The urgency of anti-imperialist feminism

Lessons from Palestine

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> This war is a war that is not only between Israel and Hamas. It's a war that is intended, really, truly, to save the values of Western civilization […] because we are here to defend the values of liberal societies, of LGBTQ which Hamas fights endlessly …[1]

> The Hamas rapist machine bears full moral responsibility for all the casualties in this war that it launched on October 7 and is waging inside and under schools, mosques, homes and UN facilities.[2]

Throughout its genocidal war on the occupied Gaza strip, Israel and its allies in the Western imperialist core have justified their actions by weaponising the plight of women and girls who have been 'systematically' violated by Hamas.[3] While Israel continues to deny access to independent investigators, making it impossible to verify these allegations,[4] 'October 7' has become a marker for unspeakable sexual violence, which the US President Joe Biden,[5] and Secretary of State Antony Blinken,[6] have respectively described as appalling and beyond belief. Israeli official representatives, such as Isaac Herzog and Eylon Levy quoted above, insist that Israel stands the ground of 'sav[ing] values of western civilisation,' while the 'Hamas rapist machine' is held entirely culpable ('bear[ing] full moral responsibility') for the slaughter waged on Gaza for the past several months. At the core of this moral value system defining Israel's right to fight those 'human animals'[7] and 'eliminate everything in Gaza,'[8] stands the protective duty towards women and LGBTQ people (encompassing the 'values of liberal societies'). In the context of addressing women's organisations and 'civilised nations,' the Israeli Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, urges them to fight uncompromisingly 'the barbarism that threatens to wash over the world'.[9]

When LGBTQ and feminist-liberal values end up playing a central role in enabling a genocidal war, it is imperative to revisit and interrogate the meanings and nature of feminism in a more radical philosophical manner. In this regard, the philosophical traditions of feminist decoloniality and Third World Marxism serve a twofold aim. First, they help to historicise the functionality of gender/sex to the onto-epistemic foundations of Zionist settler colonialism, what I call the occupation of gender by genocidal means. Second, they advance an understanding of gender/sex in relation to the mode of social reproduction that Zionism requires and serves under US-led imperialism. During these times of wasting of Palestinian life, anti-imperialist feminism becomes a subject of intellectual and political urgency, gesturing towards alternative epistemes that have been buried beneath the social and conceptual categories abstracting away from the materiality of history. What are the limitations of a poststructuralist reading of sex/gender, when dealing (or not) with the question of national liberation and counterviolence of the oppressed in contexts such as Palestine, and the Arab region at large? The centring of the national question redefines the moral and political parameters shaping feminist and queer mobilisation and alludes to the value of historical inventiveness incarnated through revolutionary consciousness.

The occupation of gender by genocidal means

Western modernity draws a boundary between human versus non-human that concurs with the gendering processes under colonial capitalism. The work of decolonial feminist scholars, such as Sylvia Wynter and Maria Lugones,[10] historicises the emergence of 'gender' to

substantiate the ideological and material cognates of European imperialism and capitalism. By identifying how European gender categories and values were imposed in the context of the Americas and the Caribbean, Lugones and Wynter[11] show how gender underscores the racialising logics of bourgeois 'Man' and thus cannot be isolated from the racial and class constituents of colonial capitalism. The to-be emancipated 'women' of the colonies have been embroiled within a political strategy of gendered recognition[12] that reproduces their material and historical proximity to bourgeois Men,[13] thereby reifying the onto-epistemic violence of colonial modernity. Such violence stems from conceptual terrains – for Lugones, 'the coloniality of being',[14] and for Wynter, 'colonial difference'[15] – that incarnate the social institution of capitalist modernity throughout the sixteenth century's racial longue-durée. Wynter examines the ontological distinction between 'natural masters' and 'natural slaves' that mandated the socio-economic and political order of Spaniards' 'expropriation of the indigenous peoples' lands and the enserfment of their lives/labour.'[16] Lugones identifies 'the process of active reduction of people, the dehumanisation that fits them for the classification, the process of subjectification, the attempt to turn the colonised into less than human beings.'[17]

Looking at the events that have been unfolding since the Zionist regime began its brutal onslaught on the Palestinian people in the Gaza strip, we see yet again how gender is used to draw the contours of settler colonial encroachment.[18] Gender as the property of colonial capitalism manifests in how Israeli settlers come to *occupy* the gendered/sexed subjectivities that bestow upon them the right to plant LGBT flags on scorched Indigenous land (see Figure 1). Their backers in the imperialist core mobilise the discourse of protecting 'our' (meaning: Israeli) women and girls from the perverse monstrosities of Muslim terrorist men,[19] their gendered vulnerability supposedly encapsulating the plight of humanity at large.[20] This is best captured in the declarations made by followers of the Hillary Clinton-style feminist personality cult, including the likes of Sheryl Sandberg who has claimed that the core concern at hand is 'not what is happening in the Middle East, but what is happening to our humanity'.[21] Sandberg means to convey that humanity itself is at stake and its restoration the task of those endowed with the natural right to act against Palestinian-waged terror. Such discourse on humanity generates and follows a conception of the human animated by a material and moral value system that benefits, in a Wynterian sense, the White Bourgeois Man. The defining principle of this moral system is the distinction it sets between the human and non-human animal (in the words of Israeli general, Yoav Gallant),[22] as well as new definitions of Nature, separating 'the garden' from 'the jungle' as Vice-President of the European Commission, Josep Borell, describes.[23] Both the 'animal' and the 'jungle' capture racialised projections of self and other construed in the very process of humanisation. The Native American, the African, the Arab and the Muslim need to be humanised (become 'Man') through colonialism's civilising mission.

In *The Birth of a Jungle*, Michael Lundblad develops a cultural analysis of the 'discourse of the jungle',[24] revealing how racialisation of animality imbricates classed, gendered and sexualised processes in the US at the turn of the twentieth century. Examining *Tarzan of the Apes* by Edgar Rice Burroughs, published in 1914, Lundblad shows that bourgeois white men are constructed as innately able to restrain their animality with reason and rationality.[25] Situating his analysis on the 'discourse of the humane' in relation to animals within the context of widespread lynching of black Americans, Lundblad reveals how 'animality is essentially elevated over blackness,' 'enabling white men to torture and vivisect black men, thus treating them worse than animals at the turn of the century.'[26] A Darwinist-Freudian conception of 'the savage' underlines the rewriting of blackness as wildness of Africans, conceiving of them as innately amoral and savage as opposed to white men who can take a stroll on the wild side, yet maintain their 'inherited instinct for chivalry.'[27] The Darwinist and Freudian analytical combination suggests that savagery of the black African in the jungle manifests in two main and interrelated aspects: first, the delight in cannibalism/torture and killing in the most hysterical manner;[28] and second, the delight in the rape of white women, which derives from the 'essentially instinctual nature of savages and the resulting inability, supposedly, to repress sexual instincts.'[29]

The mobilisation of a taxonomy analogous to the 'discourse of the jungle' has been at the core of this Zionist genocidal campaign, in which the category of the Arab-

Figure 1; https://twitter.com/Israel/status/1723971340825186754?lang=en.

Terrorist-Savage has been relied upon and reproduced to both trigger and enable the ongoing genocide. Israeli media describes a nation that remains 'shocked at the unrestrained murderous savagery that thousands of our neighbours unleashed upon us', the civilised garden.[30] While the alleged Hamas rapes classify as 'crimes against humanity',[31] they also mobilise a 'no moral equivalence' discourse in the face of those, including within the US political establishment (such as Representative Pramila Jayapal), who call for a more balanced approach to the conflict:

> There is no 'balanced approach' to a group that commits this type of barbarity. The only approach is their total elimination.[32]

> Rape and sexual violence against Israeli women call for nothing less than unequivocal condemnation. Israel did not invade Palestinian homes and rape and sexually violate Palestinian women. Hamas did invade Israeli homes and did rape and sexually violate Israeli women. There is no 'balance' or 'both sides' or 'moral equivalence' here. Period.[33]

The 'no balance' approach reveals the active role of the US in providing ideological and material cover for the Zionist regime as it commits genocide. When a journalist asked US State Department Spokesperson, Matthew Miller, about the double standards implied in US actions, as it continues to fund an army that is plausibly believed to be committing genocide, Miller responded:

> There is a false equivalency embedded in that question. There is a difference between members of a terrorist organisation who went out and intentionally killed innocent civilians [...] that is different than a military campaign conducted in an environment where that terrorist organisation hides behind civilians.[34]

Such a statement not only draws a boundary between a legitimate 'Israeli military campaign' versus terrorism, but also activates a moral and political compass towards the only identifiable raped/invaded/innocent civilians of that equation (Israel).[35] While the civilian presence in Gaza is seemingly acknowledged in Miller's statement, it is quickly overshadowed by asserting their proximity to the terrorists/jungle realm. This effectively captures the moralising grounds of the continuous slaughter in Gaza, perceived as nothing but a hub of pure terror. As the Israeli President affirms, there are 'no innocent civilians in Gaza',[36] and the projected beastliness manifests in IDF daily videos documenting their civilising strolls in the jungle. In some videos, where IDF soldiers pose next to animals found alive in Gaza (see Figure 2), we see how animality is elevated above the beastliness of the Indigenous Palestinians.

Figure 2; https://twitter.com/ytirawi/status/1746322932643610798.

In other videos, documenting soldiers rummaging through Palestinian women's lingerie (see Figure 3), the savagery of the jungle emerges through sexualised projections, where unchecked 'sluttiness' lurks beneath 'externally enforced taboos,' as per Freud's description of savages.[37] In the performance of triumphal intimacy with the possessions of killed and displaced Palestinian women, we see a graphic and almost literal illustration of what I have been calling the occupation of gender.

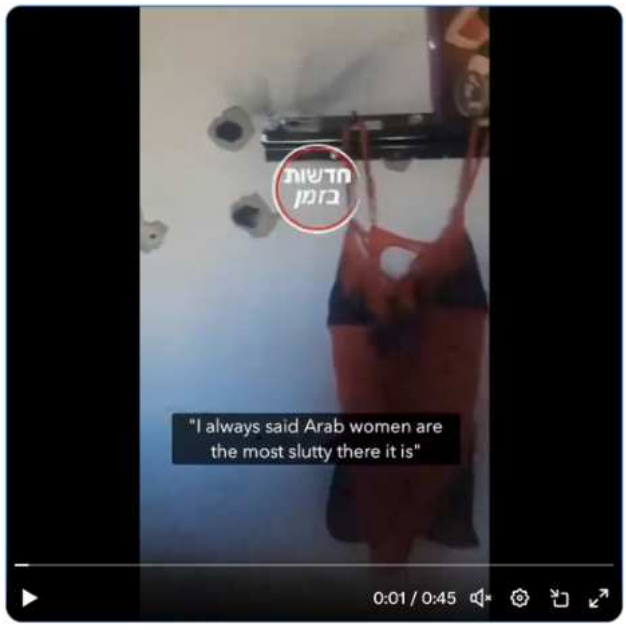

Figure 3; https://twitter.com/ASE/status/1732507774066520162?lang=en.

Wasting as (un)gendering

The delineation of the boundary between humans and beasts is not merely an ideological construction that colonialists advance within a civilisational discourse that pits itself against 'the jungle.' Rather, such (de)humanising projections are an extension of an ideological apparatus that sustains the capitalist mode of social reproduction under US-led imperialism, where the Arab region has been playing a key role for decades.[38] We need turn no further than the work of Third World Arab Marxists to unpick the layers of what we mean by US-led imperialism, including the functionality of the Zionist settler colonial outpost to the project of American hegemony.[39]

In these analyses, imperialism refers to the process of capital accumulation on a world scale, where development is apportioned unequally along racial and class lines.[40] Established on a relation of unequal development, imperialism requires the overexploitation of labour and perennial extraction of resources from peripheral countries, including through the use of monetary

and financial warfare. In such a process, the global South loses national autonomy over its economic policies, while being prevented from harnessing resources for popular developmental goals and instead forced to cater to imperialist diktats. Overall, the social reproduction of imperialism occurs through the consumption of the developing world, thus economising the living conditions of workers and nature. Building on this philosophical tradition, Ali Kadri introduces the concept of *accumulation by waste*. For Kadri, the political economy of dollarised financial imperialism is predicated on a specific logic of waste, which has always annihilated the lives of the working masses of the South. Yet, as per the requisites of financialisaton, it does so at higher turnover rates. In such a context, wars, militarism and repression play a unique role because they respond almost instantaneously – via killing – to the needs of financial capital. In other words, killing and wasting are 'intrinsic characteristics' of the domain of production under US-led imperialism.

This logic of waste has a twofold implication for the Arab region, and especially Palestine. First, US-led imperialism violates state sovereignty through wars of encroachment, waged through concrete practices of arms factories, counterinsurgency, surveillance and the physical land bases and attendant stability needed for those processes.[41] Since 9/11, US-led wars have killed around 5 million people,[42] and this domination of the region wastes Arab human potential. To kill Arab life is to shorten its labour longevity, thus it is the ultimate form of cheapening labour power under capital, and doing so is not some sort of unwanted by-product or collateral damage. Rather, the purposeful wasting of human life is a sphere of production and an end in itself.[43] To say that it is a sphere of production is to reveal that wasted life through imperialist and colonial encroachment are *outputs* as well as *inputs* into surplus value making.[44]

Second, this explains the eliminatory logic of Zionist settler-colonialism, which has a fundamental role to play within the waste industry of US global capital industry.[45] Palestinian resistance movements in the 1960s understood this very well when they told us that Zionism is a spearhead of imperialism.[46] Being a European settler colonial formation, much like the US, the Zionist regime incubates a mode of social reproduction that promotes imperialist values and secures US interests in the Arab region and on a world scale.[47] By acquiring nuclear weapons and through its numerous military attacks on and invasions of other countries in the region – such as Iraq, Lebanon and Syria – Israel has been the major force behind imperialist capital accumulation and its corollary, Arab de-development.[48] Historically, what binds them together is a racist capitalist regime of 'hetero-conquest'[49] needed for the continued domination of the Indigenous, poor, and racialised peoples of the world. Israel is a material investment for the US in militarism, a reality that has emerged clearly during this latest genocidal war. Every aspect of the Zionist regime – from its liberal-progressive ideological values to its military capacity and economic strength – engrosses its sub-imperial or functionary role within the entire Middle East region. As Theodore Herzl proposed to his then British Imperial allies, the to-be Jewish state would serve as 'the portion of the rampart of Europe against Asia, an outpost of civilization as opposed to barbarism'.[50]

Expectedly, in the aftermath of October 7, Western ruling classes rushed to support uncompromisingly (in moral, political and economic terms) the Herzlian state. The Zionists, together with the reactionary regimes in the region – the Gulf monarchies, Jordan and to some extent Egypt – are a fundamental cog in the continuity of the waste industry assigned by US-led imperialism. The genocidal war that has been unfolding for the past eleven months is an intensified form of the waste industry. Whereas before the genocidal onslaught, Gazans were facing a slow genocide, their caloric intake controlled entirely by the occupiers besieging them by air, sea and land,[51] the recent intensification of the killing perfectly encapsulates the waste marketplace of imperialism.

In such a context, it is important to understand how the 'body' becomes wrapped up in the myth-making medium of Western-invested genocide. A whole panoply of bodies: disfigured, tortured, mutilated, burnt, decomposed, crushed, bulldozed, thieved, even as they lay restless and nameless in gruesome mass graves. Numbers and bodies collide to produce a percentage of conferred collateral damage. When Joe Biden is told that 70 per cent are women and children, he responds that there is no truth in these figures.[52] The only truth imperialists know and propagate is that 'a worthy Indian is a scalped Indian', 'a worthy African is a blackened enslaved African', and 'a worthy Arab is a Joint Direct Attack Munition (JDAM) decimated terrorist.'[53] Wasting is the logic

through which US-led imperialism reduces life in its expansive capacity, to bits of flesh among wreckage and rubble, chunks of dead meat for Gaza's hungry dogs to chew on. In doing so, it materialises what I call, borrowing from Hortense Spillers,[54] a scene of unprotected flesh, of terrorist wasted flesh *(un)gendered*.

(Un)gendering operates on two intertwined levels. First, it relies on the ideological and material reduction of the Other to terrorist subspecies. The casting of racialised Others outside of humanity, and by extension of sexed/gendered scripts, is central to the domain of accumulation by waste under Zionism and US-led imperialism. This is best seen in how Palestinians of all genders have been systematically painted by Zionists and their allies, feminist and otherwise, in the imperialist core as legitimate killing targets. The 'usual' protections accorded to 'women and children' do not apply to Palestinians.[55] Second, (un)gendering sustains a symbiotic relationship with the *gendering* scripts that reify the epistemological structures of settler colonialism and imperialism. This is where racialised Others can turn from being undifferentiated terrorist-subspecies to various modified versions of sexed/gendered identifications, concurring with the shifting calibrations of Western bourgeois ideology. We can think, for example, of how Western narratives about vulnerable gays and women of the Arab world encapsulate the ideological terrain of colonial saviourism, rescuing these poor souls from 'the timeless homogeneous mythical place called Islamland'.[56] These gendered/sexed representations demonstrate what Palestinian queer organisers and their allies identify as pinkwashing[57] to explain Zionist and Western hegemonic mobilisation of the 'oppressed veiled woman' and the 'in-need-of-saving LGBT Arab'.

Such colonial projections have a functional role to play in the waste industry. That is, the conceptual production of victimised gendered/sexed Arab bodies activate *accumulation by waste* on two levels. First, the ideological production of sexed/gendered victims underscores the violence of abstraction imposed on bodies and objects commodified 'in total separation from their specificity and materiality.'[58] In challenging the false propagandisation of Israel as a haven for oppressed gay Arabs, queer Palestinians reply: 'there are *no* pink doors in the apartheid wall'.[59] Second, these ideological abstractions not only hide the social reality of ungendering ('the apartheid wall has *no* pink doors') of the Zionist regime, but also advance the material reproduction of the same *accumulation by waste* regime harboured under US-led imperialism. Feminists like Clinton are amongst the benefactors of this class regime that abstracts and wastes Arab human potential. Their feminism equates to 'saving the gays and the women of Iraq' by levelling Iraq to the ground,[60] and greenlighting the genocide of the Palestinians to save the world from Hamas male savagery. The question then becomes, is historical abstraction all we are left with, or might there still be room to defy the imperialist and settler colonial canons of (un)gendering?

Ruptures: anti-imperialist upheavals

> The duality of the US, the West, and the civilised friends of gay people is being used against the Iraqi people and government, who are instead homophobic. This gives the Americans the right not to respect the will of the Iraqi people or of the Iraqi gay community to determine their own paths of struggle. Instead, they imposed the love of gayness and democracy on them, in a ready-made package, sent from America with love. Similarly, Israel uses this discourse in its attempt to whitewash its crimes in front of the whole world.[61]

When Palestinian organisers in the group *alQaws for sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society*[62] explain their firm rejection of the single-issue approach to sexuality, they do so by historicising the journey that got them to mobilise queerness as a 'radical approach to political mobilisation and decolonisation'.[63] That is, Zionist settler-colonisation of Palestinian Indigenous bodies and lands has animated activists' political reconstitution by virtue of growing away from Zionist and western LGBT frameworks. They instead have become more attuned to the material reality embedding Palestinian Indigenous struggle for humanity. In that process, we see a definition of Palestinian queer affiliation that is Palestinian first and foremost and identifies itself within the terrains of Palestinian national struggle for freedom and liberation. At the same time, anti-pinkwashing activists reveal to us the violence within the identity-based affiliations that Zionists and their Western allies seek to impose onto the Palestinian context, which require Palestinians to emerge as victims of their homophobic pride-negating society and seek the freedom that their coloniser is supposedly going to extend to them.[64] This, in effect, corres-

ponds to the dependent nature of social development to which the colonised are forced to subscribe in the process of their peripheralisation and so integration within the 'progressive' market of the imperialist core.

Palestinian mobilising against pinkwashing is not, however, simply an act of unveiling colonial investment in women's and gay rights. Rather, and more crucially, these anti-pinkwashing mobilisations demand that we seek the alternative epistemes that have been buried beneath the social and conceptual categories abstracting away from the materiality of history.[65] Making international calls for boycott, while being active contributors on the ground in political mobilisation, anti-pinkwashers/pinkwatchers show the power that Palestinian queers have, contrary to Zionist and western saviour projections. Most importantly, these actions gesture towards anti-colonial/anti-capitalist forms of struggle. In their political activism, for example, alQaws activists state that rather than seeking pride they seek Dignity;[66] instead of the liberatory façade of capitalism's possessive individual they seek to be rooted in communities.[67] They also explain that instead of seeking the occupier's supposed 'pink doors',[68] they stand by the right of the occupied to wage their uprising for self-determination;[69] and rather than singling out a struggle based on sexuality they refuse the very premise of bourgeois ideology as it abstracts sexuality from the violent structures (settler colonialism and imperialism) maintaining bourgeois dominance.[70]

This emphasis on the structures of oppression – which the imperialists and settler colonialists always seek to hide in their bourgeois projections of what queerness or womanhood ought to signify for Indigenous Palestinians – reveals the grave limitations of post-structuralist queer-feminist critiques, which manifest on three intertwined fronts. First, the dilution of class and structural analysis that followed from French-influenced post-structuralism has led to the production of idealist and dehistoricised conceptions of identities, heavily invested in a deconstructionist paradigm.[71] As Gabriel Rockhill argues, even anti-essentialist versions of this strand of thought, such as those articulated by Judith Butler, continue to approach gender and sexual relations discursively, without providing 'a materialist analysis of capitalist social relations that have produced these categories of gender and sexuality, their existence as major sites of collective class struggle is occluded'.[72] 'At best', they remain 'oriented toward a liberal pluralism in which class struggle is replaced by interest-group advocacy'. Second, we see the occlusion of US-led imperialism and, consequently, the centrality of the national question for those who remain under settler colonial and imperialist aggression.[73] This is accompanied by an analysis that undermines feminist/queer nationalist anti-colonial politics, characterising them as unproductively stuck within a politics of essentialism and puritanism.[74] These critiques instead glorify sexed/gendered configurations that are conceived within a hybrid anti-essentialist idiom for the sake of activating abstract notions of co-existence: 'Palestine/Israel.'[75] Third, we see approaches that push the deconstructionist approach to such an extent that advocating queerness in its subjectless capacity or the zone of death drive becomes possible.[76] Queerness is conceived against the logic of reproductive and heteronormative futurism, supposedly imposed everywhere, while forgetting that racialised working class people are already confined to the realm of wasting and shortening of their lives.

Butler 's initial response to October 7 and Israel's launching of its genocidal war - 'The Compass of Mourning'[77] – provides an instructive illustration of such limitations. Beginning with a recognition of the problematic liberal imperative to 'condemn or approve', Butler effectively reinforces this imperative with their unequivocal condemnation of the 'terrifying and revolting Hamas massacre.'[78] The essay moves on to reiterate the value of nonviolence as a moral compass for both Israelis and Palestinians under what Butler named in a previous work a 'cohabitation' paradigm.[79] Acknowledging the colonial context in Israel/Palestine, Butler nonetheless challenges the putatively dubious moral stance of some pro-Palestine activists, referencing the Harvard Palestine Solidarity Committee (HPSC). For Butler, in this essay, the group's contextualisation of the Israeli apartheid regime as the only one to blame for the escalation of violence serves to 'exonerate' Hamas's 'hideous killings':

> I deplore the violence unequivocally at the same time as I, like so many others, want to be part of imagining and struggling for true equality and justice in the region, the kind that would compel groups like Hamas to disappear, the occupation to end, and new forms of political

freedom and justice to flourish.[80]

At times, Butler acknowledges the necessity of historical contextualisation regarding the existence of groups like Hamas, as when they say that 'we have to know the history of the situation, the growth of Hamas as a militant group in the devastation of the post-Oslo moment'.[81] However, this momentary engagement with history recedes in the face of overwhelming theoretical abstraction dictated by an idealist vision of non-violence, as Butler tells us that alternative political and moral possibilities lie in a 'struggle for a free Palestine in which Hamas would be dissolved or superseded by groups with non-violent aspirations for cohabitation'.[82] The notion of cohabitation or coming together of Israeli Jews and Palestinians, which Butler proposes as the most productive political and moral trajectory, is emblematic of the very identarian base of their theorisation, even though they would strongly claim otherwise. As Lisa Bhungalia and I argued in 2014, 'cohabitation' emerges from and follows dehistoricised, depoliticised, Weberian notions of 'hate', 'religious conflict', and 'ethnic war'.[83] It ignores the material structures that maintain one group's exclusive domination over another, effectively eliding the mode of social reproduction that Zionism requires, that is, the wasting and killing of Palestinians. Consequently, it divorces Zionism from its functionary role within US-led imperialism. Moreover, the abstract notion of Palestinians and Israeli Jews 'coming together' fails to engage productively with the deep history of existing anti-colonial and anti-imperialist struggles (and strategies) deployed to imagine liberation beyond academic-sanctioned versions of 'decolonisation'.

In contrast, anti-imperialist feminism gestures towards a new moral praxis to be found within the revolutionary will of those who, following so many years of dehumanisation and besiegement, have the full right, in the words of the late Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP)[84] leader George Habash, to 'protect our revolution. Our code of morals is our revolution.'[85] This emerges further in two interviews conducted three weeks after the joint military operation,[86] Al Aqsa Flood, with the revolutionary PFLP figure Leila Khaled. In one of the interviews, she reflects on the the cumulative and intergenerational nature of resistance,[87] focused on the return of Palestinian refugees to their lands and Palestinian national liberation. Considering the current situation in Gaza, she remarks that there is only one option for Palestinians – resistance – and notes that even amongst the families being bombed by Israel, there is 'nobody speaking out and saying they're against resistance.' She observes, reflecting on how Palestinians in Gaza have reacted to the loss of their families and loved ones, that their reactions show 'that the people's culture is a culture of resistance, not of surrender.'

In a related interview, she reflects on armed struggle:

> the only choice we have is to fight and to liberate our land including through armed resistance… people have the right to resist with all means, including armed struggle. This is in the Charter of the United Nations… it's a fundamental law. Where there is repression, there is resistance… history taught us that people resist to keep their dignity and land.[88]

In the same inteview, Khaled recalls the hijacking operations that she was part of in the late 1960s, which have seen her branded a terrorist by Zionists and imperialists to this day. Khaled explains that hijacking was a tactic intended to get the world to pay attention to the Palestinian question 'because they didn't listen to us when we were in the camps'. Recounting details of the operations of which she was part, Khaled describes how she took control of the cockpit while invoking the name of Shadia Abu Ghazaleh, the first Palestinian martyred woman in the wake of the 1967 Naksa.[89] She then reflects on how upon encountering Western media, all she was asked by an American journalist was: 'How many hours do you stand in front of the mirror?'[90] Such a question, for Khaled, sits within wider Western projections about Arab women as passive and domesticated, incapable of political thought and action.[91] These gendering scripts of imperialism operate alongside the ungendering processes that relegate Khaled, like many other Palestinian resistance figures, to the dehumanising realm of the terrorist, nonsensical, amoral savage. A recent cancellation of her seminar at a US-based university was propelled by anti-terrorism laws that led the president of the university to affirm:

> terrorist violence conflicts with academic freedom… it is at odds with the values that universities hold dear: reason, dispassion, freedom of speech and inquiry, respect for individuals and individual liberties.[92]

However, lying beneath these (un)gendering scripts of empire are the words of Khaled when she asserts: 'We are ready to pay blood and flesh to liberate this land.'[93] If, borrowing from Spillers, we read Palestine as a scene of unprotected flesh, then Khaled's words promise a defiance arising out of that very abjection.

Khaled gestures towards an anti-imperialist feminism, where Indigenous counterviolence is the site of inventiveness of the colonised flesh, once it emerges beyond the socio-political taxonomies dictating colonised non-being.[94] In the face of the ongoing genocide waged against the Palestinian people, Khaled and her comrades in the Palestinian resistance movement point us to the significance of standing firmly with the plight of the oppressed to fight against the usurpation of their right to claim their own history. The fight itself activates a process of social transformation propelled by 'the ability to determine the mode of production most appropriate to the evolution of the liberated people.'[95] This – the quest for autonomous development of national productive forces – 'opens new prospects for the cultural development of the society in question, by returning to that society all its capacity to create progress.'[96] In other words, the waste-driven economy of the imperialists is put into crisis when the colonised rise to declare the rightfulness of their Intifada. Palestinian Intifada stands as a living example of a 'class struggle' where *homo politicus* replaces *homo economicus* in the process of materialising revolutionary consciousness.[97] Claiming their place within the revolution, women and the rural poor become crucial pillars of a national productive force that could activate *insihab* (delinking)[98] from the material imperatives of the US-led global waste industry. In so doing, the struggle for national liberation proves its capacity to reconfigure the social sphere. In the face of dispossession, there is ongoing *sumud* (steadfastness, staying put on one's land). In the face of genocidal killing, there is an aspiration for *shahada* (living martyrdom) by resisting Indigenous subjects. They not only refuse to die[99] but are also aware of the role they play in History: facing up to Zionism and US imperialism.[100]

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Notes

1. MSNBC, 'Israeli president: War against Hamas intended "to save the values of Western civilization"', *YouTube*, 5 December 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v64TVMo2vKw&t=286s.
2. Patrick Wintour, 'Stakes High As South Africa Brings Claims of Genocidal Intent Against Israel', *Guardian*, 4 January 2024, https://www.theguardian.contentsm/-world/2024/jan/04/stakes-high-as-south-africa-brings-claim-of-genocidal-intent-against-israel.
3. Jeffrey Gettleman, Anat Schwartz and Adam Sella, "'Scream without Words": How Hamas Weaponised Sexual Violence on Oct. 7', *New York Times*, 28 December 2023.
4. CNN reporting on sexual violence and the New York Times Hamas rape story have been exposed as relying on non-credible witnesses (see e.g. 'CNN report claiming sexual violence on October 7 relied on non-credible witnesses, some with undisclosed ties to Israeli govt', *Mondoweiss*, 1 December 2023, https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/cnn-report-claiming-sexual-violence-on-october-7-relied-on-non-credible-witnesses-some-with-undisclosed-ties-to-israeli-govt/; Jeremy Schill and Ryan Grim, 'Kibbutz Be'eri Rejects Story in New York Times October 7 Exposé: "They Were Not Sexually Abused"', *The Intercept*, 4 March 2024, https://-theintercept.com/2024/03/04/nyt-october-7-sexual-violence-kibbutz-beeri/). Investigative journalists also reveal that ZAKA, the Israeli non-governmental organisation, provided testimonies on sexual violence along with the commission led by Cochav Elkayam-Levy that were non-reliable and fraudulent (see e.g. 'ZAKA is not a trustworthy source for allegations of sexual violence on October 7', *Mondoweiss*, 30 December 2023, https://mondoweiss.net/2023/12/zaka-is-not-a-trustworthy-source-for-allegations-of-sexual-violence-on-october-7/; Ali Abunimah, 'Israeli "commission" on 7 October rape claims exposed as fraud', *The Electronic Intifada*, 25 March 2024, https://electronicintifada.net/content/israeli-commission-7-october-rape-claims-exposed-fraud/45401). Further, doubts over reliability and credence were cast over the UN report issued in the follow up to Pramila Patten's visit to Israel. It is important to note that the report concludes that the UN team 'was unable to establish the prevalence of sexual violence and concludes that the overall magnitude, scope, and specific attribution of these violations would require a fully-

fledged investigation', Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, 'Official visit of the Office of the SRSG-SVC to Israel and the occupied West Bank', 4 March 2024, https://www.un.org/sexualviolenceinconflict/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/report/mission-report-official-visit-of-the-office-of-the-srsg-svc-to-israel-and-the-occupied-west-bank-29-january-14-february-2024/20240304-Israel-oWB-CRSV-report.pdf. Finally, a recent UN OHCHR report, released in May 2024, confirms that the Investigating Commission was not able to independently verify allegations of rapes by Hamas due to 'a lack of access to victims, witnesses, and crime sites as well as obstruction of its investigations by the Israeli authorities'. Also, the report states that 'the Commission found some specific allegations to be false, inaccurate or contradictory with other evidence or statements and discounted these from its assessment'. See A/HRC/56/26, 'Report of the Independent International Commission of Inquiry on the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and Israel', 27 May 2024, https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/06/israeli-authorities-palestinian-armed-groups-are-responsible-war-crimes.

5. Libby Cathey, 'Biden calls reports of Hamas' sexual violence against Israeli women "appalling"', ABC News, 6 December 2023, http://abcnews.go.com/International/biden-calls-reports-hamas-sexual-violence-israeli-women/story?id=105401641/.

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7. Emanuel Fabian, 'Defense Minister announces "complete siege" of Gaza: No power, food or fuel', *The Times of Israel*, 9 October 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/defense-minister-announces-complete-siege-of-gaza-no-power-food-or-fuel/.

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9. NBC News, "'Where the h--- are you?": Netanyahu

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10. Maria Lugones, 'Toward a Decolonial Feminism', *Hypatia* 25:4 (2010), 742–759; Sylvia Wynter, 'Unsettling the Coloniality of Being/Power/Truth/Freedom: Towards the Human, After Man, Its Overrepresentation – An Argument', *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3:3 (2003), 257–337.

11. Lugones, 'Decolonial Feminism', 743; Wynter, 'Unsettling', 257.

12. Lugones, 'Decolonial Feminism', 755.

13. Wynter, 'Unsettling', 317.

14. Lugones, 'Decolonial Feminism', 745.

15. Wynter, 'Unsettling', 260.

16. Wynter, 'Unsettling', 298.

17. Lugones, 'Decolonial Feminism', 745.

18. Walaa Alqaisiya, 'Beyond the Contours of Zionist Sovereignty: Decolonisation in Palestine's Unity Intifada', *Political Geography* 103 (2023), 1–11.

19. Jennifer Cunningham, 'Sheryl Sandberg, Hillary Clinton, Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and others issue a global call to action to denounce sexual violence at UN summit', *Business Insider*, 5 December 2023, https://www.businessinsider.com/sheryl-sandberg-urge-world-to-denounce-hamas-for-sexual-violence-october-7-attack-2023-12.

20. Jack Brile, 'Hillary Clinton slams progressives ignoring Hamas horrors: "no excuses"', *Washington Examiner*, 5 December 2023, https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/2627532/hillary-clinton-slams-progressives-ignoring-hamas-horrors-no-excuses/.

21. Cunningham, 'Sheryl Sandberg'.

22. Fabian, 'Defense Minister'.

23. Middle East Eye, 'EU's foreign policy chief Josep Borrell calls Europe "a garden" and the rest of the world "a jungle"', *YouTube*, 17 October 2022, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-MncHLS51uM.

24. Michael Lundblad, *The Birth of A Jungle* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 2.

25. Lundblad, *Birth*, 145.

26. Lundblad, *Birth*, 27.

27. Lundblad, *Birth*, 144.

28. Lundblad, *Birth*, 153.

29. Lundblad, *Birth*, 49.

30. David Horovitz, 'Shock at the October 7 catastrophe gives way to horror and fury at global immorality', *The Times of Israel*, 29 October 2023, https://www.timesofisrael.com/shock-at-the-october-7-catastrophe-gives-way-to-horror-and-fury-at-global-immorality/.

31. Brile, 'Hillary Clinton slams'.

32. Congressman Jeff Van Drew on *X*, 4 December 2023, reported in the *Washington Examiner*, https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/news/2450813/-white-house-calls-hamas-rapes-reprehensible-in-wake-of-jayapal-controversy/.

33. Ritchie Torres, 'Rape and sexual violence against Israeli women calls for nothing less than unequivocal condemnation', *X*, 3 December 2023, https://twitter.com/RitchieTorres/status/1731439939902992708.

34. Prem Thakker, 'Republicans and Democrats have made a deal that they will cut UNRWA funding through next year', *X*, 18 March 2024, https://twitter.com/-prem_thakker/status/1769717253732171912?t=0oSmemBdg5RAgjLNTUfV4Q&s=08.

35. Sexual and gender-based violence that Zionists have perpetrated for decades against Palestinian men (see e.g. Daniel J. N. Weishut, 'Sexual torture of Palestinian men by Israeli authorities', *Reproductive Health Matters* 23:46 (2015), 71–84); women (see e.g. Kathryn Median, 'Israeli Settler colonialism, "Humanitarian Warfare", and Sexual Violence in Palestine', *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 23:5 (2021), 698–719; Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 'The Politics of Birth and the Intimacies of Violence against Palestinian Women in Occupied East Jerusalem', *British Journal of Criminology* 55:6 (2015), 1187–1206); and children (see e.g. Claire Nicoll, 'Defenceless: the Impact of Israeli Military Detentions on Palestinian Children', Save the Children Report (2020), https://resourcecentre.savethechildren.net/document/defenceless-impact-israeli-military-detention-palestinian-children/) has received a fraction of the outrage and condemnation directed against the alleged Hamas rapes on October 7 by western politicians.

36. The Wire, "'No Innocent Civilians in Gaza", Israel President Says as Northern Gaza Struggles to Flee Israeli bombs', 14 October 2023, https://thewire.in/world/northern-gaza-israel-palestine-conflict.

37. Mary Turfah, 'Running Amok', *The Baffler*, 18 June 2024, https://thebaffler.com/latest/running-amok-turfah.

38. Ali Kadri, *Arab Development Denied: Dynamics of Accumulation by Wars of Encroachment* (London: Anthem Press, 2015).

39. Anour Abdel-Malek, *Social Dialectics: Nation and Revolution* (Albany: SUNY Press,1981); Ali Kadri, *Arab Development Denied* (London Anthem Press , 2015); Samir Amin, 'U.S. Imperialism, Europe, and the Middle East', *Monthly Review*, 1 November 2004, https://monthlyreview.org/2004/11/01/u-s-imperialism-europe-and-the-middle-east/.

40. Samir Amin, *Unequal Development* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1976).

41. Matteo Capasso and Ali Kadri, 'The Imperialist Ques-

tion: A Sociological Approach', *Middle East Critique*, 32:2 (2023), 149–166.

42. Stephanie Savell, 'How Death Outlives War: The Reverberating Impact of Post 9/11 Wars on Human Health', Watson Institute for International and Public Affairs, 2024, https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2023/IndirectDeaths.

43. Ali Kadri, *The Accumulation of Waste: A Political Economy of Systematic Destruction* (Leiden: Brill, 2023).

44. War is a primary and direct form of killing. Yet, sanctions, IMF-led SAPs, and the entire neoliberal assault on the masses of the global South should also be considered as part of the process of *accumulation by waste*.

45. Max Ajl, 'Palestine's Great Flood: Part 1', *Agrarian South: Journal of Political Economy*, 13:1 (2024), 62–88.

46. George Habash, *Revolutionaries Never Die* (Lebanon: Saqi Books, 2009). Source in Arabic.

47. To frame Zionism as a spearhead of US-led imperialism is to depart from some of the theoretical limitations of settler colonial theory, highlighting its failure to engage with dynamics of class and capitalism as they shape colonialism and racism. Zionist elimination of Indigenous Palestinians is a mode of social reproduction under settler colonialism that tallies (does not contradict) with the functionality of US-led imperialism in the region and on a world scale. In other words, the elimination of Palestinian life for Zionist settler colonial encroachment should not be abstracted from the material processes dictating: first, a class regime (including with internal class contradictions/profits for comprador elites) working in the interests of US imperialism in the region via direct wars, coup d'etat operations, IMF and World Bank policies; and second, a labour regime from which a politics of national resistance is borne out to challenge the class positionality of Palestinians and wider working Arab masses who form part of Palestine's strategic depth and war against Zionism, reactionism and imperialism. For more on this debate, see Max Ajl, 'Logics of Elimination and Settler Colonialism: Decolonization or National Liberation?', *Middle East Critique* 32:1 (2023), 1–25.

48. Hassan Harb, 'Imperialism, Zionism and Reactionism in the 21st Century', *Ebb Magazine*, 15 October 2023, https://www.ebb-magazine.com/essays/al-aqsa-flood.

49. See Walaa Alqaisiya, 'Palestine and the Will to Theorise Decolonial Queering', *Middle East Critique* 29:1 (2020), 87–113.

50. Oxford Learning Link, 'Document-Excerpts from Theodor Herzl, The Jewish State (1895)', Oxford University Press, 2024, https://learninglink.oup.com/access/content/von-sivers-3e-dashboard-resources/document-excerpts-from-theodor-herzl-the-jewish-state-1895.

51. Reuters, 'Israel Gaza blockade study calculated Palestinians' calories', 17 October 2012, https://www.reuters.com/article/idUSBRE89G0NM/.

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54. Hortense Spillers, 'Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe: An American Grammar Book', *Diacritics* 17:2 (1987), 68.

55. On the concept of 'unchilding' in relation to Palestinian children see Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, *Incarcerated Childhood and the Politics of Unchilding* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2019).

56. Lila Abu Lughod, 'Do Mulism Women Need Saving?' *Time*, 1 November 2023, https://ideas.time.com/2013/11/-01/do-muslim-women-need-saving/.

57. Walaa Alqaisya, Ghaith Hilal and Haneen Maikey, 'Dismantling the Image of the Palestinian Homosexual: Exploring the Role of AlQaws', in *Decolonizing Sexualities*, ed, Sandeep Bakshi, Suhraiya Jivraj and Silvia Posocco (Oxford: Counterpress, 2016), 125–140.

58. Ewa Płonowska Ziarek, *Feminist Aesthetics and the Politics of Modernism* (New York: Columbia University press 2012), 130.

59. Haneen Maikey, 'Liberation in Palestine: A Queer Issue', presentation at SOAS University of London, 28 February 2014.

60. See Nadje Al-Ali and Nicola Pratt, *What Kind of Liberation? Women and the Occupation of Iraq* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

61. Haneen Maikey and Sami Samali, 'International Day Against Homophobia: Between the Western Experience and the Reality of Gay Communities', alQaws, 23 May 2011, https://www.alqaws.org/siteEn/-print?id=26&type=1.

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63. Walaa Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering in Palestine* (London: Routledge, 2022), 67.

64. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering*, 117.

65. Walaa Alqaisiya, 'The Decolonial Wor(l)ds of indigenous Women', *Social & Cultural Geography* (2023), 1–19.

66. Alqaisiya, 'Beyond the Contours', 7.

67. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering*, 117.

68. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering*, *58*.

69. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering*, 139.

70. Alqaisiya, *Decolonial Queering*, 59.

71. Domenico Losurdo, *Il Marxismo Occidentale Come nacque, come morì, come può rinascere* (Bari: Laterza, 2017).
72. Gabriel Rockhill and Zhao Dingqi, 'Imperialist Propaganda and the Ideology of the Western Left Intelligentsia: From Anticommunism and Identity Politics to Democratic Illusions and Fascism', *Monthly Review*, 1 December 2023, https://monthlyreview.org/2023/12/01/imperialist-propaganda-and-the-ideology-of-the-western-left-intelligentsia/. As a counterpoint, for a historical materialist account of gender and sexuality see Gary Kinsman, *The Regulation of Desire: Queer Histories, Queer Struggles* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2024).
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75. Gill Hochberg, 'Introduction: Israelis, Palestinians, Queers: Points of Departure', *Journal of Gay and Lesbian Studies* 16:4 (2010) 493–516.
76. Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004).
77. Judith Butler, 'The Compass of Mourning', *London Review of Books*, 19 October 2023, https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n20/judith-butler/the-compass-of-mourning.
78. Butler, 'The Compass'.
79. Butler, *Parting Ways: Jewishness and the Critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012). A few months after the *LRB* piece, short clips circulated online where Butler appears to claim that Hamas is part of 'Palestinian armed resistance'. However in a lengthy interview following these claims, (available at PoliticsJOE, 'The west knows nothing about the Palestinian struggle', *YouTube*, 25 March 2024, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XU5Ao50uog8), Butler clarifies that the Israeli far right had a vested interest in the making and circulation of these clips, and that her position towards the 'mass atrocities committed by Hamas remains unchanged'. I must also emphasise that my critique engages with the corpus of Butler's work regarding non-violence and cohabitation in Palestine and is not based on a few scattered statements.
80. Butler, 'The Compass'.
81. Butler, 'The Compass'.
82. Butler, 'The Compass'.
83. Mary Thomas, 'On the Civilian in Gaza: Walaa Alqaisiya and Lisa Bhungalia interviewed by Mat Coleman and Mary Thomas', *Society and Space*, 16 September 2014, https://www.societyandspace.org/articles/on-the-civilian-in-gaza.
84. Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine: a Marxist Leninist party founded by George Habash in 1967.
85. *Ebb* magazine, 'George Habash on morality and the Palestinian Revolution', 10 October 2023, https://www.ebb-magazine.com/essays/our-code-of-morals-is-our-revolution,.
86. It is crucial to challenge the common assumption, particularly within Western media and political discourse, that Hamas was the only group that participated in the launching of this military operation. Other Palestinian political factions, including the PFLP and Islamic Jihad, were involved.
87. She states that 'the process of accumulation [of acts of resistance] lead to qualitative change'. See Leila Khaled: Journey of a Palestinian Icon, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PUN64QJTToY, accessed 16 August 2024.
88. *Break Through News*, 'Leila Khaled Interview: Palestine is an International Liberation Struggle', *YouTube*, 27 October 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6BBvzyKL-G4&t=208s. Editors' note: International humanitarian law recognises a right to armed resistance in the context of occupation. See Marco Longobardo, *The Use of Armed Force in Occupied Territory* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 147–164.
89. *Break Through News*, 'Leila Khaled'.
90. *Break Through News*, 'Leila Khaled'.
91. *Break Through News*, 'Leila Khaled'.
92. Alice Speri and Sam Briddle, 'Zoom Censorship of Palestine Seminar Sparks Fight Over Academic Freedom', *The Intercept*, 14 November 2020, https://theintercept.com/2020/11/14/zoom-censorship-leila-khaled-palestine/.
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https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/1970-amilcar-cabral-national-liberation-and-culture/ .

96. Amilcar Cabral, '1970'.

97. Adel Samara, *Beyond De-linking: Development by Popular Protection vs. Development by State* (Glendale, CA: Palestine Research and Publishing Foundation, 2005), 133.

98. Samara, *Beyond De-linking*, 134, explains how by building their own cooperatives and reviving a land-based economy, women and peasants advance the formation of a resistance economy, what he identifies as 'delinking by popular protection'.

99. Both in the metaphysical sense of the word as well as in reference to the material continuity of the struggle captured in Palestinian common belief that resisting subjects can be killed but the idea/cause for which they die lives on.

100. Encapsulated in the words of a recent Gaza survivor: 'They have killed everyone in the house! Congratulations to this free world! Congratulations to the European Union and the US for showing off your strength by killing off women and children. If they think that the Palestinian people will be broken down into surrendering, I swear to God we won't accept humiliation or breaking down and we will not leave this land. Tonight, I will sleep in my demolished house, and I will not leave! We will never leave from here! Look I came out from underneath the rubble. Look Biden, all your rockets and missiles, your aircraft carriers, which came to kill us, and I came out from under the rubble standing defiant.' *Middle East Eye*, 'Palestinian man sends a message to Israel that Palestinians will never surrender', *YouTube*, 12 October 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xnUqAAzn0oY.