We try to be pragmatic and provided we are given a margin for manoeuvre by our political masters we try to be imaginative.⁸⁸

So what are the political masters saying?

The following are leaked conversations between US and Israeli 'security' agents.

Danny Arditi, Head of NSC counterterrorism presented their plan to facilitate financial support for Salam Fayyad while mitigating against terrorism.

In Arditi's view, the current closure of Gaza border crossings is not sustainable, with several thousand Palestinians currently waiting to enter Gaza through the Rafah crossing. Arditi said that sooner or later the Government of Israel would have to deal with Hamas.⁸⁹

Arditi's proposal called for the creation of an external oversight system, with assistance from the United States and/or the European Union. The proposed system would include the creation of a strong Palestinian FIU based in the West bank, and 'the adoption of Financial Action Task Force ruled by the Palestinian banking system. [...] Arditi said that Mossad Director Meir Dagan also advocates a new Palestinian 'social security system' as an alternative to the Hamas Daawa system of charitable institutions, but Arditi remained skeptical on this point.⁹⁰

The political masters are choreographing from their window.

Arditi said that the objective was to damage the Hamas government in Gaza financially

without creating a humanitarian crisis, and to buy time for Fatah to rebuild support.⁹¹

Arditi and others are looking for a balance between humanitarian concern for the Palestinian population and effective tracking of possible terrorist activity.⁹²

This is what the political masters are dictating, and from here the EU can respond by alleviating the humanitarian crisis. *Great!*

* * *

Ahmed Yousuf, a Hamas leader who had worked to convince his brothers in the movement to agree to the formation of the national unity government, shares the loss of expectations with me.

I feel very disappointed. Because I and Ghazi Hamad- were behind giving the boost for the idea of having a unity government, because the European promised to take Hamas off the Terrorist list. So we kept telling our people that that is the European position and we convinced our people to accept the National Unity Government- but after the failure of the National Unity Government we lost even our credibility. We lost our credibility with our people and we paid a huge price. We paid the price as individuals. We tried to build confidence and trust around this topic and we lost it. They were saying that if we have a Unity Government then the Europeans will open the doors to us and we made the Unity Government and they kept their closed door policy. Within the movement, if you were pushing forward this policy and it failed- you feel very disappointed.⁹³

A pair of surgical gloves

A friend walks into the waiting room of a clinic. This person is there for a regular check-up; however, this is the first time they visit this particular clinic. A friend walks into the waiting room of this clinic. My friend approaches the counter and says his name. The woman behind the desk looks at the computer screen in front of her. She looks down at the screen and then looks up. She passes my friend a form to fill out. She passes my friend a form, and she passes my friend a pair of surgical gloves. My friend is HIV positive.

* * *

The passing of a pair of surgical gloves. The passing of a pair of surgical gloves, which performs my friend as dirty and dangerous.

An act that is part of an injurious performative discourse tears the bodies apart. An utterance of threat performs a distance between them. While my friend and the woman at the desk are in the same space they are torn apart by the performative act. The woman behind the desk cannot see my friend; she cannot see his pain or sadness. The woman behind the desk performs upon him an injurious discourse and misses the person in front of her. She passes him a pair of surgical gloves.

* * *

On 24 June, 2006 several Palestinian resistance factions co-ordinated an attack on the Israeli occupying forces. They raided an outpost near the Kerem Shalom border crossing between Israel and the Gaza Strip. Seven Palestinian fighters snuck into the area via a 100-meter tunnel dug under the Rafah terminal area. In this co-ordinated operation two Israeli soldiers were killed, four were wounded and one, a 19-year-old corporal, Gilad Shalit, was captured and taken back to Gaza.⁹⁴

This operation was a response to,

On 9 June, 2006 an Israeli artillery shell fired upon Palestinian civilians picnicking on a North Gaza beach. This attack killed seven people and left dozens wounded. The Israeli shell killed ten-year-old Huda Ghalia's entire family, leaving her as the sole survivor. Huda was photographed "running wildly along the Gaza beach, then falling weeping beside the body of her slain father".⁹⁵

* * *

Mahmoud al-Zahar,

Directly after the elections the EU closed all relations with Hamas and Gaza. Everything closed. Officially up to this point.

Unofficially, following the elections we continued to have relations. Sometimes to sneak a conversation in, in order to speak about a ceasefire. Or to carry a message from the Israeli side to us, about the negotiations for Shalit.

You heard about the German mediator. He used to sit down here and come to discuss things. Actually I met him at least 16 times.⁹⁶

The German mediator came 16 times to speak with former Foreign Minister Mahmoud al-Zahar. He came 16 times to discuss Shalit. He came 16 times and only wanted to discuss the whereabouts of Lieutenant Shalit.

The passing of a pair of surgical gloves regurgitates an injurious discourse.

We are here to talk about the capture of an Israeli.

The performative act does not see the pain of the body standing in front of them.

Who is Huda Ghalia?

* * *

Khalil al-Haya offers the following observations of EU action towards the Palestine,

European people can be put into two types: one type are inside responsibility and the other are outside responsibility. The ones inside responsibility are well committed to EU policy; they are doing what it wants and they are not doing anything else. There are two directions – first direction is those in responsibility – following the policies.

Second, there are those that really know the justice of our cause; who doesn't know that Britain gave Palestine to the Jews; that they created a country in a land not for them. So they are inside, but they are really cheating – cheating with themselves; cheating with government; cheating with Israelis. They know the truth but don't want to implement anything. They know the truth – but they do nothing. They know that we have thousands

of Palestinian prisoners inside Israelis jails they don't move and don't talk about it. But when Shalit was taken from the tanks, from his place from where he bombs Gaza – he was taken from there into Gaza. We found all these people from oppositions, coming and talking about Gilad Shalit, all these delegations for Shalit. All these peoples, Carter – all the parliamentarians, all newspapers all talking about Gilad Shalit – no one is coming to talk about Palestinians prisoners.

It's like they were really interested. People giving us messages and notes for Gilad Shalit. And all these Palestinian prisoners who, for six years, did not have one visit from their families- not one letter ... and no one cares for them, no one asks about them.⁹⁷

Part three: a fictional 'coming together' of Hamas and the EU

What if...

What if the EU had decided to be more open, more receptive, more engaging with Hamas after the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections?

I am at the Ministry for Prisoners in Gaza. I have just finished conducting a group interview with some young members working for the Ministry. I am sitting in an office waiting to meet the Minister of Prisoners. I am chatting with an older member of the government who also works in the Ministry. I ask him about the elections. I ask him about the EU's response to the elections. He shares his excitement about the elections with me. He shares his dismay about the external response to Hamas's success.

I then ask him,

What if Hamas had said to the EU: "Hamas will refuse to deal with the EU unless the EU decides to be more just and fair with Hamas?"

His eyes open wide. He stares at me. A small smile creeps across his face. His smile breaks into a laugh.

The wide eyes, the glance, the peculiar laugh, all perform a reaction to the absurdity of my question. The question itself appears to be so 'out of question' that the only suitable response is a laugh.

* * *

Mahmoud Darwish,

What will we do without exile?⁹⁸

The questions seek to open up a future under the conditions in which the future has been foreclosed or in which the future can only be thought as repeated subjugation.⁹⁹

What would we do without exile?

What would Israel do or be without the ongoing dispossession of the Palestinians?

Butler observes that Darwish's poem takes the reader into an unimaginable and yet imaginable

space: 'Palestinian life without exile'. The poem itself wants to imagine a different future; a future which is not born out of the threat to life and destruction of the Palestinians.

What shall we do without exile?

This line reveals how the exiled life of the Palestinian is what has come to shape it. But the poem urges that there may be a way that the Palestinian life can be imagined beyond exile; and it asks, what would that look like? How might the Palestinian live by an Israeli, who is not an occupier, what would this look like?

Can we think of a political future which does not repeat a discourse of colonial subjugation? Is there a way to open-up to an alternative future which isn't already closed down by an existing performative discourse of threat?

Exile is the name of separation, but alliance is found precisely there, not yet in a place, in a place that was and is and in the impossible place of the not yet happening now.¹⁰⁰

* * *

In this last section I would like to begin to provide the possibility for an alternative 'coming together' of Hamas and the EU. I would like to begin to envision a coming together in politics that does not reproduce the same relations of destructive vulnerability and subjugation which defined the encounter previously.

Such an encounter might demand that we wander or even propel ourselves into an unknown world. The 'coming together' might require that we abandon particular epistemological framings that already demarcated what is possible? This stretching of our epistemological fabric might ask that we enter into the discursive space of the fiction.

If this fictional space offers an alternative ontological arrangement to the current world, might it not be worth taking a look? If this imaginative space invites the possibility to destabilise present political relationships and fashion them anew, might our energies not be well placed in this fictional world?

Hamas will refuse to deal with the EU unless the EU decides to be more just and fair?

Smile.

Fictional imaginaries

Butler remarks,

Certain kinds of practices which are designed to handle certain kinds of problems produce, over time, a settled domain of ontology as their consequence, and this ontological domain, in turn, constrains our understanding of what is possible.¹⁰¹

* * *

The following is a discussion between me and an EU commissioner, who maintained a prominent position in EU foreign policy initiatives at the time of the 2006 elections.¹⁰²

HIM TO ME: Do you feel we made a big mistake and should have given Hamas a chance?

HIM: That is where I hear you coming from.

ME: Hypothetically ... would that have allowed Hamas to come in in a way which was more constructive to the Palestinian cause ...

HIM: But you then make huge suppositions how Israel would have reacted to that. And it requires excellent good behaviour on both sides for your scenario to have worked. And perhaps we all regret an opportunity that was missed, if that is what we believe, it does sort of allow for a sort of re-inventing history. [...]

HIM: Had we all been lovey-dovey, snuggled up to Hamas, well you won an election so you must be democratic, and still even Hamas, not able to control extreme rogue elements within its ranks and Hamas wouldn't have been able to discipline, and then perhaps Israel would have felt the need to react in some disproportionate manner.

ME: There were very damaging things that came out of the EU's policy.

BOTH OF US: Laugh nervously.

ME: Yes, it is a good point what Israel would have done. And perhaps I am naive and idealistic, but Israel is sensitive to its relationship with the EU.

HIM: You think so.

ME: Maybe.

HIM: Not very.

HIM: Ok yes. EU is a bigger trade partner. But when it comes who is going to protect us in this terribly vulnerable position, the only game in town is the Americans. And we count on the Americans to keep the Europeans in line, which generally they have succeeded in doing. And that is how it works.

HIM: I think where it is naive, that had the EU been able manage to strike out on its own course in a more courageous and assertive, and meaningful manner, that we would have changed the terms of the debate, or we would have just complicated things more. But I don't believe the Americans really have the space, even if you have Solana saying you got it all wrong ... that is not how the world works.

ME: But sometimes complicated isn't necessarily bad. Maybe it would have made things more interesting.

HIM: But would it have brought peace and a two state solution?¹⁰³

* * *

A subject will emerge in relation to an established order of truth....¹⁰⁴

The Commissioner's idea of a possible future is governed by a predication of the way things already are. His imaginings of a different political response to Hamas are demarcated by a belief in the order of threat that exists between them.

Hamas wouldn't have been able to discipline

Israel would have felt the need to react

The only game in town is the Americans

And that is how it works.

So let's not complicate things.

He already expects a particular response from Israel and the US. He is attached to a particular

expectation of Hamas. There is an existing set of practices, ideas, knowledges, which demarcate his capacity to imagine an alternative future.

Even if you have Solana saying you got it all wrong ... that is not how the world works.

* * *

A subject will emerge in relation to an established order of truth....

but it can also take a point of view on that established order that retrospectively suspends its own ontological ground.¹⁰⁵

In my discussion with the Commissioner I believe my words uttered a desire to imagine an alternative possible future. My remarks wished to allow an amount of hopeful unknowingness to enter our discussion.

“But sometimes complicated isn’t necessarily bad. Maybe it would have made things more interesting”.

I impart a desire to explore a contingent future; one which is not already determined by “that is not how the world works”.

Because maybe ... just maybe it is.

* * *

So let’s bring back Chicken Run!

The following comments express a desire for the EU to have tried something different. They entertain a thinking that the EU could have generated a different response to Hamas’s success in the 2006 elections.

Hussein Agha, former negotiator and analyst, offered the following comments on an alternative political arrangement between Hamas and the EU.

But the Europeans could have come together and played a proactive role, having a unified view of this matter and counselling the Americans, that perhaps they should be allowed to probe Hamas and chance getting Hamas to adjust to the new realities. I am not saying Hamas would have done that. But once you start that process you know that things can only move in good directions. But they did not. They went for the lazy option. We won’t talk with you.¹⁰⁶

Manuel Hassassian, Palestinian General Delegate in London, offered the following remarks to the House of Lords European Union Committee,

The Mecca agreement provides an historical opportunity from my perspective for the EU to engage with Hamas in a national context, which is a national unity government. It might enable it also not to solely deal with Hamas, engaging and dealing with the national unity government will not only help the prospects of peace but will enable the EU also to engage with political Islam in a favourable and relatively moderate context.¹⁰⁷

I asked Christopher Patten, former EU commissioner for External Relations, the following question, “what capacity did the EU have at this point to develop a different response?”

He responded,

Oh every!

We could have laid out a more thoughtful list of criteria to determine whether or not we could have contact with the national unity government. Other states, like the Saudis, put all their effort into creating national unity, a national unity government. And, we poopooed it. And we would have had the support of the Gulf states, several ... the Arab league and a huge number of other countries at the UN.¹⁰⁸

There could have been an alternative response to Hamas's success in the elections. There could have been an alternative reaction to the national unity government.

How do these voices fill the imaginative space? What is it they desire to see?

They speak of an alternative future, in which the EU could have been more proactive in dealing with a unified government, in which the EU could have responded differently. They speak of an alternative coming together of Hamas and the EU?

Do these voices offer a new energy? Do they make us smile?

* * *

In Butler's 2010 article, "Performative agency", Butler offers two modes of critique that wish to break away from the underpinnings that have already conditioned the possibility for certain knowledges. Butler recalls Maruyama who writes of alternative possibilities for democratic deliberation in post-war Japan through an imaginative exercise in discursive freedom.

Maruyama excavated the past through hermeneutic methods that sought to uncover the 'not yet' and the 'unrealised' in social forms that came before. Such potentials or ideals not only motivate certain movements, but also establish the form of democracy as 'fictional' in a specific sense.¹⁰⁹

The 'not yet realised' motivates movement.

The tapping into the 'not yet' which is a resource of the past becomes the way of articulating ideals, conceived as non-actualities or, in his view, fiction.¹¹⁰

Does a tapping into the unrealised hope of the Palestinian elections allow for a writing of a non-actualised but possible future? A possible future in which the EU and Hamas could have worked together.

This fiction will be that which exceeds the established framework for understanding reality; it will exceed established modes of rule and precedent, social facts, and challenge the limits of established ontology.¹¹¹

Does imagining an alternative ontological arrangement open up to a diversified epistemological position on the possible relationship between the EU and Hamas? Does this fiction allow for a coming together of the EU and Hamas which does not replicate an existing oppressive discourse of threat?

* * *

Butler's second account is of Hannah Arendt's text *Eichmann in Jerusalem*, in which Arendt invokes an 'ideal judge' to fashion "possibilities of political belonging that do not rely on established forms of individualism",¹¹² that do not rely on existing ontological presumptions to form critiques and offer an alternative idea of community.

Arendt is not satisfied with the way in which the Israeli state judged and tried Eichmann, for his "crime and the punishments cannot remain restricted to the language of the nation-state".¹¹³ Arendt critiques the judging of Eichmann as a nation; rather Eichmann should be judged by all humankind. Arendt argues that we cannot rely on the same modes of legal decision-making in defence of a nation state in order to arrive at our judgement of Eichmann. She recalls the use of legal decision-making in defence of the Nazi nation-state. As such, Arendt proceeds in performing her own sentencing, which is "hypothetical, retrospective, wishful, and ideal".¹¹⁴ Arendt invokes a new 'we'. She writes of a 'we' who collectively judges and sentences Eichmann. Butler writes, "the 'we' that Arendt invokes clearly provides the legitimating ground for her own final judgment, as fictional as it is powerful".¹¹⁵

The fiction works to show *what is lacking in the current order of legal decision-making*. The fiction seeks *to establish a new basis* upon which Eichmann can be judged, one that is not in defence of a particular nation, but rather one that aims to defend pluralism at large. The intervention, "models what a subject might look like, might sound like, who spoke in the name of a diverse humanity and against those who seek to deny or destroy some part of that diversity".¹¹⁶

What a subject might look like, might sound like, might do *if...*

* * *

In my interviews with Hamas members I engaged a curiosity about the unrealised possibility of an alternative political arrangement between Hamas and the EU.

I asked the following question during our conversations in Gaza.

If you were invited to the EU as part of a delegation, what would you say?

Do these voices offer an alternative coming together of Hamas and the EU? A coming together in which the EU may be able to see and hear the Palestinian, to see and hear the Hamas representative.

Hamas member, Ahmed Majdi responded,

Firstly, the purpose of the relations between Hamas and the EU; I want them to know that we both need each other.

The nature of governing Muslims is worth discussing. They should understand it. And the way they are doing things nowadays is also great. We want to exchange experiences.

As a Palestinian, I was grown up through Hamas organisation. They have to know that Hamas is not looking only for blood and resistance, no, Hamas is also working on educating its members from all sides.

Neglecting the humanity in Gaza should be discussed.¹¹⁷

Arendt's alternative sentencing performs an act that is dissatisfied with the way in which an

existing epistemological framing, one which is already marked by the injurious past, is then used to shape a future judgement. The shift into the fictional space allows Arendt to open-up to a different epistemological framing, permitting her to write what the subject might say if they were detached from an established legal-decision making practice working in defence of the state. The fiction opens up to a different kind of ontology, which may provide an alternative mode of critique; perhaps a critique that is open to imagination and creativity.

Do these voices offer an alternative coming together of Hamas and the EU?

If you were a part of a delegation to the EU on behalf of the prisoners' rights and as a member of Hamas? What comments would you have made after the elections?

Tawfiq Abdallah Abu Naim, chief of the Prisoners' Association, a former prisoner for 24 years, a father of three sons and a daughter and a graduate from the Islamic University answers,

I would ask them this.

First I want to ask why Israel and America didn't work with the UN decisions towards Palestine like they did with all UN decisions towards other countries and nations?

Second why they accept for Israel to break all rules and laws in how they treat the prisoners despite they signed all kinds of agreements in the world like the Geneva accord which guarantees the prisoners' rights?

Third: why the world is still silent about all these crimes and massacre and the killing inside prisons that Israel does to the Palestinian people? Like what happened with Mohammed al-Ashqar that all channels and Israeli channels (channel 2) broadcasted the video while he was being killed inside the prison in front of all people's eyes and no one did anything about it and the criminal is still free out there.¹¹⁸

Allow the sadness of this desire for difference to be felt.

Do these comments offer an alternative departure point from which EU–Hamas relations can follow? One which adheres to UN resolutions or one which recognises that the EU and Hamas both need each other. One which recognises that the EU has something to learn from those who resist.

I asked Hani Meqbel, leader of Hamas youth the following question,

What if you were invited as a member of a Youth delegation to come and discuss your ideas and opinions with members of the European Union?

I wish I will be a member of such a delegation. I want to tell them this point: listing Hamas as a terrorist movement was totally wrong and it was built according to mistaken reports from Israel and Fatah. You can take Yassir Arafat as an example – when he wanted to say no for the Israel activities and decisions, they killed him. Weak occupied people should defend themselves, that's it. The terrorist one is who kills and settles, not the defender.

The prisoners issue should be mentioned also. It's a pure issue of humanity. Some of them spent more than twenty or thirty years in jails. And I think this is against all the rules all over the world.

They have tanks ... drones ... all what we have are simple weapons to defend ourselves and our weapons are home-made not given from the US and some other

countries. I wish again that I will be able to be a member of this delegation to explain more and more.¹¹⁹

* * *

Hamas may be recognising an alternative form of itself within an imagined delegation that has been invited to speak of itself in Brussels. They may be imagining an alternative European ear that is willing to listen.

Can the idea of an alternative political arrangement shift the way in which current policy is addressed? Whereby we are no longer bound to a current oppressive performative discourse, of 'this is how the world is' in order to address future possibilities. Does a tapping into the 'not yet', but perhaps open up existing relationships to an alternative constitution?

Impossible desires

Let's bring back Chicken Run!

Let's bring back the naive desire of the childlike, when love, happiness and fairness are still the most important things.

* * *

In his discussion with the House of Lords, European Union Committee, Ahmad Khalidi, Senior Associate Member of St Anthony's College, Oxford University, stated the following,

If – a big 'if' – Hamas had been given a chance to govern in the wake of its electoral victory, if the international community had dealt with it differently, then my guess is that you would have had a completely different situation today.¹²⁰

If...

What if?

What if...

* * *

Let's stay in the 'what if' for a moment? In this moment we may be permitted to ponder the unthinkable, the not yet realised, the perhaps possible.

What if...

In such a moment we may smile by imagining an alternative response to the 2006 elections.

Perhaps in the space of the 'what if' we are allowed to entertain our childlike naivety, and spirit for change. Perhaps in the space of the 'what if' our imaginations are allowed to reconstitute a form of coming together between Hamas and the EU which does not replicate the already oppressive relationship between them. Perhaps here a different form of conversation can be had.

* * *

Judith Butler in *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism*,

Although it is commonly said that a one-state solution and an ideal of binationalism are impracticable goals, even by those who bear such concepts goodwill, it is doubtless equally true that a world in which no one held out for a one-state solution and no one thought anymore about binationalism would be a radically impoverished world. I take it that we might say the same about pacifism. It might be discredited as lacking all Realpolitik, but would any of us want to live in a world in which pacifists no longer existed? What kind of world that would be?¹²¹

To desire the 'impossible'. Because such a desire may open-up to a whole new world of different possibilities.

If Hamas had been given a chance to govern in the wake of its electoral victory....

If the international community had dealt with it differently ...

What if...

Khalidi responds to his own fictive question,

You would have had a situation where the Palestinian internal political process would have been relatively stabilised, where Hamas would have been put in a position of responsibility.¹²²

The 'what if' provides *an alternative departure point*, whereby the political interjection seeks to imagine an improbable world. This imaginative interjection seeks to break away from a present ordered way of thinking.

An alternative departure point.

Butler continues,

So it is not a question of cleaning up the act of present-day Israel or implementing reforms, but overcoming a fundamental and ongoing structure of colonial subjugation that is essential to its existence. So in asking, what would Israel be without its subjugation of the Palestinians, we pose a question that underscores that Israel as we know it is unthinkable without that subjugation.¹²³

Butler's questions take us into an imaginative space whereby we are asked to rethink the possibilities of Israel and of its nationalism. However, this imagined space is split from a grounding in a current understanding of Israel and its politics of the violent dispossession of Palestinians. Does this distancing from an ordered way of thinking provide an alternative avenue in addressing current political relationships?

What would Israel look like without the subjugation of the Palestinian people?

The question of 'what if' takes the inquisitor into a space that wishes to creatively expand the realm of the possible.

* * *

I was intrigued by Khalidi's words. I was curious about the possibilities that invigorated the imaginations of political leaders. I read this quote to most of my interviewees in Gaza. Perhaps I was interested in the sense of hope that existed in a moment; in a moment where anything may be possible.

If – a big 'if' – Hamas had been given a chance to govern in the wake of its electoral victory, if the international community had dealt with it differently, then my guess is that you would have had a completely different situation today.

Jamil al-Khalidi, head of the Central Elections Commission for Gaza responded,

I believe if the Europeans particularly dealt with Hamas as a winner in the elections, or if they accepted the coalition government that included ministers from Hamas and Fatah, I think this was a precious opportunity that the EU had foregone. And had if this happened, it would have been possible to reach common grounds between the Europeans and the coalition government that included Hamas. This would have saved the region lots of troubles and it could have been possible to reach at least an interim solution that can be the beginning to a comprehensive solution. I think a movement like Fatah or Hamas can't be ignored when we come to find a solution to the conflict. The coalition government was an excellent chance to reach a solution that can be accepted by all the parties involved.

If Hamas government was given the chance to rule in normal conditions, (if Hamas thinks it was really given the chance to rule normally but everybody besieged it and made efforts to fail it), the people would have more confidence in the next elections and they would be able to judge which party is good for them. And we as people, would be able to know if the problem is in the agenda of Hamas or the agenda of Fatah.¹²⁴

Huda Naim, Head of Women's issues, Hamas leader responded,

A nice picture.

The people would not be suffering as much as they are suffering now. The people would also believe that the Europeans really believe in democracy. We are not saying that the EU are one whole, there are different positions. But in this position to turn their back on us and on democracy they were one whole. And this is the opinion of the EU. Now the people know that when democracy goes against the interest of the West then they will be prepared to step on their own principles. If the EU had accepted the result of the election then things would be much better socially, economically, and politically.

Of course this would contribute to achieving peace in the region.¹²⁵

* * *

Butler's suggestion for the configuration of a nationalism or a political community in Israel and Palestine is one that does not emerge out of the current politics of the violent occupation. Its recommendations are not born from a discourse that repeats its own colonial subjugation. The departure point is one that seeks to separate itself from a current order. The suggested alternative starting point is one that begins with the rights of refugees. Butler poses, what might it mean to

discuss the idea of a nation in Israel and Palestine, which may take as its *starting point the rights of the refugee*, the displaced, the stateless, the expelled and in doing so such a future solution would “make sure that no formulation for honouring the rights of refugees requires the production of a new stateless class”.¹²⁶

An alternative departure point. An alternative departure point where love and compassion may still be possible.

An alternative departure point, where the EU has reached a common ground with a coalition government which includes Hamas. Where the people of Palestine still have faith in the democratic process, which they believe will be supported by the EU, despite who wins. Where Hamas is not ignored and is invited to contribute to achieving peace in the region. Where democracy has not been made a mockery of. Where Palestinians have not been punished for their democratic decision. Instead the 2006 elections led to a flourishing and strengthening of governance.

Where do we get by starting here?

The imaginary future disquiets and disturbs, allowing for a new possible polity to be fashioned.

* * *

“If – a big ‘if’ – Hamas had been given a chance to govern in the wake of its electoral victory, if the international community had dealt with it differently?”

Response from Hamas Spokesperson, Ghazi Hamad,

That’s right. I agree this is my view also.

Look Catherine if you make a comparison between a person in a small cell and another in the free land. First, our priorities would be different. Second, you would show us how to trust the International Community – that really you are a pioneer of democracy. But now we feel that these persons are just cheating us. They convince us to participate in the elections and then they reject us. The whole political map would completely change. Hamas could take part in providing for the prosperity of Palestine with Fatah and the other fractions.¹²⁷

To open up to possible futures. To open up to a possible alternative political arrangement, without trying to capture it, freeze it, tie it to a delimiting discourse. Now, of course, the imaginative possibilities of the fictional interjection remain contingent. The performed alternative cannot be fully determined in advance.¹²⁸ In attempting to dislodge current ontological orders, we cannot already know what will come. There may be traces of old orders. We cannot know what to expect.

Should we try on the tight blue pants?

Khalidi’s what if?

Jameel Majdalawi, Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, responds,

This subject is not clear. I’m not sure that those things will happen. Yes no doubts that things will be better but not necessarily the democratic and right life that we’re looking for. Because whoever leads by the name of religion can never be democratic. Religion essential

is absolute but politics essential is relative.¹²⁹

Merwan Abu Raas, Hamas member, Head of religious affairs responds,

Indeed, this quote needs some explanation. What does he mean when he says that he will find a different Hamas? OK he can see the difference, but not in the roots and the ideology, but the world would see some flexibility. When the world respects us, we will show our respect and flexibility.¹³⁰

Richard Youngs, political analyst, responds,

I don't think the engagement itself would have been a panacea. I don't think it would have solved everything in the way that some people perhaps think it would have done. Even if the International Community had recognized the government, engaged fully with Hamas, I don't think the picture would have been entirely rosy. And that suddenly Hamas would have changed all the more difficult elements of its positions. The engagement would have been a first step along a rocky road of trying to try to build up some degree of understanding and confidence between Hamas and the International Community.¹³¹

So let's complicate things!

Let's not be lazy.

Let's get on the rocky road.

Let's put on the tight blue pants.

* * *

Do these responses to the 'what if' allow for political imaginaries to wander into a more creative and hopeful space? Can the idea of the potentially possible, but not yet probable allow for an alternative coming together of Hamas and the EU? Does it allow for a different EU practice towards Palestinian politics and governance?

Politics in drag

Let's bring back that trace of lost romance. Let's allow for Hamas and the EU to get lovey dovey.

Let's bring back the melancholia for what is lost. Let's perform the kiss in the pub. Let's bring back the possibility of an alternative encounter between Hamas and the EU. An alternative encounter that does not reproduce the same relations of threat, destructive vulnerability, and blinding subjugation that defined the encounter previously. An alternative encounter whereby the actors may be able to see, hear and be together otherwise.

How can we begin to imagine a 'coming together' of the EU and Hamas? How can we imagine a coming together of these diplomatic figures, in a way which allows for listening and for care?

What kind of fictional interjection would open-up their political relationship to an alternative future?

* * *

In imitating gender, drag implicitly reveals the imitative structure of gender itself – as well as its contingency. Indeed, part of the pleasure, the giddiness of the performance is in the recognition of a radical contingency in the relations between sex and gender in the face of cultural configurations of causal unities that are regularly assumed to be natural and necessary.¹³²

A drag performance. A drag performance that may display the constitution of the acting subjects. A drag performance that may tell of the historicity of the acting subjects, the discourses that shaped them, the modes of recognition they inhabit and the practices they ritualistically perform. A drag performance that may show the constitution of the subjects and show how they may be performed otherwise.

* * *

The drag performance begins by destabilising the idea of the natural, coherent and continuous identity. It inhabits the idea of the ‘originality’ and performs it anew. In performing it anew drag disrupts the coherency of the normalised alignment of bodies to spaces and bodies to bodies. It thus draws crucial attention to the regulatory fiction which continuously works upon the possible recognition of and relation between beings.

By performing an alternative encounter between the subjects, the drag performance challenges the apparent normal diplomatic encounter, and shows how it may be ordered differently. Hamas and the EU may meet each other otherwise through the drag performance. The EU may develop an alternative response to Hamas’s success in the elections or to the formation of the national unity government. This otherwise response works to destabilise the coherency and seemingly naturalness of the previously ‘normalised’ ordered encounter. It refuses to see a politics of neglect or misunderstanding as suitable and normal. Feminist writings on alternative futures emphasise the possibilities for community and care.

* * *

The dramatic mechanisms of the drag performance allow for the imitative structure of the public performance to be revealed; it thus brings into the open the constitutive shape of the encounter and destabilises the grounds upon which a current ordered relationship stands. The perpetual displacement of the original “constitutes fluidity of identities that suggests an openness to resignification and recontextualization; parodic proliferation deprives hegemonic culture and its critics of the claim to naturalized or essentialist gender identities”.¹³³ In ‘politics in drag’ the actors are permitted to entertain ideas that have been removed from the normalised diplomatic space. Within the space of play of drag performance the actors may reach out to alternative iterations of politics.

The drag performance releases the grip of existing oppressive modes of thinking and being that had been taken for granted within assumption of political realpolitik. Creative and queer forms of critique can lay bare *regulatory fictions* that are taken as normal and which then shape ideas of what is possible. A particular regulatory fiction which can be *refictionalised*. This refictionalisation opens up to the possibility of imagining an alternative political arrangement

between Hamas and the EU. The actors may ‘come together’ in a way that dislodges the performative orders of threat and subjugation which defined their encounter previously.

It didn't have to look that way.

It could have looked like this instead.

* * *

The drag performance attends to the psychic internalisations of ordered forms of recognition. It may reveal, expose and disturb internalised struggles with recognising oneself and recognising others.

Butler's observations on drag:

Psychoanalysis insists that the opacity of the unconscious sets limits to the exteriorization of the psyche. It also argues, rightly I think, that what was exteriorized or performed can only be understood through reference to what is barred from the signifier and from the domain of corporeal legibility.¹³⁴

The drag performance may be an opportunity to bring to the fore that which is normally barred from public performance. It may be able to address that which remains at the limits of the public performance. Through the performance of drag, can we therefore offer a different performance, one which engages with that which was not exteriorised because of an anxious attachment to a particular version of oneself in the normalised diplomatic space? Can drag present that which the EU was unable to perform under the weight of a performative discourse which sought to already know Hamas as threatening?

* * *

The iconographic figure of the melancholic drag queen may be understood as the ‘acting out’ of ungrieved loss.

If melancholia in Freud's sense is the effect of ungrieved loss (a sustaining of the lost object/Other as a psychic figure with the consequence of heightened identification with that Other, self-beratement, and the acting out of unresolved anger and love), it may be that performance, understood as ‘acting out’, is significantly related to the problem of unacknowledged loss.¹³⁵

The melancholia of the heterosexual imperative is the incapacity to love an entire set of individuals that do not fit into the opposite gendered category of normalised desire. There is a melancholy for not being able to love in this way and there is a melancholia for not being able to recognise this grievance.

* * *

A drag performance. A drag performance that makes present the melancholia for what is lost in the ritualised attachment to performative discourses that barred the possibility of acting and loving in alternative ways.

A drag performance that displays the melancholia for not being able to perform who one wishes. To love who one wishes. To love oneself in a different way. Perhaps there is a way to perform the EU's melancholia for not being able to love Hamas, the taboo Palestinian figure. Perhaps there is a way to perform the denied versions of the EU, which could not be expressed while they remained anxiously attached to a fantastical idea of who the EU is and who Hamas is. Perhaps there is way to allow a trace of lost romance to reconfigure the relationship between the EU and Hamas?

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Conclusion

Post-performance policy proposals

This book relied on the unlikely pairing of performance art and diplomatic practices to address the EU's failed response to Hamas's success in the 2006 Palestinian legislative elections.
Some stories we are used to hearing ... others not so much.

It argued that rituals, both discursive and institutional, limited the way in which the EU addressed the shifts to Palestinian politics that arose from Hamas's electoral success. The EU performed a certain knowledge over Palestinian politics and enacted particular institutional rituals, which this book argued prevented risk-taking and a more creative response to the outcome of the elections.
What a fucking shame.

In this book I presented how performative writing and juxtaposition allow us to think politics anew. I propose that methodological creativity should not deter from making proposals, advances, suggestions for a different kind of politics. Instead, I argue that formal politics has a lot to learn from creative initiatives taking place at the margins of Social Science research and community-oriented practices.
What happens when we try to de-regulate a particular fiction, to allow for new experiences; new observations to come in? What happens when we try to perform the fiction anew?

In this conclusion I will summarise the significant findings from my research and make suggestions for an alternative kind of politics. The EU's response to Hamas's success permits an awareness of the kinds of knowledge and social practices ritualistically invoked to close down opportunities for productive change in international politics.
Some fictions we have got more used to than others. Used to seeing them, experiencing them, hanging out in them.
We may not like a particular fiction, but it has been normalised, nevertheless.

In this conclusion, I will juxtapose these proposals with lines and segments from a performance piece I produced based on this same research. The performance piece, entitled, 'Politics in drag: Sipping toffee with Hamas in Brussels' is a 45-minute solo performance, which uses the tactics and strategies laden within drag performance to rearticulate EU-Hamas diplomatic relations. The performance piece was first shown at the Aberystwyth Arts Centre in Wales on 23 May, 2014.
This performance re-fictionalises a particular political event with the intention of addressing the hidden desires of political figures, disturbing the rituals of their space and open-up an attachment they may have to a particular understanding of themselves.

An upwards and outwards movement of knowledge

Hours following the assassination of Al-Qassam leader Ahmad al-Jabari by an Israeli drone attack on November 14, 2012, queues began to form in the street. What do you need when you know there is about to be a war?

The first practice and policy recommendation of this book is to take the time to listen; to take the time to listen to difference and objection. This often involves listening to local actors and technical advisors, or listening to parts of the self that have been foreclosed.

What happens when we invite those bodies who are normally ignored or those neglected parts of the body/psyche, to come out and speak?

This proposal may require a slowing down in policymaking decisions, in order to create space for those with local awareness and sensitivity to participate more fully in policymaking decisions.

[HA] Should we get out of line a moment?

[EU] Ya let's take a break.

Such initiatives may involve challenging hierarchical decision-making practices, and encouraging technocrats to speak their minds, to speak of their doubts and of their reservations. It may also ask for a speaking from the heart.

[HA] I mean why didn't you try? We tried. Why didn't you?

This book critiqued the efficacy with which external actors were 'able' to sanction and boycott Hamas. Within a matter of days the Quartet had reached its decision to impose the conditions on Hamas. The EU, both as a member of the Quartet and through its own institutional practices, quickly followed suit. This book explored how institutional rituals impose themselves on individual workers, who feel they must perform the rituals associated with their institution or risk being marginalised. Larger systemic rituals also put pressure on institutions to act accordingly, whereby institutions develop working habits or a working culture that maintains the patterns of the wider system. On issues where the EU had found itself divided, it had become an institutional practice to follow the American position.¹ Whereas some held out for the EU to be a more honest broker in the region, this research showed that the EU's ritualised response was to associate its strategic interests with following American and Israeli initiatives.

[HA] We tried. Why didn't you try?

"Immediately after the elections American officials could be seen making their rounds",² explains a senior official for the European External Action Service. "The Americans were pressuring EU officials on how they should respond to Hamas's success. Basically, the US was carrying with them Israeli Foreign Minister, Lieberman's policy and was pushing this on European officials".³ Following the conditions became the lowest common denominator for the EU, allowing them to act decisively and in unison. An attachment to these institutional objectives sidelined taking other, perhaps more creative and thoughtful political initiatives.

[HA] The only realistic policy on offer? Strong anchor? That's how you make your foreign policy?

[Pause]

We might as well get back in line then.

The decision to impose the conditions was reached in the Council of Ministers, and then passed down to the European Commission to enact. Many EU bureaucrats who had experience working in Gaza, or who may have met members of Hamas did not participate fully in the decision-making process, rather they were responsible for implementing a decision already taken. The conditions then became a mantra that would define all EU relations towards the new government, and quickly a no-contact practice became policy.

[HA] After all that with the elections – You put us in a cage!!!

This book's research revealed that those that had been working in Gaza, or other parts of the OPTs, or those that had experience in working in the region felt differently about the EU's response. These actors celebrated the democratic process, and argued for a little more nuance within the EU's position.

[HA] Observers were saying that we did everything you guys should be expecting from us. We didn't do it all for you of course ... that would have been ridiculous. But I mean did you even read our electoral platform? We were engaged with democratic politics. We were up for dialogue.

Importantly, these actors argued that the conditions themselves, as a foreign policy decision did not make any sense, as the conditions were non-operational. There were no benchmarks for addressing whether Hamas had fulfilled the conditions or not. Moreover, because of the non-contact policy EU bureaucrats were not actually able to engage with Hamas ministers to observe any potential changes in their politics.

[EU] Hey what's that?

[HA] This? Oh it's my suitcase.

[EU] What's in it?

[HA] Not telling.

[EU] No?

[HA] It's a secret. I'll tell you when you decide to give us a chance.

This research revealed that despite their misgivings civil servants felt uncomfortable or worried about expressing their positions out of fear of losing their job, or rather, they took it as their job to follow orders and not speak up.

[EU] Oh my goodness it was fantastic monitoring these elections. It really was.

This research also showed that senior EU bureaucrats were aware that their policies might have an adverse impact on Palestinian politics, but this realisation did not shift their position. Evidence given to the House of Lords EU Committee shows that senior EU bureaucrats and

technocrats were concerned that the EU's divergence of funds to Fatah, and a general practice of supporting one-half of the government over the other could distort Palestinian unity and governance.⁴

[EU] Anyways when are the next election we are set to monitor? [Drinking from the teacup]

This research elaborates on an understanding of agency in the field of international relations. State actors, such as policymakers and bureaucrats may disagree with their own initiatives, but they may lack the time, the institutional space, the social capital, the courage, the financial stability (if they feel their job is at risk) to act differently.

[EU] But that was the only realistic policy on offer.

As such, while those with technical knowledge may have been concerned about the implications that rejecting the election results would have for democratisation and for Palestinian governance in general, they saw it as their job to follow through with the conditions decided by the Council of Ministers.

[HA] Since 2003 14 members of my family have been martyred. In 2007 an Israeli drone bombed my family's house. They assassinated two of my brothers and four sons of my brothers. They also killed our neighbour. The son of my sister was martyred during the most recent Israeli war and the son of the son of my sister was murdered in front of our home when he was 15 years old.

One technical observer from the European External Action Service explained that Hamas had made compromises on the conditions, in terms of agreeing to work with 1967 borders and offering de facto recognition.⁵ A senior Hamas leader argued that these were significant signs of flexibility and compromise, but he rightly questioned whether the EU were paying attention.⁶

[HA] But my story is not important. What is important is why you can't hear it. [melancholic voice spoken directly to the audience; make eye contact].

A politics of not knowing

The second post-performance policy recommendation encourages a distancing from knowing. The ritualised reproduction of knowledge fails to see and respond to difference and change, and instead works to maintain an existing regime of intelligibility. Ritualised knowledge production allows actors to reduce complex political issues into 'manageable' solutions', and to a claim a certainty over the Other.

These fictions may appear to bind us together, but perhaps in a way that also tears us apart.

The discourse of terrorism, which claims to know Hamas and to know Palestinian resistance, misses its object and annihilates alternative ways of understanding.

The mask shows something. [Take off mask] But it also hides....

Hamas is not a monolithic, unchanging political entity. Like any political organisation, it hosts

an array of positions and has disaccord between some of its members.⁷ Mishal and Sela have argued that Hamas is a pragmatic movement, that does not remain wedded to a dogmatic standpoint, but rather its positions responds to its changing social context and political environment.⁸

Absolutely nothing happened. You know it was the true will of the people. Yup. Come on, that is called democracy.

The rituals of democracy, campaigning, electoral platforms and international engagement through monitoring may have constituted an opportunity for Hamas to perform itself differently. While some in Hamas may have resisted rapprochement with European actors, moderate voices within the movement worked hard to encourage an attempted trust in the 'former' colonial powers.

There was a fairly clear consensus that we had to do all we could to support the good guys, whether or not they were the ones who won the election.

Certain Hamas leaders explained to me that they encouraged their brothers in the movement to agree to national unity in 2007 with the intention that such an agreement would facilitate recognition and external acceptance of the movement. The continued European rejection of their efforts discredited these attempts.

... YIPPEE THANK YOU STRATEGIC INTERESTS

There were alternative responses to the Palestinians' election of Hamas available. Deputy Chief Elections Observer, Richard Chambers commented: "there could have been a much more effective way to engage with Hamas. Wait and see how that government proceeds. Wait and see which ministries the EU can engage with".⁹

Internally I think there was a wish to be engaged with Hamas.

This 'wait and see' approach is echoed by members of the European Parliament's Delegation for Relations with the Palestinian Legislative Council: "The members agreed that the election process had been transparent and democratic and that the International Community should refrain from making hasty judgments based on previous stereotypes, but rather wait and see how Hamas, as a government, would act".¹⁰ Waiting and seeing defers the already knowing of Hamas and the Palestinians who voted for them as security threats.

[HA] Oh come on.... Tell me something about politics I don't already know.

[EU] What?

[HA] Tell me something I don't already know.

Surprise me.

There may be an even more radical politics available, that of not knowing at all. The imposition of the conditions reiterated this knowing of Hamas as already illegitimate, and therefore in need of conditioning. The implications of this knowing halted all EU projects in Gaza, as ground missions that involved engagement with the government were stopped.

... So you know, it's absurd. Everybody knows that its absurd.

A European Neighbourhood Project (ENP) report published a year after the elections acknowledged that no progress had been made because of the EU's own position towards

Hamas. More importantly the international sanction of Hamas and the culminating physical enclosure of the Gaza strip emerged from this knowing of Hamas as illegitimate.

I also blame them because the losing party, Fatah party, they took strength in the west; they made them feel stronger, and this contributed to the split also.

It observed the gendered and colonial shape of the diplomatic practices intended to make sense of Palestinian politics. And it questioned, to what extent these practices could really see and understand the Palestinian struggle. Rather, this book reviewed evidence that suggested the EU's ignorance about Palestinian politics and pain.

[HA] I mean things became really dangerous for us after the elections. Friends of mine were killed. Democratically elected leaders were put in jail. I was afraid to walk down the street. It became worse after the elections than before.

While those on the ground could see from Hamas's efforts throughout the elections and from the visible support they garnered, that Hamas's political party, Change and Reform were going to win the 2006 elections, for many its success came as a shock.

The saddest part perhaps ... is that no one was surprised that the EU ignored the election results. Many were perhaps disappointed.

But no one was surprised.

Even certain members of the movement, while they had suspected a strong performance, they had not envisioned their victory. The move from resistance movement to government was complicated, especially under the circumstances of international sanctions forcing all former civil servants to refuse to deal with the Hamas government, leaving all public institutions to be filled and managed by the new Hamas government on its own.

[HA] You refused to pay the salaries of any civil servant who would work in the Hamas government. 140,000 thousand employees sitting at home receiving their salaries just so they would not work for a Hamas government.

[HA] That was really really mean.

Hamas's success changed the course of Palestinian politics in an unexpected way. It is possible that the EU had no idea how to respond. It is possible that the election results fundamentally challenged the EU's established policy of favouring Fatah. This book recommends the possibility of policymakers admitting that they are confused, that the event eludes them, that things did not go according to plan. And then stop there. Many EU public statements admit such new developments, but then there is a rush to fill the crisis, to fill the confusion with a claim to certainty.

[EU] I know...I know... I'm sorry

Creativity over foreclosure

What happens when we imagine anew conversations between diplomats and political leaders, which normally do not occur in the public of high level politics?

Through ethnographic observations and interviews this book observed some of the rituals that shaped the discussion of Palestinian politics within the daily practices of the EU. This book addressed the colonial and gendered historicity of these spaces and the impact this had on the kinds of conversations that occurred.

So does a parodic performance of these conversations play against how we already expect a particular kind of discourse in politics?

This book argued for an alternative departure point from which to imagine political possibilities and policy initiatives. It aimed to explore the possibility for a coming together in politics, which does not reinforce relations of subjugation, oppression and hierarchy. A politics of creativity over foreclosure works from a place of disruption and revelation. It rejects that politics is a certain way, and rather, it strives to write for an alternative, perhaps more sensitive iteration of politics.

[HA] Oh thank goodness. Because I was prepared to encourage my bothers in the movement to refuse to deal with the EU unless they abided by the rule of law and ceased promoting violence in the region.

It proposed an understanding of agency, and the possibility for creativity in politics as being limited by an anxious attachment to performative rituals. The final policy proposal is to encourage a politics of creativity over foreclosure, to encourage risk-taking and challenging the norms of the institution. Gill Jagger explains that Butler's emphasis is that we should not idealise dominant social and political structures.¹¹ Dominant discourses already work to preclude alternative subjectivities or ways of knowing, as such it is "not enough to engage with historical specificity as currently given to effect change and transformation".¹²

Should we step into this toffee cup for a moment ...?

Stemming from Butler, I understand agency and the possibility for change as existing within the performance of difference: the actual doing of difference in one's daily performances.

The toffee cup may not be an actual place.

The style or divergence of the performance does not need to be dramatic or grand, change can also come from incremental differences.

we don't know what is going to happen but we are willing to try[.]

Deleuze argued that creativity already exists in being. Bell writes of Deleuze's emphasis on creativity, "what has been, if not denied, then bracketed, namely the creativity of things, their self-activity, indeed, the very insistence of *life*, is put back into the frame".¹³ There is already a creative potential within daily practices of politics which can be harnessed.

Rather it is space ... the space at the top of one's breath, the pause before the next step ... a slight break before we perform what comes next ... before we do what we always do ... perhaps in this moment there is the possibility to change, ever so slightly, what is the normal fiction of our lives...

The form of writing in this book is in some ways an example of such risk-taking. This book took on the methodological and ethical position of shifting the form of academic writing. While it may not have always succeeded, it strove to be inclusive, inviting and even entertaining. It

desired to make space for a different kind theorisation, drawing on diverse mediums from performance art, film, literary critique, song, documentaries, visual art installations; this book attempted to allow these forms to speak politics. I chose not to analyse these works in relation to my own objectives, but rather to create an undisciplined space for conversation.

a moment whereby we can observe how we got here and why, who is not here with me and why, what is not here and can it be here....

Edkins and Kear describe the working of “performance and politics as ‘folded’ in myriad and complex patterns, interanimating one another as domains of political subjectivation and creative practices undertaken by aesthetic subjects[.]”¹⁴ The shift in the form of the text endeavoured to make space for a different register of response to an academic narration of Palestinian politics and international diplomacy. The performative form of the text attempted to account for what remains ritualistically foreclosed from an academic telling of politics.

A pause ... an opening-up ... and then go forward ... or maybe not ... or then go forward but maybe just a little differently.

It is January 25 2006. Hamas, Ḥarakat al-Muqāwamah al-ʿIslāmiyyah, The Islamic Resistance Movement has just won the Palestinian parliamentary elections. Change and Reform their political party won the majority of the seats, Fatah came second. Hamas is now responsible for forming the 10th government of Palestine. The European Union sent an elections observations mission to monitor the Palestinian elections and they would now like to make an announcement.

Thank you.

While we recognise the rather peculiar position we have in monitoring these elections, because of our role in assisting the colonisation of Palestinian lands and peoples both historically and through our current relationship with Israel, we would like to offer our congratulations and support for these elections, which according to our electoral observers were free and fair.

Now, we find ourselves in an awkward position because Hamas is on the EU’s terrorist list, but they have just come to win these democratic elections. It is not easy maintaining normal political relations with Hamas. We face enormous pressure from the US and Israel, who encourage us to sanction Hamas. Several EU member states also support the sanction of Hamas.

So we find ourselves in a precarious position.

We don’t really know what to do.

I am not sure I know how to respond.

We could approach Hamas and ask them what they think we should do. We could ask for a little more time before we come to any clear response. For the time being I would just like to say...

I don’t know.

Notes

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- 3 Senior Representative, European Commission, interview with the author, Brussels, 19 June, 2013.
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- 6 Khalil al-Haya, Hamas founder; Member of the Palestinian Legislative Council (2006; 2012), interview with the author, Gaza, 12 December, 2012.

- 7 Khalid Amayreh, " Hamas debates the future: Palestine's Islamic Resistance Movement attempts to reconcile ideological purity and political realism". *Conflicts Forum* (November, 2007), 1–16. Accessed 14 September, 2014 <http://conflictsforum.org/briefings/Hamas-Debates-the-Future-monograph.pdf>.
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- 9 Richard Chambers, Deputy Chief Observer of the European Union Election Observation Mission, West Bank and Gaza (2006); Co-Director of Democracy Reporting International (2012), interview with the author, Aberystwyth, 25 April, 2012.
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- 14 Jenny Edkins and Adrian Kear, *International Politics and Performance: Critical Aesthetics and Creative Practice*. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 8.

Index

- Ahmed, Sara 15, 20–1, 23, 28, 36, 38, 44, 50, 54, 62, 77, 168–9, 172
- Butler, Judith 6, 12, 26, 39, 84, 86, 91–2, 120, 125–6, 175, 198, 218, 219, 222, 227, 232, 245; excitable speech 192, 207
- Challenger space shuttle 152–3, 159, 166
- collective punishment 2, 10, 228–9
- colonial 8, 13–14, 44, 59, 211, 218; European colonialism 47, 187, 200, 213
- conditions 5, 154–5, 160, 170, 174, 176, 179, 243
- Darwish, Mahmoud 188, 218
- Death of a Salesman* 169–70, 171–3
- Derrida, Jacques 6, 124–6
- diplomacy 8, 40–1, 67, 146, 148, 150, 244; diplomatic practices 238; diplomatic rituals 71–2, 156; diplomatic spaces 54
- drag 1, 75, 83, 88–90, 230–3, 239
- Eichmann in Jerusalem* 223–4
- ethnography 244; auto-ethnography 5–6, 13
- European Commission 1
- European External Action Service 5, 21–2, 32, 54, 156, 169, 171
- European Neighbourhood Policy 97, 106, 128, 200, 243
- European Parliament 1, 24, 28–9, 30, 47; elections monitoring mission 106; rituals 32, 35, 37, 44–6, 52
- European Union Election Observation Mission for the West Bank and Gaza 96, 98, 102, 110, 122
- Fanon, Frantz 12, 87–8, 117, 190–2, 206
- fear 3–4, 42–3, 198
- Ferrero-Waldner, Benita 102, 141, 159, 170, 196, 212
- foreclosure 3–4, 12
- Foucault, Michel 112–13, 142–3, 176–8
- Gaza 20, 27, 31, 54, 62, 199, 243; being bombed 31, 35–6, 44; UNRWA response 53
- gender 11–12, 39, 48–9, 119, 175, 202, 230; *see also* women
- Hamas 65, 82, 101, 117, 119, 141; assassinations 180, 243; campaign restrictions 111; Change and Reform 74, 104, 120–1; electoral campaign 104–5; Hamas Charter 11, 122, 126–7; Hamas electoral platform 71, 120–1, 126–7; Hamas in government 144–6, 150, 207–9, 217, 243; resistance 44, 117–8; restrictions on 165–6; as taboo 139, 195–7, 205, 233
- Haniyeh, Ismail 30, 138, 209
- heteronormative 4, 12, 20, 73, 78, 81–2
- homosexuality 195–7, 215–16
- The Hours* 34, 39, 41–4, 50, 54
- interpellation 189–91, 194, 206
- Javier Solana 68, 97, 141–2, 154, 159, 169, 189, 194–5, 212
- El-Khoury, Tania 51–2, 201
- lesbian 61, 72, 78
- liminal 98–9, 102–3, 108–9; liminality 107; limits on liminality 108, 112–13
- love 66–7, 81–3, 136, 148, 192, 197–8, 225, 228, 232–3

Mad Men 23–4, 30, 47–8, 50–1
masculinity 12, 176
McKenzie, Jon 4, 136, 152–3, 167–8
Mecca Agreement 209, 212
men 12, 25–6, 29, 30, 32, 44, 50, 52, 54, 62, 187, 189, 192, 206
Mesha'al, Khaled 26
Morrison, Tony 13, 189, 204, 210

National Unity Government 209, 211–13, 215, 221; *see also* Mecca Agreement

Palestinian Central Elections Commission 96
Palestinian Legislative Elections (2006) 9, 70, 96–7, 102–6, 111, 124–5, 128–9
Palestinian Political Prisoners 28–30
Paris is Burning 69, 75–6, 83, 85–6, 92
passing 77
Pearson, Mike 7, 20, 26
performance 6, 70, 112, 114, 122, 232
performance pressures 136, 153, 166–8, 239
performative writing 13, 238, 245–6
performativity 6, 13, 120, 190, 193–4, 198, 204–5, 222, 233

Al-Qassam 44, 239
The Quartet 174, 249; *see also* Road Map
queer 135, 150; queer performance 71, 79, 83; queer phenomenology 23, 54

race: blackness 12, 69, 76–7, 117, 191–2, 204, 210–11; racism 1, 36, 69, 117, 198, 200, 203–4, 207; whiteness 77, 89, 204, 208, 210–11
Rafah 1, 199, 214
Rancière, Jacques 14
recognition 57–60, 63–5, 70, 73, 79, 83–5, 91–2
rituals 3, 19, 103–4, 109, 111, 114, 172, 238–9, 242; ritualised practices 3, 24, 169; getting stuck 38, 172
Road Map 11, 102, 105, 125

strategic interests 2, 240, 242

terrorists 5, 64, 196; discourse of terrorism 87, 205–6, 215; terrorism 123; terrorist list 171, 174, 215; terrorist organisation 2, 174
threat 4, 16, 46, 109, 136, 187–9, 191, 193–9, 206, 216–18
Turner, Victor 6, 26, 98–9, 102, 108

war 30–1, 34
women 30, 32, 48–9, 85, 202, 207



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