After the Last Frontiers: Palestine Between Memory and the Anticolonial Art of Resistance

by

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Abstract

After the Last Frontiers, my thesis exhibition, aims to raise questions about forms of oppression and violence practiced by the oppressive colonial powers in Palestine and, by extension, the world. The thesis explores the possibilities of artists' contributions to social and political change by shedding light on my motives, narratives, and art practice, and by comparing my artworks to those by artists who have tackled similar issues. The art produced for this thesis exhibition is intended to act as an anticolonial form of resistance and activism. The exhibition consists of installations of objects that represent sites of memory, reviving the collective memory of people and land. In my case, I wish to commemorate the places that were stolen, the over 750,000 displaced Palestinians and their descendants, amounting to millions, the thousands of Palestinians killed since 1948, the hundreds of thousands of acres of olive trees uprooted, and the over 500 Palestinian villages and towns obliterated. Based on relevant historical and archival artifacts, this practice-based thesis underscores the significance of documentation and archival material in memory tracing/maintaining, and its relevance to the Palestinian case, and, in turn, the Israeli hegemonic narrative in the West.

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge the ancestral and traditional territories of the Indigenous nations of Canada, "who are the original owners and custodians of the land on which [I] stand and create"(OCADU), the land where I live and raise my children in peace, the land where I have sought refuge. I arrived in Canada as a refugee. Although I became a Canadian citizen and was granted an internationally recognized passport for the first time in my life, I still feel like a refugee. I was deemed a refugee almost three decades before I was born, when my family was forcibly displaced from Jaffa to Gaza in the 1948 Nakba. That event marked the occupation of Palestine and the dispossession and uprooting of millions of Palestinians. They were given tents and labelled "refugees" in their own homeland. I was labelled a refugee on my birth certificate and ID card. I wore a refugee school uniform and went to refugee clinics. Reflecting on my privileged life in Canada, I cannot help but think about how tainted my privileges are. I am nothing but one more colonial settler who further contributes to the alienation of Indigenous people. Hence, I started questioning my existence here. Since this is not my home, and I am banned from my ancestral homeland, then "Who Am I? Where is Home?" These are the questions that led me to create the painting by the same title (fig.1).

I also acknowledge all the wonderful people whose assistance was essential in the accomplishment of this thesis exhibition. I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to Professor b.h. Yael, my primary advisor, for her persistent support and critical feedback. She encouraged and guided me throughout my graduate experience at OCADU. My deep gratitude to Dr. Barbara Rauch, my secondary advisor, for her great leadership and invaluable insight, and to Dr. Martha Ladly, Program Director, for her wisdom and continuous motivation. Endless thanks to Professor Kip Jones, without his kindness and welcoming at the Foundry, my thesis work would not have been attainable. My appreciation also goes to OCAD University's Department of

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Thank you

Dedication

To

My mother in Palestine, Fathia Hussein Al-Jekhleb
My father in heaven, Omar Ahmed Salha
My first string to life, and inspiration
Without your unwavering love, none of my accomplishments would have been realized.
You are beyond words
I miss you so much

My uncle, Mohammed Ahmed Salha
You are one of the last of those who carry the scent of the free homeland. Your face is saturated with the fragrance of Yafa's oranges. You are the origin of the narrative. Please remain strong so I can continue to be empowered and inspired by you, and for the narratives to remain revived.

My grandfathers, Ahmed Salha, and Hussein Al-Jekhleb, whom I never had the chance to know
My grandmothers Hejar Al-Sheikh and Mariam Al-Jekhleb
My beautiful childhood memories
So many years after, I still mourn you

My children, Osama, Maya, Yazan and Layla, and my husband, Zaid
You are the extension of my soul and existence
The reason I can breathe

My sisters, Nihad, Sahar, Mona, Soha, and my brother Mohammed
You are so close to my soul, yet so far away
I love you so much

All the old familiar faces that have been obscured by absence and defamiliarized by the absurd
The Abu Wahids who are no longer there
Your faces still ring in my memory

All Palestinian souls that have perished brutally
All Palestinian towns and villages that no longer exist, and those that remain

I dedicate this thesis work

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** Cover Page: Detail of *These Are NOT the Keys*, 2020.

Preface

Haunting Childhood Memories

I have been trying so assiduously to separate my art from politics, because thinking about all the injustices of the past and present in Palestine causes me enormous pain and frustration. Unwillingly, I have lived and breathed politics since I was born. It was embedded in the refugee status of my family and community—and in the oppressive conditions we endured every day under the Israeli military occupation. My daily encounters with soldiers left me with haunting memories. Over the years, my dear father and entire family would listen intently and tirelessly to the radios and TV news stations for some hopeful news about a possible breakthrough in negotiations that could bring about a just solution. Little did they know that such a dream could never be realized in a world built on imperialistic interests and hypocrisy. If righteous leaders with some conscience and a sense of justice existed, none of the suffering would have happened in the first place, and the Nakba in Palestine could have been avoided. It is very easy to turn a blind eye to injustice when exposing it could jeopardize one's own interests.

My childhood, like that of many other Palestinians under military occupation, was full of daily action. Every morning, whether on my way to school, or off to the nearby vendors to buy freshly made falafel and hummus for breakfast, I would run into dozens of Israeli Occupation soldiers in their green uniforms, with heavy, well-equipped backpacks and machine guns poised to shoot. They were also stationed at checkpoints near my school which was adjacent to the Israeli military compound in Gaza. Although it was a familiar scene, I could never get used to it. I was always intimidated by the sight of those giant foreign men, and sometimes women, patrolling both sides of our Gaza streets with their machine guns. The soldiers were even at Palestinians' homes, monitoring the surroundings from rooftops, using these as snipers' stations. Countless times, in their search for young men in hiding, they came shouting and kicking our

doors with their military boots. One of us children would rush to open the door so they would not start shooting. They used to burst into our neighbours' houses, too. Sometimes our house would be missed. Other times they would start with our house first, even though it was the farthest one at the end of a closed lane. Whenever we heard that thunderous banging, we would wait for our turn, or until they left the area and it was quiet again. Then we would hear some reassuring voices from neighbours calling out that the soldiers were gone. Everybody would dash out to the streets to figure out who had gotten captured or injured. Sometimes we would hear the screams of women chasing after soldiers walking away with their sons or husbands. These were hard times but also amazing in terms of our incomparable sense of solidarity.

Certain traumatic images remain in my psyche. For example, I still remember the time a neighbour's six-month-old baby, sitting on the floor, got kicked by one of the angry soldiers. The result was brain damage. I still remember the soldiers pointing their machine guns in the face of my bedridden grandmother, accusing her of concealing men. Although she later confessed to being utterly terrified, my grandmother yelled bravely, "I do not have any men here! Shall I produce men for you?!" Another soldier held a tear gas bomb to my youngest sister Soha's nose. He threatened to detonate it if she did not reveal the whereabouts of some men who were suspected of throwing stones at Israeli jeeps. Only ten years old then, Soha insisted, "I do not know!" They eventually threw a burning bomb in my parents' bedroom and left furiously. This happened during the first Intifada. Quite often, the military jeeps would block the entrance of a main street that branches into many side lanes. The youth would start gathering and throwing stones at distant jeeps. The soldiers would then throw gas bombs to disperse the protesters, who would run away and then regroup. Sometimes the soldiers would suddenly drive into protesters, capturing some and chasing down the rest who had run into lanes and random houses or had jumped across rooftops and escaped into different neighbourhoods. Other times, the snipers

killed or maimed them. Regularly monitoring our streets with their binoculars, the soldiers recognized the protesters in each neighbourhood. This hunt for young Palestinians would continue for hours. When the troops withdrew at the end of a day, the streets looked like a battlefield. The women's role was to protect exits for the escaping protesters and hand them cut onions for relief from the tear gas. Sometimes the women would collect little stones—the "Palestinian terrorist's heavy weaponry"—into buckets and provided them to the stone throwers. These women would often chase after the soldiers and attempt to rescue the captured youths. This form of resistance to the occupation forces is the oppressed nation's revolution after losing hope of ever witnessing the emergence of a potential saviour. I lived and felt this sense of hopelessness and desperation daily in the face of a formidable military force.

I also have an indelible memory of an incident that occurred when I was 12 years old. It was during one of those curfews lasting for weeks or months. I was bored, so I opened the door and peeked out. As luck would have it, a troop of heavily armed soldiers was passing by our lane. In a split second, they turned their heads and spotted my head poking out in the distance. In broken Arabic, they shouted, "Khush Baytak" (Go inside your house). I backed inside for a bit, but then, given my abiding stubbornness, I thought, "But I am inside the house, I am only peeking into the lane to get air". So, I peeked out again. They were still standing there looking towards our lane and house. Again, they yelled, "Khush Baytak". Then, to my surprise, the soldiers started stomping towards our house. They seemed like a full army. At this point, I panicked and locked the door with the double lock and ran inside. Since I had finally complied, and assuming they must have heard the metal door shutting, I thought they had left. I was wrong. Soon after, the door kicking began. They demanded that I open the door. Assuming that they would not recognize me, I ran to open it. The moment I unlocked the door, they rushed in and started beating me. Then one of them pinned me against a wall with his machine gun. Enraged,

he yelled as he continued to press his machine gun against my neck. I didn't understand what he was saying. I thought I was going to die. Finally, he let go but threatened to shoot me in the head the next time.

Albeit traumatizing, this incident made me realize how lucky I was to be alive when many other innocent people had perished under similar circumstances. It was common to hear that a woman, a man or a child got shot and killed at home by a sniper's bullet simply for peeking from behind closed windows or standing on their balcony. A machine gun was enough to swallow the distances and put an end to the story of a curious, little peeper. I know I am lucky when I think about the victims of the Kafr Qasem massacre of 1956, in which approximately 50 Palestinian villagers, including 23 children and a pregnant woman, were slaughtered premeditatedly by border military gunfire during a curfew (Aderet, "Testimonies", par. 18). Of course, it was a part of ethnic cleansing, a scheme of the occupying state. Shmuel Malinki, one of the executioners later remarked: "It would be desirable to have a few people killed in each village" (Cook, "The Executions", par.39). At the time, a curfew was imposed on eight Palestinian villages, including Kafr Qasem. Originally, it was supposed to begin at 6:00 p.m., but at 4:30 p.m., an earlier start of the restriction time was suddenly announced to the villagers, which meant that the villagers returning home from work at 5:45 had no idea of the change. When asked about the fate of the villagers returning home past the new curfew hour, the commander, Issachar Shadmi, replied, "I don't want sentimentality; I don't want detainees… Allah Yerhamu", an Arabic phrase meaning "may they rest in peace" (Aderet, "General's Final Confession", par. 20). At a later trial, Shadmi, was fined a symbolic one cent for his crime.

The door kicking episodes increased at nighttime while we slept. Waking up in the middle of the night from the fierce sounds of banging and yells of "Eftakh Bab" (open the door) became normalized for Palestinians, most certainly for me. Time after time, the men of the

neighbourhood, including my father, were collected at night, dragged to one of the streets and forced to face walls to be searched. They were held there for hours, sometimes until morning. Ostensibly, the rationale was to identify men who "posed a threat" to the security of the all-powerful military state, but it was also a means of humiliation and intimidation. Palestinians were not allowed to be peaceful activists or to complain or resist in any manner. They were misrepresented to the world, prompting most journalists to conflate the words "Palestinian" and "terrorist".

I knew many innocent men who were rounded up and imprisoned for years without a trial and with no visitation rights. I knew them as my innocent neighbours, acquaintances or relatives. My cousin, a graduate of psychology from Bethlehem University, was jailed for two years without any obvious reasons or charges. They had him arrested on the first day of Ramadan, while sitting with his family at the dining table waiting for the Maghreb Athan (call for prayer at sunset) permitting the fasters to eat. Just a minute before the Athan, the troops invaded the house and arrested him. His grief-stricken mother always said, "I wish they allowed him to eat first." This was a common strategy of the Israeli Occupation Forces. Mealtime during Ramadan was the best time to ensure that young men would be at home. The middle of the night was another targeted time. Many men did not sleep at their homes for months and years out of fear they would be captured while asleep and tossed into prison. Nevertheless, they were eventually caught or killed. Reyad, a newlywed neighbour, was arrested then, leaving behind Ayda, his bride. I witnessed her every day on my way from school. All dressed up with full make up, she waited for years for her husband's return. Whether or not she was awaiting at the doorstep when he finally emerged, I am not sure. Their reunion was brief. A few months after he came home, we woke up to the sounds of the soldiers banging on someone's door again, but this time, we

knew from the direction and distance of the sound that they were at Ayda's door. Reyad was dragged off to prison again. Of course, this pattern happened repeatedly.

Another innocent young man, Ragheb, famous as an energetic stone thrower from the next lane, was also taken away by the soldiers. Four years later, he was found distressed and withdrawn, sitting in the rain in the public market. The Israeli Occupation Forces had released him from prison and disposed of him there. Some passersby eventually recognized him and brought him to his family where he continued to live as someone belonging to a different world. He looked like Ragheb, just not the same person anymore. He could not recognize any of his family or surroundings. He became known as "Crazy Ragheb". One day he climbed to the top of the tallest building in the city and committed suicide. No one will ever know what kind of torture he had endured in prison to cause his new state of mind.

My maternal grandmother died when a gas bomb was thrown into her house by the Occupation Forces and landed by her side while she was praying. She lived in the West Bank after being displaced from Jaffa city in 1948. For many years, my mother was not able to get a visitor's permit to see her although it was only a two-hour drive away. Unwittingly, I was the one who delivered the news about my grandmother to my mother. There was no means of communication then, as only very few people had a home phone. That afternoon, an acquaintance came to our house and sat by the side of my paternal grandmother, who was the maternal aunt to my maternal grandmother. With his head lowered and a sad expression, he relayed the news. All I overheard were the words "died" and "West Bank". It never occurred to me that it was my mother's mother who had died. My naïve,10-year-old self ran to the kitchen where my mother was preparing food. With the childish excitement of breaking news, I announced: "Mom, the man says someone in the West Bank has died". Among our relatives, it was only my mother's direct family who were residing in the West Bank. Suddenly, I could

almost see her heart through her facial expression. She did not rush to the living room. She lingered a bit, continuing what she was doing. Then, she washed her hands, and slowly walked to the living room, scared of finding out: Was it her dearest mother? A sister? A brother? Which one? Which loss would be the hardest? It was the first time I saw my strong, always silent, mother crying so hard.

My brother, Mohammed, the only male child after five girls, was shot at the age of eight by an Israeli sniper when he was playing in the street. I was coming home from school. When I approached our lane, the neighbours' kids yelled "your brother was shot". I ran home to a house full of women from the neighbourhood. I looked for my mother. I finally found her in the bathroom washing blood from my brother's clothes in silence. I stared into her face trying to read her emotions. My brother was in critical condition, as the sniper had shot him very close to his genitals. After long complex surgery, the bullet was removed. He finally survived in what the doctors called a miracle. Within months, my brother's hair turned white.

Although my family remained in Palestine, they always felt in exile and out of place. According to my grandmother, in April 1948, large ships arrived at the Jaffa shores and carried away Palestinians escaping the massacres. People from Palestinian villages walked for months and months to neighbouring Arab countries, as mentioned in a number of autobiographies by Palestinian writers in exile. My paternal grandparents chose Gaza due to its proximity, in the hopes of returning to their home after the attacks had stopped. Most of our relatives were scattered throughout the world. Those who were forcibly displaced in 1948, and whoever left thereafter for any particular reason, were never allowed to return. This meant that my grandparents were not able to reunite with their siblings abroad. I barely had the chance to meet my uncles who had left to study abroad before I was born and were never allowed to return to Palestine. Since she was with my father in Gaza, my mother could hardly ever see any of her

family in the West Bank. This circle of alienation continued in subsequent generations. Consequently, my children will never know my family. We are here; they are there. Ten years ago, eight years after I left Gaza, I lost my paternal grandmother, who had been like a second mother to me. Her death was followed by my father's passing five years later. Then many of my friends and neighbours were massacred. Given the crippling blockade, I never had the chance to visit and say goodbye to any of them. In the 18 years since I left, I have been able to see my mother and siblings only once. This is one of the hardest parts of being in exile: solitude, estrangement, and destruction of the family structure. Edward Said states that exile is "like death but without death's ultimate mercy, it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (Said, "Reflections" 174). At times, I suffer from melancholy and nostalgia. I miss the intimacy of home even though growing up under occupation was not easy. I miss the warmth of my family, friends, neighbours, and all the familiar faces. It is indeed as Said puts it, a "crippling sorrow of estrangement" (173).

Terminology

Delving into the above narratives, I almost forgot what caused these memories to float to the surface. I am full of stories about childhood acquaintances who were shot dead or disappeared behind prison walls. However, I must stop. The tragic narratives are endless. I hope it is obvious now why I have been struggling to separate my art from my politics. Pursuing a Master of Fine Arts degree has been a long-standing dream to further indulge in art making for art's sake and the amazing narratives of art history. However, since I joined the program, I have been repeatedly encountering decolonial and postcolonial theories. Thus, it was inevitable that I would be drawn back into political discourse. My childhood and my entire existence have been informed by historical and political events. Eventually, I became convinced that this separation is impossible.

While I am interested in the "colonial" part of the term "postcolonial", dealing with the "post" part of it is tricky, as this prefix means "after", which connotes a past happening rather than an ongoing one. As someone from an actively colonized country, it is hard to talk about a postcolonial status. This term works when applied to postcolonial countries such as Algeria or South Africa. The same cannot be said when discussing Palestine or even the land of Canada where Indigenous people continue to experience an active displacement and cultural elimination. My very own existence here today is evidence of that fact. Would it not be more accurate and comprehensive to label theories and discourses addressing colonized nations as "anticolonial" theories?

Furthermore, I am not comfortable using the term "decolonial" when addressing liberation strategies to end the occupation. It seems too generic, too soft a term. Since coloniality is a brutal reality, it requires a more aggressive term. A text by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, in which she debates the term "decolonization", came as a treat to me. It conforms to my thoughts as she writes: "I want to state frankly that I do not agree with the term decolonial, nor with all the redundant literature that has stemmed from it, to the point that it has almost become a school of thought and theory" (Cusicanqui 1). Cusicanqui argues that in addition to being used to engage in unintelligible debates, and adopted by some "internal colonialist power", the term is "practically useless for action in the streets and for engaging with concrete indigenous struggles". She prefers, and I could not agree more, to replace "decolonial" with "anticolonial", which would connect it directly to the "language of subalterns" (2), and therefore to national struggle.

I was relieved to find a corresponding text by Eve Tuck stating that decolonization "cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks. The easy absorption, adoption, and

transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation" (Tuck 3). The term "decolonization" has turned into a blanket term, applied to various contexts of oppression and social injustices. This trend somehow diminishes the gravity of colonialism and the struggle against it, rendering "decolonization" a "metaphor". According to Tuck, "describing all struggles against imperialism as 'decolonizing' creates a convenient ambiguity between decolonization and social justice work" (Tuck 17). In this sense, engaging in a social discourse on colonialism without touching on the Indigenous suffering and or addressing the "deoccupying" of land, is an "equivocation". Likewise, I argue that addressing or theorizing settler colonialism in the Americas, South Africa, and Australia while disregarding settler colonialism in Palestine is hypocritical and misleading. Any discourse about the Palestinian anticolonial struggle demands situating it in the bigger context. Hence, throughout my thesis, I will be referencing theorists coming from similar colonial experiences.

Chapter One: Introduction

> Memory is life, borne by living societies founded in its name. It remains in permanent evolution, open to the dialectic of remembering and forgetting, unconscious of its successive deformations, vulnerable to manipulation and appropriation, susceptible to being long dormant and periodically revived. (Nora 8)

My practice-based research explores the historical, cultural and psychological sense of place. As a descendant of a family displaced during the 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe), I am among the millions of others who have grown up feeling the reverberating impact of that collective trauma. As such, my work addresses issues of identity, displacement, and memory. Identity and memory are interwoven with place through political and cultural boundaries. My visual narratives are informed by childhood memories, family anecdotes, and historical and geographical references. At the start of the second term of the IAMD program, a Facebook post caught my attention. It was by my 82-year-old uncle who regularly posts narratives of his childhood and adolescence, describing his first-hand experience with expulsion and his ensuing years as a displaced and dispersed refugee—from his home amidst the orange orchards and beaches of Jaffa to the UNRWA refugee tents in Gaza. The post was a narrative of an incident that took place when he was a ten-year-old boy in the aftermath of the 1948 Nakba. He was lining up with his father and his father's cousin for flour rations. The flour was distributed by the UNRWA to displaced Palestinians at refugee camps. A Zionist aircraft appeared suddenly in the sky and bombed the piles of flour sacks. Many people were suffocated in flour, including his dad's cousin, who suddenly vanished in the white clouds. My uncle recalls his father crying at the tragedy that took his cousin's life, among many others. Immediately, this narrative inspired a slight change in my original idea and sparked a subsequent body of work.

The pieces created for my thesis exhibition stand as a memorial to honour and perpetuate the legacy of the Palestinian people, their lands, and the places that have been lost since 1948

and onward. Although the original story, the flour narrative, has inspired my work, it is interwoven with other stories forming the bigger narrative. Certainly, 1948 was a key date in the Palestinian collective memory. However, it is not one specific story or event that forms the Palestinian collective memory, but many stories of various aspects and levels of an ongoing process continuing into the present.

In materializing the interdisciplinarity of my practice, I employ archival elements to reconstruct narratives of place and to create artifacts serving as emblems of Palestinian collective memory. My aim is to counter the colonial narratives and systemic attempts that erase evidence of a nation called "Palestine". I also explore methods and strategies of anti-colonial resistance through object-based, narrative-based artifacts that contribute to public pedagogy: a window into the historical past. These artifacts signify absence. Installations of deformed body parts and keys—the symbol for homes Palestinians were forced to leave—disrupt absurd reality. They are discomforting and jolting, thus drawing the viewers' attention to the systemic and systematic violence and oppression inflicted on the powerless, not only in Palestine but throughout the world. My work aims to challenge the dominant discourses of knowledge that are controlled and distributed by imperialistic systems through mass media. They distort reality and mislead the public to rationalize the atrocities perpetrated by these dominant systems.

The archival research for this thesis includes documented narratives, both visual and semantic, as well as photographs, videos, artifacts, letters and testimonies from people who witnessed the Nakba events. Since most of the physical Palestinian archive was looted by the Israelis, it is inaccessible to Palestinians. However, I have obtained some archival material and testimonies from precedent research, films, articles, investigations and studies published by such varied sources as the Israeli newspaper *Haaretz*, The Institute for Palestine Studies, The Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs (PASSIA) and

Electronic Intifada, among other national electronic libraries. I have used elements of Palestinian archival artifacts to create new artifacts that resonate with the concept of memory and symbolize the homes people abandoned under Israeli coercion. In addition, I have experimented with assorted materials and compared processes of making and storytelling as modes of conveying the complexities of memory and remembering, and the intersecting relationships among those processes. In this sense, my final installations are the culmination of experimenting with interwoven fragments of memory, artifacts, material, narratives, and process documentations to form the bigger narrative.

Figure 1: Who Am I? Where is Home? 36"x36", Acrylic on Canvas, 2018

Chapter Two: Logic of Elimination

> Ideologies of U.S. settler colonialism directly informed Australian settler colonialism. South African apartheid townships, the kill-zones in what became the Philippine colony, then nation-state, the checkerboarding of Palestinian land with checkpoints, were modeled after U.S. seizures of land and containments of Indian bodies to reservations. (Tuck 32)

Palestine was another settler colonial project following the success of precedent colonial models in the Americas, Australia and South Africa. The linking of colonial settler experiences around the world reveals that these oppressive practices are controlled and manipulated by a central systematic structure of obliteration and apartheid. Australian anthropologist Patrick Wolfe argues that colonial systems operate by the same settler colonial logic of elimination and state violence embodied in the conception of *terra nullius* or empty land, which is used to justify and support settler colonialism and the dispossession of Indigenous peoples (Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination" 387–409). This deceptive assumption of empty land—meant to erase the Indigenous presence on the land—is compared to the perception of "a Land without People to a People Without Land", an often-repeated Zionist slogan coined by Jewish writer Israel Zangwill and used to rationalize the colonization of Palestine (Said, "The Question" 9; Khalidi, "All That Remains"). Palestinian American theorist Edward Said notes: "Much of the pre-state Zionist ideology that mobilized Eastern European communities for the trek to mandatory Palestine was premised on the virtual absence of inhabitants, on what was often depicted as either completely empty or hopelessly arid land awaiting redemption by Jewish pioneers" (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 22). At a recent conference I attended at the AGO, titled *From Glissant Unfixed and Unbounded*, Palestinian artist and activist Rehab Nazzal recounted a remark made by David Kettler, an American professor, on Nazzal's presentation about *Canada Park in Palestine.* He recalled going door to door as a child to collect money for the Jewish National Fund (JNF), on the claim of establishing a home for Jews on an empty land. I found a

similar account in an article by a Jewish peace activist titled *Why I no longer donate to the Jewish National Fund*: “When I was a child going to a Jewish day school, I was told that where Israel is now there had before been desert, and the JNF had been instrumental in filling it with trees”(Gindin, par. 3). Of course, the overall scheme, as Said puts it, was “to start Israel as if afresh, a state rising from nothing, to take its place among the nations” (“Memory, Inequality, and Power” 22).

In Canada, the equivalence of the empty land concept was propagated by poets, intellectuals and artists alike. For instance, Canadian artist Emily Carr’s paintings of “abandoned villages …with the remaining poles leaning over, rotting in neglect and deterioration” reflect a settler colonialist view of elimination. Equally, her statements describing the totem poles as the glory of “our wonderful west” and “the relics of its primitive greatness” which represent “to us Canadians what the ancient Briton's relics are to the English" (Crosby 220) indicate that she not only appropriated the material culture and heritage of First Nations but also depicted the land as devoid of its original owners. Such systematic structuring of the logic of elimination and settler colonial invasive existence on the claim of primitive absence have led Wolfe to argue that “invasion is a structure, not an event” (Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Transformation” 163).

Chapter Three: Literature Review

As a backdrop to my art-based research, this thesis addresses the reality of settler colonialism in Palestine and elsewhere and investigates approaches towards dismantling its universal claims. In examining the colonial elimination and dissipation of the colonized Others, I compare examples in various settler colonial contexts: Palestine, South Africa, Australia and the Americas. Thus, I draw from anticolonial theorists and authors including Edward Said, Patrick Wolfe, Eve Tuck as well as writings by Rashid Khalidi, Walid Khalidi, Ilan Pappé, Stuart Hall, Franz Fanon and bell hooks. Generally, Said is my primary theoretical influence on the question of Palestine, perhaps in part because he lived in exile as a displaced Palestinian. Moreover, my practice-based research has been guided theoretically by the writing of Judith Butler, Pierre Nora, and Sherry Turkle, among others. In addition to contextualizing my studio work, they have shifted my thinking and inspired me to explore new materials and ways of making. Additionally, I have researched psychological and philosophical ideas on loss and memory. I also discuss my artwork in relation to case studies of anticolonial artworks.

In this chapter, I will lay out the theory behind my motivation and thinking process. My literature review will continue in other chapters. When discussing my work, I will envelope it with a specific context/backdrop as necessary. Later, I will include a chapter documenting narratives as testimonies of some epochal events that have taken place in Palestine.

Material Artifacts as Sites of Memory

> A lieu de mémoire is any significant entity, whether material or non-material in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community. (Nora 7)

In justifying my object-based body of work, I argue that material artifacts can elicit memories. I support my argument with a framework of social and psychoanalytic theories. My work strives

to commemorate people whose lives were taken in acts of violence and oppression. As Butler suggests: “The question that preoccupies me in the light of recent global violence is, who counts as human? Whose lives count as lives? And, finally, what counts for a grievable life?” (Butler 20). My work becomes a way to pay tribute to and honour the souls worth remembering. These are the souls of countless innocent individuals whose lives ended brutally on the orders of the Israeli militia, with the international community turning a blind eye or being actively complicit in it. My artifacts are telling those souls that the memory traces they leave are eternal. Butler’s words speak directly to the Palestinian case:

> But those lives…were also snuffed out brutally and without recourse to any protection, …Will the names of the Palestinians stated in that memorial …ever be brought into public view? (Will we feel compelled to learn how to say these names and to remember them?) … which deaths can be fairly mourned there … we have to consider how the norm governing who will be a grievable human is circumscribed and produced in these acts of permissible and celebrated public grieving, how they sometimes operate in tandem with a prohibition on the public grieving of others' lives. (Butler 37)

In presenting my artworks as objects of memory, I was partly influenced by Nora’s concept of “Les Lieux de mémoire” or “sites of memory”. Although developed in the French context, Nora’s ideas can also be applied to cases of remembrance and collective memory on an international scale, including mine. In accordance with Nora’s definition of memorial entities, my objects act like sites of memory. The individual memory helps form the collective memory in the same way a single story contributes a valuable thread to a larger narrative.

My object-based work reinforces the notion that despite our ephemerality, we always leave traces of memory. This is resonant with the context of Turkle’s text *Things We Think With*. She talks about the memory closet and how she is searching among the objects for traces of her father, while drawing connection between objects and memory. As she notes, “… mine was born in the smell and feel of the memory closet and its objects. That is where the contents of the

memory closet had been so safely contained", and further, "We are on less familiar ground when we consider objects as companions to our emotional lives or as provocations to thought" (Turkle 4–5). Similarly, I see my objects as mnemonic devices that aid in sustaining the collective memory of an event. Narratives, monuments and memorials are all mnemonic devices (Olick, par. 19) that help reconstruct the past in the present.

Collectively, the objects in my work constitute emblems of things that matter. They are semiotic objects carrying deeper meaning behind their physicality. This brings to mind Georges Perec's *Notes Concerning the Objects that are on my Work-table.* The author talks about objects, their significance and ranking based on their sentimental value and the memories they evoke, rather than their function. Regardless of Perec's intentions, I interpret such objects as metaphoric of human psychology: the burdens of life and memories. As he states, "[s]ometimes I would like it to be as empty as possible. But most often, I prefer it to be cluttered almost to excess" (Perec 144). We may wish to be carefree, to clear our minds of memories, but it is impossible. Our tapestry of memories gives our lives meaning and substance. Without them, we would be void entities suspended in the universe. According to Perec, "[t]he weight of the objects it supports helps to keep it steady" and the act of "tidying" up and getting rid of things can be viewed as "activities of withdrawal" (144). Addressing the concept of permanency versus ephemerality Perec notes, "[s]ome will remain for a few minutes, others for a few days, others…will take up permanent residence" (145). The same can be said of people and the traces they leave. While some individuals have enduring impacts, others pass through life with no traces, as if they had never existed. Through my art, I wish to commemorate the land and homes that were left behind, and the original inhabitants of the land: the Palestinians either killed or displaced.

My Practice Through the Lens of Psychoanalysis

I have grounded my practice-based research in philosophical and psychoanalytical theories drawn from past independent readings. In terms of a psychoanalytical framework, my argument is supported by psychoanalytical theories. Throughout my studio practice, I have found a connection between my work process and memory revival. The nature of my work iteration, from process to completed artifacts, along with the process of storytelling and the passing of narratives, contributes to the preservation of memories. The deeper the information is processed, the longer a memory trace will last. German psychoanalyst Hermann Ebbinghaus's experimental study of memory and his discovery of the forgetting curve substantiate this idea. Ebbinghaus posits that memory retention declines over time when there is no attempt to retain it. He also employed a saving method to test his memory retention through rehearsal and repetitions (Murre, par. 9). Likewise, the decay theory, articulated by American psychologist Edward Thorndike, holds that although memory fades due to the mere passage of time, it leaves a trace in the brain which is activated by rehearsal (Thorndike 4). This theory is also enhanced by the memory rehearsal ideas proposed by Fergus I M Craik and Roberts Lockhart. They argue that "whether rehearsal strengthens the trace or merely postpones forgetting depends on what the subject is doing with his rehearsal. Only deeper processing will lead to an improvement in memory" (Craik and Lockhart 681).

I contend that my work provokes the uncanny. My sculptural installations are comprised of distorted bodily fragments and artifacts turned into unfamiliar disfigured objects as a result of violence (figs. 2–10). The idea to create deformed objects has been founded on Sigmund Freud's notion of the "unheimlich" (Freud 345), translated into English as "the uncanny". Originally, it meant the homesickness for the mother's womb. It is the opposite of heimlich, meaning homely or familiar, and thus, not strange. The familiar is repressed within it, since, for Freud, the prefix

"un" in "unheimlich" is the token of repression. It symbolizes the dread of a repressed memory. The uncanny involves the return of a familiar event made strange by repression, with the repressed material returning as an enigma in a way that disrupts reality and unitary identity. According to Freud, the uncanniest objects are mannequins because they evoke the imminence of death in life (345). Similarly, the lifeless objects in my work provoke a primordial uncanny confusion between animate and inanimate states, and between the real and the imagined. The dismembered limbs in my works evoke the uncanny, alerting the spectator to the complexity and absurdity of normalcy.

Figure 2: All That Remains Series, Resin and Wax, 2019

Figure 3: This is NOT a Mask. All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 4: This is NOT a Mask. All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 5: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 6: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 7: Bodily Fragments (detail), All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 8: Bodily Fragments (detail), All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 9: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 10: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Chapter Four: Research Methodologies and Material Exploration

My thesis research uses a multiplatform research methodology that combines practice-based and qualitative research methods. In doing so, I am following Kristen Luker's combination of research methods, which she describes through the metaphor of salsa dancing (Luker 130). As an artist researcher, I find that Luker's approach speaks to my practice-based research which intertwines material exploration with theories and concept development. My qualitative research consists of several methods, including self-reflection or autoethnography (Sullivan 110). As a descendant of dispossessed Palestinians, I have based my research concept on personal and intergenerational/ ancestral narratives and direct experiences. I have also integrated Indigenous methodology to link the Palestinian settler colonial experience and to situate it in a larger context of settler colonialism through comparing literary reviews of Indigenous, Black and Palestinian anticolonial theorists and authors falling under the same umbrella of ongoing colonial histories. In addition, textual analysis has helped shape my thinking and clarify my view of my work as artifacts of remembering. Similarly, the process documentation of my artwork has allowed me to develop a connection between the processes of making and thinking. My qualitative research also includes oral narratives and testimonies, case studies of art-based anticolonial methodologies, investigations into colonial strategies and experiences, archival research methodologies and memory encoding through a combination of objects and narratives. In psychology, the three main ways in which memory can be encoded are visual, acoustic and semantic (Mcleod, par. 4), as well as through gestures and other body language. Correspondingly, my artifacts act as the visual component, while the narrative involves the semantic element through storytelling, and the acoustic is represented by how the audience listens to and perceives the story.

Through the process of making, I explore the role of material culture in the evocation and representation of memory, and the way material objects and semantic narratives can act as agents to revive and preserve collective memory. The choice of material and process documentation elicit memories and enhance the interdisciplinarity of my studio-based research. They are integral to my thinking and reflect the complex process of memory and remembering. For instance, the process of bronze/ metal casting, from start to the finished object, is intertwined with the evolution of my thoughts. The lost wax process, in which wax is replaced by a sturdier material, is akin to the resurrection of those who have been lost. Despite the withering away of their bodies, they continue to live in memory. In every stage of the bronze casting process, and in the numerous and lengthy processes leading to the final object, there is a possibility of failure if one does not pay close attention to minute details and perform each step with meticulous care. With such painstaking work, my fear of possible failures increases. What if my objects do not survive and turn into a pile of unrecognized forms, wiping away the traces of memory? Likewise, collective memories are susceptible to failure. One must work extremely hard to perpetuate memories. One way is through both oral and object-based narratives, passing the stories from one generation to the next, and keeping the memory fresh by circulating it to as many audiences as possible. Much of what we know of the Nakba was transmitted through the telling of firsthand accounts and oral histories passed along through material artifacts.

** See Appendix A for images of process and work iteration.

Chapter Five: The Artwork Entangled

My studio work incorporates an array of materials and techniques: bronze, resin, wood, paper mache, oil, acrylic, 3D printing, laser cutting and a variety of other materials. All the objects in this body of work are intended as memorials for losses resulting from the colonization and occupation of Palestine. As noted earlier, through my work, I aim to disrupt the absurd reality of the ongoing suffering by defamiliarizing the produced objects. This disruption is intended to spark a reaction in the viewers. Hopefully, it will compel them to confront cases of violence and oppression not only in Palestine, but everywhere, since the particularities of my personal–collective narrative resonate globally with other oppressed individuals and minorities. The Nakba constitutes two elements: the people and the land. Thus, my body of work includes two components: body parts representing those who were killed or displaced and artifacts symbolizing the stolen land and plundered homes. The first component is comprised of bodily fragments and incorporates feet cast in bronze, resin and wax, as well as ruptured faces in bronze, titled *All That Remains*.

Exhibit A: All That Remains

The deformation and violent ruptures of the feet and faces indicate the violent manner in which Palestinians were ripped from their homeland, as well as the violence inflicted on their bodies through massacres and ethnic cleansing (figs. 11–21). The idea of absence is also suggested through the absence of the rest of the body. They are not the people but a representation—a constant reminder of those who have been lost. In this group of objects, I focused on a specific body part: the foot. Feet can leave traces or footprints. Despite being ephemeral, footprints symbolize that which remains. They are metaphors for the mental traces, that is, reminders of the people who lived there once and their continuous deep-rooted

connection to land. The feet I create look precious, as memories are precious. I have achieved this effect in one of the installations of resin feet, by raising the sculptures on glass plinths and using lights to emulate the precious collections in a museum setting (figs. 22–28). In another installation, the feet sculptures are placed on the ground, protected from the dirty floor by fancy paper. They are installed near a doorway to resemble how people usually arrange their shoes at the entrance of their homes, thus alluding to both presence and absence simultaneously (figs. 29–30). A third installation, made of a foot supported with metal bars, is placed on a piece of a satin fabric extended from the wall to the ground, with the following text scattered across the fabric: "Feet Leave Traces That Remain When Souls Fly Away" (figs. 31–35). In a fourth installation, one foot is in a clear acrylic cube precariously placed on the ground and secured to a wall with a metal chain. Opposite to it is another foot wrapped with wire and standing outside the cube, creating a dialogue (figs. 36–39). With both feet ruptured below the knees, this installation symbolizes the forced separation of family members by dispersal, killing or a physical wall that traps them on both sides. Also, just as Palestinians are scattered throughout the world, the installations are scattered randomly in the gallery, but primarily near entrances or in hallways.

**See Appendix B for other sculptures/ installations of bodily fragments in other medium.

Figure 11: All That Remains Series, Wax, 2019

Figure 12: All That Remains Series, Wax, 2019

Figure 13: All That Remains Series, Wax, 2019

Figure 14: All That Remains Series, Resin, 2019

Figure 15: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 16: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 17: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 18: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 19: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 20: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

Figure 21: This is NOT a Mask, All That Remains Series, Bronze, 2019

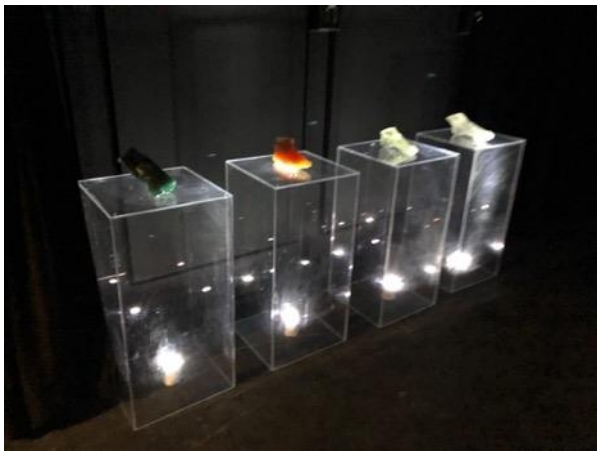

Figure 22: All That Remains Series, Exhibition Installation, Resin, 2019

Figure 23: All That Remains Series, Exhibition Installation, Resin, 2019

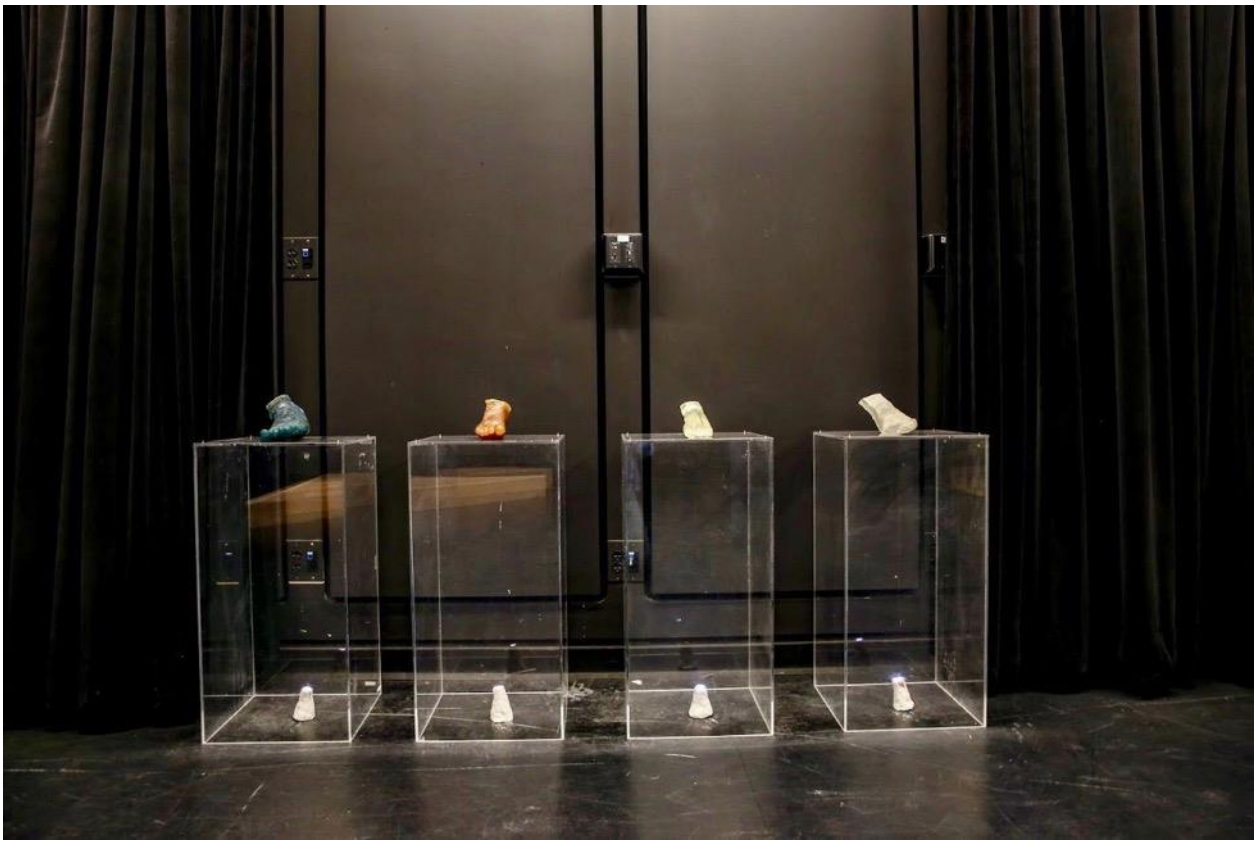

Figure 24: All That Remains Series, Exhibition Installation, Resin, 2019

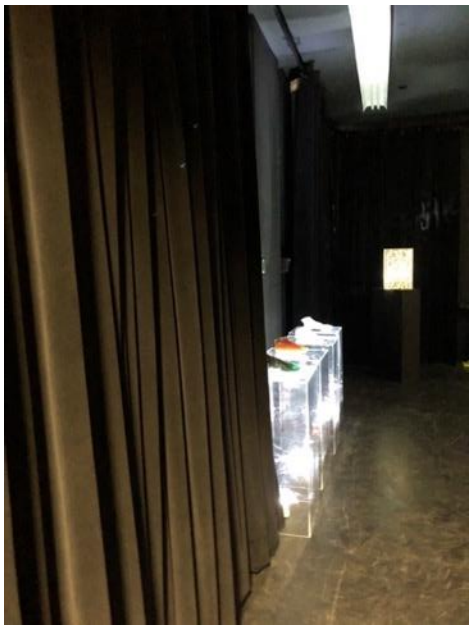

Figure 25: All That Remains Series, Resin, 2019

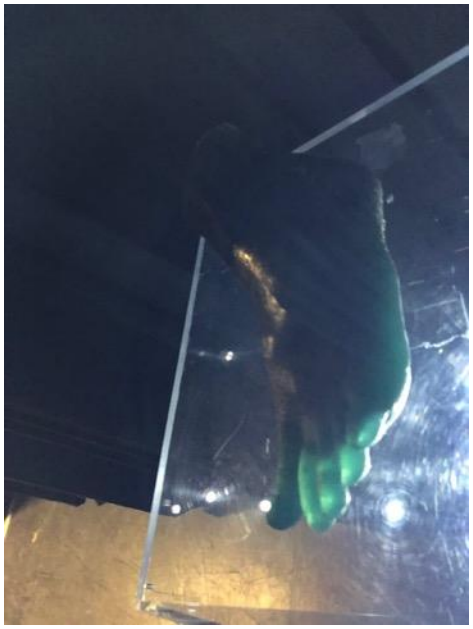

Figure 26: All That Remains Series, Resin, 2019

Figure 27: All That Remains Series, Resin, 2019

Figure 28: All That Remains Series, Resin, 2019

Figure 29: All That Remains Series, Exhibition Installation, Mixed Media, 2019

Figure 30: All That Remains Series, Exhibition Installation, Mixed Media, 2019

Figure 31: Feet-Leave-Traces-That-Remain-When-Souls-Fly-Away, Bronze on Satin, 2019

Figure 32: Feet-Leave-Traces-That-Remain-When-Souls-Fly-Away (detail), Bronze on Satin, 2019

Figure 33: Feet-Leave-Traces-That-Remain-When-Souls-Fly-Away, Bronze on Satin, 2019

Figure 34: Feet-Leave-Traces-That-Remain-When-Souls-Fly-Away (detail), Bronze on Satin, 2019

Figure 35: Feet-Leave-Traces-That-Remain-When-Souls-Fly-Away (detail), Bronze on Satin, 2019

Figure 36: All That Remains, Exhibition Installation, Bronze, Wire and Wax, 2019

Figure 37: All That Remains, Exhibition Installation, Bronze, Wire and Wax, 2019

Figure 38: All That Remains, Exhibition Installation, Bronze, 2019

Figure 39: All That Remains, Exhibition Installation, Bronze, Wire and Wax, 2019

Exhibit B: These Are NOT the Keys

The second component of my thesis work consists of artifacts that represent and trigger memory: the personal possessions left behind when people are either decimated or displaced. Among those objects are picture frames, shoes, and house keys. I have chosen to focus on the most important artifact, the key. Unlike other objects that people leave behind in similar situations, the key is the object that Palestinians carried with them when they locked their doors for the last time before they were displaced. It is a symbol encapsulating everything left behind. The keys to Palestinians' pre-Nakba houses are kept in the hope of returning there one day. Keys are all that is left of their homes and memories, but also, along with their land deeds, they are a proof of belonging, of ownership and of their legal rights in Palestine. They are mnemonic devices carrying emotional as well as legal value. Consequently, keys are dominant in the Palestinian collective memory. They are a national symbol of the Right of Return. "Many Palestinian refugees still keep the keys and title deeds to their old homes. They are faithfully preserved over the years, but they can't go back, and many of the houses were destroyed" (Said, "Film: In Search of Palestine" 15:20). While a Palestinian man is showing Said his keys and deeds in his home at Al Dehisha refugee camp near Bethlehem, the man states, "we have one hope: even after 1000 years, after we die, our children will return. And their children and their children…There is no other way. Oppression never lasts… Will the strong always remain strong, you think?" Said replies "No" (15:39).

Journalist Robert Fisk admits that the first time he ever saw one of the Palestinian keys was in the Shatila camp in Beirut in 1977 ("The Keys to Palestine", par. 27). "I always feel a sense of "shock and awe" when I see those keys – and I held one in my hand again a few days ago" ("I Spoke to, par. 2). While interviewing a Palestinian family there, he asked whether they really thought they would return to Palestine. "At this, the grandmother emerged carrying

something in a handkerchief. 'It is from our home in Haifa,' she said, unwrapping the cloth. And there was her key" ("The Keys to Palestine", par. 27). It is as if the key holds the answer; it is the evidence of their belief, an Amen to their prayers.

I am aware that the key, as a symbol and a mnemonic device, has been widely used, not only by the vast majority of Palestinian artists, but also by the Palestinian community within the larger diaspora. It is only normal for such a powerful symbol to emerge again and again in Palestinian oral histories, literature and artwork. It comes as an instinct for someone who grew up witnessing such keys and hearing narratives that are filled with bitterness, hope, and determination about what the keys represent. Embedded in my memory and in the Palestinian collective memory, the key cannot be considered overused or appropriated when used by any Palestinian artist. The Ayda refugee camp to the north of Bethlehem has a huge metal Key of Return atop the entrance gate as a reminder that they will never forfeit the Right of Return to the homes their parents and grandparents were forced to abandon 72 years ago. One can see graffiti of the key with the phrase "We will return" on the walls of streets in Gaza, the West Bank as well as Palestinian refugee camps in Jordan, Syria and Lebanon. People carry keys around on placards in protest marches and on national occasions. Undeniably, they are so precious that they are kept safe and handed down through subsequent generations.

In an interview held at the Ain al-Hilweh refugee camp in Lebanon, Reuters correspondent Yara Bayoumy, writes that Salah al-Me'ari, a 45-year-old man, "still keeps 18 carefully folded, yellowing pages of land documents and two rusty iron keys" transferred to him through his father and grandfather—as a proof of the properties he was forced to abandon at "Palestinian village of Akbarah, near Safed town north of the Sea of Galilee" where only 15 houses still exist today (Bayoumy, par. 4). "My grandfather gave the papers to his son in 1954 and told him to hold them in trust. And now we hold them after my father died. And we will pass

them on to our children and grandchildren," he said. According to Salah, his dad died of oppression, constantly recalling with tears his house in Palestine "where he used to play and where the family grew figs, olives and walnuts" (par. 4).

In the Shatila refugee camp in Lebanon is a small museum holding pre-Nakba artifacts that people carried when they were displaced in 1948. Among the radio sets, brass coffee pots and land deeds are three large heavy metal keys. Fisk tells a story of one of the three keys belonging to a farmer who lived in the Palestinian border village of Al-Khalisa, now the Israeli town of Kiryat Shmona. The owner, he says, "locked up his home – built of black basalt stones – for the last time on 11 May 1948, when the Jewish Haganah militia refused the villagers' request to stay on their land." Fisk adds, "Just for a few days, mind you, for most of them were convinced – or thought they knew – that they would return after a week or two and re-open those front doors and walk back into the houses many had owned for generations" ("I Spoke to", par. 2). Refugees living in "the squalid camps of Lebanon" (par. 5) can still see their lands when looking across the southern border fence. This narrative is similar to the one my grandmother often told about my grandfather burying his money in a jar in his orange orchard, thinking that they would be back after a week once the shelling in Jaffa stopped. They never returned. However, they held onto their keys even though they knew they had lost access to their homes, since "[t]he new owners of those homes forbade any return and then changed the locks" ("The Keys to Palestine", par. 2).

Immediately after its war on Palestine, Israel closed the borders and issued its Law of Return in 1950, which prohibited the return to their homes, towns and villages of any displaced Palestinians expelled by Zionist militias from 1948 forward, despite the United Nations Resolution 194 of December 1948 stipulating the rightful return of all Palestinians to their homes. At the same time, it allowed, facilitated and recruited the migration of Jews from all over

the world to Palestine. Twenty years after the fact, the borders were opened when the Zionist state occupied and annexed the rest of Palestine in 1967, that is, Gaza, and the West Bank, in addition to the Syrian Golan Heights and Egyptian Sinai Peninsula. Therefore, those who stayed, including families who had been separated from each other in the 1948 Nakba, were finally able to visit relatives who were then displaced to Gaza and the West Bank. Every time my aunt came to visit from Jaffa, she would re-enact the moment when she and her mother and sister were finally able to reunite with their brothers and sisters who had all been dispersed in Tulkarem, Nablus, Gaza, and Jordan. She would perform how she walked towards her brother with wide stumbling steps and open arms, her knees failing and bending as she stuttered, "Br..brother, brother!" At the time, my paternal grandfather refused to visit his home in Jaffa. He could not tolerate seeing his home and land inhabited by others. His family, as well as that of my grandmother, had fled to neighbouring Arab countries so he never saw any of them again. His sons (my uncles), left Gaza at 18 to attend university in Cairo, but they were never allowed to return. My grandfather died from sorrow and bitterness. I was only six months old.

At this point, it is fitting to mention the Museum of Memory. The museum, described by Fisk as a "shabby" hovel, is run by Mohamed Issi Khatib, a retired doctor whose family was displaced in 1948 to the "slums of Chatila" ("I Spoke to", par. 6). Fastened to its outer left wall is a sign inscribed as "Museum of Memory" in English, Arabic and French (fig. 40). According to Fisk, Khatib places the blame on the British for the loss of Palestine. "'You did this,' he says, smiling in complicity because we all know the history of the 101-year old Balfour Declaration." This document, the Balfour Declaration supports the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine, while disregarding the majority of the Palestinian population, referring to them only as "existing non-Jewish communities" (par. 14). When asked whether the Palestinians are to be blamed in any of this, Khatib answered that his parents made a mistake leaving Palestine in the

1948 expulsion. They should have stayed despite the dangers and the high possibility of dying there. “What a bitter conclusion,” comments Fisk. “Many Palestinians did stay. But many others stayed and died – think Deir Yassin [massacre]” (par. 18). He concludes by saying that Khatib’s “little museum and its keys are a symbol of regret rather than hope” (par. 21). I would add that they are expressions of bitterness, loss and oppression. I can relate to Khatib’s sentiments. My siblings and I always blamed our grandmother for leaving. We wished my grandparents had stayed.

Figure 40: Museum of Memory, Shatila Refugee Camp, Lebanon. Photo credit: Duraid Munajim, 2018

In my installation, *These Are NOT the Keys*, I use a grid of 72 keys with a board of light emitting diodes (LED) displaying a poem by Mahmoud Darwish in both English and Arabic. Facing the installation is a metal bench with its legs signifying stacks of books (figs 4–44). I chose to make 72 keys to mark the number of years since the Nakba. In fact, the time of my thesis exhibition, April 2020, coincides with the actual anniversary of this event. Although the formal commemoration day is on May 15, a day after Israeli Independence Day, April is usually referred to as “Black April”. Nakba commemorations take place in April, marking the fall of Palestine and the massacres perpetrated by the Jewish gangs including that of Deir Yassin carried

out on April 9. The mass Palestinian exodus began in April of 1948. Keys of Return are usually the stars of such commemorative events. My thesis exhibition contributes another way to remember the Nakba. Since my installation is a memorial site for the pivotal Nakba, the exhibition is connected to various commemorative sites and events throughout the Palestinian diaspora.

Figure 41: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Outdoors Installation, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 42: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 43: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 44: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2019

The keys are cast in bronze, aluminum and iron. The variety of materials reflects class distinctions and demonstrates how this upheaval affected Palestinians of all classes, colour and religion, rendering it a collective experience. While bronze or brass are among the most

expensive and sturdy metals, many of the original keys were often made of iron, hence their heavy weight. There is also variation in the colours of the keys. They are treated with cupric and ferric patina as well as rust to reflect age. They also vary in shape and size. Some are bent and some have damaged bits. The keys are meant to be deformed and thus non-functional. The deformation signifies the sense of hopelessness in view of the political status quo. They become provocative, unfamiliar objects in size, purpose and form, thereby reflecting the absurdity of all the injustices inflicted by humans on fellow humans, especially at the hands of those who had experienced recent forms of oppression and victimization themselves. Additionally, this depiction of disfigured keys suggests that the keys no longer hold functional values but are mere objects of memory that connect them to the past of their owners. Along with the emotional value they hold as symbol of ancestral property ownership, they possess a hidden force uniting Palestinians, stemming from our enduring belief in the right of return. Thus, the keys symbolize our ongoing resistance to the Occupation forces. The title of the installation, *These Are NOT the Keys*, signifies that the keys in the installation are not the original keys but rather memorial artifacts, facsimiles of the originals. The negation and the presence of the keys in a display mode represent the absence of the homes that these keys reference (figs. 45–53).

Figure 45: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 46: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 47: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 48: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron, and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 49: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 50: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, 2019

Figure 51: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, 2019

Figure 52: These Are NOT the Keys, Wax, 2019

Figure 53: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, 2019

The keys are installed in groups of ten in seven rows. The eighth row has two keys at the beginning, while the rest of the spots are left empty to indicate the continuous process of colonizing Palestine and the unresolved status of Palestinians in forced exile and forbidden to return home. The keys are hung on long nails fastened to the wall, representing the original way Palestinians hung their keys by their doors. The light is focused on the installation in a way that casts shadows of the keys on the wall. The installation is divided by a programmable LED sign installed at the level of the bench, to invite the audience to sit on the bench and read the text displayed—a poem by Palestinian national poet Mahmoud Darwish (figs.54&55), titled *The Earth is Closing on us* (1982). It reads as follows:

The Earth is closing on us
pushing us through the last passage
and we tear off our limbs to pass through.
The Earth is squeezing us.
I wish we were its wheat
so we could die and live again.
I wish the Earth was our mother
so she'd be kind to us.
I wish we were pictures on the rocks
for our dreams to carry as mirrors.
We saw the faces of those who will throw
our children out of the window of this last space.
Our star will hang up mirrors.
Where should we go after the last frontiers?
Where should the birds fly after the last sky?
Where should the plants sleep after the last breath of air?
We will write our names with scarlet steam.
We will cut off the hand of the song to be finished by our flesh.
We will die here, here in the last passage.
Here and here our blood will plant its olive tree.

Figure 54: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Outdoors Installation, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

Figure 55: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Outdoors Installation, Bronze, Iron and Aluminium, 2020

The LED lights repurpose the keys and the text displayed provides another level of interaction. Although Darwish's poem addresses the displacement of Palestinians and their various exiles, the text can be interpreted to have a larger global dimension. "The Earth is closing

on us, pushing us through the last passage…. Where should we go after the last frontiers?" These lines could also allude to the environmental crisis the Earth is facing today as a result of warfare, stemming from imperialistic expansionist greed. The destruction of nature for profit is causing the Earth to collapse. It is humans' own folly that is taking the earth to its downfall. In Australia, climate change is causing more frequent and devastating bushfires due to drought and rising global temperatures. The recent fires have been raging since September 2019, scorching over 27 million acres, killing approximately one billion animals and at least 30 people. With constantly increasing temperatures, what if this fire continues to expand? Then where do the people go? Taking this discussion back to the specific colonial context of the Palestinians and the atrocities perpetrated against them, Israel has contributed to the destruction of the environment in several ways. Not only does the damage affect the Palestinian populations trapped behind ghetto walls or checkpoints, but it also adds to the global crisis. The Israeli military's frequent assaults against Palestinians using internationally prohibited weapons, including radioactive depleted uranium and white phosphorus, have increased the levels of toxicity and contributed significantly to air, water and soil pollution (Qumsieh, par. 7). Ultimately, such substances leave both immediate and long-term impacts on the population's health and environment. Furthermore, Israel's feverish confiscation of Palestinian land and its construction of Jewish settlements and industrial projects damage the environment irreparably. This process requires the uprooting of hundreds of thousands of fruit and olive trees. Bulldozing land leads to increasing drought and soil erosion. Jewish settlements deplete water resources from Palestinian aquifers, so Palestinians suffer from a scarcity of water (par. 6).

The frequent bombardment of Palestinians, which results in the deaths and maiming of many innocent civilians, also leads to long-term environmental damage designed to eliminate the Palestinian presence. Epidemics such as typhoid, cholera and salmonella (Kubovich, par. 15), in

addition to the growing incidences of cancers, birth defects and infertility are all results of Israel's occupation and military attacks. According to a study carried out by RAND Corporation, (Study, par. 15), polluted water is the leading cause of child mortality in Gaza. In a report published in 2012, the U.N. humanitarian coordinator Maxwell Gaylard noted that if no action is taken, Gaza will no longer "be a liveable place in 2020 and it is already difficult now" (AlJazeera, "UN Warns", par. 1). It is already 2020. Thus, there will be no place for Palestinians to go, not only in terms of displacement and being pushed into exile, but in terms of the living conditions being viable for the remaining Palestinians.

The harsh conditions have driven many Palestinians to escape their unbearable lives by migrating to neighbouring Arab and European countries. The Palestinians of Gaza have been selling their properties to afford the costs of escaping, including payment to the border brokers and sea pirates who "secure" their journeys to the unknown. Although many of them drown in the sea or die while sneaking across land borders, some do manage to escape with no intention of returning. In such cases, I wonder if their border exits are facilitated by Israel to push more Palestinians out of Palestine. Arguably, it is a scheme to depopulate the land of its original residents and disperse Palestinians all over the world so they can eventually wither away as a nation/ethnicity. Hence, my work contributes to the ongoing narrative and an anchoring or assertion of "Palestinianity".

Foreign Body

> Moreover, it is not simply the oddity of unusual juxtapositions that we are faced with here. We are all familiar with the disconcerting effect of the proximity of extremes, or, quite simply, with the sudden vicinity of things that have no relation to each other; the mere act of enumeration that heaps them all together has a power of enchantment all its own. (Foucault, "The Order of Things" xvii)

According to Foucault, "we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed" (Foucault, "Of Other Spaces" 22). The LED sign is a foreign

body associated with modernity and commerce juxtaposed against the rustic keys. The scrolling LED text is not subtle. This jarring disruption of the keys can allude to the way Palestinians' lives and their sense of home, security and belonging have been disrupted by Zionist settler colonialism, another invention of modernity. The juxtaposition creates an interaction between the seemingly old mnemonic keys and the modern LED sign, suggesting a past that continues into the present. Michel Foucault based his debates, more than once, on unusual juxtapositions. Despite their paradoxical appearance, they share similar qualities in terms of relaying a message and the fact that they have both started in the past but continue in the present. While the Nakba occurred in 1948, it did not end then. Today, more than 70 years later, Palestinians are still being displaced and dispersed. Many still suffer daily under military occupation and apartheid. The same can be said of the LED. Although it goes back to the past, it dominates the modern urban landscape around the world. Moreover, LED signs are the most common and most effective advertising strategy used to attract attention in public spaces. They are also used to circulate information, which is often a reminder of the colonial media machine that reflects colonial narratives. The unique properties of the LED and its adaptation to digital communications made possible the creation of the first LED flat screen TV. Thus, LED technology is connected to one of the most powerful modes of disseminating narratives and misconceptions. Therefore, incorporating LED signage in an art context is a form of resistance, a way to narrate the perspective of the oppressed in the face of the oppressor's dominant narrative.

Exhibit C: This is NOT the Archive

The installation *These Are NOT the Keys* also includes a bench on which viewers can sit facing the keys, facilitating reflection on the text and the whole work (figs. 56–57). The bench is made out of a combination of steel bars that are processed to rust and bronze legs to correspond to the material of the keys. The metal bars of the bench signify the physical and political barriers

facing Palestinians (figs. 58&59). In the middle of the bench is an old, open book that one may be tempted to grab and explore. However, the book pages are cast in metal and thus inaccessible (fig. 60). In place of the legs, there are two stacks of old books in bronze. (fig. 61). Placed under the bench, the books represent the archive that is hidden away, despite its historical, cultural and legal significance. To gain access to the material, seekers/researchers need to dig and make it available. The title *This is NOT the Archive* is a reference to the absence of the Palestinian archive locked deeply within Israeli institutions.

** See Appendix C for more images and other installation scenarios.

Figure 56: Viewers sit on the Bench Facing the Keys

Figure 57: Viewers sit on the Bench Facing the Keys

Figure 58: This is NOT the Archive, Steel and Bronze, 2020

Figure 59: This is NOT the Archive, Steel and Bronze, 2020

Figure 60: An Old, Open Book Placed on the Bench

Figure 61: Bench Legs, Work in Progress, Bronze, 2020

The Archive—Looted and Hidden

> After the Palestinian People were expelled from their homes, Israeli forces came in and quite methodically proceeded to seize all of the contents in their houses. … [That includes] Khalil Sakakini's library at Jerusalem, one of the most important Palestinian private libraries, Lawyers whose entire offices and files were seized. To this day, if you go to archive, you will find Palestinian Lawyers category. The fact that they were taken away is a sign of contempt for Palestinian History. (Mahmoud Yazbak, professor at University of Haifa, qtd. in Aljazeera, "History Suppressed" 1.44&2.57)

Colonizers have used an assortment of elimination strategies besides expelling, imprisoning and ethnic cleansing. The destruction and disappearance of archives and remnants of cultural heritage have long been an insidious means of erasing Indigenous people from the historical narrative. I argue that building and preserving the archive is one important tool towards claiming collective memory, as well as countering the colonial narrative and the systemic attempts at effacement. Undoubtedly, artists and intellectuals play a major role in emancipating the archive and strengthening the collective memory of a people—and eventually dismantling colonial powers. "Despite all sorts of efforts to do away with us politically as a people, we had continued to exist

and resist as a people," notes Said in the preface of *After the Last Sky, 1986*, a book that was named after a line in the previously mentioned Darwish poem. This famous memoir was a collaborative work with Swiss photographer Jean Mohr as a response to colonial attempts to erase any traces of Palestinian existence and obfuscate the crimes committed against the Palestinian people. Initially, Mohr's accumulated photographs, taken during several decades of visits to refugee camps, were to be displayed at an exhibition for the U.N.'s International Conference on the Question of Palestine in 1983. However, Mohr was not allowed to include any descriptive legends with the photographs. Finally, a compromise was reached to permit captions noting the locations only, "but not one more word" (Said, "After the Last Sky" 3).

The photographs and accompanying text in *After the Last Sky*, uncover silenced narratives of everyday Palestinian life in refugee camps and in exile following the 1948 tragedy of displacement. While they depict the Palestinian struggles and injustices, they reveal aspects of the complex Palestinian identity. Scattered around the globe, many Palestinians were declared stateless and denied basic human rights, including travel documents. They became numbers with their Palestinian national identity annulled. "You must think of the refugee-peasants with no prospect of ever returning home, armed only with a ration card and an agency number" (Said, "Reflections" 175–176). Consequently, these photographs negate the dehumanizing stereotype of Palestinians as terrorists. The book succeeded in emancipating a historically important archive: Mohr's photographs, while the bulk of the Palestinian archival material remains sealed and hidden in the Israeli intelligence complexes. Of course, in order for Zionist settlers to make a place their home, they had to make the Palestinian inhabitants disappear, to turn them into ghosts not to be heard of or from ever again.

Not only did the Zionist invaders steal the land and appropriate its culture, but they also robbed the Palestinian people of the tangible evidence of their history. In the Nakba, they

destroyed Palestinian public and private libraries and many of the artifacts that are proof of a pre-existing culture. At the same time, the Israeli state and militia plundered and looted many records from Palestinian homes, libraries and institutions in 1948. Again in 1982, when they invaded Lebanon and looted both the research center of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Institute of Palestinian Studies, they removed whole chapters of Palestinian history and concealed it in Israeli archival institutions (Hijazi, par. 1). Dr. Sabry Jiryes, Director of the PLO's research center, reported that the invading troops removed the "entire library of 25,000 volumes in Arabic, English and Hebrew, a printing press, microfilms, manuscripts and archives"—and even rubber stamps. Dr. Jiryes also stated that during their week in the seven-story building, Israeli soldiers smashed all the furniture and equipment, leaving the place a total mess littered with pieces of twisted metal shelves and filing cabinets. "They used explosives to pry the safe open". He estimated the losses at $1.5 million, saying that the documents looted are "invaluable and possibly irreplaceable… they have plundered our Palestinian cultural heritage" (par. 4). More than 98% of the documents remain sealed and concealed in the inner recesses of the Israeli archives and libraries under the pretext of security and privacy. Researchers are denied access to them. According to Akevot, the Israeli NGO Institute for Israeli Palestinian Conflict, of the 14.8 million files, including 400 million documents, only about 1.29% are accessible to the public (Aljazeera, "History Suppressed" 7. 09).

Israel has no right to act as a gatekeeper to the Palestinian's archive. The Israeli government is deliberately obliterating traces of Palestinians, forcing the world to forget they ever existed as a nation on the land now known as Israel. Looting the archival record denies today's Palestinians the right to know their past and connect to their present. This censorship of the archive and material evidence aimed at cultural erasure and historical denial is an insidious expression of power. Moreover, Israel continues to systematically conceal vital records of

colonial schemes and evidence of the atrocities perpetrated in the1948 expulsion of Palestinians and the annihilation of whole villages, evidence of war crimes of a terrorist state.

While studying the history of propagandist Zionist photography that was used to distort facts about Palestine to justify its colonization, Rona Sela, a researcher of visual history and a lecturer at Tel Aviv University, was permitted rare access to some of the hidden archive. Through her 20 years of research in the Israeli Military archives, she concluded that it was intentionally obscured from the formal narrative of Israel (Sela, "The Genealogy"). Her interest in digging out evidence of the obliterated culture and history of the place resulted in the discovery of a trove of photographs looted from a photo studio belonging to Kalil Rasas, one of the founders of Palestinian photojournalism. In an archive of Palestinian films and cinematographs, including films by Palestinian visual artist Ismael Shamout ("The Genealogy"), Sela discovered some aerial photos of Palestinian villages and towns that were used by the military militia Hagana to map out strategies and facilitate the conquest (Aljazeera, "History Suppressed" 4:53) (fig. 62). She states that when she went back to the archive three years later, she was told that it no longer existed. She also reveals, "When I started working with material from the archive, I saw photos and notes written on them by the censors and archivists. For example, Palestinians are described as terrorists, as gangs. This taught me how the materials go through a process of rewriting [to]aid or benefit the Zionist narrative" (5:54).

Former Israeli chief archivist Yaakov Lazovik criticized Israel's censorship of archival material which he says could expose the Israeli "human rights violations" that are "unprecedented in the democratic world" (Aderet, "General's Final Confession", par. 12). He asserts that "historical war crimes are being concealed under the guise of "national security concerns" while much of the material has nothing to do with security issues. The outgoing archivist concedes that "most of the material in the archives will never see the light of day, and

the remainder will be opened under unreasonable restrictions, without transparency or public oversight" (par. 3).

Figure 62: Aerial Photo of Palestinian villages and towns that were used by the military militia Hagana to map out strategies and facilitate the conquest, video still, Aljazeera

Chapter Six: Testimonies: The Complete Crime

Besides the erasure of the Palestinian identity and the total removal of Palestinians, looting and hiding the archive aim at covering up the atrocities perpetrated in 1948 and thereafter. Hence, one unilateral narrative would be fed to the world. For this reason, I decided to use my thesis paper as a platform to document some first-hand testimonies that reveal the brutal massacres that took place during the Nakba. Among many other massacres, Deir Yassin is one of the most infamous. It became a symbol of the Nakba because it was a pivotal event that commenced the flight of over 750,000 Palestinians due to the intentional propagandist impetus aimed at intimidating the Palestinians, forcing them to flee to avoid a similar fate. Jewish historian Benny Morris notes in *Righteous Victims,* a book based on archival research in the Israeli military's archive, that "Deir Yassin had a profound demographic and political impact: it was followed by mass flight of Arabs from their locales" (Aderet, "Testimonies", par.15). He expresses his shock upon learning that the militia's atrocities expanded far beyond massacres than he had assumed: "To my surprise, there were also many cases of rapes of Arab girls and women. In the months of April–May 1948, units of the Haganah were given operational orders that stated explicitly that they were to uproot the villagers and expel them and destroy the villages" so they would have no place of which to return to (Shavit, par 8).

Before delving into more testimonies, I would like to point out a significant tendency. When Jewish historians or perpetrators of massacres describe the 1948 Nakba, they refer to the inhabitants as "the Arabs". This consistent avoidance of naming or identifying the original inhabitants of the land is shocking to me. Names matter. Avoiding the use of the word "Palestinians" is an attempt to delete them from the history of the place. After all, calling them by their actual names goes against all the schemes and endeavours to erase everything pertaining to their history and existence. It is a way to obscure the Palestinian identity. It is also used to

justify the occupation of the land of Others. Quite often, we hear right-wing journalists and social media extremists say, “There are 22 Arab states, so why don’t they go and mingle with them?” Following such logic, then an alternate question would be why doesn’t Europe reabsorb its former Jewish citizens? Of course, this would never happen because placing Israel in the heart of the Middle East, was from the beginning a part of the bigger colonial project that serves imperialist interests, mainly those of the United States. The labelling of this ongoing conflict as a religious one is a pretext to obfuscate the ugly truth of occupation to further capitalist and imperialistic expansionist goals. It is not about the religions of Jews versus Muslims or Christians. The motherland is generous enough to accommodate people of all religions, ethnicities and races. If it were not for politics and power, people of many faiths would still be able to coexist in ultimate peace.

Despite Israeli efforts to cover up its atrocities and to avoid damaging its image by defending its claim to have the "most moral" army in the world (Cook, “Why”, par. 3), its crimes continue to surface through confessions of Israeli/ Jewish military leaders and soldiers as well as scholars’ investigations. In March 2016, *Haaretz* published a soldier's letter “detailing the execution of hundreds of Palestinian men, women and children in the village of Dawaymeh, near Hebron” in 1948. In addition, Teddy Katz, a Jewish Master’s student at the University of Haifa, collected recorded testimonies of 40 eyewitnesses as evidence of the massacre of more than 200 people at the coastal village of Tantura, south of Haifa. According to these testimonies, “half the civilians were shot in a rampage. The rest were marched to the beach, where the men were separated from the women and children. They were taken to a wall near the mosque where they were shot in the back of the head” (Pilger, par. 1).

Many of the Israeli massacres were perpetrated as a tactic designed to terrorize the Palestinian inhabitants and force them to flee. Military commanders Uzi Narkiss testified that in

1967, he and “other commanders” were aiming at ethnically cleansing most of the Palestinians under the guise of fighting in self-defence: "Within 72 hours we'll drive out all the Arabs from the West Bank" (Cook, Why, part. 8). There are many similar instances of this ethnic cleansing, including the 1948 Deir Yassin and Dawaymeh, and 1956 Kafr Qasem massacres. The Mukhtars (leaders) of Deir Yassin had made a peaceful agreement with the Jewish militia. Previously, they had received a promise that Deir Yassin would be left in peace (Zochrot, par. 8, and El Fassed, pars. 3–4). However, given Deir Yassin’s strategic location on the hilltop connecting Jerusalem with Tel Aviv, the Israeli occupying militants had their eyes set on it. They had plans to drive out all of the non-Jewish residents and to establish a Jewish colony there. The villagers, numbering about 750, were primarily stonecutters from the nearby quarry. They were slaughtered and dumped into these same quarries (Aderet, “Testimonies”, par. 19).

While she was investigating the psychiatric hospital erected on the remains of the abandoned houses of Deir Yassin, Israeli filmmaker Neta Shoshani was led to research on the massacre. *Born in Deir Yassin*, a film codirected with Tamara Erde, 2017, is based on interviews and testimonies with the members of the Ergun and Stern gangs who participated in the evacuation of Palestine. Some of these individuals were ex-convicts and immigrants to Palestine in the pre-Nakba years. Having been assisted in their escape from prison, they were later handed senior positions in the newly designated state of Israel. Yehoshua Zettler, for instance, was a murderer and bank robber who had managed to escape from prison multiple times before he joined the Lehi gang as its chief of operations (*The Telegraph*, pars. 9–10). Zettler was also responsible for planning and carrying out the assassination of UN envoy Count Folke Bernadotte, a Swedish diplomat who represented the United Nations Security Council as a mediator following the 1948 Nakba (pars. 4–6).

According to the Israeli version of the event, only 110 Palestinians were massacred in the Deir Yassin (Aderet, "Testimonies", par. 8), yet, according to Red Cross and other reports, about 245 Palestinians were killed on that day (Zochrot, par. 9). These victims include men, women, pregnant women and children who were brutally murdered by the Haganah and other armed Jewish gangs. Many of the villagers were captured and paraded in trucks through newly founded Jewish neighbourhoods before being executed (Deir Yassin, par. 2). The testimonies of some of the perpetrators indicate that many more were massacred than the Israeli officials declare. Avraham Ben Yaacov testifies: "The smells were horrible. They brought all the bodies to the village entrance, piled and burned them" (Shoshani 5:07), while Irgun member Tzvi Bezalel confirms that "[T]here were many corpses. It took us hours to bury them. It was very hard. We were afraid that people will come and take photos, and give us a bad reputation… So, we wanted to make the corpses disappear… I remember their faces" (6:12). In describing how the Palestinians were fleeing from their homes in the aftermath of the massacres, Yehoshua Zettler, the Lehi commander of the operation, proudly narrates: "They ran like cats… One house after the other...we exploded and moved on, when you are done with one house, you start shooting at the next one. When you get to the third house, they already ran away, you see? In a few hours… half of the village is already gone" (Shoshani 0:50) When asked what they did after Deir Yassin, he replied: "Forward, to the next village" (1:19).

The narrative that people who died in the massacres were fighters and that the killing happened in self-defence in an exchange of fire is contradicted by the testimonies of some of the perpetrators. Yair Tsaban, a later government minister, relates that after the massacre, he was sent with other fellows to bury the corpses of the dead. "The rationale was that the Red Cross was liable to show up at any moment and it was necessary to blur the traces because publication of pictures and testimonies about what had happened in the village would be very damaging to

the image of our War of Independence" (Aderet, "Testimonies", par. 24). He elaborates: "I saw a fair number of corpses. I don't remember encountering the corpse of a fighting man. Not at all. I remember mostly women and old men" (par. 14). Tsaban further testified that girls were lined up against a wall and shot with a submachine gun, while "an old man and a woman, sitting in the corner of a room with their faces to the wall, and they are shot in the back. That cannot have been in the heat of battle. No way" (par. 14). Shraga Peled, 91 at the time of the film, was in the Haganah Information Service at the time of the massacre. He testifies being sent to the village after the fact to document the massacre. "When I got to Deir Yassin, the first thing I saw was a big tree to which a young Arab fellow was tied. And this tree was set on fire. They had tied him to it and burned him. I photographed that" (par. 19). He also relates photographing other dozens of corpses dumped into a nearby quarry that he spotted at a distance. The photographs were handed to his commanders, says Peled (par. 19).

Uri Milstein, an Israeli history professor, denies that any massacres occurred in any of the villages. He has written many articles asserting that the Deir Yassin massacre is "a mendacious myth" and "a blood libel" and that the "Arabs" were killed in "a battle in a built-up area" (Aderet, "Testimonies", par. 22). Countering this claim, Mair Pa'il, a Hagana information service officer, provides an eyewitness description of what happened: "I don't need photos, I saw the massacre. The man next to me photographed it. Other people saw the pictures. And the massacre was much worse than the pictures" (Shoshani 1:19). He mentions men, women and children being lined up along a wall and shot. "As a result, the Arabs that survived ran away terrified. Some women weren't shot, some were sitting and crying, holding [their] children some of whom were shot." When asked about whereabouts of the photographs, he replied, "I assumed that the Zionist interest is to hide them… because it was a massacre!" (Shoshani 3:57)

Pa'il is one of the few who shows remorse in the film. He says he did not participate in the massacre. When he found out that the two Zionist militias Irgun and Lehi "were planning to conquer the village of Deir Yassin", he states that he agreed to go too, but … once they'd taken over the village, the Irgun went from house to house and made sure that any Arabs who stayed went straight to heaven " (Shoshani 2:47). Conversely, Moshe Idelshtein, a Stern Gang Intelligence officer, claims, "only later on, we realized this horrible thing. So many were killed. It was a shocking sight. Women and children hacked to pieces" (Erde 1:30). When asked if he has any regrets, he responds, "Not at all, why should I regret?" (1:49). Similarly, Benzion Cohen, Irgun commander in charge, declares proudly, "We tried to bomb as much as possible and to kill as many as possible. It's a shame there weren't a few more battles like Dier Yassin's so that there will be no more Arabs here, except in photos" (3:18). Another officer remarks that what happened is "Nothing worth talking about!" (4:41) Assuming that the allegations that the Palestinians perished in a fair battle is true, the Palestinian "fighters" would have been fighting against the invaders to defend their families, homes and existence and would have been, in this case, justified and legitimate.

Many decades after the fact, as with other massacres, Israel is still hiding the archival materials. Both Shoshani and *Haaretz* petitioned a decade ago to get the Israeli military to release archival evidence of what had taken place. The petition was denied by the High Court of Justice in fear that the "publication of the pictures was liable to damage the state's foreign relations and violate the 'respect for the dead!'" (Aderet, "Testimonies", par. 21) Nevertheless, Shoshani somehow managed to get hold of some pictures documenting some of the orphaned children of Deir Yassin. Those are also available at Dar Al Tifil School (House of Children), the orphanage that housed 55 orphans of Deir Yassin. Following the massacre, the Israeli military collected the orphans from the village and dropped them at the Jaffa gate to fend for themselves

(Yael, 24:30). Hind Husseini, a Palestinian resident from Jerusalem, took 55 of them into her custody. She transformed her family home into an orphanage and dedicated her life to taking care of the children.

B.h. Yael, a professor at OCAD University, produced and directed a documentary on Deir Yassin called *Deir Yassin Remembered*. Whereas Shoshani's film is based on testimonies of perpetrators, Yael focuses on the survivors of Deir Yassin and other residents and activists from neighbouring areas. "The village is still intact", remarks Jeff Halper, an Israeli historian and activist. "Deir Yassin is one of the few villages that remained intact after the 1948…[It] is now a mental health centre" (3.15). Zeinab Ackel, a survivor who was 20 years old at the time of the massacre, recalls, "I was so happy, and I was like a little princess living with my family. I wish I had died before what happened in Deir Yassin" (0:12s). Ackel not only witnessed the massacres but also lost numerous family members in Deir Yassin including two sons and one stepson. According to Ackel, she lost a total of 27 people of her family, massacred on one doorstep (9:10). Raneen Jeries provides another testimony confirming the enormous value of passing down oral histories. Jeries, a member of the Zochrot Learning Center on the Nakba, states: "I know a little bit about Deir Yassin. If my grandmother didn't tell me, there is no one that can tell me. Especially in Israel, the education ministry and the government [have a] policy in the schools not to learn, not to tell people about what happened, just to make it like Israelian [narrative]" (1:49). Fahmi Nashashibi, a Palestinian hotelier from Jerusalem adds, "most of the history that is transferred from one generation to another is through words from the parents to the kids" (1:40). Eitan Bronstein, director of Zochrot, says: "In the schools they teach the pupil something like more or less we had war, we fight it, it was a just war of course, we fought for our independent state and because of the Holocaust … and the Arabs wanted to kick us from here and all these stories, and most of the war most of what we did was justified" (20:07).

In a film produced by the BBC, *In Search of Palestine, Edward Said's Return Home,* Said states that while he lost his home, "others lost much more during Al Nakba… the most traumatic event [that] was calculated to spread panic". Om Salah, one of Deir Yassin's survivors interviewed by Said, lost 25 family members, including her uncles and brothers. In trying to protect one brother, she offered the militant 250 British pounds for his life. As Om Salah states, "I said: please don't kill him; he's only a schoolboy… He took the money and held down my brother… then he shot my brother in the head five times" (Said, "Film: In Search of" 8:02).

It is important to recount these testimonies in my thesis. They form a significant part of the oral history archive. Relevant history has been obscured and not much was written about what took place in 1948. Most what we know was communicated through oral narratives. We came to know about many events of the Nakba through the vehicle of family stories. These powerful narratives perpetuate the memory and counteract the twisted Israeli version of the events which depicts what happened as "justified". Hence my desire to document these testimonies. It is a way of building an authentic archive to counteract the Israeli government's looting and sealing away of the archival material. These testimonies are confessions refuting the distorted versions of history. Even though some of the videotaped testimonies are a form of documentation, we cannot trust they will be preserved. The future of technologies and the fate of digital documentation is not secured.

It is no secret that history books are blatantly biased, presenting the past through each country's dominant lens. Generally, the accepted history is written by the powerful who have the means to direct it towards their ideological ends. For example, when he was in grade seven last year, my son wrote an essay about the Nakba. I was shocked by how twisted and sanitized the 'official' facts are. It was obvious that the resources he consulted were written by the dominant powers in a way that normalized what had happened. As someone who lived the consequences of

the Nakba and grew up with firsthand stories of the events, I could detect the differences in the competing narratives. The terminology that Palestinians use to describe the facts are different from those fabricated by Zionists. My son was using the language and narrative of the colonizer. That is why it is important to listen to oral histories/herstories, to evoke the collective memory of what took place in Palestine, and to pass those authentic narratives to subsequent generations. It is appalling that Palestinians are denied access to their own archive and history, while Israeli scholars have access, albeit limited. This archival access denial should not be surprising, since Palestinians have been denied access to their own land. As Sela argues: "I don't think that Palestinian history should be deprived of documents and evidence. It is important to return the material to the owners so that it won't be me, someone with privilege and access who writes the Palestinians' history, but rather, Palestinian researchers themselves" (Aljazeera, "History Suppressed" 9:11).

Chapter Seven: Permission to Be

This policy of hiding the archive can be classified under what Said calls “Permission to Narrate.” Palestinians, along with human rights activists and truth seekers, are not permitted to talk about what happened, criticize Israeli atrocities and human rights violations or to question the Zionist colonial narrative. In an article titled *Permission to Narrate*, Said points out, “Israeli propaganda seems to lead a life of its own…whereas unpleasant truth about [massacres and genocides perpetrated by] Zionism were systematically suppressed” (Said, “The Politics of Dispossession” 249). On the claim of past victimization, Israel is exempt from accusations pertaining to its abrogation of human rights laws. Any discourse about Palestinian identity or Israel’s violation of universal human rights is automatically labelled as anti-Semitic. The late Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon stated that "we are placing no restriction on our operations [in the Palestinian territories]. Israel is under no pressure. No one is criticizing us or has the right to do so" (Said, “Memory, Inequality, and Power” 17). As Said notes, the people of Palestine “are prevented from getting an education, or from being allowed to move, express themselves, organize freely without fear either of intimidation, collective punishment, or straight out assassination,” when under world-wide human rights rules it has been agreed that “each individual or collectivity, no matter his or her color, ethnicity, religion, or culture, is to be protected from such horrific practices as starvation, torture, forced transfer of populations, religious and ethnic discrimination, humiliation, extra-judicial political assassination, land expropriation and all manner of similar cruel and unusual punishment” (16).

In the early stages towards occupying Palestine, the Zionists, led by Theodor Herzl, proudly identified themselves as settler colonialists. This is because colonialism was a part of the Enlightenment project of modernity. It was hailed by all the great Enlightenment philosophers who justified the genocide of Indigenous People. In the case of Palestine, Zionism was backed

by influential philosophers and scholars during the 1950s and 1960s. Within the context of post-modernity and post war, colonialism started to be criticized, and Zionists and the newly created state of Israel banned any discourse about Palestine. In addition to ruining the image of Israel as the most "democratic" state in the region, this would mean recognition of something they had been striving to erase and or obfuscate, that is, the dispossession, the apartheid and appropriation of the Palestinian cultural and epistemological heritage. Rashid Khalidi, a Palestinian American historian and Professor of Modern Arab Studies at Columbia University, recalls how, in his graduate years at Yale University, the word "Palestinian" or "Palestine" was considered "an epithet". To utter it was "to deny the right of Jewish people to exist" (Khalidi, "Brokers of Deceit" 45:56). Said recalls how when invited to university conferences, "ironically", the hosts asked him to "lecture on a literary topic", which was a way to "ignore my embarrassing political activity", while others "spoke of my efforts on behalf of 'my people', without ever mentioning the name of that people. 'Palestine' was still a word to be avoided" (Said, "Reflections" 564). Said calls these experiences "suppression of a history as everyone around me celebrated Israel's victory, its terrible swift sword" at the expense of Palestinians who are "forced over and over again to prove that they had once existed. … 'There are no Palestinians,' said Golda Meir in 1969…I was working in an almost entirely negative element, the non-existence, the non-history which I had somehow to make visible despite occlusions, misrepresentations and denials" (562–63). What pains me the most is that the world remained silent towards thousands of years of history denied and ancient culture uprooted, a nation being ethnically cleansed and replaced in a conspiracy that involved intellectuals, historians and imperialist giants. By intellectuals, I mean respected thinkers such as Michel Foucault, Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir—as named in Said's article ("Diary:", pars. 6–18)—who claimed to be truth seekers, but at the same time unflinchingly supported Israel.

Jewish historian and professor Ilan Pappé, was forced to leave Israel and received numerous death threats for his support of Palestinians and for his books on the ethnic cleansing of Palestine (Negev, par. 1). Pappé argues that in 1948, Israel took over Palestine "through settlement and ethnic cleansing" (Pilger, par. 4). Thus, he is accused of being a traitor and anti-Semite for breaking the silence about the atrocities of 1948, including "the expulsion, direct and indirect, of some 750,000 Palestinians, the systematic destruction of more than 400 villages and scores of urban neighbourhoods, as well as the perpetration of some 40 massacres of unarmed Palestinians" (Pilger, par. 6). Pappé was among the few professors to support student Katz, whose master's degree "was annulled by Haifa University" which, despite his distinction, struck his name from the honour roll, because of his recorded testimonies of the Tantura massacre which included "horrific descriptions of executions, of the killing of fathers in front of children, of rape and torture"(Pilger, par. 6).

Many other Israeli academics and celebrities, including Norman Finkelstein and Ariella Azoulay, were attacked for exposing the uncomfortable truth about the Israeli establishment and its sanitized narrative. Only one hegemonic narrative was allowed to be spread through mainstream media, academia and history books, yet, in the information age, the discourse has shifted. Mainstream media are no longer the only source of information. Since members of the general public have access to the Internet, they can be exposed to a much broader spectrum of voices from international and grassroots news sources, thereby reducing the impact of brainwashing, misinformation and stereotyping by the colonial corporate media. Furthermore, artists and activists can work to oppose the dominant narratives and dismantle the matrix of power and hopefully inspire change on the ground.

Chapter Eight: Terra Nullius

> If the Arab occupies a space in the mind at all, it is of negative value. He seems as the disruptor of Israel's continuing existence, or in a larger view, a surmountable obstacle to Israel's creation in 1948. Palestine was imagined as an empty desert, waiting to burst and bloom. Its inhabitants are imagined as inconsequential nomads possessing no stable claim to the land and therefore no cultural permanence. (Said, "Film: In Search of" 18:15)

Besides massacres and physical removal of native traces, colonialism has a common strategy of wiping out the colonized nations through dehumanization and demonization, labelling the original inhabitants as inferior, the uncivilized Other. This one-dimensional image, supported by anthropologists and historians, was meant to position Indigenous peoples as rootless barbarians. While First Nations in the Americas were depicted in history books and children's movies as cannibals, Blacks were described as savage. "In the process of settler colonialism, …[e]pistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage" (Tuck 5). Moreover, Indigenous resistance in Canada has been defined as rebellion in order to diminish or even negate First Nations' legitimacy. Likewise, through media propaganda, Palestinian resistance has been labelled as "terrorism" when, in fact, Palestinians, who are under the occupation and surveillance of the dominant Israeli army with America's "indulgent support" (Said, "The Politics of Dispossession" 248), live in extremely harsh conditions with little freedom of movement.

In comparing the colonial elimination of the natives by means of removal and isolation, Said speaks of the apartheid walls built around the Palestinians, the checkpoints and the Jews-only roads connecting Jewish settlements, forming a "matrix of control", where it is impossible to see the banned Palestinians (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 25). Amira Hass, an Israeli journalist in *Haaretz,* writes: "a person could travel the length and breadth of the West Bank without ever knowing, not only the names of the villages and cities whose lands were confiscated to build the Jewish settlements and neighborhoods, but even the fact that they exist at

all" (Hass as qtd. in Said, "Memory" 25). Similarly, in reference to his visit to South Africa in 1991, Said comments: "you could drive from white centers like Cape Town to Stellenbosch, a distance of about 80 miles and never see anything of the black South Africa. It was entirely white…the road curved around in such a way that …the rest of the black population was simply made invisible" (25). Tuck addresses similar ways of disappearing Indigenous peoples by forcibly removing them "from their homelands onto reservations, indentured, and abducted into state custody" (Tuck 5). This form of elimination is an internal form of colonization and operates in parallel with external colonization which is signaled by the replacement of Indigenous inhabitants with dispossessed settlers brought through other simultaneous colonial projects such as slavery, labour, and displacement as a result of "coerced immigration from nations torn by U.S. wars or devastated by U.S. economic policy" (7).

In claiming the colonizer's innocence in this narrative, and ensuring rightful ownership to land, white settlers invented tales around Indian removal, depicting the Indians "as vanishing in an earlier time frame, and thus Indigenous people are already dead prior to removal" (Tuck 16). Shereen Razack describes this as "the national mythologies" of settler societies, where "it is believed that white people came first and that it is they who principally developed the land; Aboriginal peoples are presumed to be mostly dead or assimilated." (Razack, 2002, 1–2, as qtd. in Tuck 12). While Tuck refers to such tales as a fabrication of "historical memory" which aims to generate "historical amnesia", Said calls it "a tremendous assault on memory," as he notes: "[To] say nothing about [or obfuscate] reality, is quite without precedent or analogy in our post-modern times. Not in former Yugoslavia, not in Africa, nor elsewhere in Asia and Australia" (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 26). In *Deir Yassin Remembered,* Nashashibi remarks that the general public in Israel cannot acknowledge that they are guilty of inhumane treatment towards any group of people: "It's another culture, another religion, another type of living, even

the food is different…the way people dress is different, and yet, they don't want to accept that they are occupying another nation. They always think as it is a benevolent occupation, as if the Arabs and the Palestinians are benefiting from the Israeli occupation" (Yael, 17:48). Halper also addresses the Israeli denial of Palestinian existence and right to land, as he notes: "You know we are still in that situation of saying, no this is our country exclusively. We're Judaizing it. The people who lived here had no claim to this land, they were not rightful inhabitants" (18:26).

Chapter Nine: The Now: The Nakba Continued

> This in essence is the Palestinian tragedy; the daily uprootings, daily evictions, daily destruction of property and homes take place, and people are powerless to do anything about it. The world is taking very little notice of this. It's very hard for me to stand and talk about this and see my own people going through this endless cavalry without any relief, without any sympathy or support from the so called civilized world that backs Israel in these barbaric inhuman practices that are scarcely known to the world around... the tragedy of Palestine is constructed, every day, every minute, every hour for 50 years[then] and it's continuing. It's terribly harsh for me to stand here and I feel so utterly powerless and ashamed really, I belong to the same human species as these brutes who come and dislocate people without apparently a twitch of consciousness. (Said, "Film: In Search of Palestine" 25:36)

The atrocities perpetrated against the Palestinians are a concrete proof of how histories are reconstructed over and over again, and how tragedies are remade by human beings against their own kind. The reality of the situation in occupied Palestine and the massive inequality between Palestinians and Israelis there is "completely shielded from the world outside" (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 23). When covering the news, an American CNN broadcast will victimize Israel and demonize Palestinians without even mentioning the presence of a military occupation; facts are twisted and "taken out of the context" (24). Said wonders: "how many Israelis have had to live through the demolition by bulldozing of entire villages? … How many Israelis have had to endure missile attacks by Apache helicopters or rockets from American made F16 fighter jets? How many Israelis have had to be stripped and searched at checkpoints on an hourly basis? None at all." He describes how, on the onset of the second Intifada, "one million bullets were fired" by Israeli military forces at Palestinian demonstrators in a matter of three weeks, something that is unprecedented in the history of settler colonialism.

Geography of Place

> After their dispossession and expulsion from their homes and territory, most Palestinians had to live as refugees, coming to terms not with their past, which was lost, annulled, but with their present…scattered throughout the Arab world, where invidious laws made it

> impossible for them to become naturalized, unable to work, unable to travel, obliged to register and re-register each month with the police, many of them forced to live in appalling camps like Beirut's Sabra and Shatila, which were the sites of massacres 34 years later. (Said, "Reflections" 562–63)

Up to the present day, many Palestinians still subsist in refugee camps in occupied Palestine and throughout the Arab world. The Nakba not only altered the demography of Palestine, but also the geography of the place. Areas populated by Palestinian refugees are called "camps" rather than towns, villages or cities: The Beach Camp, Jabalia Camp, Al Dehisha Camp, Balata Camp, Jenin Camp, and so on. The reason is that when Palestinians were displaced, they were given tents by the UN, forming camps. Although they later built their new homes on those spots, 72 years later, these places are still officially referred to as camps. This is a constant reminder of what has happened to historical Palestine, no matter how hard politicians and historians try to shift borders and to delete "Palestine" from the map. In occupied Palestine, one can find a city and an adjacent camp both with the same name. For example, Tulkarem city, and Tulkarem camp, Rafah city and Rafah camp and so on. The city indicates the original inhabitants, while the camp houses the displaced population and the part of the city where they set their tents, then built their houses. Usually camps are very poor and overcrowded with a net of narrow lanes and sometimes flooded sewage due to poor infrastructure.

While filming the *In Search of Palestine* documentary, Edward Said visited Al Dehisha camp in the West Bank. He notes: "Even now, survivors of the 1948 forced to exodus still live in refugee camps such as Dehisha, a stone's throw from Bethlehem. The Palestinians from the coastal areas and the Lod and Ramla who were driven away by the Israelis came here" and settled in tents ("Film: In Search of Palestine" 12:34). Over time, the tents turned into houses built by the refugees themselves. Then Israel surrounded the one-square-kilometre camp with a gated fence, pushing 8000 into a prison-like concentration camp. They "spent their whole life" in Dehisha. "The old people, the original inhabitants, are still waiting for something to happen" so

they can go back to their towns which are "about 12 kilometre away and they can actually see them [from here] …it's now Israel and they look at it… and cry…They are still waiting. In the meantime, Dehisha goes on and there are many other camps like this in the occupied territories" and the Arab world. They are still waiting for a solution (12:28).

Conditions have been getting worse. Israel continues to force out Palestinian inhabitants and confiscate their lands to build hundreds of Jewish settlements, amidst Palestinian populated areas, pushing Palestinians into smaller areas and building walls and fences around them, rupturing and separating families again and again as a result. Israel then pretends to offer a two-state solution and claims these ruptured and scattered areas a potential state. However, as Azmi Bshara, a Palestinian political and intellectual figure, notes, "it is not a two-state solution; it is a demographic separation without sovereignty" which "has one name in history, it is called apartheid, it has no other name" (Bshara, in Said, "Film:" 29:33).

** See Appendix D & E for work, images and links to work related to *The Now*.

Chapter Ten: Case Studies on Anticolonial Art of Resistance

> I kind of feel Palestine was always intellectual and spiritual but not physical, and I've resigned myself to a loss of this place. But I still feel moral commitment to it because I think it's terribly unjust and the injustice done to it has never really been acknowledged; I mean, standing here in front of the house I was born in, and my family owned, I want the Israelis to understand that all of us were driven out of places like this...this is our history and it remains whether they like it, or have tried to forget it, or not." (Said, "Film:" 6:55)

For me, as for every Palestinian artist and writer, including Said, art and literature are expressions of our patriotic feelings, forms of protest against the oppression of our people and an assertion of our rights and rightful deep-rooted existence on our land. These are also integral to our resistance and struggle towards liberation—and against occupation and the colonial attempt to uproot Palestinians. When we talk about our personal experience in this context, it is the national collective one. We dread the effacement of memory. We, therefore, strive to keep Palestine alive and protect our identity. That is why a narrative-based practice is important. The work I have created is rich in symbols and references vital to Palestinian identity. It seeks to enlighten the Western public about the ongoing suffering of Palestinians as a consequence of colonization and forced exodus. Palestinian artists and their work are just like the Palestinian oranges, cactuses and olive trees: eternal signifiers of the Palestinian national identity and our collective resistance. This is what has been reduced into one word: "decolonization," a term which, I believe, is a modern/postmodern colonial invention that replaced the expression of "struggle for liberation" to normalize and mitigate the power of revolution. Unless it means the total removal of occupation, then it remains a word locked in theory books with no tangible achievement on the ground. Thus, I prefer the more accurate term "anticolonial".

One such artist whose work I identify with is Larissa Sansour, the London-based, Palestinian photographer, filmmaker and installation artist. To sever the Palestinian historical connection to land, Israel manipulated archeology and made it "complicit in the making over of

the land and its markers, as if there had never been any Arabs or any other civilizations there except Israel and the Israelites" (Said, "Memory" 22). *In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain,* (2015) (fig. 63), is a 29-minute science fiction film that challenges the Zionist narrative of an empty Palestine. In a documented performance, Sansour strategically buries 15 deposits of porcelain plates with folkloric patterns in various sites across occupied Palestine: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Ramallah, Haifa, Nazareth, Jaffa and the Dead Sea. This performance, using hand-painted plates decorated with the keffiyeh pattern, a national symbol of Palestinian identity, presents an act of identity formation, archaeology that establishes a historical connection to Land. When unearthed in future archaeological excavations, their discovery will interfere with the colonizer's distorted versions of history and cause a historical intervention.

Figure 63: Sansour, Larisa. In the Future They Ate from the Finest Porcelain, Video Still, 2015. Photo courtesy of the Artist

In the film, Sansour employs images of a dystopian sci-fi future as a reflection of anticolonial artistic imagination. It clearly refers to the Israeli claims to Palestine based on archaeology: "Archaeological finds are used in support of the colonialist narrative and this narrative lends weight to the ideas of continued presence and historical entitlement" (Dabrowska, par. 1). This validates the impact of myth, fiction, and narrative on nation-building and history shaping. "In practical terms, this means that a narrative shaped partly by myth and fiction and

then supported by a perverted form of archaeology outdoes any legal claims and international rights, fiction wins over fact any day" (par. 11). The genre of the film also indicates the absence of the real, proving how in archaeology the truth is irrelevant, which undermines the colonial narrative. "The stronger narrative has a bigger chance of beating all competition regardless of whether it is based on truth or fiction" (par. 12).

Created in the form of a fictional video essay, the film is narrated through a voice-over of a conversation between a psychiatrist and the leader of a resistance group who challenges the colonialist narrative through archaeological evidence. As Sansour states, "so my resistance group set out to create a counter-narrative based on the exact same components and decides to make underground deposits of elaborate porcelain". The aim of the resistance group members is "to influence history and support future claims to their vanishing lands. By implementing a myth of its own, their work becomes a historical intervention- de facto creating a nation" (Dabrowska, par. 7). Sansour's work comes as a response to the Israeli politics of nation-building at the expense of the cultural extinction of Palestinians. Sansour describes archaeology as a battleground for settling political land disputes, thereby causing the discipline of archaeology to lose its credibility as a sub-branch of historical studies.

Sansour's work is a reminder of a book by Palestinian anthropologist Nadia Abu El-Haj called *Facts on The Ground: Archeological Practice and Territorial Self-Fashioning in Israeli Society* (2002). Abu El-Haj argues that "in the process of providing Israel with an ancient objectivized history visible in archeological evidence, the traces of other more just as historical histories were ignored or simply moved away by trucks and bulldozers". The remnants "became for Israeli archeology evidence of a kind of essential 'Israeliness' which gave the state an unassailable pedigree in a long distant past with the intervening cultures and peoples; myriads of

people and cultures were simply pushed aside and ignored" (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 22).

Israel has continuously worked towards effacing the Palestinian presence as a survival strategy in the face of what it claims is Palestinian terrorism. Nevertheless, Palestine and "Palestinians remain, despite Israel's concerted efforts from the beginning either to get rid of them or to circumscribe them so much as to make them ineffective" (Said, "The End of" 250). In addition, due to the determination and persistence of Palestinians, the land will always be "encumbered by Palestinian memory…by virtue not simply of force of arms but of other means … because by those very unmilitary means some of which are the mobilized force of memory, the power of images, and the heroism and ingenuity of sheer persistence" (Said, "Memory" 22&19). Palestinians' continuous resistance and refusal to submit to colonialism render the colonial project incomplete. With their tenacity and "the demand for attention and justice, despite the world's indifference" (26), and despite the Israeli efforts to deny and obliterate, Palestinians continue to inscribe their history and to perpetuate the Palestinian identity. Palestinians were to be turned into "drugged roaches in a bottle" (Rafael Eytan as qtd. in Said, "The Politics of Dispossession" 249). However, "[i]t can never work because you cannot destroy the will of a people and you can never destroy the power of an idea" (33).

Despite their dispossession and dispersal as refugees and their oppression under brutal military occupation, Palestinians have managed to build a moral solidarity with each other around the globe and maintain their Palestinian identity. Also, through grassroots activism, they have built solidarity with other oppressed people. As an example of this international solidarity, Said recalls how when the United States invaded Iraq, demonstrators all around the world immediately linked the US aggression on Iraq to that of Israel against the Palestinian people (Said, "Memory, Inequality, and Power" 21). During the invasion of Iraq, I was a student in

Greece, and I witnessed how thousands of demonstrators who opposed the American attacks on Iraq were equally chanting for Palestine, condemning both the US and Israel.

Emily Jacir is another Palestinian installation artist and filmmaker whose work is concerned with resistance and silenced historical narratives. One of her most prominent works is an installation titled *Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages that Were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948* (2001) (fig. 64). The installation features a life-size refugee tent, a memorial tent, that narrates the history of Palestinian displacement with the embroidered names of every village that was destroyed, depopulated or occupied in 1948 (*Democracy Now*, par. 3). In 2001, Jacir opened her New York studio for three months to friends and acquaintances to help sew names of the obliterated villages on the refugee tent. Over 120 people from various backgrounds participated. The work was obviously inspired by Walid Khalidi's book *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948.* Based on six years of field research, the book provides a comprehensive description of statistical data, maps and photographs of the over 480 Palestinian villages that were destroyed or depopulated during the 1948 Nakba. It illustrates their history, architecture, topography, economy, current status as well as related narratives of invasion and annihilation. In talking about the long title of the work, which emulates the book title, Jacir explains that her intention is to force anyone who comes across the work or reads about it to revive and confront the history of the villages and counter the efforts to erase that history. It "was because if they ever wrote about it in a magazine or newspaper, which they did, they would have to put what it is because otherwise, with my experience with speaking about this issue, they always try to obscure what happened or change the history" (Gheith, par. 7).

Revival and commemoration of the obliterated villages is a challenge to the colonial efforts and the incompleteness of their sinister plans and projects. In 1969, Israel's Moshe

Dayan, then the defence minister, admitted the following: "Jewish villages were built in the place of Arab villages. You do not even know the names of these Arab villages, and I do not blame you because geography books no longer exist. Not only do the books not exist, the Arab villages are not there either. There is not a single place built in this country that did not have a former Arab population" (Johnny, par. 12). Major General Avraham Tamir relates that at the time, when reports emerged about displaced Palestinians marching back from Jordan toward their abandoned villages in occupied Palestine, “Ben-Gurion lays down as policy that we have to demolish [the villages] so they won’t have anywhere to return to. That is, all the Arab villages” He adds “within 48 hours I knocked all those villages to the ground. Period. There’s no place to return to” (Shezaf, par. 30).

It can be argued that this statement reflects the centralization of the colonial mentality/logic and proves the systematic framework of colonialism to cause any traces of the natives to vanish, by either totally destroying or assimilating them into a “white American world” (Lawrence as qtd. in Deloria, 1998, 4 and Tuck 8). By extension, as a link from the discussion of Palestinian dispossession to First Nations in the Americas, Tuck remarks of this logic that “all Indians are dead, located in faraway reservations, that contemporary Indigenous people are less indigenous than prior generations, and that all Americans are a “little bit Indian” (Tuck 9). In 1890, L. Frank Baum asserted that the safety of white settlers was only guaranteed by the “total annihilation of the few remaining Indians” (Baum as qtd. in Hastings, and Tuck 8). Also, D.H. Lawrence observed: “No place exerts its full influence upon a newcomer until the old inhabitant is dead or absorbed” (8). Unlike the Canadian or American agendas of assimilating First Nations, the Zionists do not wish to assimilate Palestinians. They simply want them gone. Their aim is an apartheid state, since they failed in the total removal of Palestinians, which explains their attempts to sabotage any reconciliation efforts. This also explains the current

political propaganda on globalization and the "new Middle East", rationalizing the wars and mass killings which are, in my view, expansionist, imperialistic, and colonialist strategies towards a global colonization and Americanization of the world that is already underway.

Like the works by both Jacir and Sansour, my installations function as visual narratives to revive culture and memory. These examples of struggle through art/literature are what Fanon refers to as the "literature of combat" (Fanon 47). He cites Algeria's storytellers as an example: "it is a literature of combat because it assumes responsibility, and because it is the will to liberty expressed in terms of time and space…There is a tendency to bring conflicts up to date and to modernise the kinds of struggle which the stories evoke" (48). The storytellers developed their imagination and "completely overturned their traditional methods of storytelling and the contents of their tales" (48), therefore attracting the public. The epic reappeared as an authentic cultural form of entertainment. Hence, Fanon argues that the storytellers challenged the colonial attempts to obliterate the "conquered" nations through the "banishment" of their "customs" to destroy their national culture. "Colonialism made no mistake when from 1955 on it proceeded to arrest these storytellers systematically" (48). Similarly, my pieces are embedded with narratives that convey the extraordinary role that visual symbols play as forms of archival memories in the struggle against the annihilation of national culture and identity.

Figure 64: Jacir, Emily. Memorial to 418 Palestinian Villages which were Destroyed, Depopulated and Occupied by Israel in 1948, 2001. Refugee tent, embroidery thread, daily log of names of people who worked on tent. 8x12x10 feet ©Emily Jacir, courtesy of Alexander and Bonin, New York

Chapter Eleven: Art Installation as Public Pedagogical Memorial

Historically, memorial art has been connected to monuments that reside in the public sphere. In contrast, by incorporating the memory concept into the work, object-based installations can go beyond spatial configuration and serve the same purpose as public art/memorials. Andreas Huyssen talks about the emergence of what he calls memory sculpture as a part of post minimalist art. He draws a line between this kind of work and monumental/memorial work in terms of public versus museum, and individual audience versus the public or community. He argues that a material object is never just an installation or sculpture in the traditional sense. Instead, it displaces the past into the present by articulating memory and absence, "challenging the viewer to move beyond that material presence of the sculpture and to enter into dialogue with the temporal and historic dimension implicit in the work" (Huyssen 111). My object-based, narrative-based installations serve as public pedagogical memorials to draw attention to colonial violence. They raise questions and awareness concerning global social and political acts of oppression. According to Fanon, decolonizing the mind is the first step in sweeping away the colonial regimes (Fanon 69). These are also strategies to disrupt the dominant colonial narrative circulated by colonial pedagogical apparatus. "Literature, and pedagogy can be crafted to aid people in learning to see settler colonialism, to articulate critiques of settler epistemology, and set aside settler histories and values in search of ethics that reject domination and exploitation" (Tuck 19). Hopefully, they can also inspire positive change.

Speaking from personal experience, it is hard to separate art from politics, no matter how hard one tries. The claim of the absence of artistic expressions as a signifier of savagery was a rationale for colonization. The pretext was that the Europeans were bringing enlightenment and civilization to tame the savage natives. "Art was seen as intrinsically serving a political function" (hooks 66). Thus, artists can mobilize their art to reaffirm the past and counter the colonizers'

agendas aimed at disfiguring and destroying the cultural past of native peoples. Historian Howard Zinn stated that he would like to be remembered “for getting more people to realize that the power which rests so far in the hands of people with wealth and guns, that the power ultimately rests in people themselves and that they can use it”. As he remarks, at certain points in history, “they have used it. Black people in the South used it. People in the women's movement used it. People in the anti-war movement used it. People in other countries who have overthrown tyrannies have used it” (Zinn, par. 3). I would add that artists as activists can certainly use their power. As bell hooks points out, art has the ability to transgress boundaries, being the impetus for the black aesthetic movement to counter the colonial gaze that perceived Blacks as savage, “more animal than human” (hooks 66). African American artistic production “was regarded as testimony challenging racist thinking which suggested that black folks were not fully human, were uncivilized, and that the measure of this was our collective failure to create "great" art” (66).

Chapter Twelve: Conclusion

Colonization, displacement, exile, refugee, identity and memory are all interwoven terms that comprise who I am. It is difficult to talk about one without implying or thinking of the other. I choose to discuss these issues because they are embedded in my psyche and existence. They inform my artistic practice. My practice-based research examines ways in which material objects can elicit notions of memory and remembering. I create memorial objects to pay homage to the oppressed people and violated land of Palestine. My research has incorporated a multi-platform methodological and theoretical framework derived from autoethnography, practice and critical theory. In my attempt to advance my practice-based research, I discuss methods and strategies of anticolonial resistance through the power of art and literature. As such, the keys in the installation *These Are NOT the Keys* are not only artifacts serving as reminders of a past event continuing to the present, but they are also anticolonial objects of resistance that aim to undo Zionist colonialism.

The settler colonial strategies of elimination include the destruction or confiscation of archives and cultural artifacts. Eliminating the evidence of an Indigenous culture is an attempt to erase that culture from the historical narrative of a particular place. My thesis exhibition is based on archival research to examine the role of the archive in preserving the Palestinian collective memory. Regardless of our varied, individual life experiences, there is always common ground, certain universal experiences that reflect the human condition of suffering and loss. The unfamiliarity and disorientation created by the disfigured artifacts are meant to disrupt reality and underscore its absurdity. Hopefully, this disruption will awaken the viewers to current situations of violence and oppression in the world and make them question the dominant discourses dictated by hegemonic systems.

To conclude, I believe the steps above will lead me to further theoretical questions that may be addressed eventually. How can we, as artists and individuals, raise questions about the many forms of oppression and violence inflicted by dominant powers? How can we make a difference? What role can art and artists play in bringing about social and political change? In what way does silence contribute to further violation and power imbalances? And how can we make sense of all that is happening?

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Appendices

Appendix A: Process and Work Iteration

Figures 65–105: *Process Documentation*

All That Remains Series, 2019

Figure 65: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 66: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 67: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 68: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 69: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 70: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 71: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 72: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 73: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 74: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 75: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 76: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 77: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 78: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 79: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

Figure 80: Process Documentation of Feet, 2019

These Are NOT the Keys series, 2019/2020

Figure 81: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

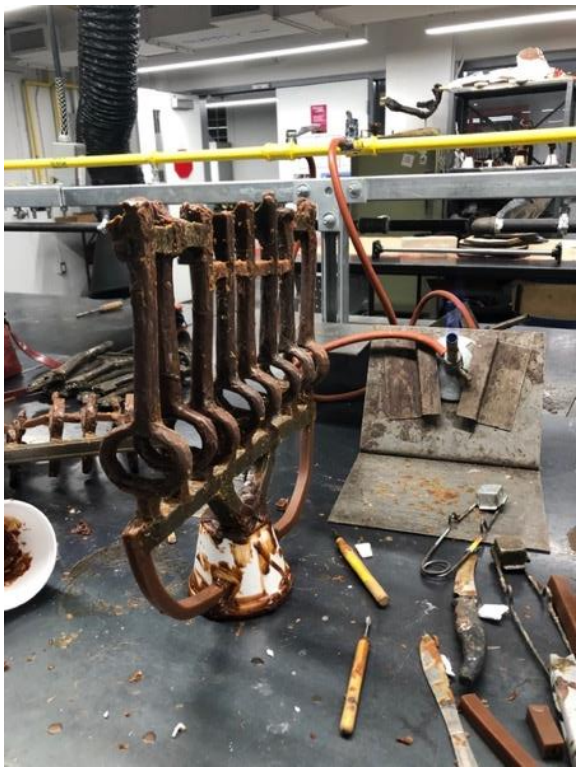

Figure 82: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 83: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 84: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 85: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 86: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

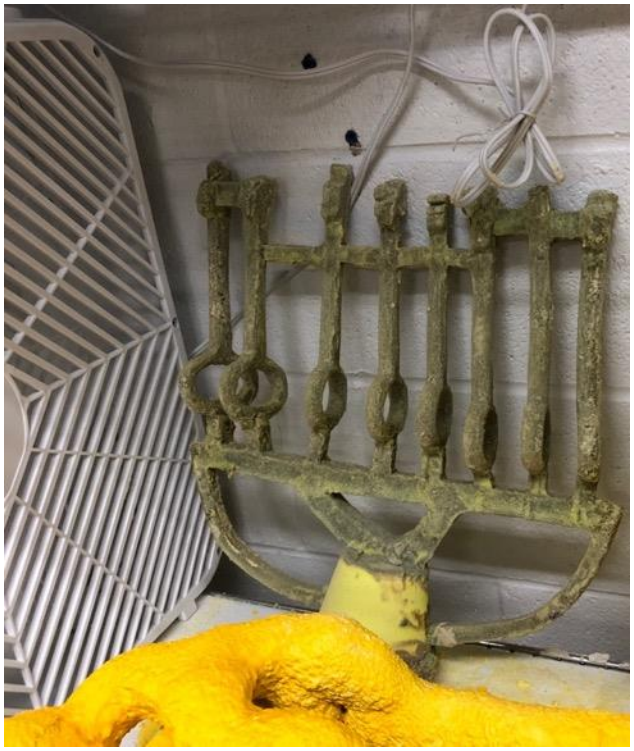

Figure 87: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 88: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 89: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

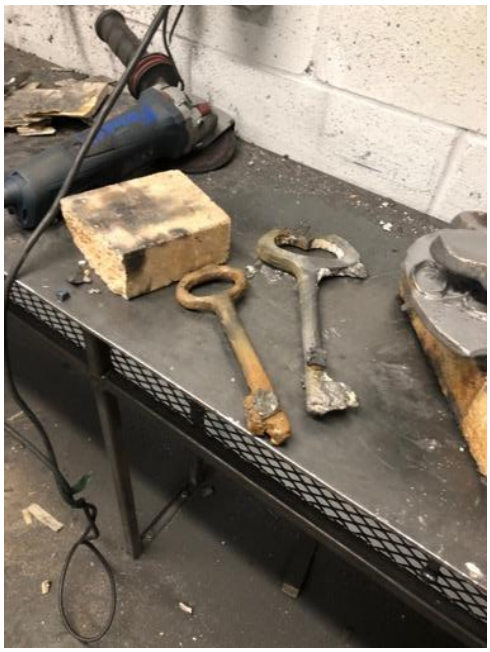

Figure 90: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 91: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 92: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 93: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 94: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 95: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 96: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

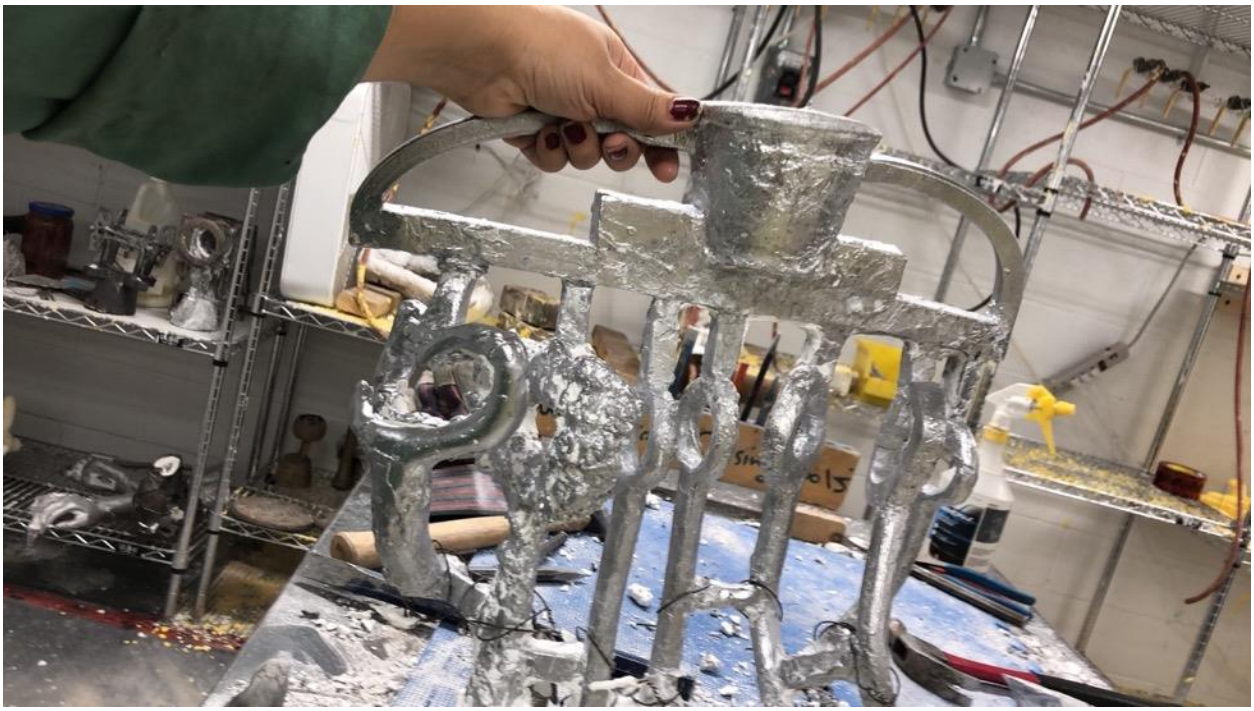

Figure 97: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 98: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 99: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

Figure 100: Process Documentation of keys, 2019/2020

This is NOT the Archive, 2020

Figure 101: This is NOT the Archive, Work in Progress, Steel and Bronze, 2020

At the Foundry, 2019/2020

Figure 102: Working at the Foundry, OCADU, 2019/2020

Figure 103: Working at the Foundry, OCADU, 2019/2020

Figure 104: Working at the Foundry- Buffalo, New York, 2019

Figure 105: Working at the Foundry, OCADU, 2019/2020

Appendix B: Other Work from Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figures 106–113*: Bodily Fragments*

Continued from Exhibit A: All That Remains

While experimenting with new materials that can best speak to the oppression and violence inflicted on the human body by the occupying forces, I decided to work with paper mache. It connotes fragility, particularly due to the nature of its components: water, flour and newspaper. The flour narrative was important in terms of inspiring material exploration in this group. I like the paradoxical quality of material, with flour being susceptible to rotting and decaying, and water being a symbol of life and continuity. This reflects the people I wish to commemorate through my work. Although they have passed away, their spirits and our memories of them endure. Many of these are immortalized in memorials carrying their names, and sometimes pictures if any found, such as in the instance of Deir Yassin or Kafr Qasem victims. In general, the choice of medium and the resulting objects/body parts are an allegory of intertwining and paradoxical issues of the human condition. While they represent those who were brutally uprooted and or murdered, they also imply the decaying human values and the grotesque reality as well as the fragility and ephemerality of the humans. They are a shout out to the controlling bodies of power in the world. Everything is susceptible to decay. Humans and empires wither away. Is it really worth the constant conflicts, suffering and injustices inflicted on fellow humans in a deteriorating materialistic world? These ideas bring to mind Foucault's thoughts on power. He emphasizes the role power plays in creating the oppressed and oppressor in a society and criticizes the Western political culture and power structure. For him, violence and oppression are caused by an imbalance in power relations and wrong applications of power (Foucault, “Power/Knowledge”).

The use of newspapers as a paper mache ingredient indicates the archiving, documenting and sharing of news, and thus supressing or circulating the narratives. On some parts of the sculptures, I have incorporated relevant Arabic texts and numbers printed out from old newspapers that address the occupying of Palestine over 72 years ago. Also, as a part of the material exploration, I added layers of fabric to my objects to prevent them from breaking. This attempt to fortify the objects might have arisen from my fear of the erasure or fading of memory.

In creating this work, I used three models/ bodies, including my son's and mine to indicate the collective experience of which my family and I are a part. It is interesting how chance can play a key role in turning things around. As I needed to work faster since I was dealing with live bodies, I cut longer strips of paper and started wrapping them around. I suddenly felt like I was in the middle of a mummification process. Thus, it became an integrated part of my thinking process and relevant to the lives of my objects. Mummification aims at preserving the body of the dead and preventing decay, while the purpose of both my objects and narratives is to preserve memory and protect it from erasure. Like the wrapping of the body with material and then unwrapping it, narratives are indicative of the unravelling of stories and facts, the unveiling of something precious, memories of the places and people we are commemorating. Moreover, the hollowness of the resulting bodily forms suggests absence.

The final installation idea evolved during the thinking through making process. The original idea was to place a full body on the ground representing a traumatized human being. However, Perec's writing about objects, in addition to some other factors such as the material qualities, have allowed me to change my approach and perceive my work as mere forms and artifacts that are representations of the human body. Hence, I decided to display the bodily fragments on a table as detached objects. Turkle's text of the memory closet reminded me of Salvador Dali's *Drawers of memory*, 1965, a metaphor I have long enjoyed. It signifies the

preciousness of memory which is at the same time hidden away and then slowly revealed by opening the closet and looking through it or pulling out the drawers one at a time. I am exploring the idea of installing the white paper mache bodily artifacts in open drawers of an all-white dresser. The alternative installation idea is to arrange plinths to look like caskets, which re-establishes the human aspect in my objects, while at the same time maintaining the object quality through the arrangement of theatrical display.

Figure 106: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 107: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 108: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 109: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

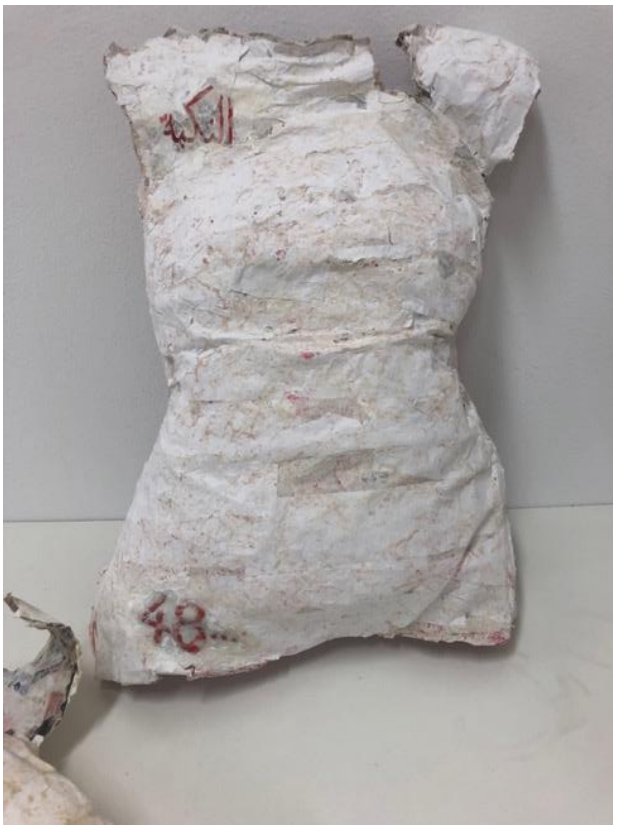

Figure 110: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 111: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 112: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Figure 113: Bodily Fragments, All That Remains Series, Paper Mache, 2019

Appendix C: Mock-Up Installation of Final Thesis Work. Tests and Experiments with Documenting During Different Times of Day, and Other Installation Iterations.

Figures 114–139: *These Are NOT the Keys*

The original installation of my work *These Are NOT the Keys* was meant to be installed on a white gallery wall in a grid of 72 keys cast in bronze, aluminum and iron. However, due to the current quarantine resulting in closure of OCAD university and cancelation of thesis exhibitions, I had to come up with an alternative installation of my thesis work. I eventually installed my work on three doors in an outdoors environment. The grid was hard to achieve due to lack of space.

The keys are installed in groups of ten in seven rows. The eighth row has two keys at the beginning, while the rest of the spots are left empty to indicate the continuous process of colonizing Palestine and the unresolved status of Palestinians in forced exile and forbidden to return home. The keys are hung on long nails fastened to the doors, representing the original way Palestinians hung their keys by their doors. Facing the installation is a metal bench with its legs signifying stacks of books. The work on the bench is still in progress due to inaccessibility to OCADU studios. For the installation, I used actual books to replace the bronze ones. The keys are divided by an LED sign installed at the level of the bench, to invite the audience to sit on the bench and read the text displayed of a poem by Mahmoud Darwish in both English and Arabic.

Working outdoors with natural lighting was quite challenging. I did many recordings of the installation in different parts of the day. I was originally looking to achieve cast shadows of the keys on the structure. I used artificial lighting in the evening. However, it did not turn out the way I imagined it to be as the shadows were dramatic and interfered with the standing out of the keys. Therefore, I tried recording in various times of the day; early morning to evening. I was looking for enough natural light to reflect on the keys so that they do not look flat. At the same

time, too bright light was not helpful in showing the LED text, therefore, I continued to experiment.

For sound, I decided to use the natural sounds of birds and other natural elements present at the time of recording. Originally, I planned to include a swing made of rusty metal chain to be installed in the gallery. As a compromise, I kept the swing going while recording to incorporate the sound of a squeaking swing as a reference. The absence of the swing suggests the absence of Palestinians from their homes. In some of the recordings, I was able to capture the shadow of the swing on a wall next to the installation. I had to move the swing for this. The reflection of the swing's shadow was only possible to capture between 6:14–6:20 am on certain sunny days. I tried to repeat the recording for a better quality, but due to rainy cloudy mornings, this was not possible. I will keep monitoring and repeat recording in the future.

Below are links to video documentation of the work, followed by images of work in various times of day and other work iterations.

1- *These Are NOT the Keys*—Time-based Installation/combinations.

https://youtu.be/dyMDSGMQrEY

2- *These Are NOT the Keys*—Outdoor Installation. With reflection of a swing shadow

https://youtu.be/jqa9oVetAE0

3- Close up Documentation:

https://youtu.be/-xd5JyEIwLM

4- Another installation scenario indoors where I placed the keys in a grid on a bedsheet to emulate the gallery wall. This was not a perfect solution. The keys were placed on the ground while I recorded from the stairs. The LED sign looks crooked although it was straight in the installation. This is due to the narrow angle I had to record from and the cropping of the video. It

was good to experiment with the original installation scenario. Later on, I experimented with installing the keys on my white desk, which worked better than the bedsheet.

https://youtu.be/Rf1Cys7AqBg

5- *These Are NOT the Keys*—Outdoor Installation with Audience

https://youtu.be/9bVsOknKEOY

6- *These Are NOT the Keys*—Another Documentation

https://youtu.be/1mMo8zQ4SYg

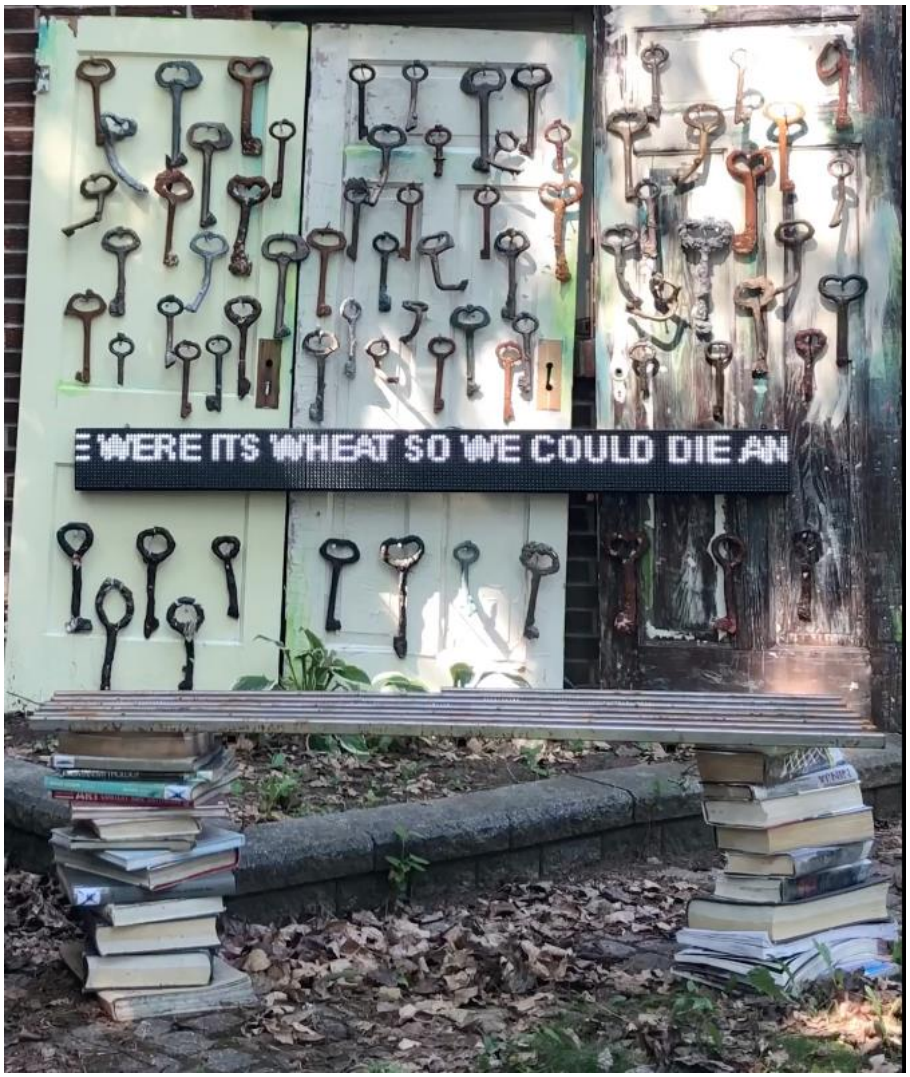

Figure 114: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, and LED sign, 2020

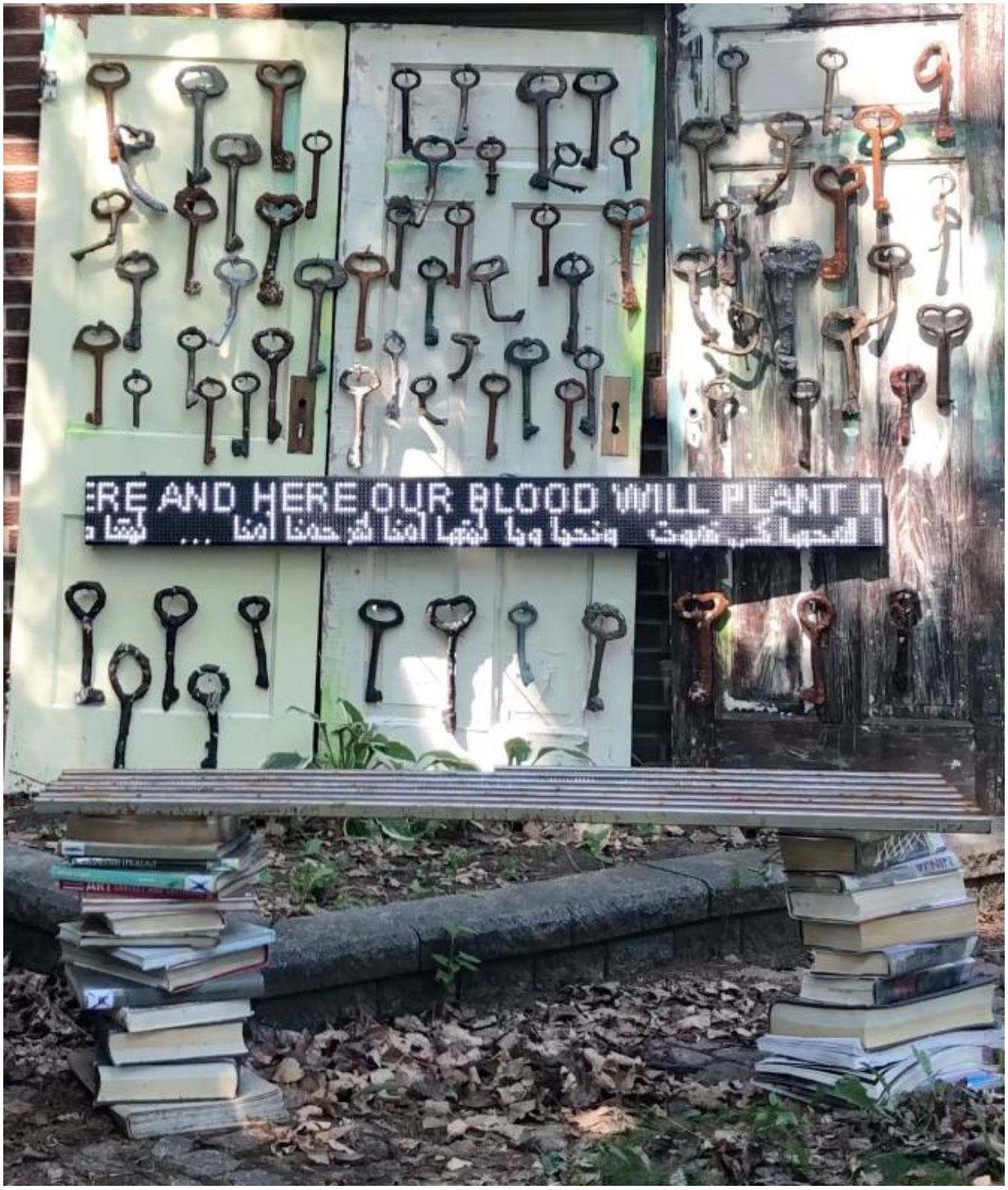

Figure 115: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, and LED sign, 2020

Figure 116: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, and LED sign, 2020

Figure 117: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, and LED sign, 2020

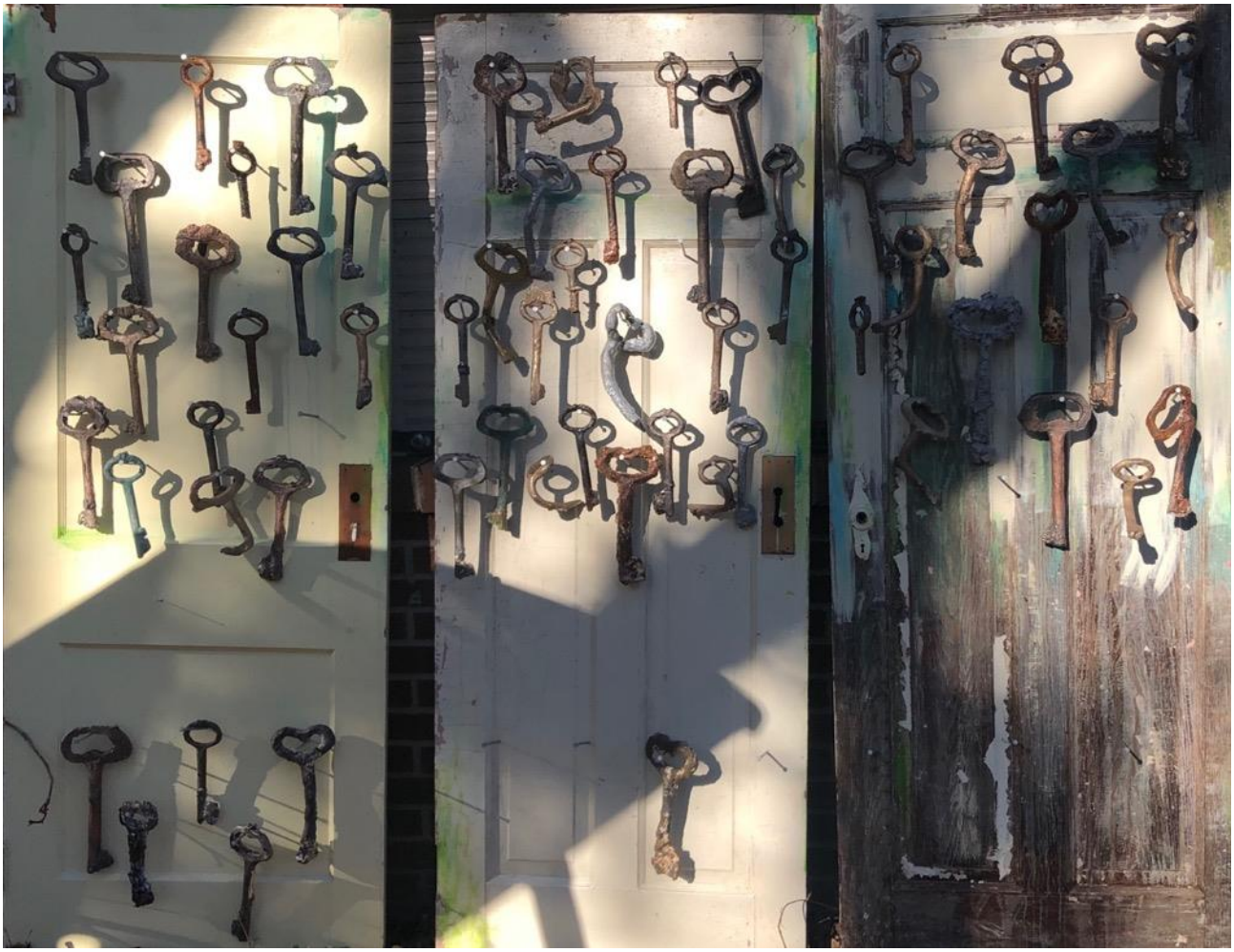

Figure 118: These Are NOT the Keys, Sun Lighting View, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

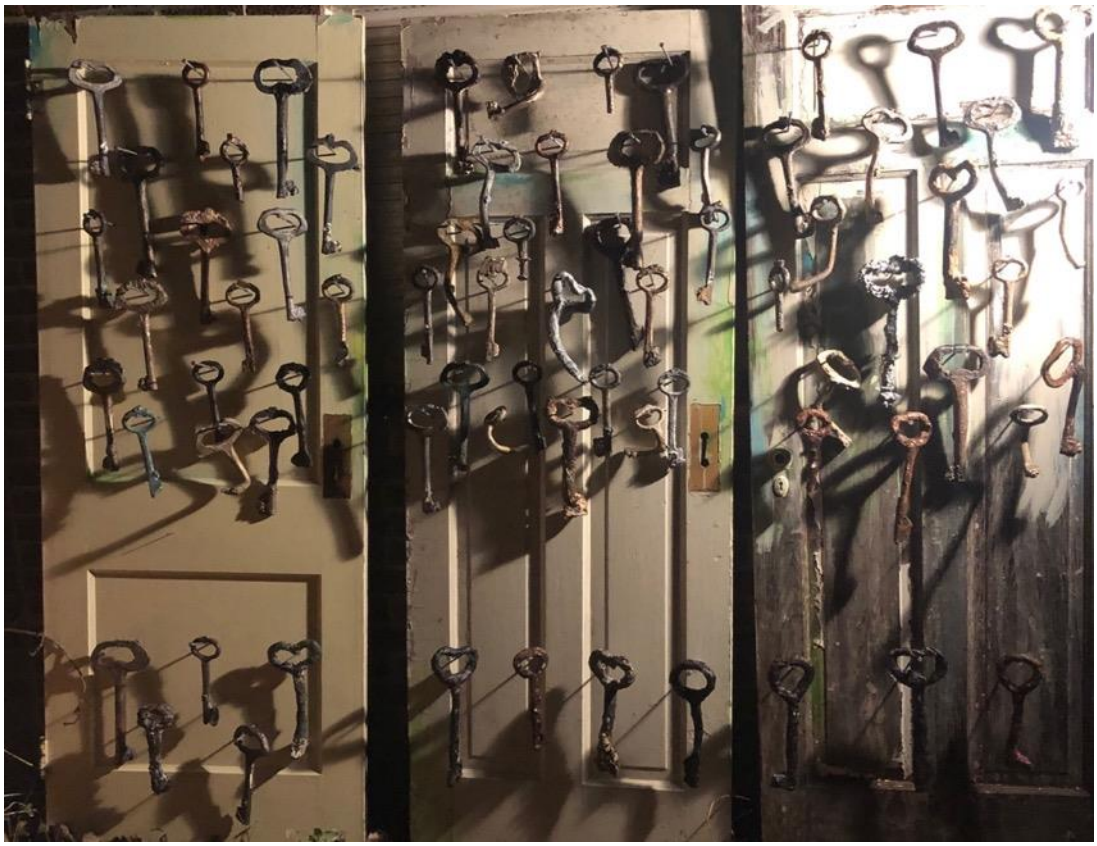

Figure 119: These Are NOT the Keys, Night View with Artificial lighting, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

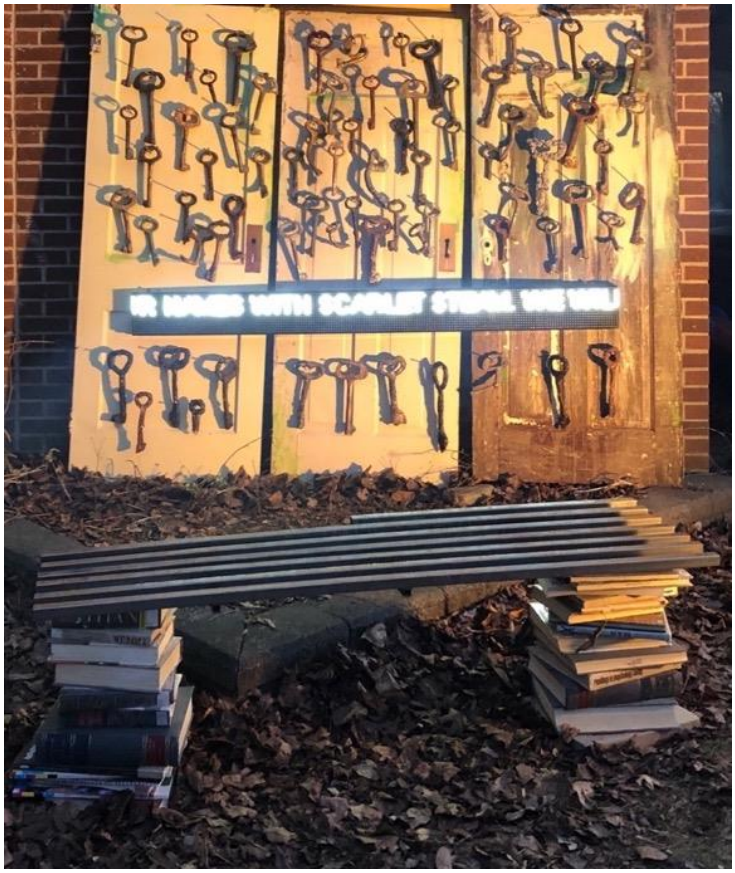

Figure 120: These Are NOT the Keys, Night View, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

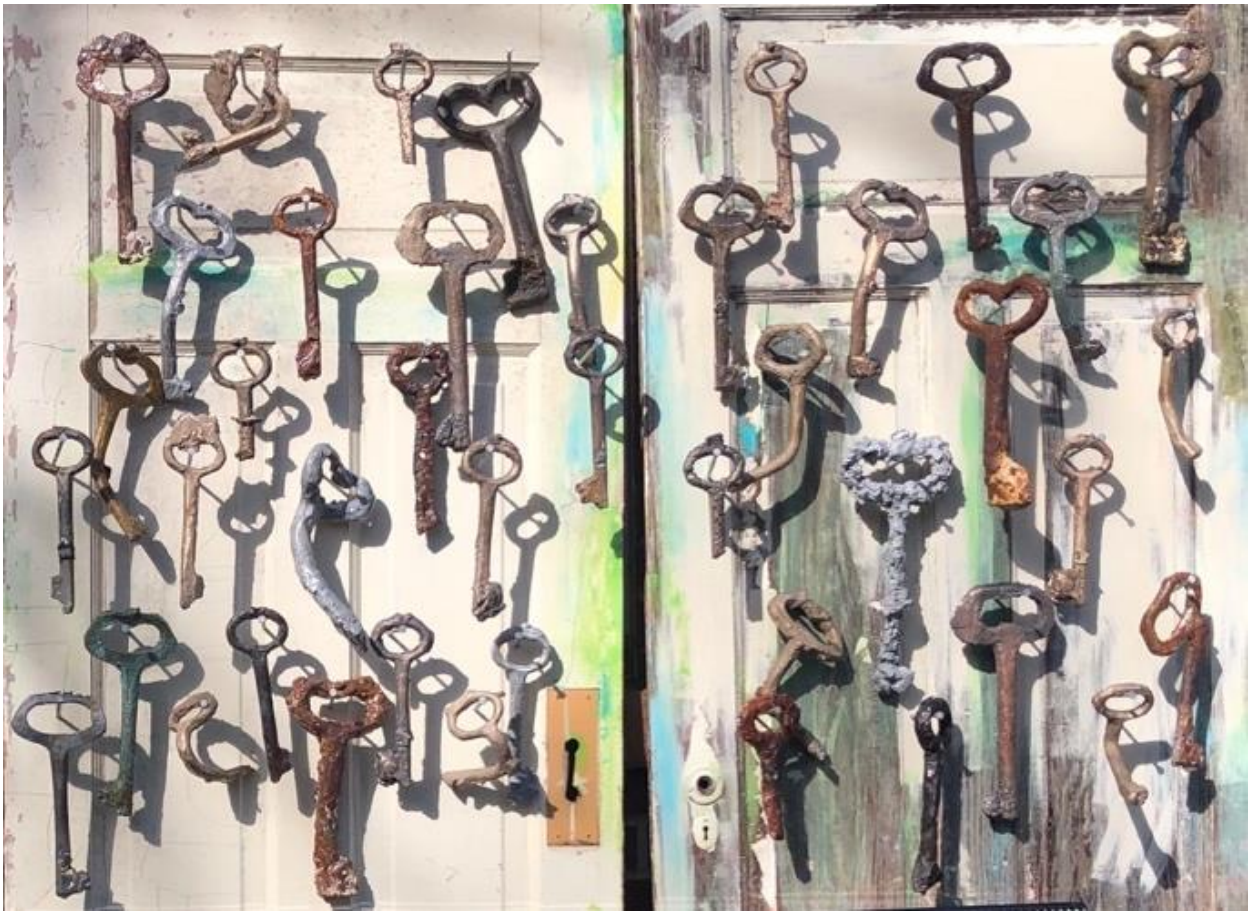

Figure 121: These Are NOT the Keys(detail), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

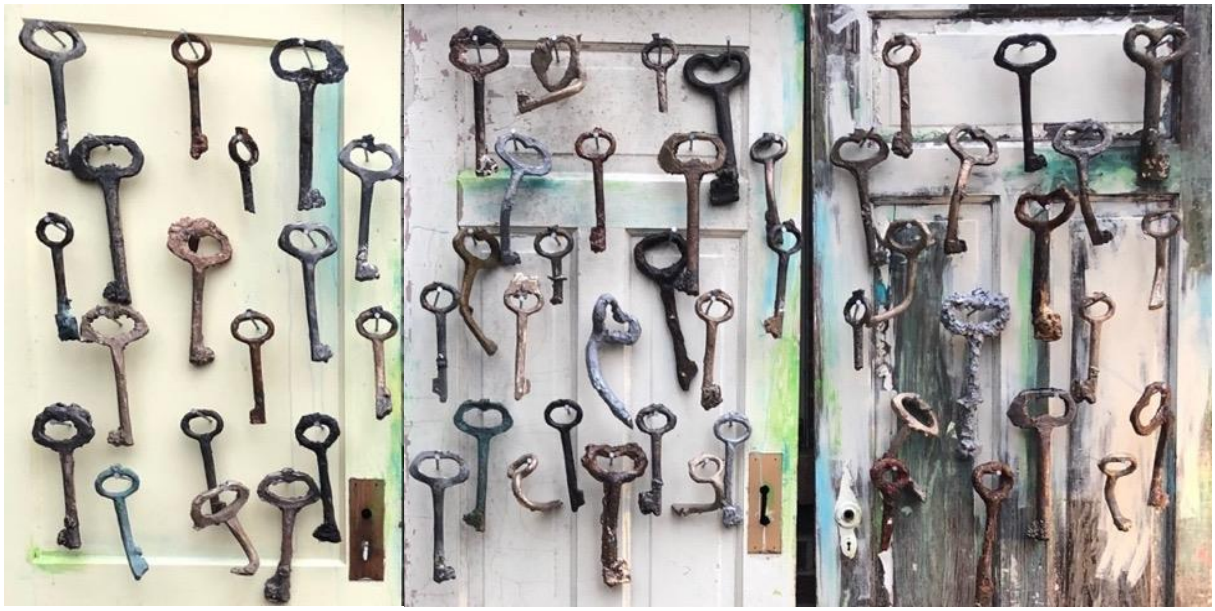

Figure 122: These Are NOT the Keys(detail), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 123: These Are NOT the Keys(details), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 124: These Are NOT the Keys(detail), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

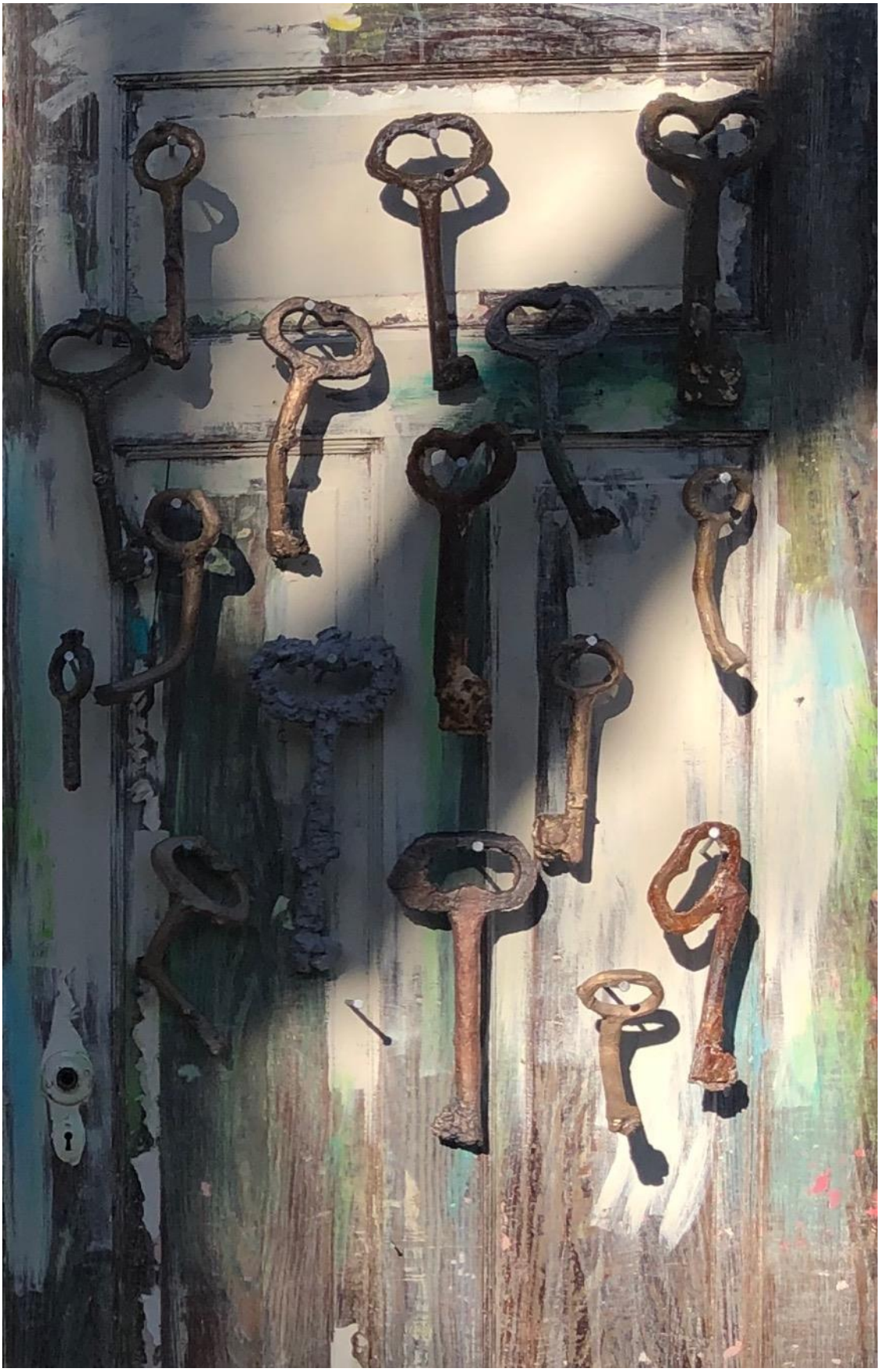

Figure 125: These Are NOT the Keys(detail), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

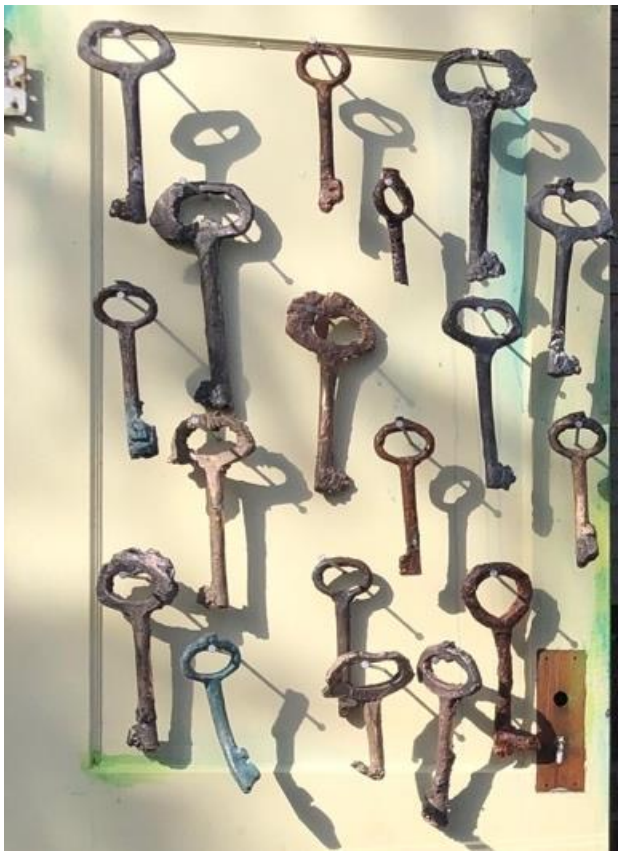

Figure 126: These Are NOT the Keys(detail), Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 127: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 128: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 129: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 130: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 131: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 132: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 133: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, 2020

Figure 134: These Are NOT the Keys, Bronze, 2020

Figure 135: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 136: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 137: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 138: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 139: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 140: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Figure 141: These Are NOT the Keys, Alternative Installation, Bronze, Iron, Aluminium, 2020

Appendix D: Other Work

Figures 140–162: *Variable Work and Other Material Exploration*

In the early stages of mind-mapping my thesis–November 2018:

Thinking Thesis???
Mind-Mapping Thesis is Like a...
Circuit Board
Cover Music Credit (Piano): Fadi Salim
Original Music: Ana w Layla-Kadim Al-Sahir

Video Link:
https://youtu.be/q7_5LXCpqzM

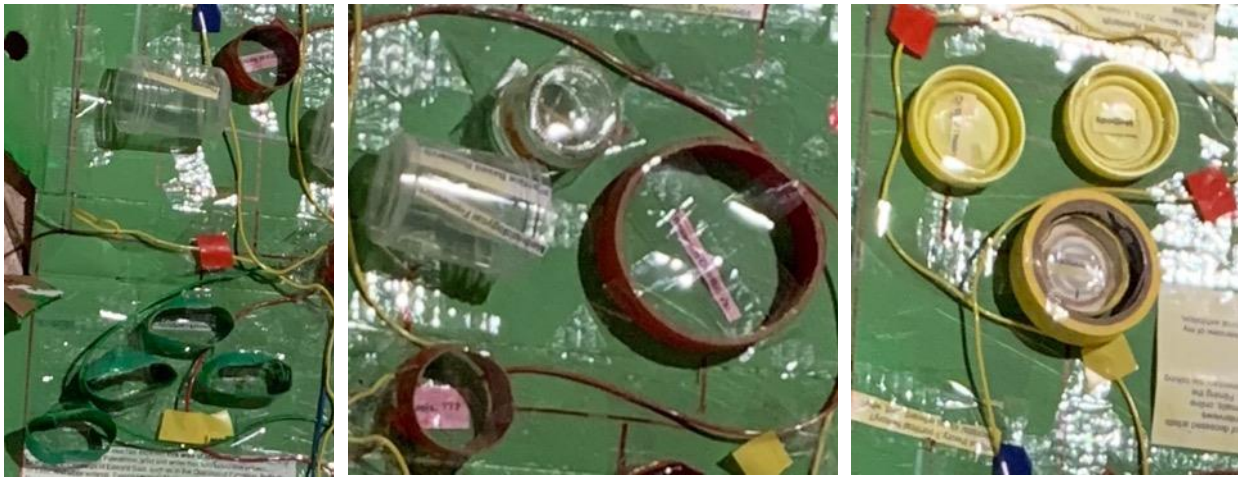

Figure 142: Circuit Board, Mixed Media/ Video Still, 2018

Figure 143: "Liberty", 2018

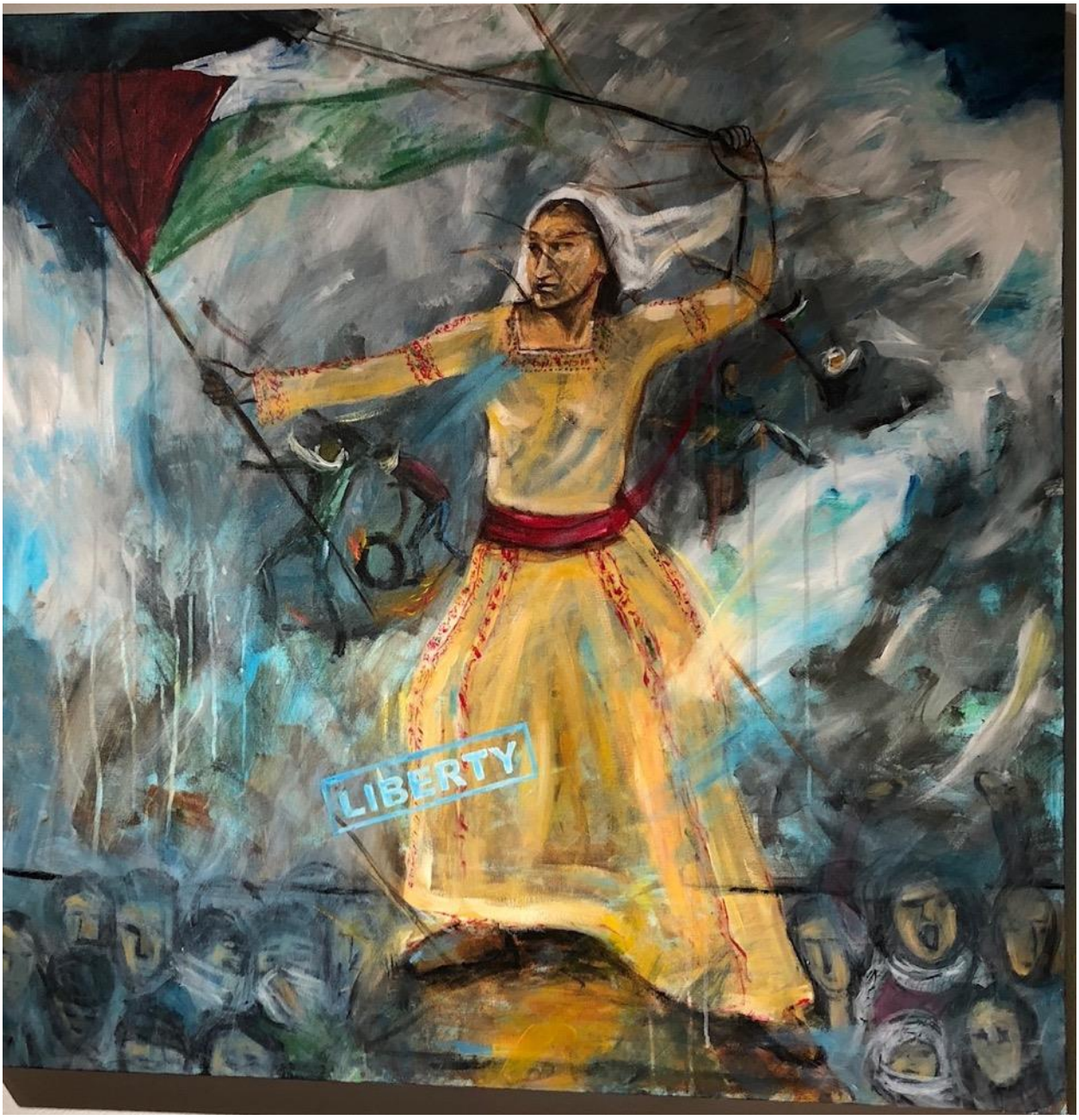

Figure 144: Liberty Leading the Palestinian People, 36”x36”, Acrylic on Canvas, 2018

From *All That Remains* series, 2019

Figure 145: Gate of Palestine, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

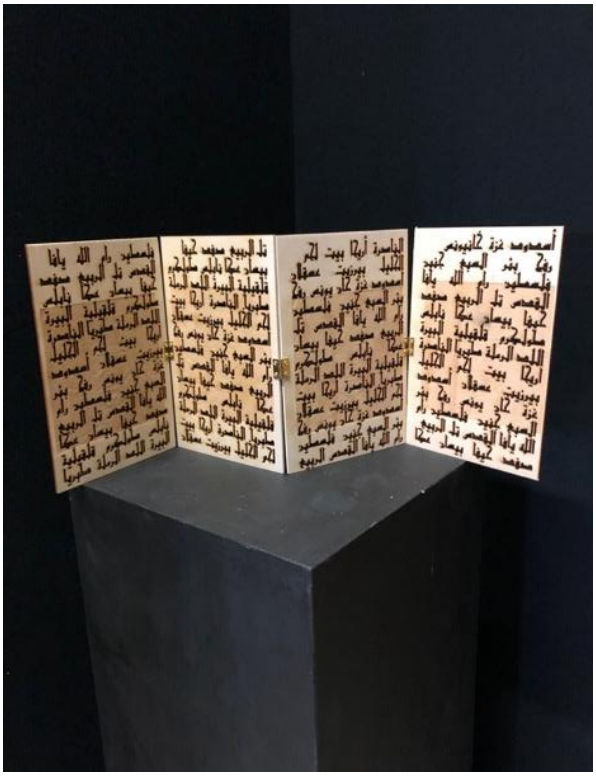

Figure 146: Gate of Palestine, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 147: Gate of Palestine, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 148: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 149: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 150: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

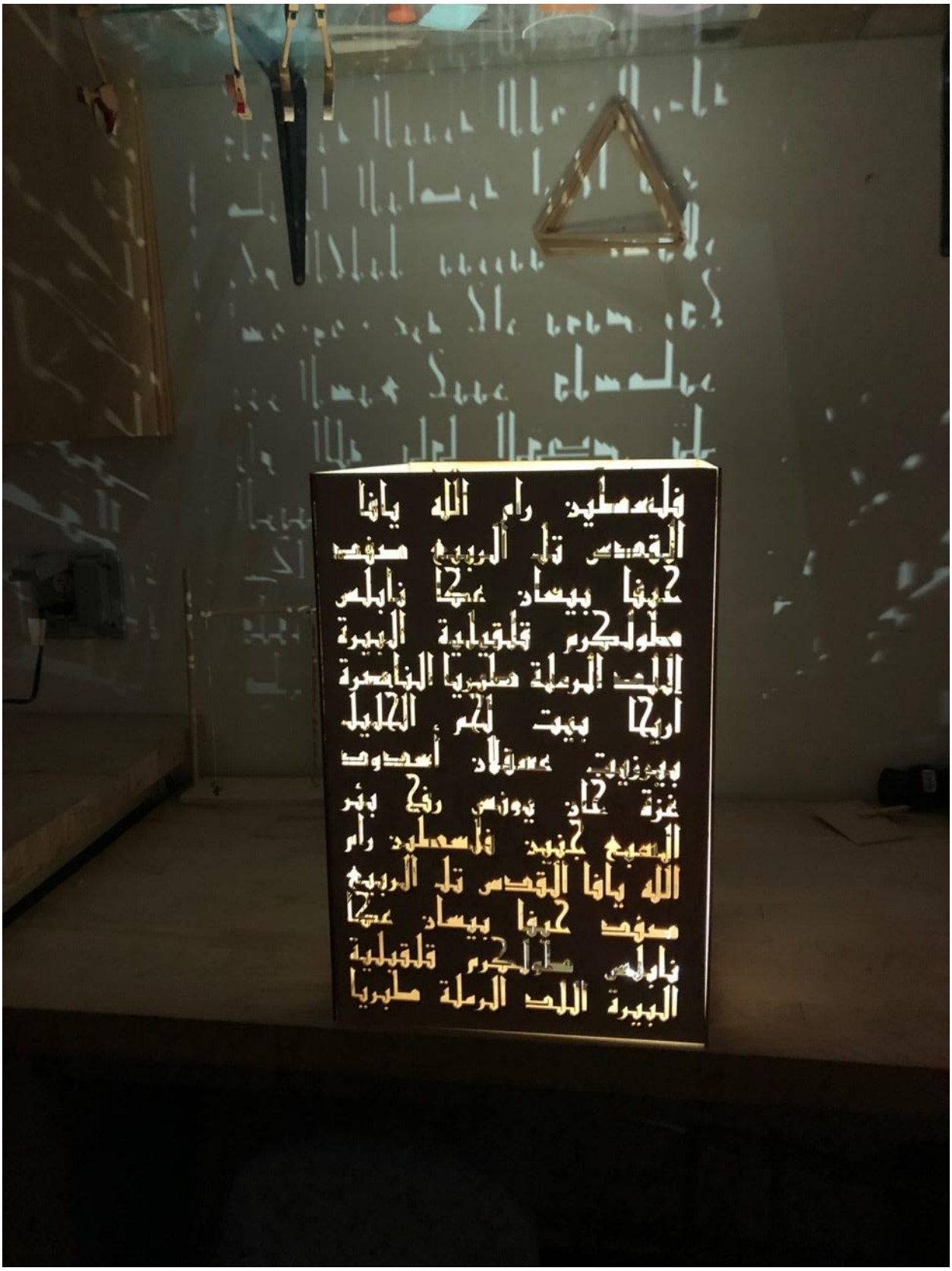

Figure 151: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 152: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Figure 153: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

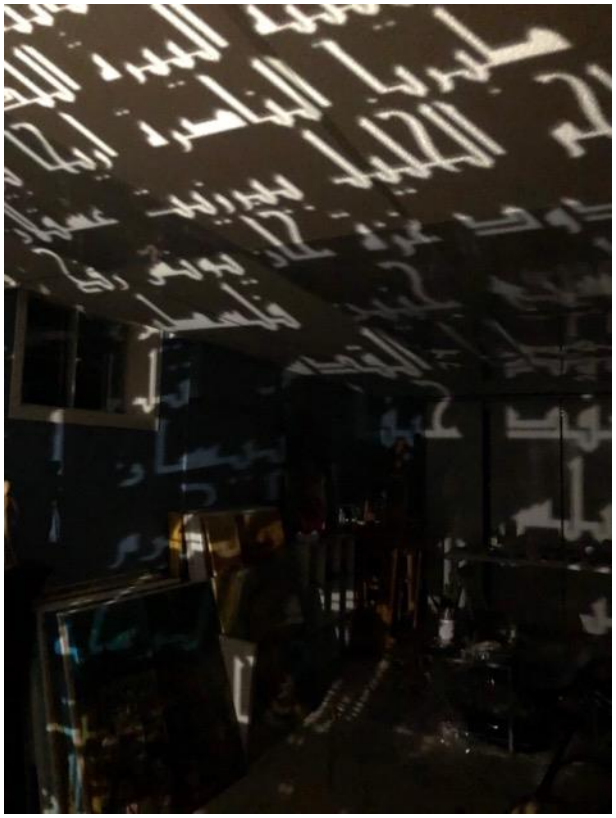

Figure 154: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

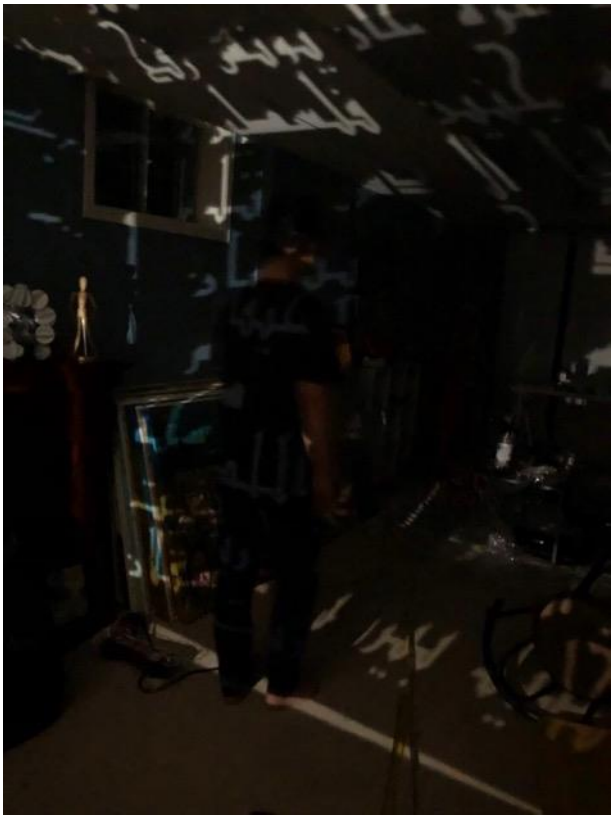

Figure 155: Palestine Lantern, Macquet, From All That Remains Series, Baltic Birch Wood/ Laser Cut, 2019

Unmask, 2019
Installation video Link: https://youtu.be/W7BmR7L1bLk

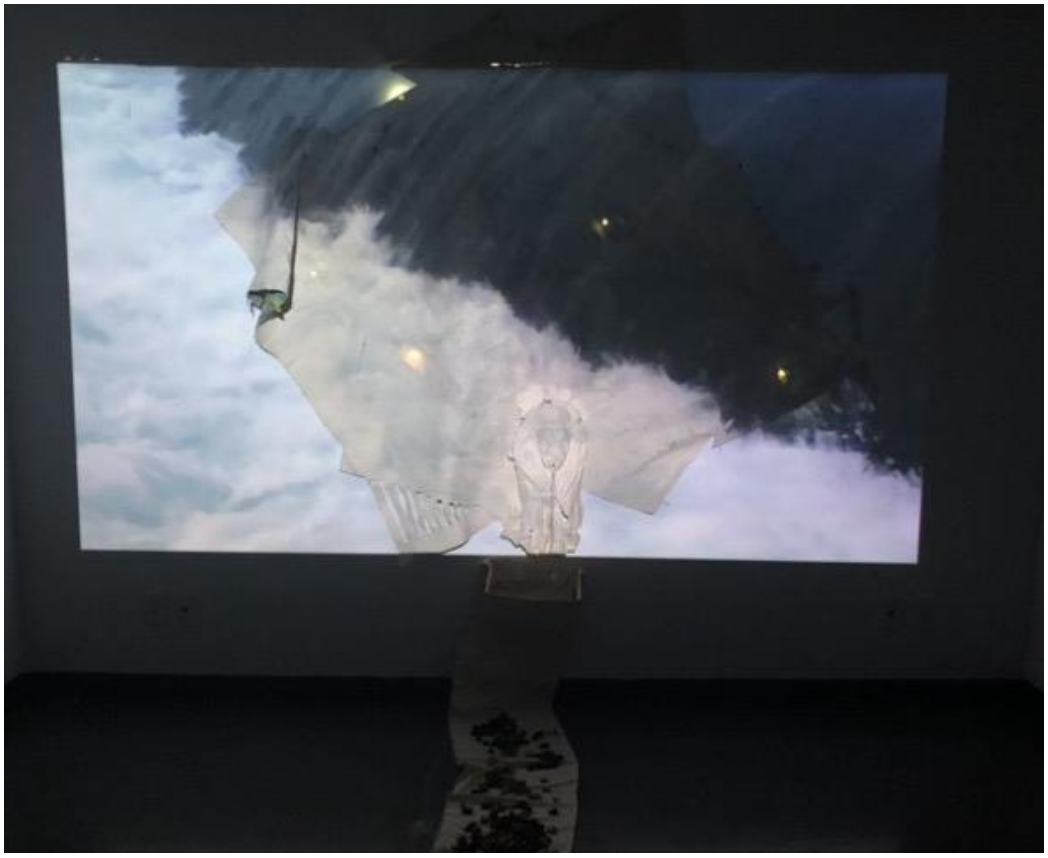

Figure 156: Unmasked, Mixed Media Installation, 2019

Figure 157: Unmasked, Mixed Media Installation, 2019

Figure 158: Unmasked, Mixed Media Installation, 2019

It's a Matter of a Phone Call, 2018
https://youtu.be/JgCWL6PzXLI

Figure 159: It's a Matter of a Phone Call, Video Still, Experimental Film, 2018

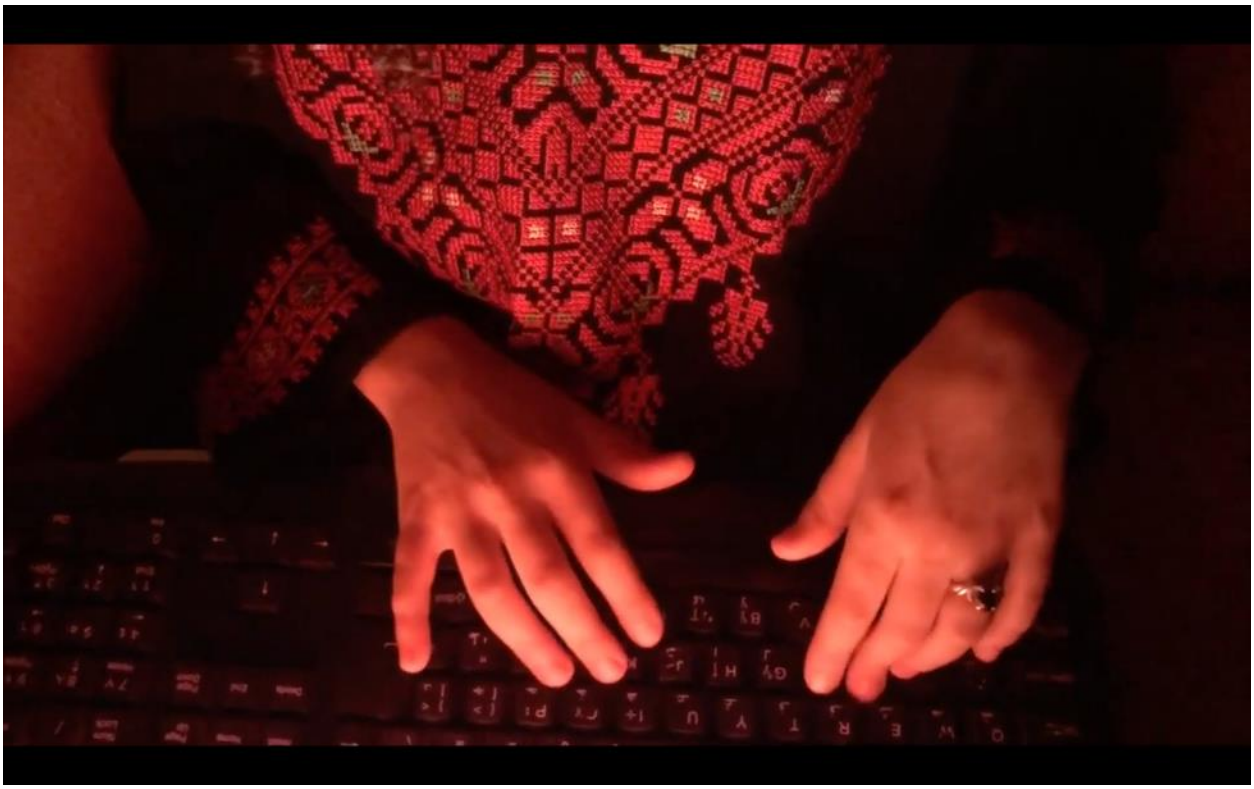

Figure 160: It's a Matter of a Phone Call, Video Still, Experimental Film, 2018

Figure 161: It's a Matter of a Phone Call, Video Still, Experimental Film, 2018

Figure 162: It's a Matter of a Phone Call, Video Still, Experimental Film, 2018

Figure 163: It's a Matter of a Phone Call, Video Still, Experimental Film, 2018

Memories at a Distance, Video, 2019
https://youtu.be/xMgpBYgKPIM

Figure 164: Memories at a Distance, Video Still, 2019

Appendix E: Continued: The Now

Exhibit D: It's a Matter of a Phone Call

Each Palestinian has an endless number of stories to tell. *It's A matter of a Phone Call*, 2018, my first short film is based on my memories of an event that occurred in 2010. The story of the film is not only the story of my sister and me, but it is also the untold story of my family's neighbours, the Abu Wahids, and millions of other Palestinians. Quite often, the Israeli Military Occupation Forces would launch aggression on the heavily populated Palestinian city of Gaza. Hundreds of Palestinians are killed. Thousands are left disabled. Hundreds of thousands become homeless due to the shelling of their homes. The missile attacks get stronger at night-time. Entire families often get wiped out while asleep. Palestinians who live inside the wall are always wondering who will be next. Those outside the wall are always wondering when they will get that dreaded phone call announcing bad news about their loved ones on the other side of the wall.

When night falls on Gaza, and the sounds of the attacks get stronger, I call my sister to keep her company and soothe her fears throughout the nights. One evening she did not pick up the phone. When I called again the next day, she was inconsolable. I learnt that the night before she had seen a missile approaching her; and started yelling "Mom, the missile is coming towards us, Mom, towards us, Mom… The missile missed my family by a few meters and took down a part of our house, but sadly, it took away the lives of our neighbours: our close friends, the Abu Wahid's, including the parents, Abu Wahid and Om Wahid and many of their children. From that evening on, when it is dark, and the aggression gets stronger, I would call my sister to keep her company and sooth her fears throughout the nights. Now, however, she is often too scared to answer the phone. Like other Palestinians in Gaza, she fears that the Israeli intelligence is testing her thoughts so the missiles can be directed accordingly.

Stories are entangled. Yes, I am a part of the narrative, but it is neither mine nor my sister's story. The real protagonists in this narrative are the Abu Wahids, who, unfortunately, will never have the chance to tell their side of the story, what they were doing or talking about, how they felt seeing the missile approaching them, their very last moments seeing their entire lives flash before their eyes, the trauma. One of the surviving children had stepped into the kitchen to get something just a moment before the missile hits his family who had been sitting around the woodfire stove in the front yard to chat while their mother was baking bread. For many months, he was in a coma in a hospital in Egypt, before waking up to find out that he had lost two legs and a hand and was left with a disfigured face. It was later that he also received the devastating news that he had lost his family. Most of their remains/ body parts were collected by neighbours who rushed out to help. In the West, when such incidents happen, people are usually seen running away from an explosion. In Palestine, it is the norm to see people running towards the sound of the explosion in order to rescue victims.

The Abu Wahids' tragedy could have been my particular story had I remained in Gaza, where I used to spend many evenings at their house. It could have been my sister's story. That particular evening, the Abu Wahids had invited her over, but she declined. It could have been the story of my entire family, considering the fact that the missile missed our house by a couple of meters. Stories are entangled. I could tell many stories in this one narrative. Abu Wahid was the person who built my study desk and my canvas stretcher bars. He framed my finished paintings and helped in my very first installation work made of metal for my very first solo exhibition right before I left Palestine for good 18 years ago. This man also created a locker for my Palestinian Christian friend who fell in love with a Muslim man, and was worried her family would find out. She kept her gifts and love letters in that secret locker in my room. Abu Wahid and Om Wahid were the romantic talk of the neighborhood: a young man marrying a woman who was eight

years his senior. Eleven kids later, they were still in love. The story of my dear neighbours is in some way my story, too, because they are such a big part of my memory.

Just as personal stories are intertwined, the theories and concepts I explore in this work are interconnected. In the making of this video, I was aware of Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic phenomenon of repetition compulsion associated with trauma, and manifested through dreams and repetitive behaviors or patterns. Aspects of suffering in the everyday life of Palestinians are a repetitive pattern. Funerals of individuals killed by snipers or missiles, strewn body parts, the demolition of Palestinian houses, the confiscation of land, the uprooting of olive trees, the constant power outages and scarce water supplies—these images are everyday scenes. My work also addresses Freud's death drive and destructive drive in service of creation. The Palestinian story is a paradigm of how the imperial powers of the world strive to destroy other entities to create their own empires. In making my video, I also thought of Foucault's idea of the use of oppressive power. In this case, it is a materialistic power embodied in destructive weapons to suppress the powerless other—and then to normalize these actions by reconstructing and distorting the facts via corporate media machines, which are again symbols of power.

Exhibit E: Memories at a Distance

Memories at a Distance is a video based on interviews via Skype with artists in Gaza. It sheds light on the daily life and activities of Palestinian artists living in Gaza under siege as another aspect of the ongoing Nakba. As an artist and former resident of Gaza, my birthplace, I am unable to be physically there to realize my work, while at the same time, the artists there cannot leave Gaza to show their art to the world and experience international exposure. This condition of confinement and inaccessibility is attributable to the ongoing blockade enforced by the Israeli Occupation.

For the interviews, I decided to use simple means such as cellphone cameras, tripods and laptops to emulate the artistic production of artists in Gaza using minimal resources. Gaza-based artist, Mohammed Al Haj, took me to places that mattered. Among the places I visited on Skype was *The Village of Arts and Crafts,* which has been recently shelled by Israeli forces, turning it into ruins. Due to the difficulty in maintaining a phone connection, it took many hours of recording with multiple attempts and constant failures, especially when outdoors. Eventually, I decided to discard all the artists' interviews and I selected one particular video of the village. The one-on-one interview between Al Haj and I was significant. Two Palestinian artists living on both sides of an apartheid wall creating a dialogue and interaction. It is an emblem of those who are trapped inside and unable to leave, and those who are in the Palestinian diaspora and not allowed to go back to Palestine to visit their families and reawaken memories. The choice of places of significance, like the village, evokes important memories for both of us. It is where we used to exhibit our work and gather with fellow artists in the Village's Cafe. In this sense, not only does technology connect me with family and acquaintances, but also to places of nostalgia despite the physical barriers and geographical distance.

The video reflects many desperate and constant attempts to connect. Technology is the only means of communications between Palestinians blockaded under occupation and those in the diaspora. In this particular instance, technology gives me access to Gaza. It also offers artists living in Gaza access to the world despite the blockade. Although it has countless advantages in connecting people around the world, modern technology cannot be trusted as it is susceptible to failure at any time. This failure is more intensified in Palestinian populated areas given the blockade which has been imposed for the past 13 years. In addition, most of the time technology becomes inefficient and useless for Palestinians living under occupation because of the frequent power outages and issues of affordability. The poor image produced as a result of bad connection

brings to mind Hito Steyerl's definition of the poor image as an image that has bad resolution and lack of quality due to technology (Steyerl 1).

Artists of Gaza continue to turn their daily suffering and struggle into legendary masterpieces. Friedrich Nietzsche's concept of the "new man" who "would not only survive but also develop and evolve through war" (Hughes and Philipp 111) applies to Palestinian artists. If the hardship and violence they endure do not kill or cripple them, this suffering would transform them into unprecedented, powerful individuals. At one of the interviews, Al Haj said that as an artist, he does not mind the harsh situation, because it provides him with inspiration, the unique subject matter and experience necessary for his formation as an artist. He sees it as the fuel for creativity and unique artistic expression. Like many other Palestinian artists living under Occupation, he is full of defiance and determination for someone who is experiencing inhumane living conditions. However, he said, "it is hard to be locked and separated from the outside world forever. We need to be allowed to breathe, to travel and experience international exposure". Other artists I interviewed share the same view. This can be interpreted in light of Nietzsche's ideas on passionate artistic creativity as a form of "The Will to Power" (Eberle 31). The horrors, deaths and suffering they endure arm them with a transformative experience. This also clearly reflects Nietzsche's idea that death and suffering are essential for life to continue.