Unsettling Birthright:
American Jewry and Colonial Identity Politics on Birthright Israel

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By

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Abstract

Since the inaugural Birthright Israel tour in 1999, over 500,000 young Jewry, that majority white Canadian or United States citizens, have toured Israel alongside Israeli peers on a free 10-day trip throughout what is framed as their "ancestral homeland." Borne out of my experience as a participant-observer on Tufts Hillel's Birthright Israel trip, "Unsettling Birthright" is critical analysis of a tour cast by its founders as an "apolitical" exploration of "Jewish identity" and "Israeli culture" in the present. I utilize ethnographic research, historical analysis, and anti-colonial cultural theory to identify Birthright Israel as a cultural conduit for colonial identity politics—an educational regime that codes a Zionist settler identity among participants. My work traces the production and reception of this identity—historicizing Birthright Israel within transnational histories of Jewish settler colonialism, delineating zones of contact between Birthright's claims to the land and Palestinian histories of ethnic cleansing, and underscoring how the violence of settler colonialism compromises the Zionist identity participants are made to claim. My work thus delineates the unstable and contradictory mechanisms through which Zionist settler colonialism is constructed, transmitted, and reinforced transnationally in the present. Ultimately, my analysis opens up space for alternative notions of Jewishness, rooted in notions of diaspora and cohabitation rather than exclusive nationalism, to be articulated.

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Introduction

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Each year, over 40,000 Jewry from around the world stream into Israel. Seemingly impenetrable borders become porous as young Jews between the ages of 19 and 26 participate in Birthright Israel—a (almost) free tour of the state. Divvied neatly into groups of 40 or 50, assorted according to University, hometown, career path, exuberance for the outdoors, dietary restrictions, or spiritual commitments, these young adults are packed into tour buses alongside a handful of Israeli soldiers, driven throughout Israel proper and the occupied Palestinian territories. As they hike bucolic hills, plant budding trees in arid soil, pray before the Western Wall, and ride camels over rolling sand dunes, Jewry come to love the land they traverse; they come to call it their home.

Since the tour's inception in 1999 over 500,000 Jewry, the vast majority white and hailing from the United States and Canada, have participated in Birthright Israel. Founded to facilitate Jewish continuity throughout the diaspora, after a 1992 population survey of North American Jewry found more than 50% of Jews were marrying outside of the faith, Birthright Israel has garnered massive success over the course of its tenure. The tour is enormous in scope—its founders laud the Birthright Israel as "probably the most concentrated voluntary wave of tourism in Jewish history"—and successful in mission—participants develop a strong sense of connection to Israel and the majority of Jews who attend marry other Jews (Chazan, 37; Center for modern Jewish studies, 28).

I. Framework: Zionism and Settler Colonialism

This thesis explores Birthright Israel as a conduit for colonial identity politics—an educational regime that imparts a particular Zionist settler Jewish identity that bolsters Zionist claims to Palestinian territory and naturalizes Jewish settlement on Palestinian land.

I use the term Zionist or Zionism to denote the belief, articulated and disseminated at the end of the 19th century by the assimilated Viennese Jewish journalist Theodor Herzl, that Jews should establish an exclusively Jewish homeland on the land now called Israel. From the early 20th century onward, thousands of white Ashkenazi Jews, hailing from predominantly central and Eastern Europe, moved to Palestine in waves, believing their immigration was a modern form of exodus, constituting a historical Jewish homecoming.[1] Herzl, alongside other European and North American Jewry with political and economic capital, sought to leverage the backing of the imperial powers that claimed sovereignty over the land—first the Ottoman then the British.[2] Leaders of the Zionist movement justified Jewish settlement of historic Palestine as a 'civilizing' mission; Herzl himself lauded the establishment of a Jewish state on Palestinian land as an "ascent of class," promising Jewish settlement would bring a "higher level" of civilization to Palestine (Herzl, 8). By discursively matching the language European colonizers use to justify the settlement and occupation of indigenous lands throughout the world, Zionists sought to frame

[1] By Palestine I refer to the area of Palestine as defined by the British Mandate borders, which now constitutes the West Bank, Gaza Strip, and Israel Proper.

[2] For an extensive review of how the origins of Zionism were indeed facilitated by imperial power and colonial structures see Sayegh, Fayez. "Jewish Settler Colonialism in Palestine." *Settler Colonial Studies,* 2:1 (206-225). Web. 25 Mar. 2015.

their claims to Palestinian territory as akin to the European colonial ventures that had, and continue to, transform the globe.[3]

From the outset and into the present day, Zionism was, and is, realized by the establishment of a Jewish settler colonial society on Palestinian land. By settler colonial I draw from Lorenzo Veracini's work to denote "processes where an exogenous collective replaces an indigenous one" (Veracini, 28). The 1948 Arab-Israeli war, celebrated as the War of Independence in Israel and mourned as al-Nakba or the Catastrophe in Palestine, displaced between 700,000 and one million Palestinians from their ancestral lands, forcing them into refugee camps within the West bank, Gaza, and neighboring countries, or into permanent exile throughout the globe (Belnin and Hajjar, 5). Jewish settlers, hailing from Europe, North America, as well as various parts of the Middle East, transformed centuries old Palestinian villages into hubs of Jewish life: Mosques were turned into Synagogues, imported Pine-trees planted over Palestinian village remains, and Arabic maps written over in Hebrew.

Zionism is thus predicated upon settler colonialism; Zionism seeks to replace Palestinian communities, infrastructure, and historical claims to the land with an exclusively Jewish state, naturalizing Jewish life on Palestinian soil by claiming Jews are indigenous to the region. Throughout my work I thus analyze Israel as a settler colonial society, one that is structured through settler colonial claims to the land. Whether or not Jews are indigenous to the region is irrelevant to my analysis. Although Israel is an important geographical location throughout sacred Jewish texts, fixating on archeological proof or genetic tests that evidence ancient Jewish

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[3] By acknowledging the continuities between Zionist settler colonialism and settler colonial regimes across the globe, I aim to underscore that settler colonialism in Palestine is not exceptional. Zionist settler colonialism intersects in a myriad of ways with settler colonial societies around the world. Palestinian demands for justice are comparable, yet not identical, to indigenous anticolonial movements that continue to fight against the effects of colonization on all six continents. For more on the necessities and nuances of comparing Palestine Native anticolonial movements in North America in particular, see Salaita, Steven. "The Native American model of Palestine's future." *The Electronic Intifada*. 10 Mar. 2016. Web. 20 Apr. 2016.

life on Palestinian soil erases the violence intrinsic to Israel's ongoing settler colonial and colonial occupation of Palestinian lands.[4] Israel is a state built by and for Jewish settlers, many driven from Europe by anti-Semitic violence in desperate need of a land to call home. These settlers now live on land most Palestinian communities were either forcibly expelled or ethnically cleansed from.[5] Today, roughly 5.6 million Palestinians—about half of the Palestinian population—live exiled from their ancestral homelands, scattered throughout the world. A large bulk of the West Bank and Gaza's population are Palestinian refugees as well, displaced from their homes that now lie within Israel's ever-expanding borders.[6]

II. Unsettling Birthright

My work traces the Zionist settler ideology and identity imparted throughout Birthright Israel to destabilize Jewish claims to Palestinian lands. Birthright Israel frames the land of Israel as a sacred homeland all Jews are entitled to by birth. Jewish ancestry gifts participants a tour of a land most Palestinians are barred from ever entering.[7] Over the course of ten days participants travel throughout Israel, "exploring sites of historic, cultural, and religious significance" ("What Is"). Zionist colonization and Palestinian displacement, confinement, and death are omitted from

[4] For further discussion on the tensions and advantages of using indigeneity as a framework to draw comparisons between Israeli settler colonialism in Palestine and settler colonialism throughout North America see Steven Salaita. "Inter/nationalism from the Holy Land to the New World: Encountering Palestine in American Indian Studies". *Native American and Indigenous Studies* 1.2 (2014): 125–144. Web. 16 Apr. 2016.

[5] While the vast majority of Palestinians were forcibly displaced from their homelands, a small percentage remained within Israel's borders after 1948, subject to the military rule of a hostile regime for decades. According to the Middle East Research and Information Project, "Today about 1.4 million Palestinians are citizens of Israel, living inside the country's 1949 armistice borders and comprising about 20% percent of its population" (Belinin and Hajjar, 5).

[6] Israel continues to expand its borders by constructing settlements throughout the West bank and slowly annexing more of East Jerusalem.

[7] Birthright Israel's eligibility requirements stipulate participants must have at least on Jewish Birthparent, or have undergone conversion to a recognized Jewish denomination ("Eligibility").

the curriculum taught, which glorifies Zionist state building and emphasizes exclusive Israeli nationalism.

A central contention of this work is that the Zionist Jewish identity transmitted throughout the 10-day tour is unstable, predicated on shaky historiographies and constant erasure. By historicizing Birthright Israel within transnational histories of Jewish settler colonialism, analyzing the curriculum of the trip itself, and deconstructing specific sites visited and activities enforced, I show that the Zionist entitlements Birthright seeks to solidify are constantly unsettled by Palestinian claims to the land.

III. Theoretical Archive

My theoretical archive spans from anti-colonial cultural theory, settler colonial studies, Palestinian historical records, and critical ethnographies on Palestinian and Israeli society.

Within anti-colonial cultural theory, Stuart Hall and José Muñoz provide essential frameworks to think through how hegemonic identificatory regimes like Birthright Israel are discursively coded and challenged. Stuart Hall's theory of coding and encoding argues that "oppositional decoding"—or reinterpreting a message through an alternative framework of reference—constitutes "a politically significant act" (106). Muñoz's praxis of disidentification builds upon Hall's work. Muñoz describes disidentification as a "hermeneutic…a way of shuffling back and forth between reception and production" (25). Disidentification goes beyond a mere critique of hegemonic identificatory codes. It instead uses these codes "as raw material for representing a disempowered politics or positionality that has been rendered unthinkable by dominant culture" (31). Muñoz's praxis of disidentification argues for "new possibilities" that are not constrained by the "materially prescriptive cultural locus of any identification" (30).

Muñoz's hermeneutic of disidentification thus allows for a renegotiation, rather than a categorical disavowal, of the Zionist identity and ideology coded through Birthright Israel. Such a hermeneutic is essential to my analysis. Beyond merely critiquing Birthright Israel as a mechanism of Zionism, my analysis attempts carve out space for an alternative Jewish identity to be articulated—a Jewish identity outside of Zionist settler colonialism's exclusionary framework.

Various scholars and activists are already articulating important iterations of Jewish disidentification from Zionist ideology and identity regimes. Judith Butler's *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* provides an essential framework for thinking through Judaism beyond Zionism. Citing Hannah Arendt, Butler defines Jewishness as a "cultural, historical, and political category…a term that tries to hold together a multiplicity of special modes at once without attempting to reconcile them." (14) For Butler the tension of multiplicity—a multiplicity generated from centuries of Jews living dispersed throughout disparate regions of the world—is a key component of Judaism. Butler thus renders principles of "cohabitation, bi-nationalism and a critique of state-violence" central to Jewish identity (15). Throughout my work, I draw from Butler's definition of Jewishness to denaturalize the exclusionary Zionist ideology imparted throughout Birthright from the heterogeneous religious and cultural tradition of Judaism.

Within settler colonial studies, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang offer essential frameworks to think through how Zionist settler colonialism operates and the extent to which it can be challenged. Tuck and Wayne describe settler colonialism as a process of "homemaking" whereby settlers "insist on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain" (5). Settler sovereignty over the land disrupts Indigenous relationships to land, representing "a profound

epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (5) Rather than constituting a single event, this violence "is reasserted each day of occupation" rendering settler colonialism a structure (5). My analysis seeks to make these intersecting violences visible to denaturalize Zionist claims to the landscape traveled. I show that Zionist settler colonialism is predicated on the ongoing destruction of Palestinian life.

Yet Tuck and Yang cement that merely making these violences visible does not and cannot constitute a form of decolonization. "There is a long and bumbled history of non-Indigenous peoples making moves to alleviate the impacts of colonization." Tuck and Yang write, "The too-easy adoption of decolonizing discourse (making decolonization a metaphor) is just one part of that history" (3). *Unsettling Birthright* is not written under the pretense of actually decolonizing Birthright Israel, which will not happen until Jews globally relinquish their "right of return" and Palestinians claim sovereignty over ancestral lands. Rather, *Unsettling Birthright* is written to show the cost Palestinian communities continue to pay so that Jewish Americans might claim a "Birthright." It is written to ask Jewish settler readers specifically—when the violences ingrained in the land traveled are visible, can we still call Israel a homeland?

The work of Palestinian scholars and their historical archives are central to my critique. Rashid Khalidi's *All that Remains* provides a monumental record of the Palestinian villages and life-worlds destroyed by Zionist colonization. I draw from these Palestinian geographies to remap my own Birthright experience, scraping away the Judaizing cartography Birthright imparts. The website *Palestine Remembered* has provided even more resources, publishing extensive records, maps, and testimonies evidencing how Palestinian landscapes were demolished, depopulated, and resettled. Both Khalidi's work and *Palestine Remembered* draw from a myriad of Palestinian sources, without which my own analysis would be impossible.

Ethnographies of Palestinian and Israeli societies have also proved instrumental throughout my research, highlighting how settler colonization and colonial occupation manifest and are normalized everyday, through tours like Birthright Israel. Thomas Abowd's ethnography *Colonial Jerusalem* evidences how Palestinian rights to an ancient city are constantly erased and written over by Zionist claims to contested sites. Eyal Weizmann's *Hollow Ground* makes visible the manifold ways Israel's occupation structures the infrastructure and architecture Birthright Israel travels over and through. Rebecca Stein's various ethnographies of tourism within and around Israel show how tourist routes are facilitated by colonial power structures, providing important frameworks for thinking through how Birthright Israel furthers Zionist colonization of Palestinian land.

Merging a multiplicity of sources enables the realization of an interdisciplinary project. Part auto-ethnography, part discourse analysis, and part critical historical inquiry, my thesis thus recodes the Zionist identity Birthright Israeli imparts through an alternative framework.

IV. Methodology

The analysis of Birthright Israel I present works out of data compiled as a participant observer of Tufts Hillel's Birthright Israel trip, which took place between May 27th, 2015 and June 7th, 2015. I attended Birthright with the express purpose of researching the tour, hoping that my own participation, on what has become something akin to a right of passage for young American Jewry, would afford me valuable insights into the ideology espoused and identity imparted throughout the tour. My reform Jewish background, white, Ashkenazi features, middle-class upbringing, and college education enabled me to blend in seamlessly alongside other participants.

Over the ten days I participated like any other young Jewish American on the trip. I hiked in the Golan Heights, river-rafted in the Jordan River, planted pine trees west of Jerusalem, and rode camels in the Naqab Desert. I attempted to document as much as my experience as possible, without drawing attention to the fact that I was approaching my own Birthright Israel experience as a research question rather than a rite of passage. I took extensive notes on the activities I participated in, the history imparted, and Israeli nationalism encouraged by trip leaders and mirrored among participants. I filled a moleskin notebook with my own emotionally charged reflections on the tour, the ways in which my participation was furthering Zionist colonization of Palestinian lands, and insights gleaned from conversations with Israelis and American participants. I recorded public lectures given on the history of sites visited, Jewish culture, and contemporary Israeli society discreetly on my I-phone. Upon returning to the United States I transcribed the hours of audio recorded, which has served as a crucial archive for my analysis of the tour.

By going back through the piles of data compiled, I attempt to remap my own Birthright Israel experience. Because my tour was composed entirely of white Jewry from the United States, my analysis focuses on the American Jewish identity Birthright Israel codes among participants. While my critique is based off of my own Birthright Israel tour, given the stringent guidelines Birthright imposes on all tours, the route I traveled, activities I participated in, and historical narrative received is comparable, if not almost identical, to most Birthright Israel tours. My critique of Birthright is thus necessarily applicable to the thousands of tours Birthright Israel sponsors for American Jewry each year.

V. Personal Statement

My own family history and political commitments structure my research of Birthright Israel. I was raised in a white, mixed faith household, with neither parent pushing their own religious beliefs onto their children. I willingly attended a reform synagogue in Seattle, WA from second grade, through my bat-mitzvah, and until I graduated high school. Zionism was never questioned during my Jewish religious education: patriotism toward Israel was taught alongside key Jewish holidays, crucial moments in Jewish history, and the Hebrew alphabet. Zionism as a natural corollary of Judaism was reiterated by my larger Jewish community—trees were planted in the Naqab on my behalf when I was bat-mitzvahed, my grandparents urged me to visit Israel each year at Passover, and Jewish peers encouraged me claim my "Birthright."

My political development was spurred by a relatively progressive high school that taught the history of Israeli occupation and invited guest speakers across the political spectrum to speak on the conflict. In college, Palestinian peers and Palestinian solidarity organizing spaces opened my eyes to the skewed Zionist narrative I had been fed throughout my Jewish education. Courses on colonialism, settler colonialism, and anti-colonial movements from the U.S. to Palestine taught me to think critically about how I might leverage my voice as a white American Jew to amplify Palestinian calls for justice. My education and organizing experience has led me to demand an end to Israeli occupation and disentangle religious Judaism from Zionist settler colonialism.

My Senior Honors Thesis is in many ways a culmination of the praxis I have learned and developed throughout my college career. Although fundamentally against the underlying ideology of the tour, I attended knowing that any critique of Birthright itself necessitates deep knowledge of the route traveled, curriculum instituted, and ideology coded. Furthermore, participation in the tour affords my critique more sway among Jewish communities supportive of

Birthright Israel. My own personal experience as a Birthright participant enables me to counter many participants' claims that the tour is an apolitical framing of contemporary Israel, wielding my own experience as counter-evidence. I thus orchestrate my ability to claim a "Birth-right" to Israel to demand an end to the tour itself, making visible the ways in which the Jewish identity and Zionist ideology instated is predicated on a myriad of settler violences.

VI. Structure of Work

The following is divided into three chapters and concluding remarks. Chapter I historicizes Birthright Israel within transnational histories of white Jewish settler colonialism. Chapter II focuses on the curriculum of Birthright—honing in on the discreet and blatant ways my own tour brushed up against colonial histories embedded in the landscape. Chapter III deconstructs the route traveled, destabilizing the Zionist cartographies participants are made to map onto the land. My concluding remarks articulate the generative possibilities of a disidentification with Birthright Israel, reflecting on possibilities for a Jewish identity that stands in opposition to the Zionist settler identity Birthright seeks to institute.

My historicization of Birthright Israel goes beyond merely contextualizing the tour's founding and proliferation throughout Jewish communities. Rather, I argue that Birthright Israel is inextricable from a history of Jewish settler colonialism throughout North America. By highlighting the continuities of Jewish complicity in settler colonialism, from the first white settlement of what is now called the United States to ongoing Zionist transformation of Palestinian soil, I contend that settler colonialism has long structured what it means to be Jewish and American.

Chapter II draws from Mary Louise Pratt's theorization of contact zones to highlight the ways in which the Birthright Israel experience is rearranged through blatant and muffled contact with colonial histories and Palestinian's ongoing anticolonial struggles. By honing in on the manifold ways my own tour's curriculum brushed up against Palestinian counterclaims to the landscape traveled, I highlight how the Jewish identity Birthright Israel instates is hollow—predicated on a series of erasures and manufactured amnesia.

Chapter III works out of environmental justice theory and the work of Indigenous scholars to trace the mechanisms through which Birthright participants maps a Jewish past, present and future onto the terrain traveled. I argue that the Zionist historiographies participants institute throughout Birthright are rife with ambiguities, constantly undermined by Zionist colonialism's visibly ongoing violences. Throwing these violences into relief evidences that the "Birth-right" participants claim is polluted with settler denials that crumble upon close scrutiny.

My concluding remarks center on the generative possibilities disidentification from Zionist colonization yields for formulations of Jewish identity. I reflect on how disidentification renders settler colonialism, in the words of Tuck and Yang, incommensurable with Jewish identity, not only in the context of Palestine, but throughout the world (31). Drawing from Judith Butler and Daniel Boyarin's critiques of Jewish nationalism, I begin to articulate a global, diasporic Jewish identity that might amplify Indigenous demands for decolonization. These concluding formulations constitute only a small step in a larger project of denaturalizing settler nationalism from normative notions of citizenship, home, and belonging.

Chapter I

Settler Colonial Historiographies: The Making and Remaking of Jewish American Identity

Sophia Goodfriend is scrawled in shaky handwriting across the inside cover of my second grade Hebrew School textbook *I Live in Israel*. A blank map captioned "Israel" illustrates the third page, with the borders of the West Bank, Golan Heights, and Gaza strip omitted. Beneath the map, in clean large font, it reads: "Here is a map of Israel. Where do you think you would like to live in Israel? Draw an X on the place you have chosen" (Frankel and Hoffman, 11). Always a diligent student, my eight-year-old self followed the prompt accordingly: a messy X drawn across half of the Negev Desert claims the region as my "home." "If you are Jewish, you have more than one home," the text continues, "You may live in the United States, in Canada, or in South Africa, but Israel has a special place in your heart. All of the places you have read about—the kibbutz, the cities, Israel long ago, and the peaceful Israel we pray for—all these belong to you too. They belong to you because you are a Jew" (Frankel and Hoffman, 10).

I stumbled across my old Hebrew school textbook the night before I embarked on a ten-day tour of Israel with Tufts Hillel on their biannual Taglit Birthright Israel trip. I was in my parent's house in Seattle before flying to John F. Kennedy airport where the tour, sold as the "trip of a lifetime," would begin ("About Birthright"). As my old Sunday school exercise book adeptly demonstrates, the tour was framed as the "homecoming" my Jewish education entitled me to as soon as I stepped foot in synagogue. The trip was a "birthright" my paternal grandparents reiterate at most family gatherings. Israel was the homeland the Torah, my rabbi, neighbors, family, and friends urged me to visit, protect, and love for most of my life.

I Live in Israel invites readers on a textual traversal of the Israeli state along a route that mirrors the tour I would take thirteen years later with Tufts Hillel. The textbook enables its

young readers to visit Jews in Jerusalem, the Galilee, Haifa, Beershiva, Ts'fat, Tel Aviv, Eilat, and Kibbutzim on the Negev desert. The text depicts young Israeli Jews' everyday life; readers meet their family, tour their home, see their school, and learn the games they play. I come to see their experience as familiar, as my own. Similar to the lifelong friendships Birthright Israel fosters among American Jews and the Israeli soldiers who join them throughout the tour, *I Live in Israel* enables me to align my story with Jewish Israelis, who are framed as not so different from me after all. "Since you are Jewish," the text tells me, "you can become a citizen of Israel too" (Frankel and Hoffman, 10).

Settler colonialism is a necessary analytic to think through the claims to citizenship, homeland, and belonging that *I Live in Israel* makes—claims that parallel invocations made on Birthright Israel. Lorenzo Veracini's *Settler Colonialism a Theoretical Overview* defines settler colonialism as "premised on the domination of a settler majority that has become Indigenous. These settlers, Veracini writes, "are made by conquest and by immigration" (6). Immigration and settlement are what connects me, the Ashkenazi Jewish American reader *I Live in Israel* is written for, to my Israeli peers. None of us is native to the land(s) we are made to call home, but the Israeli friends I meet through the text make it clear that we belong in Israel because we have no where else left to go. "A global dimension to the frenzy for native land is reflected in the fact that, as economic immigrants," Patrick Wolfe writes, "the rabble were generally drawn from Europe's landless" (392). From puritan colonizers on the Mayflower to Europeans passing through Ellis Island and Ashkenazi Jews scattered from Argentina, Mexico, Israel, South Africa and the United States in the wake of the Holocaust, settler colonialism has been enacted by economic immigrants who could no longer make a viable life for themselves in Europe (Wolfe, 392). The Israeli peers I encounter throughout *I Live in Israel*, with eastern European names and

pale skin, are fundamentally at home in a land conquered by Zionist pioneers and settled by European refugees fleeing destroyed homes, villages, and families in the latter half of the 20th century. The much-needed Israeli homeland that the text depicts bears no trace of the Palestinians who lived on, worked, owned, and cherished the land now called Israel prior to the British mandate and the UN partition in 1948.

The erasure of Palestinian claims to territory through *I Live in Israel's* framing of Israeli society is emblematic of a central mechanism with which settler colonial societies and identities are sustained globally. The making of settler identities does not begin and end with conquest and immigration as *I Live in Israel* presumes—a process incumbent on but never limited to the erasure of Palestinian history and Zionist (re)settlement. Rather, as Wolfe argues, settler colonialism is an ongoing process:

> When invasion is recognized as a structure rather than an event, its history does not stop…. narrating that history involves charting the continuities, discontinuities, adjustments, and departures whereby a logic that initially informed frontier killing transmutes into different modalities, discourses and institutional formations as it undergirds the historical development and complexification of settler society (402).

Narrating the various transmutations of settler colonialism in articulations of Ashkenazi Jewish American identity denaturalizes and destabilizes discourses of victimhood, homecoming, and belonging coded through textbooks like *I Live in Israel* and educational regimes like Birthright Israel. This chapter explores the continuities of settler colonialism as a logic dedicated to the making and remaking of Ashkenazi Jewish American identity. From the first Jewish settlements in the United States, to the floods of Jewish refugees who poured through Ellis Island to claim white citizenship, and into the present as Jewish and American are made synonymous with Israel

and Zionism, settler colonialism has structured and restructured what it means to be Jewish and American.

I. White Settlement and Jewish American Historiographies

Historians of Jewish American history classify Jewish immigration to the United States in three distinct waves (Hertzberg; Diner). The first wave occurred between 1654-1790 when Sephardic Jews from Portugal and Spain fled the inquisition and settled throughout the Americas. Ashkenazi Jews from Central and Eastern Europe followed shortly thereafter and settled along the Eastern Seaboard. Jews with the means were granted the right to sovereignty and livelihood in the colonies alongside other Europeans fleeing religious persecution in their homelands (Faber).[8] The second wave, from 1790-1880, brought 250,000 Ashkenazi Jews from Central Europe seeking the freedom and good fortune that settlement in the United States promised European emigrants (Ashton, 47). They spread past the East Coast and settled land throughout the Midwest. The third wave brought 2.5 million Ashkenazi Jews, most from Eastern Europe, to the United States. They flooded throughout the country from 1880 up until 1924, when the Johnson-Reed immigration act severely restricted the number of immigrants permitted entry to the United States (Goldstein, 70).[9]

In recent decades considerable scholarly attention has centered on the predominately poor, religiously observant Jews within the third wave who encountered anti-Semitic violence and racialized poverty upon arrival in the United States (Goldstein, Jacobson, Brodkin). This

[8] Eli Faber details the gradual establishment of Jewish communities in New York, Savanna, Philadelphia, and Newport between the 17th and 18th centuries. The first Jewish settlers to come to the United States were Sephardic, hailing from Brazil by way of Span and Portugal where they fled religious persecution. By 1720 Ashkenazi Jews constituted the majority of the Jewish community in the United States (29).

[9] For an extensive history of the 1924 immigration act see: Ngai, Mae. "The Johnson-Reed Act of 1924 and the Reconstruction of Race in Immigration Law." *Impossible Subjects: Illegal Aliens and the Making of Modern America*. (21-56). Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004. Print.

literature seeks to delineate Eastern European Jews' steady assimilation into dominant white Anglo-culture throughout the first half of the 20th century as a means of rendering visible the social construction of whiteness (Brodkin, Goldstein, Roediger, Jacobson). However, in locating the crux of Ashkenazi Jewish American racial formation in the 20th century, many historians delink the first and second waves of Jewish American immigration from the third. Indeed, little is written about those Jews who transformed the Jewish population in the United States from the meager 2,500 Jews settled mostly around the Eastern Seaboard at the start of the 19th century (Ashton, 48). Most of those in the second wave were well off and secular and therefore able to assimilate easily into Anglo-American culture. They settled in the "vast stretches of territory still open for settlement" by white European immigrants (Goldstein, 73). These Jews scattered through the newly claimed territory that constituted the United States in the 19th century, entitled to as much of the "frontier" as their gentile peers. Jews worked as peddlers, merchants, and wholesalers in regional trading posts outfitting and facilitating white settlement of the United States' expanding borders (Diner, 4). From Cincinnati and Chicago to San Francisco and Seattle, "hubs" of Jewish life were instituted throughout the West and Southwest as white settlements checkered coast to coast (Ashton, 49).

Patrick Wolfe describes settler colonialism as a structure that destroys to replace (388). The "vast stretches of territory" historians like Goldstein cast as ripe for European Jewish settlement were not empty but the territorial homelands of Native populations who lived across the West, Midwest, South, and South West regions of the United States prior to the expansion of the American frontier. European emigrants, Jewish and gentile, were made white through their settlement of newly emptied swaths of land. David Roediger explains how "white arose as a designation for European explorers, traders, and settlers who came into contact with the

indigenous people of the Americas." European emigrants, Roediger writes, developed this designation "to rationalize the dispossession of Native Americans from the land" (6). Those Jews who spread throughout the country in the second wave of Jewish immigration were conscripted into the enormous project of white settlement that transformed the United States and the Europeans who sought a home within its borders. Citizenship for these Jews was easily attained: the Naturalization Act of 1790 simply stipulated that "free white persons" who have "resided in the United States for a whole year, shall be entitled to the rights of citizenship" (Jacobson *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 22).[10] The undisputed equation of whiteness with citizenship—and the entitlements to land, mobility, and property white citizenship in the United States is tethered to—thus aided in cementing newly formed racial boundaries in the United States.

Jews in this second wave sought to make a viable life for themselves in the United States. Largely economic immigrants— "Europe's landless" that Veracini identifies as constitutive of settler societies—these Jews were fleeing religious persecution in their home countries. While excluded from social life in Europe, their ability to settle the frontier alongside other white European bodies, both Jewish and gentile, enabled them to claim the racially exclusive rights to settler citizenship and the sovereignty it conferred (Ashton 50). Despite composing less than 1% of the population, second-wave Jewish immigrants were able to accrue material capital and political sway through their active participation in solidifying the foundations of the United States' settler society.

In the late 18th and early 19th centuries affluent white Jews orchestrated their institutional power to facilitate the third wave of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration and enable Ashkenazi Jewish

[10] See also : Wald, Priscilla. "Naturalization". *Keywords for American Cultural Studies*. Ed. Bruce Burgett and Glenn Hendler. NYU Press, 2007. 170–174. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.

assimilation into white American society. Organizations like the American Jewish Committee, the order of B'nai B'rith, and the National Council of Jewish Women advocated to keep the gates of immigration open to Jews flooding into the United States from Eastern Europe in the late 19th and early 20th centuries (Friesal, 65). These affluent organizations helped "Americanize" newly emigrated Jewry, providing them resources and support networks to "help the Jewish immigrant become a member of the American commonwealth" (Bernheimer, 87).[11]

The stories my family passes down omit these histories of settler colonialism that structure white Jewish identity today. I am told that my great-grandparents pulled themselves out of poverty alongside other poor Eastern European Jews in the early 20th century. My great-grandfather Louis Gutfreund came to the United States from a small town in Poland in 1919. His story is fairly common, emblematic of the millions of Ashkenazi Jews who left family, friends, and life-worlds behind in Eastern Europe during the third wave of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration. Louis deserted the Austrian army at the age of 19 where he had served as a Calvary Officer in the First World War. Forced to raid villages and murder Jewish residents in horrific pogroms, Louis fled a life of poverty plagued by incessant violence. He stole his way into Hungary by hiding under damp hay piled onto the back of a farmer's wagon clutching identification papers in his hand, and holding his breath. Louis rode steerage over the Atlantic, received a stamp of citizenship and different name in Ellis Island, and arrived in the crowded tenements of New York's Lower East Side. Louis worked his way up from taxing factory jobs in the garment industry to owning a small carpet business on the Upper East Side of New York. However, the material benefits he accrued could not counteract what my grandparents remember

[11] Bernheimer's 1922 article claims: "The history, ethics, and ideals of the Jews have made them peculiarly impressionable to American ideals, and have enabled them, from the very beginning of American history, to make important contributions in this direction"(85). He lauds organizations and community centers as "forces of assimilation" and celebrates how these efforts of Americanization have made newly immigrated Jews a significant part of the social, cultural, and educational fabric of the American nation" (111).

as unanswered letters overseas, scores of relatives claimed by gas chambers, and years of unending grief.

Louis was able to pass easily through Ellis Island because of citizenship laws that conferred sovereignty to any "free white person" who came with the intention of settling within the borders of the United States permanently. My great-grandfather came after scores of Jewish settlers who helped populate the United States with white bodies; who were able to accumulate capital and social status through displacing Native peoples from land and appropriating it as their own. His life was elevated by the political sway and capital these more affluent Jewish Americans leveraged that enabled impoverished European Jewish immigrants to claim the advantages of white citizenship and white meritocracy. The family history passed down to me, and reflected in dominant scholarship of Jewish American immigration and assimilation, conveniently erases histories of white Jewish settlement, Jewish American political power and philanthropy, and exclusionary citizenship laws that enabled white Jewish men like Louis to achieve the material hallmarks of the American dream.

Linking up the third wave of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration to the United States to the first and second waves enables me to foreground settler colonialism as a formative structure in Ashkenazi Jewish American history. My great-grandfather came to carve out a prosperous life for himself in the United States because doing so in Europe was untenable. Polish and poor, he was able to rent a room and find a job in New York in part because he was also white and Jewish. Polish and poor, my grandparents were able to attend college and move to the suburbs because they were white and Jewish. Eric Goldstein and Karen Brodkin suggest that men like my great-grandfather only became white after reaping the benefits of the United States government's attempts to redraw and stabilize racial boundaries in the United States. They argue that the

educational, occupational, and residential G.I. benefits extended to white veterans following World War II granted European immigrants economic advantages that turned them into white citizens (Brodkin, 43). These policies surely enabled the sons of Jewish immigrants, like my grandfather, to make their way out of the ethnic enclaves of urban centers and into homogenizing whites suburbs. However, the benefits of white citizenship and sovereignty were extended to European immigrants the moment they passed through Ellis Island and promised immigration officers they intended to settle in the United States permanently. The benefits of white citizenship and sovereignty were facilitated by more settled and affluent Jewish philanthropists who provided free English classes, discounted housing, and job counseling to newly immigrated Ashkenazi Jews.

The selective historiographies of Ashkenazi Jewish American immigration and identity, penned, articulated, and passed down through the latter half of the 20th century, focus on a recovery of a fraught immigrant past marked by old-world ritual and hardship overcome. My great-grandfather may have slowly climbed up the economic latter, but his climb was propelled by the racially exclusive laws of this settler democracy and the political sway/philanthropy more settled Jewish Americans extended to recent immigrants. Delinking the most recent wave of Ashkenazi Jewish immigration to the United States thus masks how settler colonialism is manifest in contemporary enunciations of white Jewish American identity: in entitlements to citizenship in the United States and Israel articulated by my Hebrew School textbook, in trips like Birthright that enable white Jewish Americans to call both the United States and Israel home.

II. Ethnic Revivalism and Birthright Israel

These historiographies are part of a broader trend that Mathew Frye Jacobson terms "ethnic revival", which manifested throughout white America's social fabric during the post-civil rights era. Jacobson's *Roots Too* (2006) charts how, in response to the "group-based mobilization of the civil rights movement," white Americans reconstructed the United States as a multicultural haven where ethnic rather than racial plurality could palatably coexist (33). "The sudden centrality of Black grievance to national discussion prompted a rapid move among white ethnics to disassociate themselves from white privilege" Jacobson writes, "the popular rediscovery of ethnic forbears became a way of saying: 'we're merely newcomers; the nation's crimes are not our own'" (21). "Disassociation" from whiteness through a "rediscovery" of ethnic roots enabled white Americans—Jewish and gentile—to thus reimagine the America their ancestors immigrated to. Stories of recent immigration through Ellis Island displace histories of settlement emblematized by Plymouth Rock in the "national myth of origins" (*Roots Too,* 9). Images of old-world shtettles and crowded tenements on the Lower East Side erase the racially exclusive citizenship laws that enabled white settlers—Jewish and gentile—to build their homes on land claimed by Native nations. Romanticized tales of ancestors lifting themselves out of poverty by their bootstraps eclipse histories of Jewish settlement of the American frontier alongside other white pioneers. Ashkenazi Jewish Americans, along with countless other European emigrants who constitute the "economic immigrants" settler societies are built by and for, thus come to claim distant poverty and persecution rather than the advantages wrought by racially exclusive citizenship laws, as their ancestry (Wolfe, 392).

The ethnic revivalism Jacobson maps in *Roots Too* took strong hold in the 1970's when ethnicity, as a social good, became fashionable: "By 1979 a pluralistic perspective had

transformed the basic paradigm of American historiography" (41). Jacobson discusses the manifold and popular cultural, social, and political forms this ethnic revival assumed: large scale revisions of American history textbooks and curricula to sanctify Ellis Island as the nation's origin story; "homeland" tourism through ancestral European villages; movies, novels, and films devoted to romanticized depictions of old-world ghettos; an upsurge in organizations, such as the Polish National Alliance or the National Association for Irish Justice, that advocated for "homeland" politics. These various iterations of Euro-American nationalism—that took both macro and micro-political form—thus facilitated a national forgetting of the violent beginnings of the United States as a settler democracy (*Roots Too,* 11*)*. Immigrant success stories were enunciated as cornerstones of national heritage—genocide and settlement replaced with meritocracy and multiculturalism.

Published in 1979, my Hebrew school textbook *I Live in Israel* is a product of American Jews' own participation in the massive obsession with ethnic heritage that permeated white America's social fabric. As an outright articulation of Zionism for young American Jews' consumption, the textbook demonstrates how the roots project sought to "lay symbolic claim to more ethnic 'homelands' than just the abandoned Old World Village" (*Roots Too,* 164). For Ashkenazi Jews in the United States, Jacobson writes, "Israel at least partially displaced Ellis Island as American Jews' touchstone of romantic peoplehood" (*Roots Too,* 164). Rather than turning to ancestral villages and archives decimated by the Holocaust, American Jewry asserted their ethnic particularity through Israeli nationalism. This push for ethnic revivalism dovetailed with the June 1967 Arab-Israeli War, which signaled a dramatic resurgence of Zionism among Jews throughout the diaspora. Following Israel's defeat of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria and subsequent appropriation of more Palestinian land, diasporic Jewry equated support for the

Israeli state with fighting off the threat of another Holocaust (Stork and Rose, 51). In the United States alone 10,000 American Jews volunteered for service in the Israeli Defense Forces as violence broke out in Israel (Stork and Rose, 51).[12] In the days following the war, Jewish communities incorporated Israeli history and current events into religious education, American Jews went door-to-door collecting donations to support Israeli troops, Jewish American tourism to Israel experienced an upsurge, and Jewish community leaders encouraged their constituents to move to Israel and make *aliyah* in larger numbers (Urofsky, 360).[13] From the summer of 1967 onward, as ethnic revivalism tied euro-Americans to ancestral homelands, American Jews tethered their allegiance to the Israeli state (*Roots Too*, 165).

This filiation with Israel was buttressed not only by Jewish community leaders within the United States but also actively encouraged and facilitated by Zionist political leaders throughout Israel and worldwide. A joint "manifesto" written by the Israeli government and the World Zionist Organization on July 13, 1967 declared the Jewish people's "holy duty" to "ensure the future of the Jewish state": "The inescapable call of this hour is for aliyah of the whole people, young and old; a return to Zion of the whole House of Israel" (Jewish Telegraph Agency). The Law of Return to Zion, passed by the Israeli congress in 1950, enabled these calls for Jewish immigration to and settlement in Israel. Similar to the racially exclusive Naturalization Act of 1790, which facilitated European Jewish immigration to and settlement of the United States, the Law of Return stipulates that Jews throughout the world are entitled to fully enfranchised citizenship within Israel (Robinson, 99). When it was passed the Law of Return also retroactively granted Jewish residents of the state the same rights conferred to Jewish immigrants yet failed to

[12] See also "Mobilization". "Mobilization". *The New American Zionism*. NYU Press, 2014. 13– 32. Web. 23 Nov. 2015.
[13] Aliyah means the act of Jewish immigration to and settlement in Israel. The literal Hebrew translation means "ascent".

clarify what, if any, rights Arab-Palestinians within Israel were entitled to (Robinson, 99). The Law of Return thus codified the Israeli state as, what Oren Yiftachel names, a settler ethnocracy (Yiftachel, 5). By rendering Israeli citizenship a right conferred to Jews globally by birth while confining Palestinians to second-class citizenship, the Israeli state was instituted as "a regime premised on a main project of ethnonational expansion and control" attained through the structural elevation of Jewish citizens and immigrants over Arab-Palestinian citizens (Yiftachel, 5). While within Israel calls for Jewish immigration to the land functioned to secure Jewish demographic hegemony within the newly settled borders of the Israeli state, globally such calls worked to wed modern Zionism—a political ideology that was a secular outgrowth of displacement, colonial structures, and imperial power—to the heterogeneous religious tradition of Judaism.[14]

That *I Live in Israel* was still taught by a reform synagogue in Seattle more than 25 years after its date of publication illustrates how the tethering of Israeli ethnonationalism to Jewish American identity that took hold in the 1970's continues well into the present. The entitlements to dual-citizenship and belonging articulated through the text ("because you are Jewish you have more than one home…") were enforced by the opportunity I was presented to travel to Israel as an adolescent and young adult. At Hebrew school I could enroll in summer camps in Jerusalem or on a kibbutz in the Galilee. I watched my friends come back each September with a tan and flipped through photos of them lounging on the beach in Tel Aviv. My Hebrew-school teacher passed around sand from the Negev desert and gifted me dreidels embellished with an Israeli flag for Hanukkah. My rabbi encouraged me to visit the "holy land" with other youth from my temple throughout High School. When I enrolled as a first-year at Tufts my parent's address was

[14] For further discussion of the origins of modern Zionism as a secular political agenda rooted in colonization see Salaita, Steven. *Israel's Dead Soul*. Temple Press: Philadelphia. 2011. Print.

flooded with pamphlets from the campus Hillel encouraging me to build community with fellow Jewish students by experiencing Israel. By virtue of my Jewish heritage I was told to express my Jewishness through trendy displays of Israeli nationalism. Glossy photographs boasted students claiming their "birthright" on the free ten-day tour of the country: white Jews who looked like me squinted under the desert sun on top of camels, floated in the dead sea, and held hands with Israeli soldiers at the Western Wall on what was advertised as "the trip of a lifetime."

These opportunities were facilitated by the same Jewish-American and Israeli coalitions that mobilized Jewry globally in the wake of the 1967 war to support the nascent Israeli state. While larger in scope and success than any Zionist educational regimes that preceded it, Birthright Israel was heralded by nearly 60 years of American tourism to Israel sponsored by the state of Israel, Jewish American community leaders, philanthropists, and politicians, and world-wide Zionist agencies (Chazan and Saxe, 7). These tours were implemented as early as the first Arab-Israeli war in 1948 and increased throughout the following decades as they assumed various, heterogeneous forms.[15] By the 1950's young Jews from the United States could visit Israel for a five week summer experience or spend multiple years working on kibbutzim sprouting throughout Israel's newly claimed territory (Cohen, 7). As 1967 saw an explosion of Israeli nationalism among American Jewry, and assertions of Jewish ethnicity were encouraged by larger trends of ethnic revivalism among white Americans, youth trips to Israel spiked in popularity. Research published by sponsoring agencies throughout the 1970's and 80's

[15] The 1948 war fought between the nascent Israeli state and a military coalition of Arab states including Palestine is remembered by Zionist Israelis as the "Independence War" and Palestinians and their supporters as *al-Nakba* or the Catastrophe. The war expanded Israeli borders to included not only the area the UN had allotted to the Israeli state about 60% of the land allotted to Palestine as well. For a more detailed history see: Robinson, Shira. *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel's Liberal Settler State*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2013. Print.

confirmed the "powerful and long-term impact of the Israel experience on Jewish Identity" (Chazan and Saxe, 9).

These programs, however, failed to reach broad swaths of the American Jewish population. In 1990 the National Jewish Population Survey found that 52% of American Jews married in the past five years had married outside the faith and that younger generations of Jews were less likely than their parents to be involved with Jewish communities, donate money to Jewish organizations, or visit Israel (Steinfels). These results sparked uproar among Jewish community leaders who scrambled to solve what became known as the "crisis of continuity" (Feldman). The American Jewish Committee published a "Statement on Intermarriage" the following year recommending, among other initiates, educational programs to communicate "the vital importance of Israel to Jewish American identity" (American Jewish Committee). Amidst such calls for continuity the various sponsoring agencies for Israel youth trips merged under the umbrella organization Israel Experience Inc. The organization quickly became "the voice and lobby for Israel travel"; it streamlined Jewish travel to Israel and transformed tourism from exposure to "didactic lessons" into "experiential education" that solidifies travel to Israel as an "important resource for Jewish education and identity formation" (Chazan and Saxe, 8).

Within a few years white Jewish American philanthropists Charles Bronfman, heir to Canada's Seagram's Liquor, and Michael Steinhardt, retired Wall-street executive, expanded the breadth of Experience Israel Inc. In collaboration with the government of Israel, Jewish Federations of North America, the Jewish Agency for Israel, and individual philanthropists, Steinhardt and Bronfman created Birthright Israel ("Birthright Israel").[16] Framed as a "gift to the

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[16] The idea of a free-trip to Israel was in fact spurred by Israeli Knesset member Yossi Beilen who argued that American Jewish Philanthropy should focus on educating American Jews in the diaspora to view Israel as central to Judaism. He called for a "voucher" that would pay the way for young Jewish Americans to come to Israel and "learn about their heritage" on a "pilgrimage, a celebration, and rite of passage" (Chazan and Saxe 7).

next generation," Birthright seeks to "plug the dam of assimilation" by bringing "tens of thousands of young Jewish adults to Israel" (Chazan and Saxe, 6). Lifting its name directly from the ethnonationalist language of the Law of Return, which stipulates that "every Jew has the right to immigrate to Israel" ("Law of Return"), Steinhardt and Bronfman believed "it was the birthright of all young Jews to be able to visit their ancestral homeland" ("About Birthright Israel") Birthright Israel was thus created with the ultimate goal of making "a visit to Israel" no longer something claimed "by those young Jews who were already committed to being Jewish" but instead "something experienced by every young Jewish adult" (Chazan and Saxe, 6).

Since 1999 Birthright Israel has exploded in popularity. To date over 500,000 young American Jews have participated in the program. The majority of participants have reflected the demographics of its founders: each year roughly 40,000 young, mostly American and mostly white, middle/upper-class Ashkenazi Jews travel throughout the country alongside Israeli soldiers. If the tour was founded to "plug the dam of assimilation" by encouraging Israeli nationalism in young American Jews, studies published by those who craft the tour's whirlwind curriculum confirm the tour's success. In 2006 the Center for Modern Jewish Studies found the "Strongest single attitudinal effect of the Birthright Israel experience is on participants' sense of connection to Israel" (7); according to a 2009 study by the same researchers 72% of American Jews who go on birthright marry other Jews and are 46% more likely than nonparticipants to find marrying another Jew "very important"(28). Those who attend Birthright fulfill Bronfman and Steinhardt's vision, as well as that of Zionist political leaders and donors around the globe. They represent the new generation of American Jews that ideologically coheres through Israeli nationalism.

While part and parcel of the movement for ethnic revival that still permeates white America's social fabric, Birthright goes beyond merely ensuring young American Jews identify enthusiastically with their ethnic roots. Instituted through claims to Israeli nationalism, the Jewish American identity encoded on Birthright transcends the borders of the U.S to buttress *transnational* settler colonial historiographies. White settler identities in the United States and Israel are made mutually constitutive through the discourses of citizenship and belonging enunciated throughout the tour.

III. Transnational Settler Historiographies in Practice

On the fifth day of my own Birthright Israel experience I sit in the Israeli Independence Hall in Tel Aviv. The room, where the Declaration of Independence was signed in 1948, is filled with hundreds of white Jewish Americans on identical tours through Israel. Hailing from Chicago, Miami, Los Angeles, New York, San Francisco, Boston, and everywhere in between, we embody Steinhardt and Bronfman's vision. Some of us grew up, as I did, attending Sunday school and synagogue regularly while others are actively claiming their Jewish identity for the first time. Gathered together we are here to receive Bronfman and Steinhardt's "gift" to the next generation of Jewish Americans.

Fidgeting in hard plastic chairs we sit and listen to our tour guide describe how the Israeli state was founded. "It's very hard to divide a land," he proclaims in a thick Hebrew accent. "If you ask the Arabs they will say this is our country. If you ask the Jews they will say what?" An audience member shouts out in supplication, "This is our country!" The guide nods in approval and continues:

> How are we going to determine who are the natives? How long does it take to be a native? Ten years? 100 years? 200 years? 225 years? How old is a native? 130 years? Are you a native to your country? Who are you? Are you from Poland, Italy, and France? Or are you American? It is very hard to determine, so where do we start? You've lived for 400 years in America. Do you say you are native? 400 years!

The historiography disseminated on Birthright works doubly. Through the question "who is a native?" it renders invisible settler violence and settlement in both the United States and Israel. In 1948, our tour guide clarifies, Jews just needed refuge: "for the first time in 2000 years the Jews finally had a place to call home." Similar to hardworking ancestors fleeing poverty and persecution in "Poland, Italy, and France" centuries of diaspora and violence entitle Ashkenazi Jews to a home here in Israel. His words link my great-grandfather fleeing pogroms and poverty in Poland to Israeli settlers escaping similar horrors. None of them were "native" to the land they sought refuge in. None of them were native to the land that I now call home.

The tour guide's questions seamlessly naturalize Jewish claims to Israeli citizenship through and by white Euro-American claims to belonging in United States. I am entitled to a home in the United States because my family surmounted poverty and discrimination with earned success. Israel is a Jewish homeland because Zionist settlers fled unspeakable horrors and worked hard to build a new life for the Jewish people in a strange land. This history instituted through Birthright Israel thus reiterates a message I have heard throughout my life: that I am entitled to "two homes," as *I Live in Israel* declares, because white Jews before me pulled themselves up by their bootstraps to settle inhospitable lands. These parallel narratives underscore ethnic particularity rather than the advantages conferred by structural white supremacy. As such they construct, as Jacobson writes, a "white we" of both the United States

and Israel, through "self-congratulatory social fables of those more recent white arrivals who first made land at Hoboken pier" (*Roots Too* 320). As my tour guide's words weave Zionist settler narratives through the United States' settler historiographies, the white settlers who constructed both nations as racially exclusive settler democracies are eclipsed by downtrodden and hardworking immigrant ancestors supposedly excluded from the entitlements whiteness confers.

IV. Conclusions

Patrick Wolfe reminds us that studying settler colonialism as structure necessitates mapping the "continuities, discontinuities, and departures" of the logic that informs and naturalizes white claims to land seized through genocide and displacement (402). This chapter charts articulations of Ashkenazi Jewish American identity that have transmuted through the centuries to mirror national historiographies of white immigration to the United States—historiographies that mask white settlement and racial exclusion backed by power. Settler colonialism has structured how white Jews have claimed citizenship in the United States and Israel, from when they worked as active accomplices in settling the American frontier to asserting ethnic particularity through renewed enunciations of Zionism.

Rendering the structuring of settler colonialism visible in processes of Ashkenazi Jewish American identity formation, both past and present, opens up room for an alternative analysis of Birthright Israel and the identity it encodes in participants. Neither white settler citizenship nor Israeli nationalism is natural to Jewish identity. Both ideologies have been instituted in and through structures of power. White supremacy and colonial world systems justify genocide, mass displacement, and the construction of settler democracies on native lands; racially exclusive

citizenship in Israel and the United States enable white Jewish Americans to claim “two homes”; ethnic revivalism gives historiographies of bootstrap immigration primacy over histories of frontier killings, displacement, and white settlement. Decoding the settler historiographies and discourses of belonging articulated on educational regimes like Birthright reveals the hollow interior of the transnational claims to citizenship they prop up. Tracing these instabilities forges space for alternative enunciations of Jewishness. Ultimately it enables Jewry to bear witness to, rather than remain complicit in the erasure of, the webs of settlement and colonial occupation that suspend home, community, and self.

Chapter II

Normalizing Settler/Colonial Structures: Traveling Contested Land with Birthright Israel

Applause breaks out through the plane when we touch down in Tel Aviv. Participants gleefully chant "Israel! Israel!" As our chaperones smile and shuffle us off the aircraft and into Terminal 3 of Ben Gurion Airport, the drunk members on our trip whisper about the free wine and spirits they collected from unwitting Swiss Air flight attendants. "Let the party begin!" someone in our group shouts. Their ecstatic behavior is a stark contrast to the frowning faces and clenched hands that meet us at customs. My cohorts chatter excitedly about the ten days before us while I watch as black and brown travelers are interrogated and escorted away for further questioning. When it is my turn to pass through customs the official manning the window barely looks up at me. He shoots a furtive glance at my American passport, then my Taglit Birthright nametag, and finally my nervous face before quietly welcoming me to Israel and ushering me into baggage claim. There I am greeted by dancing Jewish Israeli soldiers in full uniform holding bright balloons. They will be joining us for all ten days of our tour. One of soldiers bellows at us to drop our bags and join them in song. "Welcome!" "Welcome!" they scream ecstatically in Hebrew and English. A young Jewish Israeli woman steps into the dancing circle we have formed and introduces herself as Lilach, our tour educator for the next ten days. "Today we welcome you home! From now on we are not 47 individuals!" Lilach shouts, "We are one family with a lot of joy!"

My seamless passage through Ben Gurion airport was facilitated by a security infrastructure constructed for Jewish visitors and citizens to move easily across Israeli borders. At the inauguration of Terminal Three in 2004 then Primer Minister Ariel Sharon envisioned it as an important symbol for the future of Israel: "millions of tourists…. and immigrants from

around the Jewish world…. will use this magnificent gateway into the State of Israel and come here in masses" he announced, "to ensure that the State of Israel will continue existing safely in its land" (Sharon). Taglit Birthright tourists like myself emblematize the Jewish visitors and immigrants for whom Terminal Three is indeed a "magnificent gateway." Yet our joyous celebration upon arrival is juxtaposed with the hostile questioning and visible detainment of black and brown travelers. Ben Gurion airport, like the checkpoints that dot throughout the West Bank, works to "demarcate, render legible, and facilitate management of an occupied population excluded from citizenship" (Peteet, 3). Policies of racial profiling—masked as systems of "Behavioral Pattern Recognition"—enable officials to detain any and all who appear "suspicious" while white Jewish tourists can pass through carceral infrastructures in seconds (Pratt).[17]

As my experience through Ben Gurion demonstrates, Birthright Israel hinges upon unconstrained mobility through militarized borders and fraught territory. Throughout the tour, my movement over contested land and through settler infrastructures sought to normalize Israeli settler colonial structures, structures dedicated to ongoing efforts to incorporate Palestinian land and history into a Zionist cosmology (Stein 2011, 92). Hiking in the Golan Heights, learning 'ancient' Jewish history in Jerusalem, climbing Mount Masada, and driving over segregated highways snaking through the West Bank work to solidify Jewish claims to land layered with histories of violence, displacement, expropriation, and settlement.

This chapter underscores how the colonial histories embedded in the landscape and structuring the sites we visit constitute unsettling contact zones between Jewish American

[17] The logics of security and racial profiling are not contained to Israel's matrix of security but proliferate globally in multivalent form (Israel's training of U.S. police forces, for example, is an important story for another day). Following September 11th the Massachusetts Port Authority contracted former Israeli El Al airlines security chief to tighten security throughout Boston's Logan International Airport ("Logan Airport").

tourists and Palestinian claims to the land (Chazan and Saxe, 40).[18] Mary Louise Pratt defines contact zones as "…the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict" (8). My travel with Birthright Israel was never isolated from ongoing, unequal and conflicting, relations between Zionist cosmologies and realities of expropriation, displacement, and genocide. Instead, the rites of belonging we were made to perform throughout our tour juxtaposed with the colonial infrastructures and histories we came into both blatant and discreet contact with, engendering a form of friction. Anna Tsing describes friction as the "awkward, unequal, unstable, and creative qualities of interconnection across difference" that generates cultural identity through complex and global entanglements (4). In analyzing the contact zones generated through our tour, and the friction enacted therein, I underscore how the Jewish American identity participants are made to claim on Birthright is constituted through repressed and contradictory entanglements with Palestinian history, Zionist policies of displacement, and ongoing Israeli occupation.

I. Mapping The North

After our celebratory arrival in Ben Gurion airport our group—41 white Jewish Americans, six white Jewish Israeli soldiers, two white Jewish American chaperones, and one Jewish Israeli guide—piles into Shorashim Bus no. 548. We drive immediately north, to Kibbutz Amiad, where we will be spending the first three nights of the tour. Our time in the North is filled with outdoor activities in the Golan Heights—hiking, river rafting, and swimming—that

[18] Chazan and Saxe contend that the "concept of framing is central to understanding how Birthright's educational agenda. Travelers' attention is regularly focused by the curriculum and the tour guide" (40). The creators of Birthright's curriculum go on to emphasize, "The program does not explicitly train participants as advocates for Israel and discourages the promotion of one political view" (169). They thus contend that Birthright serves as an apolitical framing of complex histories.

work to facilitate familiarity between participants and the foreign landscape.[19] The region, part of Syria's Qunaytra's province, has been annexed by Israel since the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. Prior to '67 the Golan was home to various Arab communities, from Sunni-Muslim and Druze villages to Alawite and Palestinian refugees (Mara'i, 78). During the war Israel claimed 70% of the Syrian territory as its own; within a month the Golan Heights was nearly emptied of its Arab population as tens of thousands fled violence or were driven out by Israeli forces (Mara'i, 79). Israel officially annexed the region in 1981, yet its occupation of the region remains illegal under international law.[20] Today only four Arab villages remain, while 33 Jewish-Israeli settlements encroach upon the landscape (Gostoli; Strickland). As violence wracks Syria, Israel has continued its exclusively Jewish development of the region—funding the expansion of a Jewish university, cultivation of further agricultural land for Jewish use, and the construction of still more Jewish settlements (Strickland).

Hiking in the Golan

On the second day of our Birthright tour we awake to a full breakfast of farm-fresh food that is consumed voraciously before we pile into the bus and set out on a hike through the Golan. Lilach gushes at the beauty of the landscape as we pull up to the trailhead. "The best way to know the land is to walk it!" she exclaims. Hiking in Israel is rooted in a history Zionist settlement on Palestinian land. Lilach's words are identical to invocations made by the nascent Zionist youth movement in the decades before Israel's founding. A 1920's youth-group journal

[19] The planners of the Birthright curriculum assert that shared experience creates a sense of peoplehood and groupness; that collective activities such as, hiking and sightseeing—"bind you in the present and become shared memories of the past and future" (Chazan and Saxe, 77).

[20] According to article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, "occupying powers shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies" (ICRC, "Convention IV"). The United Nations has repeatedly condemned Israeli settlements in the West bank, East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights as illegal under international law. The United States has repeatedly vetoed resolutions coming for the UN Security Council sanctioning Israel's settlement policy (Pilkington). The U.S.' support for Israeli settlements has allowed Israel to continue constructing new and expanding existing settlements on Palestinian land.

reads: “There can be no loving the land of Israel without knowing the land of Israel. And there can be no knowing the land of Israel without unmediated contact with it” (Kelner, 24-25). As Jewish settlers staked claim to Palestinian land, hiking tours assumed a pedagogical role among Zionist youth groups as a means of wedding new immigrants to an unfamiliar homeland (Kelner, 25). Guided walks through recently claimed territory was not so much set on imparting information about a strange landscape to curious participants, but more so a means of consecrating the homeland by encountering it first hand (Kelner, 26).

By the 1940’s the Palmach had made hikes a principal educational enterprise in Israel for both soldiers and associated youth groups (Almog, 176). Zionist fighting forces orchestrated hiking as a means of creating an armed Jewish presence in disparate regions, gathering intelligence on Palestinian communities, and sharpening fighters’ as well as future soldiers’ senses and physical capabilities (Almog, 176). A soldier’s written reflection on a hike through the Golan in the Palmach’s newsletter underscores how traversing the landscape was an essential component of Zionist state building:

> The marches and hikes are an intrinsic element to our training. Through them we learn to love the homeland, to protect it, and to be at home in it….In my heart I carry a deep experience of contact with the country’s landscape, an experience that will not pass (Almog 177).

The ritual of traveling seemingly untamed landscapes solidifies Jewish claims to and connection with the land. Sweating and struggling over rough terrain literally imprints the landscape into the body of young Zionists—soldiers and civilians alike. They were made to feel akin to early pioneers settling a harsh landscape, sacrificing themselves to the nation-building cause. Jewish

memories were forged onto contested environments, writing into a palimpsest of histories already engrained in the soil.

While earlier Zionists cast the Palestinian landscape as a vast and barren wilderness ripe for Jewish recreation, our experience hiking in the Golan was not so seamless. "Do not cross the barbed wire fence because there are still mines on the other side!" Lilach warns us before we embark on the trail, "The mines in the Golan are left from the Syrian war. The Syrians didn't want to tell us where their mines are." Contestation is engrained in the landscape, rendering portions of it off-limits. The terrain we are "exploring" is embedded with the Israeli state's history of military expansion and Syrian resistance. The mines are a salient reminder that the territory we are crisscrossing is not easily called Israeli or for that matter Jewish. Lying hidden and undetonated in the landscape, the mines transform supposedly idyllic landscape into salient contact zones. Unlike the Zionist youth and soldiers who pride themselves on their off-trail adventures, my group is disallowed from straying from the allotted course. Histories of militarism thus compromise my ability to truly "know" the land. The love Birthright encourages me to feel for this landscape is curtailed by the presence of colonial violence quietly resisting Judaizing discourses.

Most participants seem unperturbed by the spatial constraints Israel's illegal annexation of this region imposes on our hike. When we reach a waterfall my cohorts happily splash in the flowing water. I sit next to an Israeli soldier who chatters about the long hikes he has enjoyed nearby. As we head back to the bus most are eager to continue to our next stop at Har Bental—a mountain, turned IDF stronghold, turned tourist attraction in the northernmost region of the Golan Heights. Israeli forces captured the site during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war to keep watch over Syria and Lebanon, both visible from its peak (Yudin). In 1973 Har Bental was the site of

bloody battle during the 1973 October War, as the Syrian Army fought to seize the land Israel had claimed just six years prior (Johnson and Tiery).[21] After the War, Israel built a large base atop an older Syrian fortification (Yudin). Today a café sits atop the mountain, selling high-end espresso and sandwiches. Old trenches serve as mazes tourists can run through and visitors pose for photos next to crouching cutout figures of snipers holding guns.

Lilach asks us to gather around one of these figures as she explains the importance of the Golan Heights for the Jewish people with a map in hand: "The Golan was important because of water." She says as she points to the Sea of Galilee, "Without water you can't feed your people. Your crops will die and the population will starve. 1967 was a huge success for the Jewish people. Why do I say success? Because in six days Israel tripled its size." The rest of her talk centers the trauma of the 1973 War and the ongoing terrorist threat Syria poses to Israel as she cements the importance of this land to the Jewish people. "When you pledge allegiance to Israel" Lilach says "You pledge allegiance to a group of people, old and young, who have and will die for this country." Ethnographer Rebecca Stein's work on the intimate links between tourism and military conquest in Palestine/Israel shows how Jewish tourism to sites seized after 1967 both legitimized and normalized Israeli military violence by "reconfiguring military occupation as a field of pleasure, leisure, and consumption rather than one of violence, repression and political interests" (648). Stein contends such tourism created an "Israeli investment in occupation through images of consumer pleasures they afforded" (649). Lilach's brief presentation exemplifies Stein's contention; she frames the Golan as Jewish land claimed through taxing and traumatic sacrifice. Her words sanction and naturalize the illegal Jewish settlements we drive

[21] The 1973 October War, Ramadan War or Yom Kippur War fought between a U.S-backed Israeli forces and a coalition of Arab states, led by Egypt and Syria, supported by the Soviet Union. Syria sought to regain the Golan Heights and Egypt fought for the Sinai Sinai. For an extensive history see: Johnson, Dominic D. P., and Dominic Tierney. *Failing To Win*. Harvard University Press, 2006. Web. 17 Dec. 2015.

past on the way to this site and erase Syrian claims to the landscape we stare down at; landscape rendered unquestionably Jewish in our foreign eyes.

Friction on the Jordan River

Following Lilach's brief presentation we are allowed to explore the mountain briefly before piling back on the bus that will take us to the southern part of the Golan Heights for a river rafting excursion. "Now we're done with politics time for some fun!" Lilach shouts. After a brief ride our bus pulls into a parking lot filled with Taglit Israel groups. We don life-vests, clutch paddles, and mount blow-up rafts that take us floating down the river. Some participants sing songs in English as we paddle leisurely while others playfully push one another into the water. Picnicking groups dot the shore smoking hookah, sharing food, and ignoring the sore sight of loud tourists in the river. Someone on my raft shouts "Salaam!" and waves eagerly hoping to exchange pleasantries. A little boy runs up, screams something in Arabic, and splashes water in our faces; his parents look on unperturbed. Groups of adolescent boys smoking cigarettes follow suit, shouting in Arabic and splashing us not so playfully in the face. Laughing and screaming chaotically in English, Birthright participants attempt to splash back as the current takes us down stream. "Salaam!" my peer shouts again as we float away.

While Lilach sought to naturalize Israeli conquest and occupation, our brush up with these youth, most likely Palestinian citizens of Israel, destabilizes her claims.[22] Their unwelcoming behavior made it clear we are not wholly welcome on this land; the friction between us renders unavoidable the reality of displacement, expropriation, settlement, and occupation Lilach's words seek to write over.

[22] Today 1.4 million Palestinians are citizens of Israel, they constitute those communities who steadfastly remained on their ancestral lands or were displaced within Israel's borders after al-Nakba (Belinin and Hajjar, 5).

In commencing Birthright Israel tours in the North, throughout and around the Golan Heights and the Galilee, curriculum planners hope to wed new tourists to a strange landscape through old Zionist mechanisms of Judaizing and settling land Palestinian communities had lived on and cultivated for centuries. Hiking, swimming, river-rafting, and learning the importance of this terrain gives us the opportunity to write, just as soldiers and Zionist youth before us, our own experience onto the landscape. However, close attention to the uneven and contradictory components of my own experience demonstrates how such processes are never seamless. Subtle references to conflict embedded in the landscapes we are encouraged to blindly "know" underscores the futility of Birthright's attempts write over realities of violence and expropriation. The structuring's of colonial occupation and settlement cannot be replaced by a Zionist cartography. They surge into our present as we avoid undetonated land mines left by the Syrian army decades ago. These histories present themselves blatantly as we raft down the Jordan River and Palestinian citizens on the shore shout in Arabic before splashing us in the face, making it clear we Jewish Americans are not welcome here. These interruptions in Birthright Israel's prescribed activities open up contact zones, where relations with colonial pasts—albeit muffled by the incomplete histories we are presented—quietly compromise my ability to call this terrain home.

II. Performing Ancient Belonging in Old Jerusalem

After our third night at Kibbutz Amiad we pile into the bus and drive south. We pass through Safed, "an ancient city," Haifa, "an example of coexistence" and spend the night in Tel Aviv, "a progressive and gay friendly city". The next day we head to Jerusalem—the most

important stop on our tour.[23] Years of Jewish education have sanctified the city in my mind. Participants chatter excitedly at the thought of standing in front of the Western Wall—a site my ancestors, so I have been told, only dreamed of visiting. "The tension of Jerusalem" Lilach proclaims as we drive through West Jerusalem, " is what makes the city so beautiful and special."

Thomas Abowd's study of Jerusalem underscores how the city, claimed as Israel's "eternal capital" in the Zionist imaginary, emblematizes the state's attempts to consecrate contested territory as Jewish through assertions of a "divine link" between the Jewish people and the land; a link that supposedly stretches thousands of years back to King David's rule over Jerusalem (112). The Western Wall, or Kotel in Hebrew, our first stop in the city, is perhaps the most salient articulation of this assertion. "Visitors who stand at the Wall" The Israeli government's North American tourist site proclaims, "…sense the presence of the untold numbers of people who for centuries streamed to this, the most sacred place in the world to the Jewish people ("The Western Wall"). Abowd underscores how the Kotel's sanctification in Zionist cosmology is a relatively recent construct. The clean and expansive plaza that surrounds the wall, claimed as part of the Jewish Quarter of the Old City, constituted the "Moroccan Quarter" for 700 years prior to 1967 (Abowd, 113). The actual historic Jewish Quarter comprised only a small portion of the Old City, set back away from the wall along the southeastern portion of the Old City's gates (Dumper). Many of the houses in this area were owned and leased to Jewish residents by Muslim and Christian landlords for centuries leading up 1967 (Abowd, 135). During the 1967 war the Israeli army flattened the entire Moroccan Quarter after evicting its residents, as well as some 3,000 Palestinian refugees living in the neighborhood, to make way for

[23] Chazan and Saxe write the experience participants have in Jerusalem teaches, "The city is central and key to the Jewish experience." They contend that the sites in the city communicate to visitors "that the Jewish people were born in this place and have been linked to it for more than three millennia" (36).

the construction of an enormous plaza that would link the Jewish quarter to the Western Wall (Weizmann, 37). On August 31, a mere two months after the war, the entire old city was declared a site of "antiquity" and the Israeli government began an enormous archeological survey of the area (Weizman, 38). Today packs of tourists with cameras mill through the vast, sparkling plaza, made to feel, as I did, an ancient and sacred Jewish connection with this only decades old site.

Before we reach the Kotel we are allowed a brief excursion down Hagai/El Wad Street, which starts in the ultra orthodox Jewish area of the Old City and spans to the Muslim quarter.[24] While most in my group mill through the over priced souvenir shops close to the Western Wall, I walk rapidly down the street. Signage turns from Hebrew into Arabic and souvenir shops no longer sport "Israeli Defense Force" t-shirts but merchandise that reads "Free Palestine." Other white tourists clutch handbags tightly and look slightly nervous as Palestinian shopkeepers hustle them from their stands. Palestinian flags hang from building windows; it is clear I am no longer on Jewish land. Here, just a few meters away from the clean plaza built atop recently razed homes, Palestinian nationalist resistance to Israel's occupation is palpable.

When our tour group reconvenes at a lookout over the Kotel, the images of Palestinian nationalism displayed just a few blocks away brush up against Lilach's attempts to make me feel a sacred connection to the site. As we shuffle up to the crumbling rock, Lilach lectures us on the ancient stone, the last remnants of the Jerusalem Temple that was, as my Hebrew school teachers taught me for years, destroyed by the Roman army in 70 A.D. Participants gush over the countless notes shoved into the wall's crevices, a practice Jews have performed for millennia.

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[24] For more on the recent violence between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians on Hagai/El Wad Street, as well as a history of Jewish settlement the stretch of the street that lies within the Muslim Quarter can be found in Haaretz's recent article: Hasson, Nir. "The Street that Encapsulates Jerusalem." *Haaretz*. Haaretz Daily Newspaper. 11 Nov. 2015. Web. 19 Dec. 2015.

Some grip messages family and friends passed along to be placed between the sacred stone. Yet the metal detectors we pass through and security guards gripping A-K 47's patrolling the perimeter of the plaza signal how unstable this performance of ancient belonging I am encouraged to mime along is. I am handed paper, pencil and herded up to the crumbling rock. Orthodox Jewish Israelis pray devoutly and ignore the shouts and laughter of participants. Tears well up in my own eyes, not out of deep feelings of connection to this fraught site, but because my Judaism is being mutilated by Zionist claims to old mounds of rock.

The fraught performance of Jewish belonging juxtaposed against symbols of a highly militarized state—metal detectors, security guards bearing rifles, soldiers in full uniform—highlights what Abowd describes as the fragile interplay between remembering and forgetting enforced at this site (Abowd, 138). Lilach encourages us to imagine the thousands of Jews who have passed through here while forgetting the rampant security enforced all around us. Participants mimic how we imagine Jewry have prayed at the wall for centuries. We are not told that the vast plaza we walk over was constructed mere decades ago. We are made to forget that our ability to mill about this structure is enabled by the violent eviction of non-Jewish residents and destruction of their homes to construct the, as Weizman describes, "biblical theme park" that stands in their place (45).

My experience at the Kotel, marked by conflicting symbols of nationalism and enactments of history, signals how the supposedly ancient and divine link between the Jewish people and land called Israel is in fact unstable. A site purportedly frozen in time is secured by modern military technologies, settler displacement, and ongoing colonial occupation. Struggles for Palestinian liberation brush up against Zionist militarism, engendering salient contact zones. Performing ancestral belonging at a site like the Kotel, no matter how often invoked in Jewish

education and prayer globally, is predicated on the refusal to acknowledge these quite blatant histories. It is predicated on the erasure of Palestinian nationalist claims that wave from windows and scream across tee shirts just a few blocks away. Locating how these claims brush up against the performances of indigeneity Jewish Americans are made to act out on Birthright Israel's curriculum might prevent them from being seamlessly enforced. Highlighting the contact zones generated through intimate proximity between militant Zionist cosmologies and Palestinian struggles against colonial occupation and displacement begins to challenge the Jewish American identity I am made to claim through Birthright's curriculum.

III. Planting Roots in the Naqab

After one night in Jerusalem we pack up our belongings, and head to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust memorial museum, before driving South to the Naqab.[25] If our time in Jerusalem was spent asserting sacred Jewish belonging to the ancient city, the two nights we spend in the Naqab work to stake out Jewish indigeneity to a supposedly barren desert, rife with legends of Jewish resiliency yet purportedly devoid of Palestinian inhabitants or history. Oren Yiftachel describes the Naqab region as one of most evident sites of Israeli ethnocracy, where Palestinian Bedouin are forced off ancestral land as Jewish Israelis claim the expansive landscape as Jewish homeland (Yiftachel, 14). Our mobility over and through the Naqab sought to normalize the violent practices of judaization that enable Jewish tourists to claim the desert region as ancient patrimony. However, our tour constantly came into covert and blatant contact with the colonial realities that structure the landscape and rub up against seamless claims of Jewish belonging and continuity Birthright seeks to encode. In unpacking the contradictory contact zones our mobility

[25] For more on out visit to Yad Vashem see chapter four.

is constituted through, the Jewish continuity supposedly symbolized by the Naqab is called into question.

The Naqab has long been a central site of national redemption for Israeli leadership (Abu-Rabia-Queder et al, 12). Cast as an empty desert that would be "made to bloom" in early Zionist imaginary, today the Naqab has been remapped as a barren landscape open for Jewish settlement and transformation. The state's past and present policies of expropriation and displacement of Palestinian communities from the Naqab, enormous in both scope and brutality, enable Jewish Israelis and foreign Jewish tourists to participate in this ongoing practice of judaization (Abu-Rabia-Queder et al, 12). The declaration of the Israeli state heralded lethal violence and land expropriation that forced the majority of Palestinian Bedouins into exile in neighboring countries; a population that once numbered 95,000 plummeted to a mere 11,000 immediately following 1948 (Abu-Saad, 1725). Most of the remaining tribes were forced into an enclosure zone in the northeastern region of the Naqab, made to live on a parcel of land that represented a mere 10% of the territory they had lived on and cultivated prior to al-Nakba (Abu-Saad, 1726). While Arab Palestinian Bedouin traditionally migrated seasonally with their herds and cultivated vast stretches of the Naqab, Israeli rule sought to end their traditional way of life and claim the majority of Bedouin land as state territory. The state justifies this expropriation by refusing to recognize legal proof presented by tribe leaders of titles to the land they were displaced from. The state instead asserts that the Bedouin were and had always been rootless nomads lacking legalized systems of ownership and property (Abu-Rabia-Queder, 5). By confining Arab Palestinian Bedouin of the Naqab to a small swath of infertile land and placing huge legal restrictions on their movement, the Israeli state has sedentarized the Bedouin population within Israel, effectively isolating them from other Arab-Palestinian communities (Abu-Saad, 1726).

Today 10 state-recognized Bedouin villages exist in Naqab, while some 45 unrecognized communities checker through region, composed of Bedouin who have resiliently withstood state policies of expropriation and confinement. The refusal to legally recognize the majority of Bedouin communities outside the small portion of the Naqab allotted to remaining Bedouin communities enables the state and Zionist organizations world-wide to stake Jewish claim to much of the desert region, heralded as a symbol of Israel's future. Our time in the Naqab worked to cement these claims, normalizing what Yiftachel designates "creeping apartheid," or an "undeclared system that resembles apartheid, a system of rule that aims to cement separate and unequal ethnic relations"(15). As the state withholds recognition of land and residency rights to Bedouin in the Naqab, by planting trees with the Jewish National fund, riding camels over desert dunes, and hiking the desert terrain Birthright Israel ensures young foreign Jews stake their own claims to the landscape through invocations of ancestral belonging to the desert terrain.

Claiming Continuity on Mount Masada

Our pilgrimage up Masada on our last day in the Naqab serves as a blatant assertion of Jewish claims to the desert region. At 4:30 a.m. I am awoken abruptly by Lilach's excited shouts "To Masada! To Masada!" My eyelids are heavy and my back aches after spending the night curled defensively into a stiff ball in the corner of the expansive tent—a dramatic reproduction of a traditional Bedouin goat-hair structure— we spent the night in.[26] Most of my peers have stayed up all night, either huddled around bonfires, staring at the stars and sharing existential musings, or coupled up in the tent taking advantage of the first time all genders are sleeping in intimate proximity. I pack up my belongings and shuffle past the billowing fabrics and lush greenery still bathed in moonlight into our bus that will take us to the base of Mount Masada.

[26] For more on our stay in the Bedouin tents see chapter three.

Located on the border of the Judean desert near the Dead Sea, Mount Masada is a key symbol of Jewish resiliency in the Zionist imaginary. According to Zionist legend, In 70 AD on the mountain's peak, 960 Jewish rebels committed suicide rather than succumb to Roman soldiers (Ben-Yehuda, 29).[27] Chazan and Saxe ensure that Birthright Israel tours place grave importance on the visit to Masada, a "symbol of deep commitment of Jewish continuity and survival" (43). Each Birthright Israel tour ascends the steep mountain, a roughly 45 minute hike, to learn that "Being Jewish has involved life and death symbols of survival and there have been Jews who have risen to the occasion and fought that battle" (43).

The Masada myth is not recounted in traditional Jewish texts—the Talmud contains no reference to the story (Zerubavel, 75). With the rise of modern Zionism in Central and Western Europe at the end of the 19th century, the myth of the Jewish fighters who supposedly chose death over defeat assumed prominence in the Jewish imaginary and histories of ancient Hebrew wars of national liberation took on symbolic lives of their own (Zerubavel, 75). By the 1930's, ascents to Masada's peak became a key rite of passage for Zionist Jews. "Youth movement members, school children, and Palmach soldiers would make ritual hikes to the desert site," Almog writes, "climaxed with an ascent on foot to the Zionist sanctuary, where they swore an oath to the nation and the homeland" (37-38). There on the peak of Masada, young Jewish Zionists were made to feel as "the ancient heirs to Hebrew kingdom" (Almog, 38). With the establishment of the state of Israel, marches to Masada's peak became demonstrations of the nation's vitality and force (Almog 176). In 1950 a highly visible march was organized by the military, filmed and shown on television, composed of 1,000 recruits who symbolically ascended

[27] Ben Yehuda's text recounts how in actuality the tale of Masada was not as heroic as Zionist accounts consecrate it to be. He details how the Jewish "rebels" were in fact Sicarii extremists exiled from Jerusalem after committing acts of terror against Jewish citizens. They fled to Masada where, as Josephus recounts, male soldiers killed the women, children and then one another instead of being slaughtered by the Roman Army (Ben Yehuda, 39-41)

Masada—the same number of Jews who were supposedly besieged by the Romans (Almog 176). From then on the mass march up Masada became an annual tradition and important military ritual. New recruits would be sworn in amidst a torchlight ceremony after a difficult hike to Masada's peak (Almog 176). In the 1960's the Israeli government and rich foreign donors sponsored a mass excavation of the site. Yigal Yadin, ex-commander of the Israeli Defense Force and war hero two times over led the excavation, which was broadcasted widely on Israeli radio and television stations (Almog, 55). Leading thousands of volunteers, Israeli and international, Yadin excavated 97% of the site which was subsequently rebuilt to mimic the ancient palace, synagogues, and homes that perched atop the towering cliffs centuries ago (Almog, 54). Today Jewish Israeli hikers and tourists mill about the glimmering reconstructions in hiking gear, reading plaques supporting the Zionist myth of Jewish sacrifice emblematized by the legend of Masada.

Guides work to ensure the Birthright experience mirrors the symbolic Zionist ritual and instills in young foreign Jews a sense of reverence for the famous myth of Jewish resiliency symbolized by the peak. My bus pulls up to the base of Masada; we pile onto the asphalt parking lot, and quickly fall into a single file line as we approach the trail. Thousands of Birthright participants form a snaking line that streaks up the mountain as darkness slowly falls away to early morning light. The rising sun turns the desert horizon a deep blood orange and I cannot help but feel part of a monumental religious pilgrimage, stumbling over timeless trails, one participant in a crowd of thousands together ascending the holy peak. The sight of the young man behind me, wearing a neon yellow baseball cap that reads "Me Gusta Whores," quickly pulls me out of this sentimental reflection. I move away from his chattering cohorts, who blast

mainstream rap-music from portable speakers while chattering excitedly in English, and focus on getting to the mountain's peak.

Once atop Masada, Lilach leads us through the reconstructed ruins—remnants, we are told, of the Jewish community who heroically took their lives atop this peak centuries ago. Her long presentation, interspersed with extensive photo-shoots at scenic viewpoints is, as Chazan and Saxe write of most Birthright presentations at the site, not "totally faithful to the historical record" (43). While the "core message" Birthright participants are made to receive at Masada is of "Jewish continuity and survival," the exact historical narrative transmitted is unstable—twisted and molded differently by thousands of tour guides to underscore a political agenda that cements recent Jewish claims to Palestinian land. The blatant ambivalence Birthright educators and tour guides express toward the factual accuracy of the historical narratives participants receive, on top of Masada and throughout the tour, speaks to how remaking the landscape as Jewish in our eyes is an unstable performance of belonging—constantly made and remade through contradictory and improvised claims to the land.

Sleeping Through Settlements

The reverence for Jewish heroism and resiliency we are made to enact atop Masada, amidst recently excavated ruins reconstructed into a perfectly preserved playground of Jewish history, juxtaposes with the illegal Israeli settlements and Palestinian shanty towns we drive by on our way back to Jerusalem later on that morning. Most participants sleep soundly as our bus quietly whirls down Highway 60, over one of countless recently constructed segregated highways that snake through the West Bank, severing Palestinian territory into fragmented archipelagos (Ma'an).[28] While all save myself and one other participant make up for lost sleep, I

[28] For more information on how segregated highways constitute an infrastructure of apartheid in the West Bank see Ma'an Development Center's 2008 publication "Apartheid Roads: Promoting Settlements Punishing Palestinians".

stare out the window at the shining Israeli settlements of Beit HaArava, Almog, Mitsue Yeriho, and finally Ma'ale Adumin before we enter East Jerusalem. The tall buildings' clean white stone façades mimic the architecture of Jerusalem's ancient homes and bear eerie similarity to the bleached stone reconstructions our group was led through earlier that morning.[29] Akin to King David's palace perched atop Masada overlooking the Dead Sea, Ma'ale Adumin's towering stone-white structures, stacked on hilltops set away from the highway we drive down, stare out over the valleys of the West Bank. Palestinian homes dot the landscape, obviously excluded from the settlement's militarized gates and the network of clean roads intersecting with Highway 60 (Weizman, 116).

I cannot help but think the planners of our curriculum were purposeful in scheduling our passage through the West Bank following a sleepless night and early morning hike, when most if not all Birthright participants would be napping soundly. With Lilach and the other guides fast asleep, the usual commentary that accompanies our passage through foreign landscapes is muted while we speed over scenic valleys, through a checkpoint, and into East Jerusalem. Akin to the fragile interplay between remembering and forgetting enforced at the Kotel, within a matter of hours my Birthright group is made to see a history of Jewish settlement on Mount Masada, while turning away from illegal Jewish claims to hill tops throughout the West Bank. We are encouraged to stare down at a barren desert landscape from the mountain's peak, while ignoring the Bedouin villages we pass through in the Naqab and closing our eyes to the Palestinian homes that checker the landscape we illegally drive by in the West Bank. The commitment to Jewish

[29] Israeli building standards require that all structures that fall within Jerusalem's municipal boundaries are clad with a thin layer of clear, white sawn stone (Weizman, 31). Weizman details how settlements on "remote West Bank hill tops, never historically part of Jerusalem" but "gerrymandered into it as sites for new construction" fell within the legal boundaries of the most rigorous application of the stone bylaw" (31). Thus new illegal settlements are made to mirror the timeless Jewish structures of the old city, optically incorporated into the architecture of Zionist cosmology.

continuity and nationhood I am made to feel treading over ancient remnants of heroic Jewish pasts is thus constructed through a refusal to acknowledge the constant contact and muted friction with expropriated land and colonial presents my travel over Palestinian terrain generates.

IV. Conclusions

As we head back to Ben Gurion airport, after a quick two days in Jerusalem, participants say tearful goodbyes to the Israelis many have come to know well over our ten-day tour. Most underscore that this is not the last time they will set foot in Terminal Three, pass through colonial infrastructures, and into the foreign land participants proudly call home. For most in my group, the curriculum we have received over the past ten days has normalized policies of expropriation and displacement that erase Palestinian claims to the terrain we are made to love. Our presence on land embedded with histories of militarism has cemented ethnonational claims to contested territories. The activities we performed—hiking and river rafting in the Golan heights, miming Jewish belonging at the Kotel, and enacting reverence for Jewish continuity on Masada—worked to remap the territory we traversed as Jewish space; expansive Zionist frontiers where we could discover our own connection to the ancient land. The history we received—detailing wars for Jewish survival from 70 A.D. into the present, and legends of Jewish belonging in Jerusalem and the Naqab—interpellated us into regimes of linear Jewish time; we were made to carry rich traditions of resiliency and survival forward into new temporal frontiers.

The contact zones I have located throughout our curriculum, generated by friction with muffled histories and colonial structures, unsettles these spatial and historical frontiers. Palestinian presences on the land juxtapose with the supposedly empty Zionist landscapes and linear Jewish histories participants consume. Land mines waiting to be detonated in idyllic landscapes, symbols of militarism and Palestinian nationalism waving alongside ancient holy

sites, and reconstructed ruins perched atop mountains mirroring the illegal settlements we pass by unsettle our performance of belonging. These interruptions to our prescribed curriculum illustrate what Judith Butler, drawing from the writings of Hannah Arendt and Walter Benjamin, describes as the "double movement" of Zionist claims to progressive Jewish history (102). Birthright's "forward" movement, through colonial infrastructures and over expropriated Palestinian land, is enabled by the "deportation, land confiscation, or expulsion" endured by Palestinian communities in the past and present (Butler, 101). Our progressive movement throughout our tour tangled with another movement. "Those no longer supported by a history that would establish them as subjects," Butler writes, "…are expelled from the nation like so much debris, indiscernible from the littered landscape" (102). Palestinian lives, histories, and homes are embedded in the terrain we pass over, inextricable from the whitewashed histories we are made to carry forward into imaginary frontiers.

Locating these contact zones, and the friction generated by the "double movement" of Zionist progression entangled with apartheid policies of expulsion and displacement, might unsettle the myth of Zionist progression Birthright's curriculum normalizes. Butler, still drawing on Benjamin, writes such double movement yields a "flash" that interrupts Zionist history's propulsion forward (102). "…Does it interrupt only for a moment," Butler asks, "or can it stop or change the course of that progress?" (102). The moments of contradiction I underscore throughout this chapter, albeit small and muffled, might begin to disturb the imaginary frontiers Birthright participants traverse. In honing in on these instances of contradiction, where Palestinian presence on the land—be it through debris of war, water splashed in our faces, symbols of nationalism waving from windows, or resilient communities still living on their land—juxtapose with Zionist cosmology, the Jewish identity I am made to claim becomes

untenable. The Jewish history and Israeli allegiance I enact is rendered hollow. Amplifying these moments might begin to 'change the course' of the Zionist history Butler writes against. It might begin to halt the claims to land, nationalism, and memory Birthright Israel's curriculum grasps onto.

Chapter III

Amnesiac Cartographies: Instituting Zionist Past, Presents, and Futures on Birthright Israel

On our third day of Birthright, as we whirl down Highway 4 from Haifa to Tel Aviv, our American guide Sara hands out maps to everyone on the bus. The first we receive is a duplicate of the map hanging at the front of the tour bus, the one Lilach gestures to whenever she points out a new stop we will be making. Titled "KKL-JNF Is Israel: Our map of Achievements" the map plots "Main KKL-JNF Action Areas" These "action areas"—that take the form of forests/parks, water management sites, river rehabilitation centers, museums, educational centers, and bicycle trails all sponsored, built, and maintained by the Jewish National Fund (JNF)—are mapped atop more "general" political cartographic markers, such as major cities, towns, villages, "urban settlements, "unrecognized villages", "A+B areas", "The 'Green Line', " and "international boundaries." [30] Dark green and blue blotches, signifying JNF forests and water management sites, bleed through and obscure international boundaries; they border the light pink archipelagos that silently signify Palestine and surround grey blots of illegal Jewish settlements like menacing fortresses. Israeli-only roads, thickened red lines, snake through the West Bank and Israel, linking dark grey clusters of settlements to Israel's "Major Cities," bypassing both "recognized" and "unrecognized" Palestinian villages. The Green Line, faint and dotted, is buried beneath the network of roads, afforestation sites, and Jewish settlements it futilely runs beneath.[31] The back of the map contains boxes of text brightly detailing the JNF's history and

[30] Theodor Herzl founded the Jewish National Fund in 1901 for the express purpose of purchasing Palestinian for the development of a Jewish only state. For the past 116 years the organization has fulfilled Herzl's vision of 'making the desert bloom', priding itself in agricultural development, settlement construction, and afforestation projects, primarily over expropriated Palestinian land. Today the JNF continues to fund Jewish only settlements in occupied territories and plant pine trees over the ruins of recently destroyed Palestinian villages.

[31] The Green Line indicates the demarcation lines established in 1949 between Israel, Palestine, Syria, Egypt, Jordan, and Lebanon after the 1948 Arab-Israeli War.

various campaigns. “Join us” one box reads, “…come and leave your mark on the Land of Israel, the birthplace of the Jewish people” (The Jewish National Fund).

Sara passes out a second map. “That was the map we are supposed to give out.” Motioning towards the JNF’s map hanging, resolutely, behind her. “This is a second one that marks out the borders of the West Bank more clearly.” Titled “Israel” followed by “and the Palestinian Territory” in small font, this second map is simple and uncluttered. “Israel, the “West Bank,” and “Gaza,” are clearly separated from one another by a dark “Green Line,” which the key explains is based on the 1949 Armistice Line. Vivid annexation lines, hued white and pink respectively, mark out East Jerusalem and the Golan Heights. Major cities are the only other markers visible. With swaths of unmarked territory and firm boundaries between the regions claimed as Israel proper and occupied Palestine, this map is a stark contrast to the complex web of “successes” the JNF imprints throughout Israel and Palestine.

The two maps I receive emblematize the inconsistent means through which Birthright Israel encourages participants to know and love the land we travel. As Anne McClintock contends, “the colonial map vividly embodies the contradictions of imperial discourse” (27). Maps function as “technologies of knowledge”, instruments that enable the colonizer to know and possess foreign land and the uncharted worlds therein. Yet McClintock sites the “edges and blank spaces” of colonial maps as “vivid reminders of the failure of knowledge and thus the tenuousness of possession” (28). The maps Sara distributes display the “contradictions of imperial discourse” McClintock divulges. The first map I receive charts every inch of Palestine and Israel with confidence. The JNF boasts it has “left its indelible mark on Israel” displaying its achievements in exact detail to assure the reader that no portion of land has gone uncharted (The Jewish National Fund). The second map is largely blank; the possession confidently asserted by

the JNF replaced with unmarked territory. Neither claimed nor forsaken, these blank spaces form instead the "terrifying ambiguity" McClintock weds to imperial regimes of knowledge (28). If the first map seeks to name the land we travel over as irrefutably Jewish, transformed through the century by Jewish labor and innovation, the second seeks to disavow these claims; large swaths of empty space swallow up markers of Zionist expropriation and settlement. The Zionist cartography we project onto Palestinian land is necessarily rife with contradiction.

This chapter exposes these contradictions, focusing on the Zionist cartography instituted through and throughout my Birthright Israel tour. By honing in on the distinct mechanisms by which participants map an "indigenous" Jewish past, present, and future onto the Palestinian landscape we travel, I highlight the contradictions intrinsic to such imperial projects of mapping. Central to my analysis is Rob Nixon's theory of slow violence, signifying "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is not typically viewed as violence at all" (2).[32] The slow violence of Zionist colonialism permeates Palestinian landscapes; the displacements it enacts are geographic, narrative, and temporal. Maps are written over in Hebrew, catastrophes celebrated as "independence", and thousands of years of Jewish history instituted atop generations upon generations of Palestinian life.

The maps we are handed on the third day of our tour attempt to impose sterile, ordered historiographies atop the land we travel, masking the slow violence it is infused with. The cartographies they transmit make us forget the ongoing displacement, appropriation, and expropriation that carve out the political markers and "successes" scattered over the present-day

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[32] Nixon's theory of slow violence is formulated within the context of environmental violence, and settler colonialism is undoubtedly a form of environmental violence. While I analyze the slow violence of Zionist settler colonialism in terms of the political violence wrought by mapping, the consequences of settler cartographies are also environmental. Therefore the stakes of Nixon's formulations and my employment of slow violence overlap.

landscape. We mime an indigenous Jewish past in a biblical themed park while planting trees with the JNF; coupled up in empty Bedouin tents we perform indigenous belonging in the present; treading through Mount Herzl cemetery we pledge ourselves to a heroic Jewish future. Akin to the blank spaces or "terrifying ambiguities" McClintock names as central to imperial regimes of knowledge, these activities are contradictory—unable to contain the "temporal overspill" of Zionist colonialism's slow violence (Nixon, 8). What follows traces these activities and the ambiguities therein, divulging the mechanisms through which Birthright tries, and fails, to map Zionist cosmologies over Palestinian terrain.

I. Planting Biblical Pasts

On the fourth day of our tour we drive "South." Our bus passes budding pine and eucalyptus forests that scatter awkwardly across the arid landscape. Participants blast hip-hop from shoddy speakers. Lilach shouts empty banter over her microphone. Jewish Israelis and Americans chatter in English across the narrow isle. When our bus slows to a stop, Lilach announces with exuberance that we will be planting pine trees with the Jewish National Fund. They aren't native to the region," she explains of the seedlings we are to sow, "they were brought to remind the first settlers of home." We disembark the tour bus, trek down a dirt path, and gather around old stone arches, plastic pots, and a white Jewish Israeli woman holding a bag of seeds. It is only months after the tour and through a brief email exchange with our trip leader, that I gather that our group is standing atop Neot Kedumim, a "biblical themed park" between Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, just north of the Naqab.

Neot Kedumim was established in 1965, on a plot of land bequeathed to Nogah Hareuvini by the State of Israel. Nogah was the son of famed botanists, Dr. Ephrain and Hanna

Hareuvini, who immigrated to Palestine from Russia in 1912 (Neviski, 2). Ephrain and Hanna obsessively collected and classified biblical plants throughout the region and maintained the Museum of Biblical and Talmudic Botany at the Hebrew University (Neviski, 3). From 1924 until their deaths they dreamed of establishing a live, biblical garden of "Prophets and Sages" where Jewish patrons might see and smell the flora and fauna of biblical lore; where visitors might be "immersed in the spirit of prophets and sages" ("History"). The violence of al-Nakba destroyed their museum's carefully curated collection of living specimens turned biblical artifacts displayed at the university. Yet, the destruction of their collection "only heightened their desire for something beyond mere display cases of dried botanical specimens." In 1985 their son Nogah reported to the New York Times: "What they wanted all along was a living garden of biblical life" (Nevisky, 2).

Decades after his parent's death, when Nogah acquired the property my tour group transforms with seedlings planted sloppily in plastic pots, he described the land as barren.[33] "There was virtually nothing here to protect or save. Everything you see at Neot Kedumim was transplanted here from various corners of the country" (Nevisky, 4). A tour guide buttresses Nogah Hareuvini's blithe descriptions. "What was an utter wasteland is now blooming with everything imaginable" (Nevisky, 4). This rhetoric, disseminated globally by the New York Times, exemplifies what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang call "settler nativism" or "the ascendancy of white settlers as the true and rightful owners and occupiers of the land" (12). Citing Sherene Razack, Tuck and Yang describe how settler societies develop a national mythology that contends "white people came first and that it is they who principally developed

[33] My Birthright tour coincided with the "Sabbath year" or the sabbatical year of the seven-year agricultural cycle dictated by the Torah. On the sabbatical year all agricultural activity comes to a halt and it is forbidden to directly cultivate the land. Therefor my tour did not plant our seedlings directly into the soil, but rather into plastic pots that would be transferred to the soil once the year comes to an end.

the land…European settlers thus become the original inhabitants and the group most entitled to the fruits of citizenship" (12-13).

Nogah's description of the landscape as desolate prior to his miraculous cultivation of the soil bolsters Zionist claims that Palestine was an empty stretch of territory waiting for pioneers to "make the desert bloom". His words mirror Chaim Weizmann's, founder of the Jewish National Fund and first president of Israel, description of the Naqab. In a speech made to a group of American scientists in 1945 Weizmann describes the Naqab as "Sodom where not a blade of grass has grown for thousands of years, where, except for the Bedouin there is no living creature" (Litvinoff, 574). Weizmann lauds the "heroic pioneering" of Jewish settlers, who, through the "application of science," render the desert into "fertile land" (Litvinoff, 574). Within Zionist settler cosmologies, Palestine is thus cast as desolate wasteland, empty of inhabitants, agriculture, and inhospitable to life itself. Within this Zionist cosmology, thousands of years ago Jewish people lived amidst abundant flora and fauna that, because of the supposedly savage nomadic lifestyle of Palestinians, slowly died out due to neglect. Sites like Neot Kedumim seek to recreate the biblical abundance the Jewish kingdom allegedly contained prior to exodus. It seeks to document and display the wonders the Jewish people cultivated generations ago, as testimony to what abundant civilization the Jewish people might cultivate today.

This discourse erases the Palestinian life and cosmology destroyed by Zionist violence to make way for the Jewish civilization constructed atop expropriated land, destroyed villages, and hastily buried evidence of genocide. Neot Kedumim sits on the ruins of Dayr Abu Salama, a Palestinian village destroyed during the 1948 Nakba, which is described in Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains* in depth:

> The village was located on a flat hilltop…It overlooked wide expanses of land on all sides…Its agricultural lands, which lay mainly to the North, were endowed with fertile soil and an abundance of ground water, including two reservoirs in the area. Cultivated crops included grain, vegetables, olives citrus fruits, grapes, and figs (374).

Israeli troops destroyed the agricultural land and houses of the village, expelling the residents who remained in their homes as the violence of al-Nakba drew closer. By 1965, when the state handed over the land to Nogah Hareuvini, the landscape was overgrown after decades of neglect. The desolate terrain Hareuvini claimed to have miraculously cultivated was made barren by the Israeli state's brutal destruction of Palestinian society.

Remnants of Palestinian life are embedded in the biblical theme park I tour with Birthright Israel. Neot Kedumim's amphitheater, which hosts bar and bat mitzvah services, Jewish weddings, and celebratory dances, is constructed with the "stones retrieved from the destroyed village houses" that lie beneath the lush greenery of the park (Khalidi, 375). Our time at Neot Kedumim strives to erase this history. Akin to Zionist settlers before us, who worked to transform Palestinian terrain into colonized Israeli land by planting trees that "remind the first settlers of home," we plant seeds at a "ceremonial tree planting center" sponsored by the Jewish National Fund, one of the most notorious organs of Zionist colonialism that has, since its inception in 1901, sought to "acquire the land and property of Palestinians held in reserve for exclusive settlement and use by Jews" (Benjamin et al, 3). We plant seeds as a means of staking claim to our alleged birth-right to this land, a right reflected in the biblical flora and fauna that surround us and, within a Zionist settler cosmology, symbolize the Jewish past to which we are rightfully seizing hold.

In a speech given in Manchester in 1917, Chaim Weizmann proclaimed, "as long as the land is bought by Jews but not worked by Jews it is not Jewish land. The land becomes Jewish not through the act of buying it, but through the act of holding and working it" (Litvinoff, 167-168). Our act of "working" the land of Neot Kedumim, albeit briefly and largely inadvertently, as most participants milled distractedly over the foreign terrain, scrambling over stone structures and sandy trails, was a means of imprinting a part of our Jewish selves onto a Palestinian land. In Mishuana Goeman's "Settler Grammar of Place" she describes how processes of mapping are overlaid with specific power relations, relations that inscribe a "system of rules, indexes, and thus forms certain powers, structures, and meanings" onto land and into notions of place (238). "Foundational to normative modes of settler colonialism" Goeman writes, "are repetitive practices of everyday life that give settler place meaning and structure" (238). Planting seedlings bought by the Jewish National Fund in a "Biblical Themed Park" built atop a destroyed Palestinian village enables us Birthright participants to give Zionist meaning and structure to this land. Amidst historic flora and fauna the Jewish prophets and sages allegedly milled about in the Old Testament, we mime an indigenous belonging to a newly claimed landscape.

Birthright Israel makes foreign Jewish tourists to enact the Hareuvini's nearly century old dream. We map a biblical Jewish past onto the landscape we travel by planting the same fauna indexed in the Old Testament into Palestinian soil. We aid in restoring what Weizmann called "the cradle" of "ancient (Jewish) civilization" (Litvinoff, 672). We augment the Hareuvini's mission to "restore the landscape" that had become "neglected and barren" over the ages (Gleit, 50). The, to borrow Goeman's term, settler grammar of place we index and institute on the land thus reorients Palestinian time and space within a Zionist cosmology. Palestinian history is usurped by Jewish claims to a fabricated biblical landscape, created by the hardworking

pioneering and scientific diligence of dedicated Jewish botanists. The fragments of the Palestinian village Dayr Abu Salama is turned into an amphitheater that, mimicking Roman architectural design, harkens back two thousand millennia to the stone palaces King Joseph allegedly erected throughout this Promised Land. Willfully ignorant Jewish tourists and Israeli citizens alike now traverse this biblical theme park, pretending to carry forward this ancient Jewish history into the present. We turn away from the blatant histories of expropriation and genocide that enable this biblical role-playing. We refuse to see the fragments of Palestinian life that build up a mythical settler past on this recently remapped terrain.

This refusal constitutes the contradiction embedded within imperial mappings that McClintock cites. The landscape we attempt to transform with foreign pine trees is infused with the slow violence of Zionist colonization and settlement. The props wielded in our performance of an indigenous past are constructed with stones stolen from Palestinian homes and budding pines not meant to survive this arid climate. These histories of expropriation—planted over with mythical biblical flora and fauna—constitute the blank spaces in the colonial cartography we eagerly map in the name of Jewish identity. A palimpsest of settlement, displacement, and erasure destabilizes our knowledge of this "homeland".

II. Procreating Indigenous Presents

My seat shakes as our bus tumbles over unpaved roads twisting between sand dunes. We pull up to our destination just as the sun is setting over the Naqab desert. The music playing through the speakers is abruptly cut: "Here we are!" Lilach exclaims. "Welcome to your home for the evening." I press my nose against the cold glass window of the bus to take in Kfar Hanokdim, the "authentic Bedouin Village" where I will be spending the sixth night of our tour.

The encampment is filled with scores of young Jewish Americans on similar tours through Israel. They stream between the bright billowing tents that dot the landscape and pose for photos alongside men dressed in long white robes. Palm trees line the periphery of the village and a gift shop, selling bright scarves and beer, sits adjacent to the gated entrance. The atmosphere is akin to a lavish beach resort, yet the young Jewish Israeli men who patrol the periphery of the village, with shotguns in holsters and iPhones in hand, serve as a reminder that we are on contested land.

Located about eight kilometers northeast of the city of Arad in Israel, Kfar Hanokdim is one of roughly 15 manufactured "Bedouin villages" that checker throughout the Naqab ("Khans and Tents"). Advertised as an "authentic Bedouin oasis," the Kfar boasts lavish accommodations for tourists seeking to experience the best of "Bedouin hospitality" ("About the Kfar"). The transmuting of Arab Palestinian Bedouin culture into a tourist attraction within Israel is a relatively recent phenomenon, yet nonetheless rooted in a long history of Ashkenazi Jewish appropriation of Bedouin culture.[34] To Jewish settlers in the First Aliyah, or wave of Jewish immigration to Israel spanning from 1882-1903, Arab Palestinian Bedouin society paralleled the "ancient Israeli" life described in the bible and rabbinic literature (Almog, 186). In Zionist cosmology the Bedouin of the Naqab are frequently romanticized as descendants of the ancient Israelites; their culture treated as a living archive of biblical Israeli history. This representation enables Zionists to "anchor the right of the Jews to Palestine and reinforces their feeling that they were lords of the land" (Almog, 186). Arab Palestinian Bedouin culture is thus transmuted into symbols of Jewish nativism, marking Zionist "expertise in the codes of the land—its flora, fauna,

[34] Rebecca Stein contends that the Oslo Accords, a process that lasted from 1993 into the mid 2000's, facilitated Israeli-Jewish tourism to Arab spaces. "Spurred by the course of regional politics, the state extended an invitation to its Jewish citizens to 'coexist' with their Arab conationals." Stein writes, "Something akin to a discourse of multiculturalism was at work, whereby the state and the private sector were inviting Jews to not merely tolerate but to enjoy Arab cultural difference" (47). Novel tourist routes to locales previously avoided by Jewish Israelis thus paralleled official invocations of multiculturalism that took hold in the mid 1990's.

and topography, and also its language, character, and mood" (199). Scott Morgenson characterizes such glorification of indigenous culture as a hallmark of settler colonial regimes. "Whether erasing or performing indigeneity, omitting or celebrating it," Morgenson writes, "settlers practice settlement by turning native land and culture into an inheritance granting them knowledge and ownership of themselves" (18). From riding camels and listening to a "Bedouin host" share his "culture" to huddling around a bonfire ogling timeless skies, the Kfar Hanokdim experience renders Bedouin culture commodity Jewish tourists can proudly wield as proof of their authentic connection to the land.

During our stay, this performative inheritance of native culture pinnacles after the evening's activities are over. Inside the "Bedouin tent" we sleep in, Jewish Americans and Israeli soldiers huddle up under blankets in intimate proximity. Participants have been whispering about this night since the start of the tour. "My friend told me it's bad to go on Birthright single" one participants tells me before we have even boarded the plane to Tel Aviv. "We want you all to fall in love! Just wait!" Sara exclaims on the second night of the tour. Beneath the vast desert sky, surrounded by camels and sand dunes, the Bedouin tents are the first and only time all genders sleep within an arm's reach of one another; it is the night many eagerly anticipate finding sexual gratification on a trip renown for heteronormative Jewish coupling. Thus, within fake Bedouin tents, empty of Bedouin inhabitants but full of young Jewish Americans staking claim to a foreign landscape for the first time, Birthright participants fulfill Bronfman and Steinhardt's mission of ensuring Jewish continuity. Amidst empty signifiers of Bedouin indigeneity, foreign Jewish Americans procreate the next generation of Jewish Zionists who will proudly call themselves indigenous to this land.

However, this charade of indigenous inheritance is never monolithic. Akin to McClintock's imperial topographies, with their silent ambiguities, our stay at Kfar Hanokdim is rife with contradictions. The "Bedouin workers" we meet are not confined to the silent vessels of tradition, frozen in the Abrahamic time Zionist cosmology seeks to project onto the land and its Palestinian inhabitants. Our present act of Jewish indigeneity is quietly compromised by an offline exchange with a Bedouin "host" who serves us coffee and divulges his "tradition" within an expansive tent. After our speaker has said his rehearsed bit—explaining the importance of serving guests coffee and speaking of the Bedouin who welcomed the wandering Israelites into their tents millennia ago—a short time remains for a question and answer session. An Arabic speaking white Jewish American in our group suggests that she translate our questions from English to Arabic and his responses from Arabic to English so that conversation might flow more easily. Lilach looks reluctant; she cannot speak Arabic and will not be able to follow what our Bedouin speaker says in response to our questions. This will be the first time on our tour that Lilach is not able to regulate how we communicate with a speaker. However, because so many of us vehemently support the suggestion, our guide acquiesces. Lilach informs us we have time for four questions:

> Participant: "How did you come to work at Kfar Hanokdim?"
>
> Speaker: "I was in the Army before, in a Bedouin unit. But it's hard to get a job and make a living in Israel, there are few options for Bedouin."
>
> Participant: "Do you think Bedouin culture can be preserved in Israel?"
>
> Speaker: "I don't think Bedouin culture will remain around much longer. The Bedouin are being moved to cities. The Bedouin are getting integrated into Israeli society."
>
> Traditional Bedouin communities are not common."
>
> Participant: "What do you think of Birthright Israel Tours?"

Speaker: "I appreciate the cultural exchange and meeting young people from America."

Participant: "Do you consider yourself Israeli?"

Speaker: "Yes I do, I served in the army and am a citizen."

Lilach quickly steps in to end our brief exchange. " Okay! Okay! That's it! Time for dinner!" She shouts to the group. A few of us linger behind as the rest of our group is herded into another large tent full of low tables, plush cushions, and piles of food. The Bedouin speaker quietly thanks the Arabic speaking participant for translating before we too rush off to dinner.

In his foundational text *Playing Indian* Philip Deloria contends that settler performances of indigenous belonging in the United States are never one sided: "Throughout a long history of Indian play, Native people have been present at the margins, insinuating their way into Euro-American discourse, often attempting to nudge notions of Indianness in directions they found useful" (9). Similar to the "temporal overspill" Nixon traces as endemic to slow violence, the contradictory performance our Bedouin host presents twists and molds our ability to map indigenous belonging onto the landscape. While his tone is polite, the references to marginalization ("it's hard to get a job and make a living") endured by Arab Palestinian Bedouin in the Naqab are obvious. Allusions to integration and urbanization ("The Bedouin are being moved to cities") point to the policies of evictions, demolitions, and confinement that plague Palestinian Bedouin communities in the Naqab. Kfar Hanokdim lies just a few kilometers from Tel-Arad; an "unrecognized" Bedouin village where residents lack access to water and are forced to pay absurd amounts of money to transport and access clean drinking water ("Bedouin").[35] The flowing fountains, lush greenery, and expansive tents that decorate the Kfar stand in stark

[35] The state sanctioned oppression endured by residents of Tel Arad is just a microcosm of decades long attempts to evict Palestinian Bedouin from their land. For more on this history see Abu-Rabia-Queder, Sarab, Mansour Nasara, Richard Ratcliffe, Sophie Richter-
Devroe. *The Naqab Bedouin and Colonialism: New Perspectives*. New York, NY: Routledge Press, 2014. Print.

contrast to the poverty wrought by state abandonment in unrecognized Bedouin villages nearby. Our speakers words thus evidence how the performance of Jewish belonging and Zionist nationalism we act out, not only at the Kfar but throughout the tour, are constantly undermined by small and large acts of indigenous resistance to settler colonialism. Making the slow violence of colonialism visible merely amplifies these acts.

The expropriation that enables Jewish American tourists to traverse Palestinian land and appropriate Palestinian culture is made quietly visible by the rhetorical instability of our "Bedouin host's" performance. Like the conflicting maps we are handed on the third day of our tour, which both stake claim to and deny illegal Jewish settlement on Palestinian land, these rhetorical slippages create blank spaces that are not easily usurped into the indigenous present we are encouraged to enact. Mapping these contradictions alongside the Zionist cosmologies we are made to carry forward begins to show the limitations of imperial topographies—destabilizing the Jewish identity Birthright imparts.

III. Mourning Jewish Futures

Lilach urges us to "leave politics behind" as we disembark the bus on the last day of the tour. "We're going to a place that is just purely human, pure memorial" Lilach cautions, "just to hear stories and to connect with people, your ages, my ages, who sacrificed themselves." We have arrived at Mount Herzl, the National Military Cemetery just West of Jerusalem, adjacent to Yad Vashem, the Holocaust Memorial Museum.[36] The site was enacted as a key symbol of Israeli nationalism in 1949, when the mountain's peak was chosen as the burial ground for Theodor Herzl, lauded as the founder of modern Zionism (Maoz, 50).[37] The mountain was

[36] For more on our visit to yad vashem see the concluding chapter

[37] Theodor" Herzl, born in 1860 to an assimilated and wealthy Jewish family in Vienna, Austria, is celebrated as Israel's visionary founding father. Published in 1896, his foundational text, *The Jewish State* proposed the founding

officially consecrated as Israel's National Military cemetery just a few months following Herzl's burial, incorporated as a sacred site within Zionist topography. Our three-hour long tour through the military cemetery is essentially a trek through Israel's military history. We visit graves of the fallen from numerous battles—1948, 1967, 1973, and 2009—each entombed in separate terraces that climb in chronological order to the mountain's summit, where Herzl lies. With Lilach, Sara, and soldiers introducing us to the plots of friends, acquaintances, and national heroes, our tour is personalized vis-à-vis guides' demonstrated devotion to the Zionist cause. As we ascend Mount Herzl these narratives guide us from reverence for Israel's fallen to newfound commitment to the Zionist dream, mapping settler futures onto newly claimed land.

Mount Herzl appears on Zionist maps in 1949, the year of Herzl's re-entombment. Lilach informs us it is the "tallest mountain in Jerusalem" chosen as Herzl's resting place because "from here Herzl will see his vision, will see his dream coming true". Yosef Weitz, head of the Jewish National Fund's Land and Afforestation department, decided a "barren hilltop" just west of Jerusalem was the ideal site for Herzl's reburial (Azaryahu, 49). Its "topographical dominance and panoramic view" of Jewish settlements spanning from the "Jerusalem" and "Hebron hills" to the "hills of Moab across the Jordan" made it the ideal resting place for the visionary of modern Zionism (Azaryahu, 49).

The peak had been sized by Israeli troops only a year prior to Herzl's reburial. Israeli forces ascended its heights in the summer of 1948 to systematically destroy the Palestinian villages that dotted the surrounding areas. Whalid Khalidi recounts the villages of Ayn Karim

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of a modern state by and for Jews. His pamphlet encouraged imperial powers to finance his nation-building vision by casting it as a civilizing mission: We shall not dwell in mud huts; we shall build new more beautiful and more modern houses, and possess them in safety.… the exodus will be at the same time an ascent of the class"(The Jewish State, 8). In the years following his death, Zionist leaders canonized his writing and sought to establish the state Herzl envisioned.

and Al Jura in detail, with their lush olive groves and beautiful stone homes, as well as their destruction:

> "On 11 July, Israeli units operating in the southern part of the Jerusalem corridor captured two hilltops (one of which was later renamed Mount Herzl) over looking Ayn Karim and began to bombard it before occupying it. Those hills were located in the immediate vicinity of al-Jura, which probably fell at the same time." (Khalidi, 298)

A year after the expropriation of village lands, as Jewish settlements sprang up in abandoned homes, over olive-groves and fortified by the rubble of destroyed Palestinian homes, Herzl was entombed on the peak overlooking recently expropriated lands. Amidst freshly planted pine trees surrounding the gravesite, settlers hailing from throughout the nascent Jewish state covered Herzl's coffin with soil lifted from their settlements (Azaryahu, 53). The barren hilltop used as a strategic military outpost just a year prior was thus quickly transformed into Mount Herzl, a sacred shine to Israeli nationhood.

The construction of a national cemetery on Mount Herzl's peak parallels the design of Jewish-only settlements springing up throughout the West Bank. Just as the JNF chose Mount Herzl for its panoramic view and proximity to Jerusalem, following 1967 Jewish settlers staked claim to the West Bank's hilltops "as both a strategic ground as well as the cradle of nation" (Weizman, 89) Among Zionists, vertical settlement exemplifies a form of national renewal; according to the Old Testament Israelite society flourished throughout the West Bank's peaks (Weizman, 89). Hilltop settlements thus serve as key sites of Jewish national redemption; settlers fashion themselves as reclaiming ancestral homeland. As Ephi Etam, a retired military general, famously proclaimed: "Whoever proposes that we return to the plains, to our basest part, to the

sands, the secular, and that we leave in foreign hands the sacred summits proposes a senseless thing" (Weizman, 89).

Hilltop settlements, constructed outward according to the same uniform design, embody the sacred qualities Etam infuses them with: homes crawl up hilltops in rings, each facing outward gazing over surrounding areas. The synagogue sits on the summit, perched facing Jerusalem (Weizman, 132). Such designs thus render the West Bank an "optical matrix radiating out from a proliferation of lookout points/settlements scattered across the landscape" (Weizman, 132). Akin to the identical rows of white stone façade housing that wind up Palestinian hills, on Mount Herzl the graves we thread between bear a similar uniform design: a flower bed rising 15 centimeters from the ground is surrounded on all sides by clean, white stone walls. These tombs lie in neat rows, shaded by lush greenery and tall trees foreign to the soil. Tiered terraces, holding rows of identical gravestones, climb up the mountain, leading to the sacred peak. Parallel to the panoptic view outward facing settlements cast over Palestinian land, the plaza constructed around Herzl's grave at the summit provides a panoramic sight of the terrain claimed as Israel.

Our ascent to Mount Herzl's peak begins at Yonatan Netanyahu's gravestone, Benjamin Netanyahu's deceased brother. Killed during the IDF's infamous 1976 Operation Entebbe in Uganda where he served as chief commander, his heroism stands as an example of, as Lilach avows, the "IDF's role of protecting Jews all around the world."[38] In front of his gravestone Lilach encourages us to remark on the each tomb's uniform design. Pointing toward the Haganah

[38] According to Allan Furst of the *New York Times,* Operation Entebbe freed the mostly Jewish hostages of an Israeli passenger jet hijacked in 1976 by two German members of the West German, far-leftist Baader-Meinhof gang, and supported by members of the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine. The plane was diverted to Entebbe, Uganda, where Uganda's president and military supported the hijackers with weaponry and soldiers. While the hijackers let go of roughly half the passengers go upon arrival in Uganda, they kept 100 Jewish passengers (mostly Israeli) hostage and threatened to explode the plane if their demands were not met. Ultimately, however, the IDF freed the remaining hostages, refusing to meet hijackers' demands. Yoni Netanyahu, leader of the operation, was shot during the raid.

emblem inscribed on each gravestone, depicting a sword entangled with an olive branch surrounded by a star of David with the Hebrew words “Tzva Hahagana LeYisra'el” or “The Army of Defense for Israel” running beneath. “IDF stands for Israeli Defense forces” Lilach intonates “Say it with me: ‘Defense’ ” she urges. “Defense.” “Defense.” “Defense.” We collectively recite. “Not anything else just defense.” Lilach concludes before shuffling us past another Birthright group to the terrace containing those soldiers fallen in 1948. “Keep it in your back mind that you have a homeland, that this is your homeland.” She urges as we gather around the grave of a Holocaust survivor killed during al-Nakba. “You're more than welcome here. This place it belongs to you as much as it belongs to me.”

As we climb through the cemetery we mark Israeli military history, learning of Jews from Israel, the United States, Poland, and Russia who sacrificed their lives in 1948, 1976, 2006, and 2008 for Israel’s future. At Michael Levin’s grave, a Jewish man from Pennsylvania who joined the Israeli Defense Force and was killed in 2006 during the second Lebanon War, Sara details the joys of his personality, gleaned from anecdotes told by their mutual friends (Moore). Israeli soldiers speak of friends of friends killed in the summer of 2014 during Operation Protective edge. Crying at the grave of a childhood friend killed in 2008, Lilach divulges their shared memories and the tragedy of his death: “Do you think we really want to go to the army?” She asks us as tears stream down participant’s faces. “No we don't want to. But we understand that we don’t have another way. Because no one will protect our home and this is our home.”

By the end of our trek through the military portion of the cemetery, as we mount the circular plaza surrounding Herzl’s tomb, most participants are quietly crying. Forming a circle around the simple stone monument marking Herzl’s grave, Lilach asks us join hands and sing out the “Haktivah” or “the Hope”, Israel’s national anthem. Hebrew words fly out of my mouth

coalescing with 44 other voices into a synchronized melody. The sound is foreign but stubbornly familiar: *Ode lo avdah tikvatenu Hatikvah bat shnot alpayim: L'hiyot am chofshi b'artzenu - Eretz Tzion v'Yerushalayim / to be a free people in our land: the land of Zion and Jerusalem.* Only now do tears pour down my face. I feel neither patriotism nor deep emotional connection to this site, only a burning frustration that my cohorts happily sing out hope to the longevity of a colonial regime in the name of Jewish tradition. Motioning out towards Jerusalem, Lilach concludes our journey: "After ten days and traveling all around Israel we see what in 1967 we got to. From here we should be proud of ourselves."

Shaul Kelner describes Birthright tours through Mount Herzl cemetery as an ascent "from the depths of annihilation" through the "sacrifices made to secure the Jewish state" towards "the triumph of a free and independent Jewish people in their homeland" symbolized by Herzl's tomb at the summit (189). The arc of our tour through the cemetery parallels Kelner's claim. Moving through emotional, personalized accounts of Israeli military history, we ascend the peak to look out over Jerusalem; singing out allegiance to the Jewish state we map our own hopes and dreams for a Jewish future onto the landscape. If, as Goeman writes, "only in the constant telling and reformulating of colonial narratives does space become place as it is given structure and meaning," our ascent through the cemetery inscribes Zionist settler historiography onto newly claimed territory.

This process of mapping in necessarily unstable; the future we claim on Mount Herzl's summit is infused with the slow violences of settlement and national development, which, as Nixon writes, are enacted through the contradictory production of imagined and unimagined communities (150). As modern states develop through the expropriation and settlement of indigenous lands, local communities are erased from landscapes: "communities, under the

banner of development, are physically unsettled and imaginatively removed**,** evacuated from space and time and thus uncoupled from the idea of both national future and national memory" (151). The ensuing relationship to newly "developed" land, such as the terrain we gaze down at from Mount Herzl's peak, is constituted through a sort of "spatial amnesia" (Nixon, 151). We are made to deny histories of militarism and expropriation that enable the Zionist continuity Birthright Israel encourages young Jews to proudly assert. The ethnonational claims we ritually enact thus embody the contradictions of imperial cartographies McClintock cites: a barren peak used only decades ago as an outpost for Zionist fighters to destroy Palestinian villages is now a lush monument to the heroic Zionist future we pledge allegiance to. Akin to Jewish settlers staring out over Palestinian land from the strategic viewpoints of their fortified homes, we diasporic Jews, distended from the history of expropriation engrained in this soil, gaze out over foreign territory we now claim as our "birthright."

IV. Conclusions

"…The strategy of naming is ambivalent," McClintock contends of imperial cartographies, "for it expresses both an anxiety about generative power and a disavowal" (29). From the contradictory maps we are handed on the third day of our tour to the spatial amnesia we chart atop expropriated land throughout, Birthright Israel is loaded with such anxious ambivalence. This anxiety exemplifies the topographical instability intrinsic to the Zionist cosmology Birthright projects onto the land. By planting trees between historical biblical flora and fauna we cultivate Jewish histories yet ignore shards of Palestinian life that fortify the park we traverse. Through performing indigenous belonging within a simulacrum of Bedouin life we procreate Jewish presents on the land while shutting out Palestinian Bedouin narratives of

discrimination and displacement. Gazing out over expropriated land, we sing out hope to an imagined Jewish future unwilling to confront the recent history of displacement and settlement we stand upon.

Nixon writes of violence as a contest, "not only over space, or bodies, or labor, or resources, but also over time" (8). The Zionist past, present, and future we map as our own throughout these various sites and activities are dependent upon an enforced forgetfulness. Birthright tours attempt to chart Zionist teleology that, as Nixon's framework shows, unimagines Palestinian life-worlds and forgets Zionist violence to claim an exclusive Jewish future. Yet this teleology is steadily interrupted by settler colonialism's messy overspill. From the stones of Palestinian homes used to construct a Roman amphitheater that mimics ancient belonging to the testimony of discrimination and displacement gleaned from our "Bedouin host" at Kfar Hanokdim, the Jewish belonging we project on this land is compromised by contradiction.

Mapping these contradictions alongside the Zionist cosmology I am made to invest in throws the Jewish identity Birthright Israel codes among thousands of diasporic Jewry into relief. The Zionist cosmology we are interpellated into is instituted through nervous grammars—uneasy indexes and rules that attempt to impose a sterile order over unruly landscapes and their histories. Highlighting these ambiguities disallows the "Birthright" we stake out from remaining a holy and sacred Jewish right. My claim to Israeli land is polluted with settler denials and delusions that crumble upon close scrutiny.

Concluding Remarks

Disidentification as Praxis:
Jewishness and Resisting Settler Futurity

Jewishness disrupts the very categories of identity, because it is not national, not genealogical, not religious, but all of these, in dialectical tension"—Daniel Boyarin

"If dispersion is thought as not only as a geographical situation, but an ethical modality, than dispersion is precisely the principle that must be brought home to Israel/Palestine in order to ground a polity where no one religion or nationality may claim sovereignty over another, where, in fact, sovereignty itself will be dispersed."-Judith Butler

I. Disidentification and Jewishness

I conclude this project drawing from Daniel Boyarin and Judith Butler's writings on Jewishness and Zionism. Both Butler and Boyarin urge for an understanding of Jewishness that disrupts static notions of identity, homeland, and belonging. Boyarin argues that Jewishness cannot be relegated to a fixed category of identification. Butler contends that if dispersion, which has characterized Jewish life for millennia, grounds Jewishness, the exclusive sovereignty Zionism claims over Palestinian land might be dispersed as well. For Butler and Boyarin, Jewishness is generated through contact, tension, and relation with diverse histories, landscapes, and cosmologies. Butler and Boyarin thus open up new notions of Jewishness, notions that resists the exclusive frameworks of settler nationalism and colonial sovereignty.

I argue that the hermeneutic of disidentification, shuffling back and forth between the production and reception of dominant identificatory codes, is essential to my approach to Jewishness (Muñoz, 25). My work traces the manifold ways Birthright Israel imparts a Zionist settler identity that constantly brushes up against—or comes into contact with—Palestinian histories of eviction, confinement, and ongoing anti-colonial struggle. The hermeneutic of disidentification therefor evidences how Zionist ideology is entangled with histories of colonial

occupation, settlement, and exclusionary nationalism, histories that are incommensurable with a notion of Jewishness rooted in dispersion and cohabitation.

II. Unsettling Birthright

Disidentification thus provides an essential framework through which to disentangle Zionist settler colonialism from Jewishness. My work makes visible the histories of Zionist settlement and ongoing colonial erasure intrinsic to Birthright Israel to unsettle the claims to Jewishness Birthright instates.

Chapter one denaturalizes white settler citizenship and Israeli nationalism from Jewishness. I argue that Jewishness is threaded through global histories of displacement, exile, genocide, colonial settlement, and occupation. My own family's immigration story exemplifies these transnational histories, illustrating how Ashkenazi Jewish settlement in the United States was facilitated by the wealth and advantages accrued through settler colonialism throughout North America. These histories spin the complex web of relation Jewishness is suspended within—relations formed through colonial power, imperial conquest, settler occupation, and anticolonial struggle. By making these histories visible, I begin to destabilize the exclusive claims to identity and belonging Birthright Israel asserts.

Chapter II hones in on my own Birthright Israel curriculum to underscore how the Jewish identity coded throughout the tour is formed through contact with Palestinian histories of displacement, death, and Zionist settlement. I argue that the Palestinian presence on the land constantly generates friction—or contact zones—with Zionist settler claims to land, history, and culture instituted throughout Birthright Israel. A bucolic hike in the contested Golan heights is compromised by the danger of mines lying hidden in the landscape; an emotional visit to the

Western Wall brushes up against Israeli machine guns, metal detectors, and Palestinian flags circulating in close proximity; a drive through the West Bank illustrates the glaring disparity between gleaming Israeli settlements on hilltops and scattered Palestinian homes that resiliently remain in the surrounding valleys. Zeroing in on these contact zones underscores how the Jewish identity Birthright imparts is formed in and through relation with conflicting histories and contradictory claims to the land.

My final chapter maps out various sites visited to unsettle the Zionist cartography Birthright Israel instates. I underscore how the violence of Zionist settler colonialism embedded in the land constantly contradicts the history taught and present claims to sovereignty enacted throughout my own tour. We plant trees in a biblical themed park that is planted over the still visible ruins of a Palestinian village; we act out Jewish indigeneity to the land while Palestinian Bedouin of the Naqab speak to the state-sanctioned oppression they endure; we celebrate Jewish heroism at Mount Herzl ignorant that the land we stand on was used as a military outpost only decades earlier to destroy surrounding Palestinian villages. Mapping these moments of contradictions opens up room for a different notion of Jewishness to be articulated.

Disidentification, as praxis, structures all three chapters, throwing into relief not only the local, but also global, histories of eviction, genocide, migration, and diaspora, intrinsic to Jewishness. Together these histories unsettle the monolithic claims to homeland and belonging Birthright codes.

III. Jewishness and Settler Futurity

"…[Decolonization] is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation; it is not a philanthropic process of 'helping' the at-risk and alleviating suffering; it is not a generic term for struggle against oppressive conditions and outcomes. The broad umbrella of social justice may have room underneath for all of these efforts. By contrast, decolonization specifically

requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice." –Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang

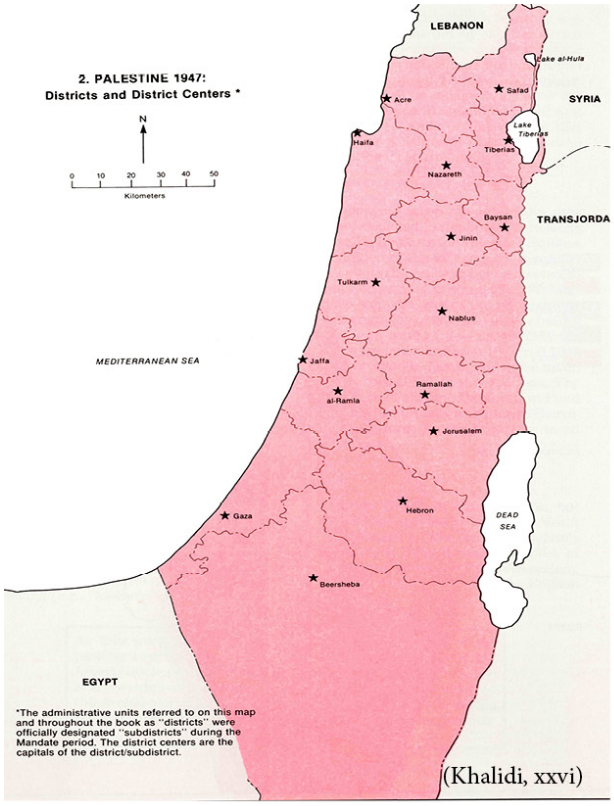
Tuck and Yang write against settler futurity—the notion that settlers can dictate what a decolonized future might look like. Rethinking Jewishness through disidentification from Zionist settler colonialism is a small step in destabilizing transnational settler colonial cosmologies. As Tuck and Yang emphasize, making visible the violences intrinsic to Zionist settler colonial ideology *does not* amount to decolonization. Articulating Jewishness rooted in dispersion and relation rather than settler claims to sovereignty over land and history *does not* amount to decolonization. Decolonization 'is not converting Indigenous politics to a Western doctrine of liberation.'

Rather, I argue that disidentification from settler cosmologies, from Palestine to North America and across the globe, might open up space for Indigenous anticolonial demands to be amplified. When the violences intrinsic to the Zionist settler identity Birthright imparts are made visible, Palestinian histories and claims to the land are magnified. In a similar vein, making visible the palimpsest of displacement, genocide, settlement, and appropriation that undergird settler societies around the world might bring transnational Indigenous demands for repatriation of 'land and life' to the forefront. Rather than absolve settlers of complicity in ongoing colonial occupations, disidentification underscores histories of expropriation and Indigenous struggles for justice, histories that constantly unsettle the lands settlers call home.

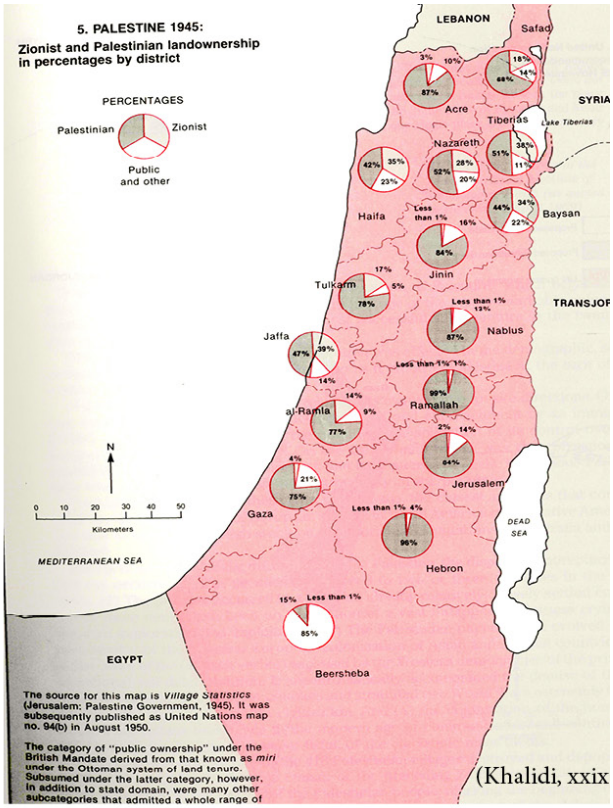
Disidentification thus prevents settlers from turning away from the present and towards a mythical future. My work attempts to make the violences intrinsic to Jewish American identity visible so that the necessity for an oppositional Jewishness, rooted in dispersion and relation, is evidenced. My work cannot dictate what this identity means within broader visions of

a decolonized future. As Steven Salaita writes, "The past is vexing enough, and the present is still unsettled."[39]

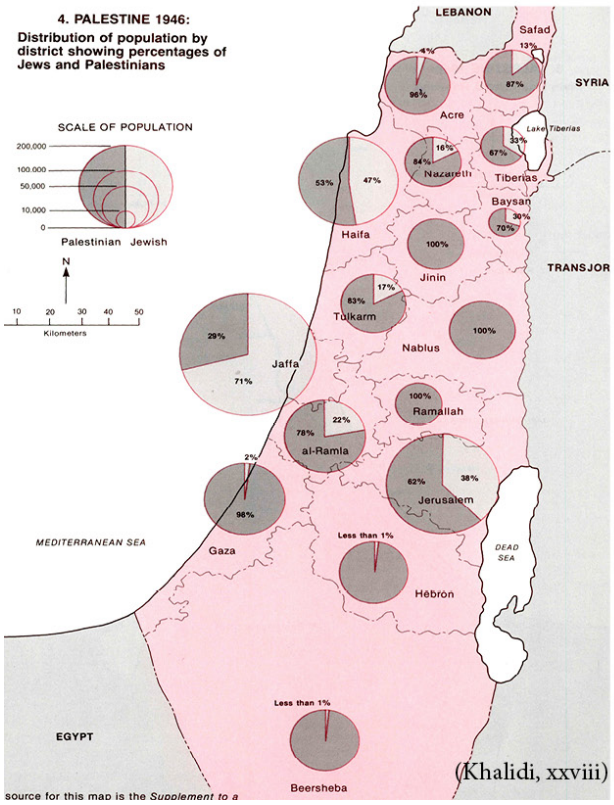
[39] Salaita, Steven. "The Native American Model of Palestine's future" *The Electronic Intifada*. The Electronic Initifada. 10 Mar. 2016. Web. 24 Apr. 2016.



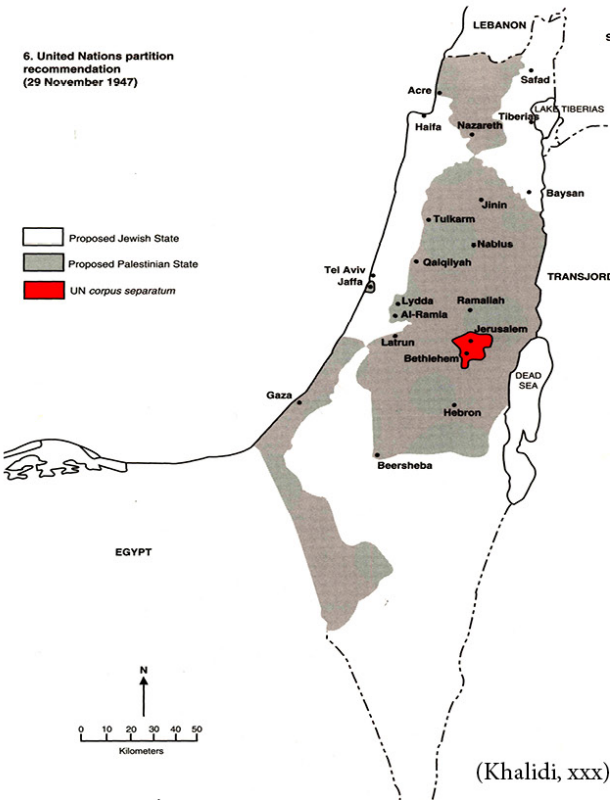
(Khalidi, xxvi)



(Khalidi, xxix)



(Khalidi, xxviii)



(Khalidi, xxx)


DISAPPEARING PALESTINE
PALESTINE
1946
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PALESTINE
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1949 -
1967
ISRAEL
2012
5 million Palestinians are classified as refugees by the UN

Tufts Hillel Birthright Route
Summer 2015

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