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ABSTRACT

Palestinian popular music is usually researched through two fram eworks: as folkloric identity or resistance to Israeli occupation. This paper stretches beyond these theoretical straitjackets. Based on two-years of qualitative fieldwork in Ramallah and Haifa, it explores how DJs and partygoers negotiate 'everyday' power through popular culture. It argues that dancefloors create semi-public spaces where young adults rehearse unconventional identities. Dress and dance assert femininities, masculinities, and queer subjectivities centred on pleasure, joy, and fun. Audience spaces are important sites of identity formation and negotiation. However, since such subjectivities are forged through consumption, youth require money (for clothes, tickets, time) to participate. Undoing gender and sexuality codes therefore relies on class-based hierarchies. Tracing identity embodiments on dancefloors reveal neither dissent nor acquiescence to hegemonic controls. Rather, as class structures cement, gender and sexuality modes shift (which instantiates novel controls). While scholarship tends to link music to resistance in Palestine, gender performances on dancefloors yield nuanced insights into power, play, and social (re)imagination. This, I argue, underscores the pressing need to approach popular culture in MENA and elsewhere beyond the now overdetermined resistance/ compliance binary.

Introduction

The sun is slowly rising, peeling back the darkness enveloping the ravers' bodies. Steadily, the deep green countryside comes into focus. Rolling hills stretch seemingly without end, jagged rocks adorned with olive trees and gleaming mulberry bushes. From the dancefloor, vivid yellow-pink-green-yellow-pink-green neon flags flutter in the breeze. The once elaborate, now smudged, fluorescent face-paint on the skin of the fifty or so dancers still in the *ḥafla ṭabī'a* (nature party, or rave) blazes. Their bindis, silver facial piercings, tattoos, suddenly vibrant in the emerging light. The ground shakes with the repetitive psytrance pulsating from the DJ's mixing desk. *Doof doof doof* pounds the high-tempo beat.

It is June, and the summer heat makes it hot in al-Jaleel (the Galilee). As the sun climbs, so does the temperature. Soon, sweat is pouring from our bodies. Some take off their t-shirts, or embroidered *tatṛīz* waistcoats, to move bare-chested. Others discard

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chequered *kūfīya* scarves, or brightly coloured pashminas, from their torsos and heads. Many shelter below a netted canopy hanging above the dancefloor, finding relief from the heat in its shade. The air is heavy with the freshness of dawn. Beer and sweat and hash and dust cling to it.

To the edge of the temporary dancefloor, the previously busy makeshift bar-shack stands deserted. A few abandoned bottles of water replace the trickle of customers who purchased beer and hot-dogs the night before. Those still dancing swapped the cheap alcohol and snacks for harder substances hours ago. Acid. Ecstasy. Dance drugs. From the field next door, smoke rises into the humid air. Campfires burn gently. Figures move between a handful of tents—sleeping, smoking, chatting, drinking tea, or strumming guitars. Further still a car park. Empty vehicles redundant until their drivers tire, or the drugs wear off. Another day at least, by most estimates. And then the gradual return to the jobs, the studies, and the families suspended in nearby Haifa and Nazareth, further away in occupied Jerusalem, or across the Apartheid Wall in militarily controlled Ramallah and Bethlehem.

For now, however, we dance.[1]Text for Footnote 2 As morning rises, the DJ softens the mind-bending, almost sinister melodies that punctuated the night with brighter, euphoric notes. It feels hotter than ever when—as if from nowhere—someone activates a sprinkler enmeshed into the canopy above us. Water rushes so heavily to the parched earth beneath our feet that it turns quickly to mud. Jagged sunlight radiates through the liquid drenching us. Laughing and hugging one another in delight, people kick off their shoes to slide barefoot in the rivers of sludge.

A figure—no two—weave across the dancefloor. A girl with dreadlocks piled on top of her head. Some braids have come loose, and they swing wildly as she waves her bangle-covered arms. She carries two huge water pistols. Packed with red and yellow paint, she shoots up into the air and onto the swirling bodies. A man follows. From a bucket or bag, he throws blue and pink powder as he zigzags between the revellers, his earrings and shell-studded necklaces jingling as he leaps. Transient euphoria. Paint and light and water and dancing drawn together through our communally-moving bodies. Vivid colour and joyous conviviality take us ephemerally, collectively, *intensely* far away from our respective personal realities until it is time to go home.

Text for Footnote 2[1]I attended this rave during my ca. two-year ethnography with the self-titled 'alternative' music scene in Palestine and its diaspora. I conducted over 100 interviews (all names have been anonymized) and 200 participant observations during 9 months in 2012 (Ramallah, Amman), 5 months 2014 (Amman, Haifa), 3 months 2015 (London), and 12 months in 2017–2018 (Jerusalem). This project stands with, and for, Palestine and the Palestinians. It stems from my longstanding commitment to transnational social justice. As an anti-racist and anti-classist lesbian feminist, I stand in solidarity with grassroots activism against intersecting (settler)colonial, patriarchal, racist, and capitalist hierarchies around the globe. However, as a white middle-class Brit living and working in London, I am necessarily historically and politically implicated in the past and present actions of the Israeli state. The fact that I travel to Palestine on a privileged British passport therefore enables *and demands* that I make judgements about Israel's illegal occupation and unjust settler-colonial policies. To write about Palestine, or any context of extreme power asymmetries, in an impartial voice is to contribute to the status quo. I reject the notion that research can or should be neutral. I take a side when I witness the violent, hostile, and oppressive ways that the Israeli state treats my Palestinian friends and research participants. However, I am not a white saviour. Nor do I seek individual forgiveness for the British political elite's ongoing atrocities —from which I structurally benefit—in Palestine and elsewhere. Instead, I hope that my work might, in its own small way, stand in solidarity with those whose legal definitions in the international nation-state system are not granted the same privileges of which, by virtue of being born British, I am today in receipt. For a more elaborate discussion of my positionality and responsibilities in Palestine, please see my forthcoming monograph *Liminal Politics: Gender, Class, & Nation in Palestinian Popular Culture*. My PhD (*Performing Alterity: The Translocal Politics of an Urban Youth Music Scene in Post-Oslo Palestine*, University of Exeter, 2017) also contains extensive reflection on my position.

Beyond national modernity: gendering transgressions on the dancefloor

This rave took place near the Lebanese border in 2014. Electronic dance music (EDM) has grown in popularity among (largely) middle-class Palestinians aged 18–35 in the past decade. Marginal vis-à-vis broader Palestinian society, several 'underground' Palestinian collectives organize a handful of two-to-three-day festivals for Palestinian audiences each year. Influenced by classic Goan raves, DJs sequence events through distinct stages. Starting soft, the trance or techno gets stranger as the night deepens—it peaks as a party explodes in the early hours. When morning breaks, DJs shift the intense baselines for rapturous melodies that become increasingly ambient as the day progresses. Held in rural beauty spots on both sides of the Green Line, self-identified 'alternative' ravers spanning Haifa, Jaffa, Nazareth, Ramallah, Bethlehem, and Jericho frequently defy Israel's settler-colonial spatial divisions to attend parties.

Participants adopt translocal dress-codes. They adorn their bodies in globalized neon vests and localized *kūfīya* scarfs or *taṭrīz* jackets. Many display tattoos and facial piercings. Others sport androgynous t-shirts, skinny jeans, or baseball caps. Some men grow their hair long, while women may shave off parts of theirs. Styles of dancing further invert heteropatriarchal identity norms. On dancefloors, movement is fluid and undisciplined. Modernist male/female gender divisions melt into the background for a party's lifespan, making space for non-conformist codes to 'queer' the rigidity of such categories. Narcotics similarly thaw conventional self/other distinctions. Augmenting feelings of love, joy, and social connectivity for its users, 'E' adds to the timelessness that characterizes raves.

Such alternate identity performances stand in sharp contrast to the gender binary that underpins 'official' (secular and Islamist) national(ist) modernity in occupied Palestine.[2]Text for Footnote 3 Because Palestine and the Palestinians remain subject to Israel's brutal settler-colonial regime, the movement for national liberation has variously animated collective social imaginaries and political cultures. And, like many other anti-colonial nationalisms,[3]Text for Footnote 4 Palestinian national signifiers marshal invisible links between nationhood, normative sexualities, and idealized masculinities and femininities mapped to ideal-type male and female bodies.

We know from feminist thinking that nations are gendered projects.[4]Text for Footnote 5 Their publics enfold disciplinary sexual identities, desires, and practices into people's quotidians.[5]Text for Footnote 6 As Palestine-specific writers show, gender and sexuality are additionally weaponized in the colony. Because Israeli settler-domination is gendered,[6]Text for Footnote 7 patriarchal national forces often regulate corporeal

Text for Footnote 3[2]Islah Jad, 'Claiming Feminism, Claiming Nationalism: Women's Activism in the Occupied Territories', in *The Challenge of Local Feminisms: Women's Movements in Global Perspective* (Boulder CO: Westview Press, 1995):-172–200; and Sophie Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine: Peacebuilding, Resistance, and Survival* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2018):4–10; 18–20.
Text for Footnote 4[3]Partha Chatterjee, 'Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonised Women' *American Ethnologist* 4 (1989): 622–33; Purnima Mankekar *Screening Culture, Viewing Politics* (London: Duke University Press, 1999); and Ritty Lukose, *Liberalization's Children* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2009).
Text for Footnote 5[4]Jean Elshtain, *Women and War* (Brighton: Harvester, 1987); and Deniz Kandiyoti, 'Identity and its Discontents: Women and the Nation', *Millennium* 20 (1991):429–443.
Text for Footnote 6[5]Afsaneh Najmabadi, 'Crafting an Educated Housewife in Iran' in *Remaking Women: Feminism and Modernity in the Middle East* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1998): 91–125; Jasbir Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham & London: Duke University Press, 2007); and Nadja Al-Ali & Nicola Pratt, *Women and War in the Middle East* (New York: Zed Books, 2009).
Text for Footnote 7[6]Julie Peteet, 'Male Gender and Rituals of Resistance in the Palestinian *intifada*: A Cultural Politics of Violence', *American Ethnologist* 21 (1994): 31–49; Walaa Alqaisiya, 'Decolonial Queering: The Politics of Being Queer in Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3 (2018): 29–44; and Leila Farsakh, Rhoda Kanaaneh, Sherene Seikaly, 'Special Issue: Queering Palestine', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 3 (2018).

norms in their resistance scripts.[7]Text for Footnote 8 National(ist) metanarratives glorify masculine heroism,[8]Text for Footnote 9 feminine motherhood,[9]Text for Footnote 10 and heterosexual childbearing. Agency is a masculine privilege in this representational economy. Male bodies symbolize the nation's frontier, and men die protecting the 'motherland'.[10]Text for Footnote 11 Their acts of self-sacrifice connote national salvation, re-birth, and heteromasculine power.[11]Text for Footnote 12 Women, on the other hand, are not agents but signs—their bodies biologically, culturally, and symbolically reproduce the nation. Such anti-colonial resistance frameworks disavow queer desires, and hail women as heterosexual mothers who repeatedly birth martyr-sons.[12]Text for Footnote 13 Classical national rhetoric thus enshrines heteronormative patriarchy into the future 'free' Palestine it imagines, the liberation of which is premised on male-female sex acts.[13]Text for Footnote 14

In this paper, I explore how raves might bring people together to politically weaponize gender and sexuality differently. I pursue three questions. First, are raves sites that negotiate intersecting settler-colonial and patriarchal-national(ist) power relations? If so, (how) do ravers' dress and dance practices configure social norms on the dancefloor? Second, in what ways might such transgressive gendered acts *reinforce* other, perhaps class-based, hierarchies? And third, are unconventional identity performances limited to the rave's spatial-temporality, or can they contribute to permanent, perhaps even public, relaxations of the gender binary?

I aim to examine the *contradictory* work that raves 'do' and 'undo' in contemporary Palestine. Foregrounding the potentially dissenting *and* complicit qualities of rave-spaces, I use qualitative data to analyse popular culture's political possibilities *and* its limitations. I draw on my two-year ethnography[14]Text for Footnote 15 with the self-described 'alternative' music scene in Palestine (Haifa, Jerusalem, Ramallah), and its diasporas (Amman and London). Here, however, I focus on musicians, DJs, and ravers in the geographically distinct, but culturally connected, cities of Haifa and Ramallah. In contrast to some of the literature on Palestinian cultural production[15]Text for Footnote 16 and EDM,[16]Text for Footnote 17 I argue that raves are only partially understood through the now overworked paradigm of Palestinian resistance (and/or capitulation) to domination.

Similar work on hip-hop subcultures in Morocco[17]Text for Footnote 18 and Lebanon[18]Text for Footnote 19 inform my approach. Noting that analysis often reduces

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Text for Footnote 8[7]Rema Hammami, 'Women, the Hijab and the Intifada', *Middle East Report* (1990): 164–165; Alqaisiya, 'Decolonial Queering', 37; and Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 5–12.
Text for Footnote 9[8]Laleh Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007).
Text for Footnote 10[9]Rhoda Kanaaneh, *Birthing the Nation: Strategies of Palestinian Women in Israel* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2002); Penny Johnson & Eileen Kuttab, 'Where have all the Women (and Men) Gone?' *Feminist Review* 69 (2002): 21–43; and Nira Yuval-Davis *Gender and Nation* (London: SAGE Publications, 1997).
Text for Footnote 11[10]Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism', *The Middle East Journal* 49, no. 3 (1995): 467–483.
Text for Footnote 12[11]Khalili, *Heroes and Martyrs of Palestine*, 18–20.
Text for Footnote 13[12]Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine', 476.
Text for Footnote 14[13]Alqaisiya, 'Decolonial Queering', 37.
Text for Footnote 15[14]See ft.n. 1.
Text for Footnote 16[15]E.g. Sunaina Maira, *Jil Oslo: Palestinian Hip Hop, Youth Culture, and the Youth Movement* (Washington DC: Tadween Publishing, 2013).
Text for Footnote 17[16]E.g. Nadeem Karkabi, 'Staging Particular Difference: Politics of Space in the Palestinian Alternative Music Scene', *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication* 6 (2013): 308–28.
Text for Footnote 18[17]Cristina Moreno-Almeida *Rap Beyond Resistance* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017).
Text for Footnote 19[18]Rayya El-Zein, '"Resisting Resistance": On Political Feelings in Arabic Rap Concerts', in *Arab Subcultures* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017): 152–76.

expressive culture in MENA to spectacular dissent, these authors highlight the limitations of subject-based agency for evaluating the contradictions of contemporary urban life.[19]Text for Footnote 20 In this paper, I move beyond celebrating agency as emancipation. Instead, and drawing further on South Asia research, I trace the fractured—sometimes transgressive sometimes 'contaminated'[20]Text for Footnote 21—agen*cies* that emerge, to different degrees and with different affects, through these young adults' aesthetic politics and rave-going practices.

Introducing global EDM

Despite its transnational reach, EDM research predominantly maps Eurocentric experiences. Early British studies locate raves in young, white, and Southern resistance to Thatcherite politics.[21]Text for Footnote 22 Current work describes EDM as a global,[22]Text for Footnote 23 often cosmopolitan,[23]Text for Footnote 24 subculture. Noting the genre's origins in white 'hippy' Goa tourism,[24]Text for Footnote 25 this literature suggests that jaded secular westerners circulate 'eastern' signifiers in parties to escape late-modern capitalism.[25]Text for Footnote 26 Such scholarship says little about the orientalist fantasies that underpin such formations. Instead, and with notable exception,[26]Text for Footnote 27 studies contend that trance's euphoric[27]Text for Footnote 28 or heterotopic[28]Text for Footnote 29 properties bracket gender, race, and class—omitting the corporeal politics that shape dancefloors.

Deploying global language, then, existing research often centres actors in/of the global north. Collin's book, for instance, uses 'global' in its title, yet draws heavily on industrialized societies in Europe and North America. Interestingly, it also offers two chapters on EDM in Israel and Dubai. However, the Gulf chapter is disengaged from the class and race politics that circulate in the clubs Collin visits. The author largely interviews European DJs and overlooks local audiences' interpretations. His Israel chapter leaves more questions unanswered. As Collin[29]Text for Footnote 30 notes, Israel occupies a prominent 'spot' on the global EDM map—something that escapes neither popular[30]Text for Footnote 31 nor

Text for Footnote 20[19]El-Zein, '"Resisting Resistance"', 94–5.

Text for Footnote 21[20]Shakuntala Banaji, *Children and Media in India* (London: Routledge, 2017): 194–97.

Text for Footnote 22[21]E.g. Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media and Subcultural Capital* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); and Ben Malbon, *Clubbing: Dancing, Ecstasy and Vitality* (New York & Oxon: Routledge, 1999).

Text for Footnote 23[22]E.g. Graham St John, *Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance* (New York: Routledge, 2010); and Matthew Collin, *Rave On: Global Adventures in Electronic Dance Music* (London: Profile Books, 2018).

Text for Footnote 24[23]E.g. Leandros Kyriakopoulos, 'Performing euphoric cosmopolitanism: The aesthetics of life and public space in psytrance phantasmagoria', *Journal of Greek Media & Culture* 5, no. 1 (2019):69–91.

Text for Footnote 25[24]E.g. St John, *Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, 243; and Collin, *Rave On*, 260–261.

Text for Footnote 26[25]E.g. Scott R. Hutson, 'The Rave: Spiritual Healing in Modern Western Subcultures', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73, no. 1 (2000): 35–49; and Des Tramacchi, 'Enthuogenic dance ectasis: Cross-cultural contexts', in *Rave Culture and Religion* (London: Routledge, 2004), 125–144.

Text for Footnote 27[26]Arun Saldanha *Psychedelic White: Goa Trance and the Viscosity of Race* (London: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

Text for Footnote 28[27]E.g. St. John, *Local Scenes and Global Culture of Psytrance*, 220–246.

Text for Footnote 29[28]E.g. Graham St. John, 'Dramatic heterotopia: The participatory spectacle of Burning Man', in *Heterotopia and Globalization in the Twenty-First Century* (London: Routledge, 2020), 178–194.

Text for Footnote 30[29]250.

Text for Footnote 31[30]E.g. Katie Bain 'Psytrance and Israel' *Red Bull Music Academy* (09/2016) available online: https://daily.redbullmusicacademy.com/2016/09/psytrance-israel-feature (accessed May 1, 2020); Bosque Utopico 'Utopia Now! Rave & Resistance in the Middle East' (3/12/2017) available online: https://www.goodtroublemag.com/home/queerhana (accessed May 1, 2020); Ronen Zvulun 'Drag shows and hipster parties: Jerusalem has an underground

academic commentators.[31]Text for Footnote 32 Indeed, if there is a MENA-focused EDM canon, Israel dominates it. Casting a net around psytrance and its stereotypical associations with non-conformist lifestyles, these accounts cultivate 'progressive' ideas about Israel on the world stage. Silent on the country's settler-colonial past and present, Palestinians are almost always absent. If they do appear, it is to show how liberal Israelis tolerate 'Arab-others'. For instance, we read in Collin's chapter (and elsewhere) that 'Arabs and Jews come together to party' in non-hierarchal unity on the dancefloor.[32]Text for Footnote 33 Given that the situation in Israel/Palestine is not simply a 'big misunderstanding' between two 'sides', such depoliticizing language trivializes Zionist settlement in Palestine. Prolonged coloniality is not a materiality that individuals can step in-and-out of as they choose. Focusing on colourful spectacles while denying material politics, such decontextualized research 'culture-washes' the occupation.

Given these Eurocentric gaps, how do we historicize Palestinian parties? What does it mean to foreground the *Palestinian-ness* of trance or techno, when much coverage equates EDM with Israel? Clearly, global rave's romanticized baggage is unhelpful. However, is the notion of subculture—that is, a cultural formation with defiant yet ambivalent relationships to 'parent' culture—useful? And if so, since 'subcultures' are not universal but 'always mediated',[33]Text for Footnote 34 which historical contexts and ideological fields underpin this distinctively Palestinian 'Arab Subculture'[34]Text for Footnote 35?

Raves: a post-Oslo phenomenon?

In the past two decades, a small but growing number of urban Palestinians built a network they title the 'alternative' music scene. Many describe their identifications through disidentifications. Mustafa, for instance, is a Palestinian-Jordanian partygoer and singer-songwriter in his early thirties. In our interview, he told me that alternative music in Palestine is neither 'commercial … nationalistic … religious … typical revolutionary [or] traditional[ly] for Palestine … '.[35]Text for Footnote 36 Thus, there is not a clear-cut sound through which these young adults draw their musical borders. Unlike the Eurocentric scenes[36]Text for Footnote 37 and subcultures[37]Text for Footnote 38 scholarship, scenesters fuse local and global practices to maintain connections with the past, while tapping into farer-reaching sensibilities. Trip-hop, reggae, dub, dancehall, electronica, and Arabic beats all feature. In parties, DJs mix high-tempo goatrance, repetitive psytrance, and heavy Berlin or Chicago-style techno with Levantine repertoires—

nightlife' (28/08/2019) available online: https://uk.reuters.com/article/uk-israel-jerusalem-nightlife/drag-shows-and-hipster-parties-jerusalem-has-an-underground-nightlife-idUKKCN1VI1RS (accessed May 1, 2020).

Text for Footnote 32[31]E.g. Graham St John, 'Freak media: Vibe Tribes, sampledelic outlaws and Israeli psytrance', *Continuum: Journal of Media & Cultural Studies* 26, no. 3 (2012): 437–447.

Text for Footnote 33[32]Collin, *Rave On*, 272, 277; and Giorgio Gristina 'From Goa to Rabin, Square: the uses and meanings of psytrance music in Israel', *Ethnografica* 23, no. 1 (2019): 12.

Text for Footnote 34[33]Dick Hebdige *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (London & New York: Routledge, 1979), 80.

Text for Footnote 35[34]Tarik Sabry & Layal Ftouni, *Arab Subcultures* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2017).

Text for Footnote 36[35]Author interview, London 28/07/2015.

Text for Footnote 37[36]Andy Bennett & Richard Peterson, *Music Scenes: Local, Translocal, and Virtual* (Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press, 2004).

Text for Footnote 38[37]Stuart Hall & Tony Jefferson, *Resistance Through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Postwar Britain* (London & New York: Routledge, 1975[2006]).

Electrosteen and *Jazar Crew* are good examples. They digitize local wedding music, *dabka*[38]Text for Footnote 39 rhythms, and poetic folkloric idioms to produce translocal forms.

Scenesters' musical identities are similarly textured. Techno DJs might in different contexts be audience members in trip-hop parties; hip-hop producers could also play guitar in progressive rock bands; and dancers in raves may elsewhere sing on stage in indie gigs. As such, this scene defies rigid categorization. Musicians and fans' interpersonal synergies are its bedrock. Connecting predominantly secular and relatively well-off hipsters, artists, producers, DJs, and leftist-activist audiences in Ramallah with Palestinians in Haifa (and beyond) this musical enclave extends social and political networks above and below colonial borders to those with access.

Raves in Palestine therefore maintain *and* break with earlier cultural legacies. As a digital repertoire, EDM is of the technological present. While trance or techno represent musical novelty, the participatory rituals they construct, however, do not. As David McDonald notes, field recordings place music at the heart of Levantine social life since (at least) the early twentieth century.[39]Text for Footnote 40 Before the PLO institutionalized culture to its vision for national liberation in the 1960s,[40]Text for Footnote 41 life-stage events (weddings, engagements, circumcisions, festivals) unravelled through grassroots performances.[41]Text for Footnote 42 Music, communal singing, and ritualized dancing brought people together 'to form and transform relationships, affirm their local identity, and index historical events and collective experiences'.[42]Text for Footnote 43 Today's cultural formations thus have antecedents in older participatory musical rituals. Then, as now, music provided physical and symbolic resources for people to imagine, negotiate, and/or challenge collective and individual identities.

Nonetheless, while sustaining historic legacies, EDM parties clearly posit new directions in Palestinian cultural production. Telling stories about certain mobilities, and indexing shifts in musical and sartorial styles, raves offer additional windows into Palestine's post-Oslo landscape. The 1993 Accords and their aftermath marked a watershed in Palestinian cultural, political, economic, and social life. Transforming collective resistance into individualized politics while promoting neoliberal capitalism, Oslo catalysed the decline of an overarching national movement.[43]Text for Footnote 44 Such transformations reshaped cultural sensibilities on both sides of the Green Line. Foundational to this scene is that time and money for leisure increased for *some* Palestinians after the region embraced neoliberalism. It is therefore necessary to locate raves within these emergent capitalist relations and shifting aesthetic practices. Since Ramallah and Haifa exist under distinct geopolitical contexts, we need different vocabularies for approaching each: an analytic to which I now turn.

Text for Footnote 39[38]Levantine folk-dance.
Text for Footnote 40[39]David McDonald, 'Performing Palestine', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 25 (2006): 6–7.
Text for Footnote 41[40]Lisa Taraki, 'Enclave Micropolis: The Paradoxical Case of Ramallah/Al-Bireh', *Journal of Palestine Studies* XXXVII no. 4 (2008): 7; and Issa Boulos, 'Negotiating the Elements', *Palestinian Music and Song* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013), 60–61.
Text for Footnote 42[41]McDonald, 'Performing Palestine',7.
Text for Footnote 43[42]ibid.
Text for Footnote 44[43]Toufiq Haddad, *Palestine Ltd.: Neoliberalism and Nationalism in the Occupied Territory* (London: IB Tauris, 2016); Raja Khalidi & Sobhi Samour, 'Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement', *Journal of Palestine Studies* 40 (2011): 6–25; Taraki, 'Enclave Micropolis', 6–20; and Richter-Devroe, *Women's Political Activism in Palestine*, 1–28.

Ramallah and Haifa: continuities and distinctions

Ramallah has grown exponentially since 1948. Host to the PA, today the city is the West Bank's de-facto capital.[44]Text for Footnote 45 After Oslo, many diaspora elites returned to the hilltop enclave.[45]Text for Footnote 46 Radically expanding the private sector, their material wealth altered the city's social fabric. In the centre, upscale villas, housing complexes, shopping malls, cinemas, fitness centres, international restaurants, lounge bars, and European music academies transformed the old city into a 'new' micropolis.[46]Text for Footnote 47 This significantly opened Palestinian society to global media. Films, music, fashion, literature, theatre, satellite television channels, and technology from previously distant places joined Ramallah's pre-Oslo cosmopolitan culture to forge today's post-Oslo urbanity.

Despite the post-colonial pretence, military occupation still dominates the city. Israel controls Palestinian mobility both within and beyond the oPt via a complex and humiliating system of concrete walls, permits, roadblocks, checkpoints, settler-only roads, and exclusively Jewish settlements.[47]Text for Footnote 48 Ramallah thus embodies Oslo's contradictions more than any other site in Palestine. Its inhabitants live in a colonial present under late-modern capitalism. As rapid-fire gentrification consolidates an embryonic middle-class into a social force with money and time for leisure, it pushes the urban poor into Ramallah's peripheral zones and refugee camps. Social space in the 'new' city is thus stratified according to class-background.

Ramallah's alternate scene is rooted within this mushrooming middle-class. Most members came of age in Oslo's paradoxical aftermath. Many are descendants of the business elite who fostered the city's insipient cosmopolitan cultures. Often university educated in the diaspora, they have the material and discursive capitals to buy into and put on private parties in Ramallah's recently established 'underground' bars. With money and time at their relative disposal, these young adults can afford the entrance tickets, drinks, music equipment, drugs, 'hip' fashion items, and travel needed to participate in alternative music rituals such as raves. For those who sneak through checkpoints 'illegally' (i.e. without an Israeli-issued travel permit) to attend events in Haifa and beyond, the stakes are even higher. The 'raver' requires access to a car with Israeli number plates, as well as sufficient social security to contain the material threat of arrest. Young adults in parties thus share a cosmopolitan-secular habitus within which 'raving' represents an attractive (and potential) social pastime. Parties, in other words, are sutured to Ramallah's post-Oslo political economy. Scenesters' self-proclaimed alterity to 'mainstream' culture is therefore stabilized to the neoliberal order from which they use 'non-commercial' music to perform distance.

Haifa's fate tracks an inverse pattern to Ramallah's post-1948 growth. As a Mediterranean port town, the city housed a vibrant middle-class before the Nakba.

Text for Footnote 45[44]Lisa Taraki & Rita Giacaman, 'Modernity Aborted and Reborn: Ways of being Urban in Palestine', in *Living Palestine* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2006), 1–50.

Text for Footnote 46[45]Tariq Dana 'Crony capitalism in the Palestinian Authority: a deal among friends', *Third World Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (2019): 247–263.

Text for Footnote 47[46]Taraki, 'Enclave Micropolis', 6.

Text for Footnote 48[47]E.g. Sari Hanafi, 'Spacio-Cide: Colonial Politics, Invisibility and Rezoning in Palestinian Territory', *Contemporary Arab Affairs* 2 (2009): 106–121; and Eyal Weizman *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (London: Verso, 2007).

Along with West Jerusalem and the other coastal cities, urban cultural life all but vanished following the dispossession.[48]Text for Footnote 49 At its genesis, the consolidating Jewish state drew clear social, political, cultural, and economic boundaries between its newly-formed Arab-Palestinian minority and Jewish settler-majority.[49]Text for Footnote 50 Israeli society remains structured around these ethno-national, racist, and settler-colonial dis-courses. While most Palestinians in Haifa are now citizens of Israel, their status is far from coterminous with their Israeli-Jewish counterparts. In effort to maintain Jewish supre-macy, the ethnocratic[50]Text for Footnote 51 state grants enhanced rights to (Ashkenazi) Jewish-Israelis symbolically, structurally, and practically.[51]Text for Footnote 52 And despite the fact that Palestinians in Israel form one-fifth of society, the state continues to define itself as an exclusively Jewish nation. Whereas military occupation forms the backdrop to quotidian living in Ramallah, civil, legal, social, cultural, and political discri-minations shape everyday life for Palestinians in Haifa.

Despite, or perhaps because of, such racist subjugation, in recent years Palestinians of the 'stand-tall generation'[52]Text for Footnote 53 formed a politically-charged *Palestinian* cultural scene in Haifa. This adds an important caveat to Palestinian EDM in Israel (or 1948 Palestine, to use the term Palestinians often prefer). While literature ignores or absorbs Palestinians in Israeli-Jewish parties, in Haifa middle-class youth are refashioning urban spaces into enclaves where Israeli-Jews, rather than Arab-Palestinians, are the guests. Today, the downtown area accommodates Palestinian bars, cinemas, restaurants, and night-clubs in which Arabic is the cultural and linguistic lingua franca. Some even argue that the city represents the 'Palestinian cultural capital of Israel'.[53]Text for Footnote 54 In this sense, whereas class fragmentation shapes access to leisure in the Ramallah context, in Haifa ethno-national discourse animates ideas around consumption.

Nonetheless, the restoration of a Palestinian middle-class to the coastal city shares other features with the West Bank's recent embourgeoisement. From the 1980s onwards, the Israeli state embraced neoliberalism.[54]Text for Footnote 55 While directly benefitting Jewish-Israelis, neoliberal 'reforms' also enhanced the class privileges of certain Palestinians. Bolstering the offspring of an older Palestinian upper/middle-class, this confined less well-off Palestinians to the urban periphery. Entrance to the leisures and pleasures that Haifa now offers its Palestinian citizenry is thus not open-access. While the sheer existence of Palestinian cultural spaces within Israel clearly disrupts the settler state's disavowal of Palestinian presence, the capacity to take part in such events remains, to a greater or lesser degree, predicated on class boundaries. Like Ramallah, then, it

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Text for Footnote 49[48]Taraki & Giacaman, 'Modernity Aborted and Reborn'.

Text for Footnote 50[49]Rhoda Kanaaneh & Isis Nusair, 'Introduction', in *Displaced at Home: Ethnicity and Gender among Palestinians in Israel* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2010), 2.

Text for Footnote 51[50]Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

Text for Footnote 52[51]Ella Shohat, 'Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims', *Social Text* 19 (1988): 1–35.

Text for Footnote 53[52]Khawla Abu-Baker & Dan Rabinowitz, *Coffins on Our Shoulders: The Experience of the Palestinian Citizens of Israel* (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2005).

Text for Footnote 54[53]Nadeem Karkabi, 'How and Why Haifa has become the "Palestinian Cultural Capital" in Israel', *City & Community* 17 (2018): 1168–88.

Text for Footnote 55[54]Tina Grandinetti, 'The Palestinian Middle Class in Rawabi: Depoliticizing the Occupation', *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 40 (2015): 2; Karkabi, 'How and Why Haifa', 1175.

is within this backdrop of enhanced middle-class money and time for leisure that EDM parties took hold in Haifa's Palestinian context.

Understanding raves in Palestine as an ambiguous subculture therefore shows two things. First, these cultural formations maintain important connections with the musical past. Parties mirror aspects of earlier community-focused expressive action. It would therefore be a mistake to frame techno, psytrance, or other digitally-based events as entirely 'new' or 'non-local' entities. Second, access to today's participatory cultures is undeniably orientated around class. The rave-habitus is potentially and unevenly available to subjects with the material, discursive, and imaginative capitals to buy into it. In the second half of this paper, I want to think more deeply about the social and political work that parties therefore 'do' and 'undo' in current-day Ramallah and Haifa. How do young men and women describe their engagements with dance cultures? And what can this tell us about gender and class in raves?

Performing alternative gender roles and relations

In interviews, young women frequently explained that live music events allowed them to up-end the gender norms that structure routine spaces. Maryam is a thirty-year old Palestinian-American university student in Haifa who identifies as lesbian. She told me that she enjoyed parties in Ramallah or Haifa's 'underground' bars more than in her hometown, Nazareth. Despairingly, she said:

> Nazareth … is not like Haifa. And it's not like Ramallah … If you do something that's not the norm, people will talk … It's not comfortable to sit in Nazareth and hold a cigarette and smoke it, or to have a drink, as a woman. If you're a guy it doesn't matter … you could be fucking a tree in the street and if you're a guy it's OK, [but] if a guy and a girl were sitting, and were like, friends or whatever, everyone is gonna start talking about her cos she's having a friendly lunch or whatever with her class mate, her friend.[55]Text for Footnote 56

Commenting on unequal distributions of gendered power, she explains that she feels Nazareth's inhabitants subject her to higher levels of public scrutiny, because she is a woman. Continuing to compare the different historical and social norms that dominate each space, she elaborates:

> In Haifa it's different, it's better … you have the university, so a lot of people finish high school and move to Haifa … they live in dorms, or get an apartment, and roommates, and then that's the reality of it. You're gonna go out, have a drink, stay out late, but it's OK 'cos it's not Nazareth, it's not your local town. Even though Nazareth and Haifa are not very far from each other, the scene that's happening [in Haifa] now is growing, there's *Kabareet Bar*, they're doing amazing things. There are different spots. Downtown, you have the *Scene Bar* with … two strong females running the place. You don't have that so much in Nazareth, it's more difficult.[56]Text for Footnote 57

This part of her statement suggests that in Haifa, the presence of the university and the absence of parents or neighbours mean that young adults can assume leisure-based identities less readily available in their hometowns. As I frequently witnessed, in parties,

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Text for Footnote 56[55]Author interview, Haifa, 14/01/2018.
Text for Footnote 57[56]Ibid.

men and women have fun, flirt, dance, listen to music, consume alcohol, use drugs, and otherwise mix with one another in a way that is less pronounced at the more visible sites of the street, park, school, or university. Reflecting these inversions, Maryam links what she perceives to be a reduction of gendered surveillance to the growth of Haifa's Palestinian party scene. Citing two Palestinian-owned bars, *Kabereet* and *The Scene*, opened in the past five years, she suggests fellow scenesters can engage in transgressive gendered consumption practices (smoking and drinking) in Haifa, because there are less parents, and more venues for meeting and partying, than in Nazareth. Her comments contend that youth migration away from the familial unit, coupled with the exposure to different people and ideas in university, create shifts in established gender roles. In language typical of a young adult across multiple global contexts, she foregrounds that she enjoys parties because gendered regulations are relaxed, and different youthful subjectivities proliferate.[57]Text for Footnote 58

Whereas Maryam emphasized the differences between parties in Nazareth and parties in Haifa, Dana asserts that 'alternative' music allows her to try out different gender roles through dress. Dana is a West Bank–based music producer and lesbian-identifying woman in her late twenties. She outlined that:

> One of the best things about my life is that I'm a person who wears baggy pants and a black t-shirt everywhere I go … I don't, like, get this urge to dress up … I'm a tomboy … I never wear skirts. I always wear jeans, training shoes, and a t-shirt that is loose. And life is beautiful![58]Text for Footnote 59

For Dana, adopting androgynous jeans, loose t-shirts, and trainers is 'one of the best things' about her life because it means she does not have to 'dress up', or perform a conventional 'feminine' gender identity on her 'female' sexed body. She continues that:

> My dad always says - because my sister she does brands, she's always like caring about her looks, the fashion - so he's always like 'I wish you'd both take a little bit from each other. You close up a bit, and you dress up like a girl a little bit more, it would be perfect!' We're just two extremes you know. I dress very plain. I'm very comfortable in the way I dress. I don't like tight stuff; I don't like to dress up. You have to see me in a wedding! I'm a hopeless case![59]Text for Footnote 60

Non-conformist clothes are thus important to Dana because she feels able to refuse the hegemonic imperative to attach sex to gender to desire through their usage. Setting up two contrasting registers of femininity, she uses her self-professed alterity from her sister to playfully defy the wishes of her father, and produce herself as different—on gendered terms—to other women in her family. The effect, she narrates, enables her to convey indeterminate sexual and gender codes to herself and others. Iterating the stylistic registers of globalized queer femininity, her dress aesthetics reject the conventional signifiers of hyper-femininity (tight clothes, elaborate hair styles, make up) as constructed in capitalist patriarchy. Instead, she stylizes her body to refuse objectification to the male gaze, and signifies that she wants to be looked at by different, non-male subjects in parties.

Text for Footnote 58[57]Angela McRobbie, *PostModernism and Popular Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994).
Text for Footnote 59[58]Author interview, Ramallah 19/10/2017.
Text for Footnote 60[59]Ibid.

Dana's class identity is therefore also contained within this narrative. By deliberately shunning 'brands', she reveals her elite-ness as someone who does not need such 'obvious' status symbols to perform social distinction. This is important because it helps us see how, as scenesters bracket gender surveillance on dancefloors, they reinforce economic divisions.

Others narrated similar pleasure in using fashion to perform non-assimilation to the sex/gender matrix. Twenty-six-year-old Tawfiq, for example, told me about the problems he faces when trying to buy clothes for his performances. Tawfiq is aqueer-identifying West Bank-based musician and partygoer who sometimes plays and/or attends parties in drag. Over much laughter, he told me that:

> It's often difficult getting things that fit. But it's so much fun! [Last time] I went to Bethlehem with my cousin, to find a dress. We went to the dress shop, and [the shop assistant] was like 'where's the girl that wants to dress up?' And so my cousin was like 'ummmm she's not here, but she's Tawfiq's height, and like about his same shape', and so we went down to the changing rooms and I put it on quickly and it was great. It was so cool. It was like a really fun adventure.[60]Text for Footnote 61

Like Dana, for Tawfiq, wearing clothes normatively assigned to the 'opposite' sex permits him to interrupt other people's expectations about how bodies can and cannot take up public space. He foregrounds the joy he experiences when using drag to destabilize modernity's hetero-homo/male-female binaries. Drag is an exceptionality salient modality of global queer culture that its patrons use to expose the constructed nature of femininity and masculinity.[61]Text for Footnote 62 Deliberately mixing 'male' and 'female' identity markers, drag highlights that seemingly stable gender 'essences' are in fact social effects achieved through repetition. Tawfiq's sartorial choices are therefore clearly—and importantly—disruptive of regulatory (nationalist) ideals about hypermasculine power.

Nonetheless, and as with Dana's alternate enactments of femininity, Tawfiq's embodied agency foregrounds a certain type of gay modernity enforced through his class power. By bringing to light a highly recognizable form of 'liberated' queer masculinity, other less spectacular ideas about non-normative desire become invisible. Most pressingly, the focus on 'women's' dress as a site of gender-bending humour consigns the long robes worn by Arab men to the category of 'skirt', thus feminizing and subjugating those types of clothing which might also be affordable for older queer men who never 'came out'.

My point here is not to diminish the significance of these social actions. Clearly, Dana and Tawfiq perform creative and critical identity work through their non-conformist stylistic interventions. I want instead to underscore that as their transgressive gender performances unravel, so too do agencies that comply with capitalist commodification. This is neither to vilify nor exonerate these consumption practices and those who facilitate them. It is rather to understand the type and extent of agency that an action contains before it is simply celebrated. Neither wholly resistant nor fully compliant, such practices point to what, writing on the Indian context, Shakuntala Banaji defines as a 'contaminated' form of agency: that is a type of action that 'thrives through curtailing and restricting the agency of others'.[62]Text for Footnote 63 What this means, then, is

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Text for Footnote 61[60]Author interview, Jerusalem, 01/03/2018.
Text for Footnote 62[61]Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York & Oxon: Routledge, 1990 [2008]).
Text for Footnote 63[62]Banaji, *Children and Media in India*, 147.

unpacking actions with an instrumental but no necessarily normative value, such as consumerism,[63]Text for Footnote 64 without recourse to the dissent/conformity binary. Moving beyond celebrated definitions of agency is, I suggest, a more productive way to trace the *fractured* forces that emerge within Oslo's wider social, political, and economic landscapes.

In this first sense, while dancefloors certainly do make room for unconventional identities, it remains that those who use them must have at least rudimentary access to money and time to spend 'on' leisure. Indeed, Maryam, Dana, and Tawfiq all iterate, yet shroud, the fact that raves are also consumption spaces. On the one hand, they attend parties in specific locales while dressing according to certain fashions to critique and reduce gender surveillance. Yet in so doing, they expose their links to wider fields of wealth inequality. Entrance depends (at least in part) on successfully mastering secular, cosmopolitan, and consumer-focused codes. Such disorderly identities are available to these young adults because—as part of the emergent post-Oslo middle class—they can afford them. Participation in these gender and sexuality transgressions are thus conditioned on class stratifications. These three young people's statements are thus important because they show that transgressing the symbolic gendered order on which patriarchal nationalism is discursively based *necessarily* depends on the social actor's access to material resources.

This is not, then, about romanticizing or too readily celebrating the 'progressive' nature of this music scene. Angela McRobbie's writing on youth cultures (in the British context) is a useful entry point for theorizing what this means in popular culture terms. Refuting modernity's teleological progress/stagnation binary, she frames popular culture as sites to analyse *shifts*—rather than overhauls—in gendered meanings. Transformations in dominant femininities do not indicate that women and girls (and in my analysis, queers) have simply seen advances, or reversals, in the ways that they are socially marked as women (or queers). Instead, the cultural forms youth produce and consume reveal how the 'habitus of gender relations has opened up', which stabilizes new feminine or masculine roles and relations.[64]Text for Footnote 65

Foregrounding contradictory social practices on dancefloors is thus useful because it moves beyond restriction versus resistance, to foreground instead how gender imaginaries may be changing. Which, of course, enacts novel controls—especially, as we have seen, in economic terms. As leisure and middle-class consumption proliferates, repertoires around gender and sexuality expand. Pushing back on the gender binary on the one hand, then, such urban masculinities and femininities harden around class.

Liminal space

Others thought differently about rave's identity transgressions. Twenty-one-year-old Razan, for example, states that participatory music events enact alternate communities. Razan is a partygoer and music student from Haifa. She explained that:

> I really felt I belonged to this community. It made me feel that it embraces me, that it really supports me, and gives me safety and protection, and that I can be whatever I want. That I can

Text for Footnote 64[63]203–204.
Text for Footnote 65[64]McRobbie, *PostModernism and Popular Culture*, 157.

make sense of myself and what I am. It really gives some kind of freedom – well relative freedom especially in the situation that we live in.[65]Text for Footnote 66

Razan describes parties as enclaves that cultivate powerful feelings of collective belonging. Underlining the protection and safety she experiences on dancefloors, she suggests that such semi-publics carve breathing spaces where she can 'make sense' of herself. In parties she 'can be whatever I want'. For Razan, performances create caesuras where self-chosen identities move to the fore. Crucially, she asserts that such cultural formations offer relief, or 'freedom', from the pressures of quotidian living. By adding that such freedom is 'relative' given 'the situation that we live in' her narrative further hones the contextual importance of parties in Haifa.

Young women such as Razan thus find these spaces significant because they create temporary zones in which the settler state's disciplinary power recedes. Parties, in other words, are pleasurable because they move beyond the colonial hegemon's panoptic gaze. While her utopian vision shrouds the fact that cultural events in Israel operate under the state's tactic permission, Razan nonetheless enables us to grasp the ephemeral respite participatory music offers from the status quo. On dancefloors, a range of alternative positions are available to those with access. Razan thus introduces the idea that parties often occur 'below the threshold' of disciplinary power. As live, embodied, and 'one-off' events, unexpected or ungovernable things might happen on the dancefloor.

Several other young women reiterated Razan's sentiments that parties perform alternative communities in which self-chosen identities proliferate. Underscoring the ephemerality of such actions, thirty-two-year-old Nylah, for instance, described how raves enable people to travel in fantasy when they cannot be in reality. In our meeting, Nylah, who is a DJ based in Haifa, put it like this:

> I feel like you can go to a club, and anyone - *anyone* - can be, like, whatever: Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian, Russian, German - you can *be everything*, or nothing – no one knows. You don't know. But you're listening to the same music. You're enjoying that moment, that hour, three hours, you know, you're out with your friends, or alone, it doesn't matter. But you're in that one place and it doesn't matter who you are, where you come from, what you – you know? And everyone is just into the music. And it's like an escape from reality. But once you're out of it, you wake up the next morning and it's like ok, you might be sitting next to a guy on the bus, you might start judging him, but yet you were together dancing in the club the night before. So, I dunno, it's sad.[66]Text for Footnote 67

Parties allow Nylah to feel as though she can 'be everything or nothing'. Combining the earlier discussion about reduced gender surveillance in bars, with Razan's insistence that live music events offer 'relative freedom' from colonial subjection, Nylah underscores that raves provide release from dominant identity codes. Her statement is full of longing for a different sort of social order. Raves, she says, are 'that one place [where it] doesn't matter who you are [or] where you come from'. Sites, in other words, in which racialized and gendered power recedes to the background. Her statement is, however, further undercut with a sense of sadness that, for her, a party's transgressive power is limited to its spatial-temporal duration. She ends, for instance, by uttering that 'I dunno, it's sad'. For Nylah, then, parties form critical fantasy spaces in which desire and reality come together in

Text for Footnote 66[65]Author interview, Haifa, 01/06/2018.
Text for Footnote 67[66]Author interview, Haifa, 13/11/2017.

unsettling ways. Raves index the pleasure of imagining a different order of things, while also citing the omnipresent fear that, in reality, the opposite is the norm.

Razan and Nylah's points are therefore important because they remind us of the danger of exoticizing Palestinian EDM parties inside Israel. While a few liberal Israeli scenesters may attend Palestinian parties, it does not follow that colonial materialities magically disappear on the dancefloor. On the contrary, these cultural events offer respite from racist settler culture, which disavows Palestinian histories and identities in modern-day Israel. These are zones where Palestinians assert their city's *living* Palestinian heritage. They thus push back on self-congratulatory liberal Israeli narratives that render Haifa a 'mixed city',[67]Text for Footnote 68 where Palestinian presence marks 'progressive' Israeli 'co-existence' with those their state systematically subjugates. Countering such depoliti-cizing 'multicultural' claims, ravers returned frequently to the anger and terror they experience growing up *as Palestinians* inside Israel. Not only, then, do raves offer relief from the brutality of the occupation and hierarchies of Palestinian society—they also carve distance from the expectations and discriminations of liberal Israeli scenesters.

Partygoers in Ramallah also spoke to Nylah's understanding of music as a platform to stage alternate ways of inhabiting the world. Zaynab is in her mid-twenties. She returned to the West Bank in her early-teens following Oslo, having spent her childhood in the Jordanian diaspora. Today, she makes music as a professional DJ, playing several shows in Ramallah each year. When we discussed what first interested her about music, she told me that:

> Ok, so basically when I was a kid, my dad says I went to him … and I said: 'I wanna be a DJ!'. I dunno where I saw a DJ, in a wedding or something, I just wanted to be a DJ … I remember, when I was 13, or something, when we were kids, we always used to put – in a birthday party or something - we would put the radio, and then, you know, the news would come on, and it's not cool man! Especially [in Palestine] because the news would always be about war and shit, like '17 dead' and you're dancing in a birthday: you're kids, you know! So, we started doing our own CDs. Everybody like burns CDs in their house, and everybody wants you to play their song, so that was a huge part of it: everyone around the CD player. And so one day I was like you know what, I'm gonna be choosing the music! That's it. So I went to my dad and I was like 'I wanna DJ!'.[68]Text for Footnote 69

Zaynab outlines that her primary motivation in becoming a DJ was to avoid having to listen to stories on the news about dead Palestinians as a child in birthday parties. Linking her early music choices to her experiences as an adolescent in occupied Ramallah, her words speak to a bleak reality in which children become resolute to the fact that death and violence are ever-constant when they are just thirteen years old. Like Nylah, however, Zaynab's words are cut through with a desperate sort of hope that music might remove the self from this colonial order of things. Indeed, later on in our interview she continued that:

> It's very important [to have a space for music]. It's very healthy. For me it makes me calmer than yoga! Like yoga pissed me off! If you get up and dance you get this energy out, and sometimes if I'm pissed off I just go dance and get it all out. It makes me calmer. For me it's an escape. That's the thing. And it's a healthy way to escape also in Palestine. I like when I share

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Text for Footnote 68[67]See Areej Sabbagh-Khoury, 'Palestinian in Palestinian cities in Israel: A settler-colonial reality', in *The Palestinians in Israel* (Mada al-Carmel: Arab Centre for Applied Social Research 2018), 102–18.
Text for Footnote 69[68]Author interview, Ramallah, 17/09/2018.

that with people in Palestine, because I feel it makes them relax from the shitty day they had, it's healthy. Dancing is healthy. Maybe the world is gonna blow up, but I'm hoping that we're gonna be the hippies doing the music on the side.[69]Text for Footnote 70

Speaking to her position in Ramallah, Zaynab's narrative more resolutely indicates that raving reduces stress from being occupied and denied, check-pointed, and separated. As she puts it, dancing is 'a healthy way to escape in Palestine [people can] relax from the shitty day they had'. Rave culture, for Zaynab, thus creates enclaves within which those a very violent settler-colonial regime segregates, found zones to meet, socialize, and have fun in ways that suspend the pain that comes from growing up under prolonged coloniality.

Zaynab, Razan, and Nylah all present their attendance in raves in terms that connote party cultures' qualities of secular ritual action. Their statements show two things. First, dancefloors enact alternative communities where new possibilities mushroom. And second, such transitory space allows people to travel in fantasy when they cannot be in reality. Raving offers relief from the miseries of settler-power. Glossing over the class capitals required to take part, all three women experience dancefloors as pleasurable gaps that resignify settler-colonial and patriarchal-national power. In particular, Zaynab, Razan, and Nylah draw out that in these ephemeral enclaves, Israel's racist and racializing logics are relaxed. Dancefloors here become vistas where these young women negotiate personal identities and social belongings on their own terms.

Coupled with Dana, Tawfiq, and Maryam's comments on gender above, Razan, Zaynab, and Nylah's narratives come together to suggest that dancefloors make breaks with the publics that the patriarchal family, state, and nation use to maintain their influence.[70]Text for Footnote 71 While, of course, reinforcing labour-market controls. As patrons in leisure sites, these young people suggest that their middle-class purchasing power enables them to act in a manner neither perceptible nor permissible in other places. In this sense, I propose that they all evoke the *liminal*, or in-between, properties of the dancefloor.[71]Text for Footnote 72 Their statements highlight the hidden ways that Palestinians living under the thumb of settler-colonial, nationalistic, and patriarchal controls forge spaces where the persistent, repetitive practices of power create worlds that exist within, yet crucially exceed, the horizons of such norms.[72]Text for Footnote 73 A second way, then, to understand the social formations expressed in raves is as reflecting tensions between gendered and racialized visions of order, and young adults' playful efforts to reconfigure such expectations.

Text for Footnote 70[69]ibid.

Text for Footnote 71[70]See Walter Armbrust, 'When the Lights Go Down in Cairo: Cinema as Secular Ritual', *Visual Anthropology* 10 (1998): 413–442; and Angela McRobbie, *The Aftermath of Feminism: Gender, Culture and Social Change* (London: Sage Publications, 2009 [2010]), 120–121.

Text for Footnote 72[71]Arnold van Gennep, *The Rites of Passage* (trans. Vizedom & Caffee) (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1909 [1960]); Victor Turner, *The Ritual Process* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1969); and Bjorn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern* (London: Routledge, 2013).

Text for Footnote 73[72]Melissa Gregg & Gregory Seigworth, *The Affect Theory Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2012), 7.

'It's not a universal language, it's a universal feeling'—towards a material politics of affective change in rave-spaces

Do imaginative feelings relax gender binaries after a party? And how can we think about emotional practices' political potential, without reverting to normative agency?

Whereas scholarship regularly collapses affect in musical events into moments of fleeting euphoria,[73]Text for Footnote 74 several young adults opened roadmaps for theorizing parties as vehicles of change. Najwan is a twenty-six-year-old EDM-lover from Ramallah. She told me that electro-music encourages material as well as symbolic retreats from atomizing bodily norms. In raves, she explained that:

> *You're totally in a different world*, because there are no limitations for a synthesizer … all the instruments that we have, they have a limit … but a synthesizer can go even further. It's crazy … the energy and the vibe it gives, this kind of music, *it creates these connections and these friends and these feelings*. Even for people who are not on drugs, I think it's the vibe it creates … everybody in the crowd moving in the same pace … connecting and moving and going around and coming back … it's just magic! This is the best feeling ever! In sync and in harmony with people you meet … *Music does these things because you don't need to talk … this is why they say it's a universal language, it's not a universal language it's a universal feeling*.[74]Text for Footnote 75

Najwan explains that EDM catapults her into corporeal realities where language recedes. In a party, she feels like she is in 'a different world'. For this young woman, raves form new affective geographies and temporalities where non-discursive social rules bind bodies with access. Music, dancing, and/or drugs, she continues, create 'connections and friends and feelings' centred on being emotionally 'in sync and in harmony with people'. This is possible because, for Najwan, 'music [is] not a universal language it's a universal feeling'. She suggests, then, that EDM cultivates embodied agencies that allow people to *feel* differently about, and therefore *enact* different orientations to, social norms hardened around bodily distance.[75]Text for Footnote 76

Others reiterated Najwan's desire for affective socialities where people reinterpret expected ways of taking up space. Nassim is a twenty-eight-year-old Palestinian-American electronic pianist. He told me that dancefloors create multidimensional spaces for those with access, which he explained like this:

> Music is like guerrilla hypnotherapy, because you can speak to people on a *physical level, like really physical* … a *more physical level than maybe writing* can, because the nature of sound, the nature of groove I think can really specifically *hit people's bodies*, and their bodies react, and then, it's trance, you know? Music is a trance for me, it's a trance experience and it's really powerful too, live, when you have a trance experience with a collective, it's like church or any kind of collective ecstasy that people experience. And I think there's something really powerful when a group of people are in that state of trance, *that state of surrender* … when you hit *these magic moments there's something really powerful. You elevate as a collective. You can transcend all of the typical bullshit*.[76]Text for Footnote 77

Text for Footnote 74[73]E.g. St John, 'Freak media'.
Text for Footnote 75[74]Author interview, Ramallah 04/05/2018.
Text for Footnote 76[75]Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2004 [2014]), 144–90; 204–233.
Text for Footnote 77[76]Author interview, 10/02/2014.

Nassim focuses on the materiality of EDM. Music is a 'physical' force *that changes people*—it 'hits people's bodies' and 'transcends all the typical bullshit'. Like Najwan, he states that music can affect such shifts because it is non-discursive ('more physical [than] writing'). His words imply that music *might* evoke 'affective dissonance'[77]Text for Footnote 78 where previous ways of knowing *could* come into conflict with recent ways of feeling. For Nasim, music is therefore productive—it 'sticks' people together in formations where corporeal rules are 'unstuck'. This is generative, then, not *only* because it fails to fully repeat norms,[78]Text for Footnote 79 but *also* because it opens possibilities for living in ways that never fully follow norms 'through'.[79]Text for Footnote 80 For Nassim, parties thus realize *concrete* utopias that he finds pleasurable because they disregard individual priority.

It is important to revisit the non-normative agencies that make these subversive strategies possible. While Nassim and Najwan overlook the fact that music changes people differently, they remind us that gender, race, and class necessarily limit and/or contain culture's transformative potential. In other words, while these subcultural sites turn *some* bodies towards others, they disregard many others. As I have argued, the embodied and affective agencies that here contaminate fixed corporeal rules depend on class. Importantly, then, such scripts are exclusionary. There is also no guarantee that those granted access will be similarly affected. To recall Sara Ahmed: how we feel is never a 'natural' state of affairs, but stems from the histories that come before us, as well as how our position(s) leads us to interpret those histories.[80]Text for Footnote 81 My point here, then, is that these social practices are neither transcendent nor assimilated. Instead, subcultural sites foster contradictory, non-linear, and multidimensional agencies that 'face each other'[81]Text for Footnote 82 in political negotiations. As middle-class sensibilities dominate parties, they author feelings which pollute fixed, nationalistic definitions of gender.

Palestinian-Jordanian music producer Malik zooms in on what happens when we make space for such tensions and inconsistencies. Inverting Najwan and Nassim's focus on deindividuation, he argues that acknowledging difference can be politically productive. He says:

> On the stage, there is a rapper … He's a rapper … It doesn't matter where he's from. The family's last name – nobody knows, he's rapping. That's what he's doing … I'm not saying that only political art does that. No, we can do it with jazz, when you have for example a brilliant jazz musician, he's playing piano, bass, whatever he's doing, and he's perfecting it so well that [it creates] a new identity of professionalism. It's respect for the art, it's mastering one's trade … and you're judging him by that … not where he's from, not his religion, *not if he's a guy or a girl or a gender or a whatnot*. And that's why I love going to shows for local bands and elsewhere where it's jazz, and there's no singing, there's no political content, *but I find it very political*. The fact that you're putting girls and guys… in the same place. How good the guys are, how much they've worked to get there, to have careers as musicians in a country that has no industry – more or less – for such things as a musician. *That to me is also an identity*.[82]Text for Footnote 83

Text for Footnote 78[77]Clare Hemmings, 'Affective solidarity: Feminist reflexivity and political transformation', *Feminist Theory* 2, no. 13 (2012): 147–61.
Text for Footnote 79[78]Butler, *Gender Trouble*.
Text for Footnote 80[79]Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion*, 155.
Text for Footnote 81[80]171.
Text for Footnote 82[81]El-Zein, '"Resisting Resistance"', 102.
Text for Footnote 83[82]Author interview, 11/02/2014.

Malik draws out the cumulative, gradual energies that affective exchanges release in music performances. He argues that as different bodies gather to share resources and build familiarities in subcultural spaces, they activate a politics that—for Malik—pose embodied questions about people's emotional investments in gendered social norms. In this sense, then, live music brings people together in formations that do not overthrow gender. Instead, he proposes that parties might move people in ways that create pathways for alternative future movements, which undo and reform some of the past histories of contact between bodies. Rendered thus, dancefloors constitute different affective relationships to the national and modernist gender histories that came before these cultural spaces.

If Najwan and Nissim open roadmaps for theorizing dance culture's productive potential, then Malik allows us to foreground what is possible—*materially* possible —about such fragments. His words suggest that the affective disorientations which emerge in a party (might) forge new relational codes that (could) persist after an event is over. By drawing attention to the *ways* that parties bring (some) people towards one another in new material formations, he argues that (some of) the structures which differentiate through gender may be reshaped. Live music, then, does not only create transient identities limited to performances. It also generates political possibilities for future relationships centred around different social norms.

Conclusion

Raves emerged in Palestine from the social, political, and economic shifts that followed after Oslo. In this paper, I contextualized how people inhabit and make sense of such transformations. Using partygoers' and DJs' narratives, I sketched the transgressive gender embodiments that unravel on dancefloors. Asking how far parties enable dancers to upend the patriarchal, racialized, and heteronormative codes that structure orthodox publics, I suggested that raves create semi-publics in which unconventional identities proliferate. In Palestine, rave subcultures open possibilities for new affective geographies and temporalities where people pollute fixed, modernist, settler-colonial, and nationalistic ideas of gender.

This is political, productive, and fractured. On dancefloors, heteronormativity is not mandatory. In parties, young adults' fashion choices, dance practices, modes of socialization, and pursuit of embodied social pleasures reconfigure the body-politics that shape other publics. Raves thus enact alternative communities for their users. However, since these reimaginations depend, at least in part, on consumption, scenesters require money (for clothes, drinks, tickets, time, travel etc.) to participate. Part of the post-Oslo middle-class 'turn', raving in Palestine is unevenly open to subjects with the material, discursive, and imaginative capitals to access and buy into it. As young adults undo established gender and sexuality regimes through dress and dance, they necessarily reinforce novel post-Oslo class hierarchies. In raves, the embodied agencies with distance from gendered and/or racialized orders is dependent on, and in fact often actively reinforces, material power structures.

By historicizing class and gender in cultural production, then, we can move beyond simplistic accounts of popular culture in Palestine in particular, and MENA more broadly. Drawing out the multiple agen*cies* involved in people's different (consumptive, affective,

and embodied) actions is thus helpful. It allows us to push beyond celebratory and towards grounded accounts of the social and political work popular culture today 'does' and 'undoes' in Palestine and beyond. Only by moving beyond the now over-worked resistance/domination binary are we able to better understand the nuances and contradictions of the region's creative practices today.

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