Israel as homotopia: Language, space, and vicious belonging

T O M M A S O   M .   M I L A N I [a,b] A N D   E R E Z   L E V O N [c]

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A B S T R A C T

Israel has recently succeeded in presenting itself as an attractive haven for LGBT constituencies. In this article, we investigate how this affective traction operates in practice, along with the ambiguous entanglement of normativity and antinormativity as expressed in the agency of some gay Palestinian Israelis vis-à-vis the Israeli homonationalist project. For this purpose, we analyze the documentary *Oriented* (2015), produced by the British director Jake Witzenfeld together with the Palestinian collective Qambuta Productions. More specifically, the aim of the article is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, we seek to demonstrate how Foucault's notion of heterotopia provides a useful framework for understanding the spatial component of Palestinian Israeli experience, and the push and pull of conflicted identity projects more generally. Empirically, we illustrate how Israel is a homotopia, an inherently ambivalent place that is simultaneously utopian and dystopian, and that generates what we call vicious belonging. (Code-switching, heterotopia, homonationalism, normativity, pinkwashing, sexuality, space)*

I N T R O D U C T I O N

Over the last few years, Israel has presented itself as a modern haven for gay and lesbian constituencies—both tourists and locals—within an allegedly retrograde and oppressive Middle East. Labeled as 'homonationalism' and/or 'pinkwashing', Israel's nation-branding strategies have been scrutinized in a burgeoning body of work within queer studies and activism (see e.g. Puar 2007, 2011). Because of the privileging of state macro-discourses as objects of analysis, such scholarship has contributed to producing a grand narrative of homonationalism as an all-encompassing project, which we should refuse to entertain *qua* scholars and activists. As the reasoning goes, any attempt to engage with homonationalism—even very critical ones such as anti-pinkwashing activism—ultimately reiterates those very terms on which homonationalism rests (Puar & Mikdashi 2012; see however Schotten & Maikey 2012 and Schotten 2016 for a critique).

In contrast, we believe that homonationalism should be put under close analytical scrutiny because we are afraid that too quick a verdict of guilty brushes over the

AFFECTIVE POWER of the homonationalist project, which makes Israel potentially attractive for a variety of LGBT individuals, including Palestinian Israelis. We also believe that a defiant stance of nonengagement is ethically contentious because it may lead to the silencing and erasure of the diversity of lived experiences of queer Palestinians in Israel, and thus inadvertently contribute to existing Zionist discourses that seek to make queer Palestinian subjectivity invisible. Finally, a refusal to engage with homonationalism can itself be seen as the embodiment of a normative stance, a perspective that ignores the nuance and complexity of lived experience and that, in line with the remit of this special issue, is itself deserving of close critical scrutiny.

In this article, we investigate how Israel's affective traction operates in practice, along with the ambiguous entanglement of normativity and antinormativity as expressed in the agency of some gay Palestinian Israelis vis-à-vis the Israeli homonationalist project. For this purpose, we analyze the documentary *Oriented* (Witzenfeld 2015), produced by the British director Jake Witzenfeld together with the Palestinian collective Qambuta Productions. *Oriented* presents the lives of three gay Palestinians who 'hold Israeli passports, vote in Israeli elections, speak primarily in Hebrew, and yet can't and won't call themselves Israeli, because they are Palestinian' (McDonald 2015). More specifically, the aim of the article is twofold. From a theoretical perspective, we seek to demonstrate how Foucault's notion of heterotopia provides a useful framework for understanding the spatial component of Palestinian Israeli experience, and the push and pull of conflicted identity projects more generally. Empirically, we illustrate how Israel is a *homotopia*, an inherently ambivalent place that is simultaneously utopian and dystopian, and that generates what we call *vicious belonging*—a complex pattern of unresolved 'forms of detachment… accompanied by rhizomic attachments and reterritorializations of various kinds' (Hannam, Sheller, & Urry 2006:3), which ultimately may hinder a speaker's well-being.

In this article we begin with an overview of the theoretical assumptions that inform the analysis. We then move on to provide some background about Israel in relation to the documentary *Oriented*, before delving into detailed analysis of relevant extracts. We conclude by arguing how detailed discourse analysis informed by heterotopia offers 'a richer analysis of the complexity of normativity than that which is enabled by… the disciplinary normativity that governs queer critique' (Hall 2013:636).

HOMO- AND HETEROTOPIAS IN INTERACTION

In this article, we employ *homotopia* as a way to capture the spatial politics of sexuality in Israel and the double binds it creates for queer Palestinians. In doing so, we do not aim to propose a new concept. Rather, we perform a queer gesture of twisting and turning an old notion, that of *heterotopia*, which is perhaps one of Foucault's least developed ideas. Of course, the morpheme *hetero-* in Foucault's term is not

linked to sexuality. Nevertheless, our word play seeks to tweak the concept toward a sexual semantic field—*homo-* in *homotopia* indeed refers to same-sex identities and desires.

Despite its scant presence in Foucault's oeuvre, heterotopia has generated a vast body of literature—a whole field of heterotopian studies[1]—that is not always in agreement about how to interpret and operationalize this notion. The reason for the disagreement can be found in the apparently contradictory elements in the original definition of the concept. Unlike utopias, which are unreal spaces in perfect form, Foucault argues:

> There are also, probably in every culture, in every civilization, REAL PLACES—places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society—which are something like COUNTER-SITES, a kind of effectively enacted utopia in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within the culture, are simultaneously REPRESENTED, CONTESTED, and INVERTED. Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality. Because these places are absolutely different from all the sites that they reflect and speak about, I shall call them, by way of contrast to utopias, heterotopias. (Foucault 1986:24; emphasis added)

The ambiguity here rests on heterotopias being simultaneously located and dislocated, real and uncanny. In order to exemplify these paradoxical qualities, Foucault gives the example of the mirror, which is a real spatial device that reflects another space, and creates for the viewer the feeling of simultaneously being 'there' in the reflection and 'here' in the flesh. While the word 'counter-sites' in the definition has led some scholars to understand heterotopias as inherently and necessarily anti-hegemonic spaces, we would argue that such a reading simplifies the inherent incongruities upon which the concept is built. Therefore, we concur with Johnson (2013:800) that 'heterotopian sites do not sit in isolation as reservoirs of freedom, emancipation or resistance; they coexist, combine and connect', engendering ambiguous juxtapositions of hegemony and anti-hegemony, normativity and antinormativity. The contradictory nature of heterotopia is perhaps most cogently captured in Foucault's observation that '[e]veryone can enter into heterotopic sites, but in truth, it is only an illusion—we think we enter and yet we are, by the very fact of having entered, excluded' (1986:8; our translation from the original).

Time also plays an important role in that 'Heterotopias are most often linked to slices in time [*découpages du temps*]—which is to say that they open onto what might be termed, for the sake of symmetry, heterochronies' (Foucault 1986:26). Unfortunately, something gets lost in translation when the original French text is translated into English. The expression 'slices in time' renders quite badly the semantic richness of its French counterpart *découpage du temps,* which alludes to the art of decorating objects with paper cut-outs that overlap with one another (see also Johnson 2012). Foucault's formulation *découpage du temps* not only suggestively captures the spatialization of time—time as paper cut-outs—but also conveys the OVERLAYING of these spatiotemporal nexus points.

As such, the notions of heterotopia and heterochrony allow us to bring space into our analytical repertoire. However, unlike the cognate chronotope (Bakhtin

1981:84; see also Blommaert 2018; Guissemo 2018), which indicates 'the intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships' (Bakhtin 1981:84), heterotopia and heterochrony focus rather less on the time/space nexus per se than on the CONFLICTING nature of spatiotemporal experience 'embedding multiple meanings around a set of spatio-temporal contradictions and ambiguities' (Johnson 2013:797). These concepts thus prevent us from reconciling or resolving binary opposites.

While sociolinguistic research informed by heterotopia has typically privileged the study of meaning making in and about the built environment (e.g. Lou 2017; Tufi 2017), we are interested in the ways in which 'entering into a space' is interactionally materialized through the stances that speakers adopt. In this sense, we view space not simply as material reality but as an ideological universe (Bakhtin 1981; Hill 1995), in relation to which speakers position themselves through talk. These (dis)alignments discursively materialize in overt spatial stances (e.g. through explicit reference to specific spaces, such as Israel, Tel Aviv, Palestine, etc.) and/or more covertly through particular language choices and switches. As Bakhtin (1981) and scholars of language ideology have pointed out, language use is never ideology-free. Rather linguistic features, registers, and varieties are ideological affordances through which speakers/writers can position themselves within a specific MORAL and AFFECTIVE universe, and in so doing legitimate their belonging to a specific sociosemiotic space (Hill 1995).

In our view, Bucholtz & Hall's (2005) 'tactics of intersubjectivity' model offers a useful analytical toolkit with which to operationalize an investigation of how speakers position themselves within a heterotopic space since it allows us to attend to the ideological loadings, and hence the specific social and interactional effects, of particular linguistic choices. As Bucholtz & Hall (2005) caution, the analytical framework is not meant to offer an all-encompassing model for analyzing all the ways in which identities are accomplished discursively. Rather, it is a partial scaffolding that focuses on three pairs of tactics: adequation/distinction, authentication/denaturalization, and authorization/illegitimation. *Adequation* indicates the processes through which individuals and groups position themselves as similar, and in order to do so downplay mutual differences. *Distinction* instead captures how difference is discursively accomplished and potential similarities are minimized. *Authentication* and *denaturalization* deal with the discursive construction of authenticity or lack thereof. While authentication indicates how a speaker's discursive moves and positionings are imbued with veracity, denaturalization denotes those strategies that discard discursive moves and positionings as forgeries. Finally, *authorization* 'involves the affirmation or imposition of an identity through structures of institutionalized power and ideology, whether local or translocal' (Bucholtz & Hall 2005:603). *Illegitimation*, by contrast, 'addresses the ways in which identities are dismissed, censored, or simply ignored by these same structures' (Bucholtz & Hall 2005:603). As we see in the examples below, these tactics of locating self and other have a distinctly spatial component (Jaworski & Thurlow 2010; Hall,

this issue), and work together in creating a complex pattern of *vicious belonging* in relation to Israel. Before delving into this detailed analysis, we first offer some relevant background information about Israel and the documentary under investigation.

ORIENTED IN THE CONTEXT OF ISRAELI POLITICS

As a documentary film, *Oriented* draws its dramatic tension from its treatment of a series of salient binary contrasts that circulate in the Israeli ideological landscape. The first and most prevalent of these is a contrast between ISRAEL and PALESTINE, in which the two societies are viewed as discrete and mutually exclusive units. The documentary's focus on Palestinian citizens of Israel can be read as an explicit critique of an assumed total separation of the two societies, and, as such, calls into question certain foundational discourses of Israeli nationalism. From its inception, and despite various entreaties to the contrary (see e.g. Massad 2006), Jewish settlement in Palestine aimed to establish a 'homogenous Jewish society in which there would be no exploitation of Palestinians, nor would there be competition with Palestinians, because there would be no Palestinians' (Shafir 1999:78). This objective was complicated by facts on the ground, not the least of which included the presence of nearly one million Palestinians living in what would become the State of Israel. To address this issue, Zionist leaders began to design a variety of plans to 'de-Arabize' Palestine (Masalha 1992), culminating in the development of a military strategy to either directly expel Palestinians from their homes or create the social and psychological conditions in which Palestinians would leave of their own accord (Morris 2001). By all accounts, the strategy was immensely successful, such that by the time of the establishment of the state in 1948, over 700,000 Palestinians had fled or been forcibly removed to the West Bank, Gaza, and neighboring Arab countries. The fledgling state immediately passed a law barring a return of Palestinian refugees to Israel, and, shortly thereafter, enacted the Law of Return, enabling Jews from around the world to immigrate to Israel and become citizens. The passing of these two laws helped to usher in sustained waves of Jewish migration to the country over its first two decades of existence. These new arrivals were sent to repopulate former Palestinian villages (which were given new Hebrew names) and a concerted strategy of erasing all traces of Israel's Palestinian heritage was set in motion (e.g. Kimmerling 2001). Thus, as Ritchie (2010:10) notes, 'the State of Israel was constituted in a foundational double movement of exclusion (of Arabs) and inclusion (of Jews)', setting up a binary distinction between Palestinians and Israelis that continues to animate Israeli society today.

And yet, this exclusion of Arabs was never fully achieved. While 700,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during what Palestinians refer to as the *Nakba* (or 'catastrophe') of 1948, another 150,000 Palestinians remained in their homes and became citizens of the newly established state. These Palestinian citizens of

Israel, currently numbering approximately 1.7 million, or 20% of the Israeli population, in theory enjoy 'full and equal citizenship rights'—including the right to a (blue) Israeli identity card, the right to vote, and the right to live and work throughout the country (Kassim 2000). In practice, however, Palestinian Israelis are treated as second-class citizens (e.g. Rabinowitz & Abu-Baker 2005) and subjected to a raft of discriminatory policies that serve to marginalize them both politically and economically (Kimmerling & Migdal 2003; Lowrance 2005; see also note 4 below). In addition to these more formal policies, a variety of discursive practices also fulfill the function of setting Palestinian Israelis apart, including their near total erasure from the dominant symbols and narratives of the nation (Shafir & Peled 2002) and an assumption that they are somehow 'not like us' that predominates among Jewish Israelis (e.g. Smooha 1989, 1992; Ritchie 2010). Together, these discourses and practices recursively instantiate new binary oppositions both among Israeli citizens (Jews versus Palestinians) and among Palestinians themselves (Palestinian citizens of Israel versus Palestinian residents of the Occupied Territories and East Jerusalem).

In recent years, sexuality—or, more specifically, a purported tolerance of sexual diversity—has become a new discursive technology through which these same ideological contrasts are materialized. Articulated in a logic of binary opposition, Israel is imagined as a 'gay paradise' and set in antonymic juxtaposition with a supposedly repressive and retrograde Palestine. Likewise, a recursive opposition is assumed between a more progressive Palestinian society within Israel (presumably due to increased contact with Israeli culture) and a more oppressive and traditional one in the Occupied Territories. Puar (2007, 2011, 2013) has given the label *homonationalism* to this ideological association between a presumed tolerance of sexual diversity and the very character of a nation. For Puar, homonationalism is a prime example of otherwise progressive policies (i.e. the enfranchisement of lesbians and gays in society) being repurposed to serve the interests of a marginalizing, and often racist, politics. Israel, for example, is a comparatively inclusive society with respect to the legal rights and the treatment of its lesbian and gay citizens. Nondiscrimination of lesbians and gays is enshrined in law; there is a large and active gay 'scene' in Israel's large urban centers; and the country has gained international notoriety as a tourist destination for 'pink' travelers (see Milani & Levon 2016). Puar's theory of homonationalism does not dispute facts like these. Rather, Puar argues that what homonationalism does is use these types of facts to promote a teleological narrative of 'progress' and 'development', folding sexual rights into the dominant national narrative so as to construct a salient opposition between those within the nation (imagined as tolerant and accepting) and those without (imagined as oppressive). In this way, presumed attitudes toward sexuality become another domain with which to distinguish the national self (in this case, Israelis) from its abject other (Palestinians).

By focusing on the lives of gay Palestinians in Israel, *Oriented* directly confronts the logic of binarism that undergirds the discourse of Israeli homonationalism and

the so-called *pinkwashing* activities (e.g. Schulman 2011; Milani & Levon 2016) that sustain it. This is not to say that *Oriented* presents an entirely rosy picture. The film concentrates on the tensions that arise for people who are gay, Palestinian, and citizens of Israel, depicting their experience of being 'caught' between competing demands, pressures, and opportunities. For this reason, and in contrast to the widespread praise it has received in Israel and abroad, *Oriented* has been criticized by some queer Palestinian activists for reproducing dominant discourses of homonationalism. The critique has been articulated most fully by the group alQaws (2015), who have argued that the film perpetuates three problematic messages. The first is that the film reproduces an understanding of queer Palestinians as stuck in a hero/victim binary, either as people who are trapped by their social and cultural circumstances (victims) or as those who manage to overcome them and so live a happy and successful life (heroes). Second, alQaws argues that *Oriented* generalizes the experiences of queer Palestinians in Israel to those everywhere, erasing the particularities of queer Palestinian life in the Occupied Territories. Finally, they argue that the film perpetuates a vision of Tel Aviv as a gay haven, a 'safe space' where queers from Palestine (and the rest of the world) can live in safety, security, and personal fulfillment.

We agree that there are aspects of alQaws' critique that are accurate, and that *Oriented* does reproduce certain problematic elements of Israeli homonationalist discourse. Yet, we suggest that alQaws paints this critique with too broad a brush and, in the process, overlooks much of the subjective and ethnographic nuance that is evident in the film. Like homonationalist discourse itself, critiques like those of alQaws are based on a series of binary contrasts: between victims and heroes, Israel and Palestine, citizens and noncitizens. Our goal in this article is to ask what our analyses would look like if we could step away from these binary modes of thinking and to demonstrate that the lived experiences of the men depicted in *Oriented* are more complex and AMBIVALENT than any binary system of classification can accommodate. It is this ambivalence that we aim to capture by viewing Israel as a homotopia for the men in the film. We turn, in the following sections, to an examination of how the men experience homotopia in practice and of the specific semiotic moves they adopt to navigate it.

CHECKPOINTS AND ZERO-SUM IDENTITY GAMES IN AN ISRAELI LGBT SPACE

The first extract we analyze shows a talk delivered in Hebrew by Khader, one of the principal protagonists of the film, at the Tel Aviv Municipal LGBT Centre. The Centre is a space that was established in 2008 'under the premise that every person regardless of age, race, or gender has the right to live freely' (TimeOut 2016). Located in Gan Meir Park in central Tel Aviv, the building also hosts the Agudah, the national LGBT association in Israel. Khader is invited to the Centre to tell the assembled crowds (made up exclusively of Jewish Israelis) about what

it is like to be gay and Palestinian in Israel. He begins his speech by recounting a story of how he had recently been contacted by a BBC journalist who wanted to write about Palestinian gay men. At one point in his story, Khader is somewhat aggressively questioned by a member of the audience who interrogates Khader's act of overt self-identification as Palestinian.[2]

(1) Khader: ani jatxil be-sipur še e (.) kara le-axarona (.) lifnei arba'a xodašim kibalti sixat telefon mi-katav šel ha-BBC ve-amar li anaxnu be-ikaron rocim et ha-sipur šelxa (.) anaxnu betuxim še savalta ve haja lexa ra' ve az amarti lo rega' (.) ani xošev še ata higata la ben adam ha lo naxon ki ha-horim šeli yod'im 'alai ve hem mekablim oti (.) ve hem la-xalutin ohavim oti ve hem tomxim bi ve ima šeli šolaxat la-ben zug šeli oxel be-ramadan ki ani lo oxel basar az keilu (.) ein po ein po et ha-sugija hazu (.) ve az hu amar li ah (.) az ata yexol lehasig lanu ulai falastini axer še saval? ((laughter)) ve oti ze me'od 'icben (.) ki:: margiš be-eizešu makom še Israel ve ha-ma'arav lakxu eize še hu monopol lihijot liberal ve mixuc la'aron ve ha-xelek ha-rišon be'ecem ba-arca'a ani roce ledaber itxem al dor falastini xadaš še adain lo zaxitem lehakir

'I'll start with a story that um (.) happened recently (.) four months ago I got a phone call from a BBC reporter and he said to me we basically want to hear your story (.) we're sure that you have suffered and that it was hard for you and so I said to him wait (.) I think that you've gotten to the wrong person because my parents know about me and accept me (.) and they love me unconditionally and they support me and my mother sends food to my boyfriend during Ramadan because I don't eat meat so like (.) there isn't there isn't that kind of situation here (.) and so he said to me ah (.) so can you maybe find another Palestinian that has suffered? ((laughter)) and that really bothered me (.) because it feels like somehow Israel and the West have a monopoly on being liberal and out of the closet and in the first part of the presentation I actually want to talk to you about a new generation of Palestinians that you still haven't had the chance to meet'

(…)

Man: ata magdir ecmexa ke-falastini (.) falastini falastini falastini (.) e ata 'aravi im te'udat zehut kxula? aravi im te'udat zehut ktuma? e ma ata roce? zot omeret ata roce ma? ata roce še anaxnu nice mi po? ata roce še tihije od medina 'aravit?

'You identify yourself as Palestinian (.) Palestinian Palestinian Palestinian (.) e are you an Arab with a blue ID card ((citizen of Israel))? Arab with an orange ID card ((resident of the Occupied Territories))? e what do you want? I mean what you do want? Do you want us to get out of

| | | here? Do you want there to be another Arab state here?' |
| Khader: | [ani:] ani jasbir lexa (.) le-gabei ha-zehut šeli ha-te'udat zehut šeli hi kxula (.) ve le-gabei ha-zehut šeli ani ani pašut magdir ota lefi ha-mišpaxa šeli (.) saba šeli nolad betox jafo ke-falastini (.) le-gabei im ani roce otxem mixuc la-medina or ani roce otxa betox ha-medina ze bexlal lo dijun relevanti (.) anaxnu tku'im exad ba-taxat šel ha-šeni ben im ben im nirce ve ben im lo | '[I:] I'll explain it to you (.) in terms of my identity my identity card is blue (.) and in terms of my identity I I simply identify it based on my family (.) my grandfather was born in Jaffa as a Palestinian (.) in terms of whether I want you ((plural)) out of the country or I want you ((singular)) in the country it's not even a relevant discussion (.) we are stuck with one another ((literally: stuck in one another's asses)) whether we want to be or not' |

To begin, this interaction was made possible by the very existence of a 'safe space', the LGBT centre, which is arguably welcoming of anyone irrespective of age, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality. On the basis of this, Khader was invited to give an account of his lived experiences as a gay Palestinian man. In a typically Bakhtininan fashion, he begins by MULTI-VOICING a conversation that had taken place a few months earlier. The keying (Hymes 1974; Coupland 2007) of the reported dialogue is humorous, which is confirmed by the audience's laughter as well as Khader's amused reaction to his own narrative. As scholars of laughter and ridicule have argued (e.g. Billig 2005), humor is the product of the collision of unexpected phenomena. In the extract above, humor is produced by a clash between (i) a tactic of *distinction* through which Khader distances himself from the dominant trope of the suffering Palestinian (see also below), and (ii) the journalist's obstinate search for an example of Palestinian grief. Through distinction, Khader also problematizes those homonationalist discourses that portray Israel and the West as modern, emancipated, and LGBT friendly in contrast to an allegedly sexually conservative Middle East. Here the stereotypical images of the homophobic Palestinian family and its violence against 'coming out' (see Ritchie 2010) is countered by a personal account of Khader's domestic experience of unconditional love and acceptance.

While distancing himself from the discursive positions of the Palestinian victim and homophobic household, through *adequation*, Khader overtly aligns himself to an 'imagined community' (Anderson 1983) of 'new' Palestinians whom he intends to present in his talk. It is at this juncture that the overt alignment to the racial/ethnic identity category *falastini* (Palestinian) engenders a reaction from a Jewish Israeli member of the audience, who discursively enacts an unexpected (and uncalled-for) *checkpoint* in which he starts asking questions about which official status

Khader holds in Israel. As noted above, Palestinian citizens of Israel possess blue identity cards and, as such, are free (at least in theory) to travel throughout Israel/Palestine (with the exception of Gaza). Residents of the West Bank, in contrast, are not Israeli citizens and possess orange identity cards. These cards do not grant them the right to unrestricted travel (or to any of the other benefits of citizenship), and they are required to have permits not only to pass through the checkpoints that control the border between Israel and the West Bank, but also to move from one city to another WITHIN the West Bank.

In its material manifestation of soldiers, gates, and fenced paths, the checkpoint has been singled out as the most pervasive technology of control through which the Israeli occupation 'has become so omnipresent and intrusive that it has grown to govern the entire spectrum of Palestinian life' (Weizman 2007:147), impinging in particular on Palestinian residents of the West Bank and Gaza, and their (im)possibility of movement. As Ritchie cogently suggests, though, the notion of the checkpoint could be expanded beyond its literal meaning as a gate-keeping infrastructure on a border so as to encompass 'a ubiquitous subjective process wherein citizens and noncitizens alike check themselves—and others—against "the field of signs and practices" (Comaroff & Comaroff 1992:27) in which the nation-state is represented' (Ritchie 2010:134).

Adopting this sort of expanded meaning, it is possible to understand how the emotionally charged reaction from the Jewish Israeli member of the audience is but another example of a capillary technology of surveillance through which "ordinary" citizens—even ostensibly radical *queer* citizens—become proxy agents of the state who reproduce wider practices of domination and exclusion in the everyday interactions with non-national—or questionably national—others' (Ritchie 2010:43).

More specifically, through *illegitimation*, the audience member challenges Khader's identification as Palestinian in an Israeli space. In doing so, he embodies the Israeli state on two interrelated levels: (i) by performing as a self-appointed checkpoint guard asking for identity documents, and (ii) by voicing a dominant Israeli fear that the creation of an Arab polity will lead to the obliteration of Israel and its Jewish population. Put simply, a simultaneous discursive alignment to Palestinianness and a spatial positioning within Israel operates as a zero-sum game in this interaction—one makes the other impossible and serves to panic dominant ideas about what it is legitimate (or not) to say within the space of Israel.

Reading this interaction through the lens of heterotopia as a space that 'we think we enter yet we are, by the very fact of having entered, excluded', we argue that Khader entered the arguably welcoming space of the LGBT Centre and was given a stage from which to speak as a sexually non-normative subject—the discursive position of gay/queer—but was excluded, or at least challenged, as soon as his Palestinian identity became discursively salient. Crucially, the incompatibility between gay/queer, on the one hand, and Palestinian, on the other, is not an

idiosyncratic feature of this specific interaction. As we describe above, and as has been shown by others in analyses of official documents and mainstream films, within a normative homonationalist framework, 'queer Palestinians are acceptable, and VISIBLE, only insofar as they mute or renounce their Palestinianness' (Ritchie 2010:66; emphasis added). Whenever they are allowed to speak, 'they do so with a voice—and in a language—that conforms to the structure of the dominant narrative' of suffering and concomitant rejection of a repressive Arab culture (Ritchie 2010:66).

And yet, despite this macro-discursive pressure, there is evidence in the interaction of Khader asserting his right to belong in the space of Israel on several interrelated planes. By answering that 'his identity card is blue' and hence stressing his official status as a citizen of Israel, he makes use of a tactic of *authorization* in order to imbue his right to be in Israel with the legitimacy bestowed by those 'very structures of institutionalized power and ideology' (Bucholtz & Hall 2005:603) that had just challenged him through the voice of the Jewish Israeli man in the audience. Moreover, Khader *authenticates* his *I-here-now* (Baynham 2003) claim of belonging to Israel through a specific time-space nexus point: the historical ties between his family and the city of Jaffa at a time prior to the establishment of the state when 'Palestinian' was an uncontested birth category for his grandfather. Read together, these discursive tactics allow Khader to speak 'with a voice—and in a language' (Ritchie 2010:66) that CHALLENGES rather than conforms to the dominant normative narrative framework that makes queer and Palestinian mutually exclusive in Israeli space. This discursive resistance reaches its peak at the end of the interaction where the anal metaphor of being 'stuck in one another's asses' powerfully conveys the VISCERAL character of Palestinian/Jewish co-habitation.

AMMAN—CRUISING UTOPIA

While we saw in the previous section how Khader discursively performs acts of belonging to Israel FROM WITHIN an Israeli space, a slightly different picture emerges when he and the other protagonists of the documentary are at a concert in Amman, Jordan. In terms of language choice, we can see here mostly Arabic interspersed with some English, which is in itself interesting considering that English is not used in other parts of the documentary.[3]

| (2) Khader: (voicing over a long-take of his face) | bi'amman fažʾā bit-ḥis inu: inu fi taghir yaʾni bit-ʾum 'isobiḥ (2) you're living in Arabic now (.) you're living how you should be live bidak tkun bidoli fiha 'ārab bands bi-ʾā-daro yižo yi'malo konserts bala ma | 'In Amman suddenly you feel that there is a change I mean you wake up in the morning you're living in Arabic now (.) you're living how you should be live you want to be in a country where Arab bands are able |

ykun ḥaki ’ala ’iḥtilal w’ala ḥarb w’ala mukata’a (1) yimkin bi: tal-’abib fi ktir <u>exceptions</u> owfi ktir <u>freedom</u> bas lazim tib- ’ā waḥad minna owfina (.) fi ’iḥna owfi hummi	to come and give concerts without talking about occupations and war and boycotts (1) maybe in Tel Aviv there are a lot of <u>exceptions</u> and a lot of <u>freedoms</u> but you must be one of us (.) there is us and there is them’
Khader: (In direct conversation with the camera)	<u>In Israel</u> (.) <u>the Jewish people the Jewish gay people always saying</u> (.) <u>oh if you’re not comfortable here</u> (.) <u>so uh::</u> [Fadi: go to Amman] <u>no go to everywhere else in the Arab world</u> (.) <u>let’s say let’s see how they will take you</u> (.) <u>how will they will handle you</u> (.) <u>and I’m say look at me</u> (.) <u>I’m in the middle of Amman in a really hipster look party and I’m having a blast</u> (.) what do you say about that?

Khader, who is otherwise generally positive about Israel and Jewish Israeli men and seems most comfortable in speaking Hebrew in other sections of the documentary, overtly utters a normative statement about the role played by Arabic in relation to the achievement of a positive sense of Palestinian selfhood. The usage of the English verb *should* in the clause "you’re living how you should be live" is a strong marker of deontic modality that indicates a normative stance about language in space. Here the metalinguistic reference to Arabic as the main unmarked language of communication in Jordan is employed as a tactic of authentication for what counts as a ‘real’ and meaningful Palestinian life. Such a metalinguistic pronouncement, in turn, contains an implicit critique of the linguistic situation in Israel, where—at least at the time the film was made—Arabic was de jure an official language on par with Hebrew, but de facto a minority language with lower status in mainstream Israeli society (Shohamy 2006).[4] This is a linguistic power imbalance that ultimately DE-AUTHENTICATES Arabic-speaking lived experiences. Interestingly, the declaration/revelation that "you are living in Arabic now; you’re living how you should be live" is uttered in English in a sequence nearly exclusively in Arabic. We can only speculate about the reasons and potential meanings of such a code-switch

because of the editing of the documentary in terms of sound and image choices. In fact, the first half of the extract is a voice-over of Khader's voice on a long-take of his face smoking a cigarette while staring contemplatively at the ongoing concert. Therefore, it is impossible to determine with certainty whether the switch to English was engendered by a change in immediate interlocutor, say, from Fadi to the English-speaking director of the film, or was ideologically moti-vated by 'the political, economic and cultural credentials of English as the primary lingua franca in the world today [which] make it the language of power internationally' (Suleiman 2004:11). Even without fully endorsing such a grand narrative of linguistic global dominance (see also Phillipson 1992), Khader's switch to English could nonetheless be interpreted as a strategy of authorization through which he seeks to invest an ethnolinguistic identity—Arabic-speaking Palestinian—with authority via the translocal status of English as a prestigious language of wider communication.

Either way, what is most noteworthy in extract (2) is the spatial opposition between Amman and Jordan, on the one hand, and Tel Aviv and Israel, on the other, which is realized through *multi-voicing* (see also extract (1)). Khader indeed acknowledges that 'there are a lot of exceptions' and 'a lot of freedoms' in Tel Aviv, although he hedges this statement with the help of the Arabic adverb *yimkin* 'maybe'. In this way, he reproduces a dominant public discourse about Tel Aviv as a liberal urban BUBBLE (Shohamy & Waksman 2010; Milani & Levon 2016). However, the Arabic conjunction *bas* 'but' plays an important ideo-logical function introducing the identity constraints that such an allegedly progres-sive space may bring with it. This is realized by Khader VENTRILOQUIZING (Tannen 2001) an imaginary Jewish Israeli voice saying 'you must be one of us'. This utter-ance encapsulates normative ideas about adaptation to a dominant Jewish Israeli script as a prerequisite to the possibility of fitting into the allegedly liberal space of Tel Aviv. Here the unidirectionality of who should be complying with what is determined by the power imbalance underpinning the DISTINCTION between 'us' (Jews) and 'them' (Palestinians).

In the second half of the extract, Khader switches to English, turning to the camera and offering an explanation of what he had just been saying in Arabic for the director of the film, and, by extension, to potential audiences. Once again, he voices an imaginary spokesperson of Israeli homonationalism that exceptionalizes Israel with regard to LGBT rights in the Middle East while at the same time sneer-ingly orientalizing how Arab countries deal with sexually non-normative individ-uals. Khader replies to this homonationalist 'oppositional voice' (Bakhtin 1973) with the authenticity of his *I-here-now* lived experience (Baynham 2003) of having fun in Amman.

Overall, this extract offers a fascinating example of what Jaworski & Thurlow call 'making space, locating self' (2010:6), that is, those discursive processes through which the construction of space is deeply imbricated with the realization of selfhood. On the one hand, Tel Aviv and Israel are looming presences in

discourse; they are *dystopias* that, no matter how progressive they might be in relation to LGBT rights, de-authenticate Palestinians through normative calls to adapt to an Israeli homonationalist script. In contrast, Amman is an alternative space, which discursively emerges as a counter-site to Tel Aviv in Khader's eyes, a kind of 'effectively enacted utopia' (Foucault 1986:24) for Palestinian gay subjectivities in which Israeli homonationalism can be 'represented, contested, and inverted' (Foucault 1986:24). Put differently, Amman is a *cruising utopia* (Muñoz 2009) where queer Palestinians like him can dream about achieving personal fulfilment, living an 'authentic' life in Arabic, and being in communion with an imagined community of other Arab speakers. And like the example of the festival given by Foucault, Amman and Jordan are 'linked to time in its most flowing, transitory, precarious aspect' (Foucault 1986:26). Its heterotopic character lies in being only a fleeting moment of escape of the *I-here-now*, and Khader and the others return to Israel.

ISRAEL AS THE STALEMATE

The dystopian character of Israel is further elaborated in a discussion between the protagonists of the documentary while slouching on couches in a flat in Tel Aviv during Israel's attack on Gaza in 2014, which caused over two thousand Palestinian casualties. Here Khader gives a gloomy account of the impasse created by the power imbalance underlying the distinction between 'us' (Palestinians) and 'them' (Jews) mentioned in relation to the previous extract. In the extract in (3), Hebrew/Arabic code-switching plays an important ideological role in conveying a sense of deadlock.[5]

(3) Khader: 'ana batalit 'ašuf 'inna <u>tikva</u>

   'I don't see that we have any <u>hope</u>'

 Fadi: mit-'assif ana (.) 'ana kul ḥayati 'il-'ishi alwaḥid 'illi kan (.)'illi kan ya'ni (.)'illi 'alamuni 'iyatu 'ino 'ino 'ino wala mara wala mara 'atnazal (.)'ana matlan ḥilmmi (.) 'inu tkun hay 'idoli (.) dolet kol sukanha owkol illi saknin fiha (.) bidun ma tkun wala doli yahudiyi wala masihiyi wala islamiyi (.) doli lakul 'illi sakin fiha (.) zai (.) amerika bas 'innu 'ašan nasal lahai 'ilmarḥali lazim tkun lazim tkun awal 'iši lazim timḥi e e e fikrit 'inu hai 'idoli hi dolit 'ilyahud [nu'tta]

   'Sorry I (.) I all my life the only thing that was (.) I mean that was (.) that they taught me that that that never never to give up (.) my dream for example is that this country becomes a country for all its citizens (.) for all who live within it (.) without being Jewish or Christian or Muslim (.) a country for everyone who lives in it (.) like (.) America but in order for that to happen first we have to erase e e e the idea that this country is the country of the Jewish people [period]'

Khader:	['ii] 'illi wala biḥayatu raḥ ysir	'[something] that will never happen'
Fadi:	šu arafak?	'how do you know?'
Khader:	šu arafni	'how do I know'
Fadi:	w-'iza sar?	'what if it does happen?'
Khader:	kif bidu ysir? ki-	'how could it happen? ho-''
Fadi:	leiš ma ysiriš?	'why shouldn't it happen?'
Khader:	'iḥna 'aba'idna mehavim [esrim axuz mi ha-axlusija]	'together all of us are [twenty percent of the population]'
Fadi:	['itarix] 'itarix 'athbat š'i waḥad 'il'alam 'inu fiš 'iši (.)'ilwaḥad bi-'-dar yitwa-'-a'u	'history has shown that there is nothing that one the world that there is nothing that one (.) can expect'
Khader:	<u>az</u> 'isra'il bithaya-'lak raḥ txali ḥada ykun hena 'aktariyi <u>gheir</u> ['ilyahd]?	'<u>so</u> do you think that Israel is just going to allow for a non-Jewish [majority]?'
Fadi:	[hon]	'[here]'
Khader:	<u>nira lexa</u>? lamma lama sar il <u>sarim bilkineset</u> y-'-ulu 'l'arab <u>rasis ba ha-švan shelanu</u>? lama bi-'-ulu <u>anaxnu ovrim mi mi mi mi kipat barzel le egrof barzel</u>? lama wlad wnasawin btit-'-attal bišawari' wtayib 'eiš 'milna' hayo 'eiš 'milna -'-a'din bisalun 'eiš sawina?	'<u>do you really think</u>? why when minister <u>ministers</u> in the Knesset say that Arabs are <u>shrapnel in our asses</u>? when they say <u>we are moving from from from from Iron Dome to iron fist</u>? when children and women are murdered in the streets and what have we done here, what have we done we are sitting in the living room what have we done?'
Fadi:	-habibi watti sotak (.) miš 'iza bitsayiḥ 'aktar minni bi-'-uliš 'inak 'inti ma'ak ḥa-'- (.) sotak wati	'-honey lower your voice (.) don't shouting doesn't mean that you're right (.) lower your voice'
Khader:	sorry 'ana mara kunt ba'amin zaykum (.) [Nagham: wa'ana kaman] 'ilyom fhimit wein mawjud masdar il <u>koax</u> wflistin biḥayat-ha miš raḥḥ t-'-um flistin [Nagham: wa'ana kaman] biḥayat-ha miš raḥ t-'-um bjanb	'sorry I used to believe like you (.) [Nagham: me too] today I understand where the source of power is and Palestine will next exist [Nagham: me too] Palestine will never exist next to Israel and

’isra’il w’iḥna bi’enein ’il’alam (.) az iza sitin sani (.)’aktar min sitin sani (.) yama ḥarabu yama žarabu fucking maḥmud darwiš (.) aktar min hik ya’ni ḥaku w-’-alu wsawwu w-’-imlu (.) wma wislos laḥal (.) kol od fi bi-’-id ’isra’il ’il’ozma wal-’-uwwi (.) ein im mi ledaber Fadi ein ein ein im mi ledaber fiš

we in the eyes of the world in (.) so if in sixty years (.) more than sixty years (.) they fought they tried fucking Mahmood Darwish (.) what more can be done that that they talked did acted (.) and they didn't get anywhere (.) as long as Israel has the sovereignty and the power (.) there is no one to talk to Fadi no no no one to talk to nothing’

The extract opens with Khader expressing his disillusionment with the future possibility of change. Observe in particular the Hebrew word *tikva* 'hope', which closes a sentence that is otherwise completely in Arabic. In response, Fadi counters (in Arabic) with what Borba (2018) calls an 'act of hope', a discursive move that 'disrupt[s] established oppressive orders by creating a sense of possibility, of a reconfigured present and of a future that has no place as of yet, but can acquire one' (Borba 2018; see also Miyazaki 2004). Here the reconfiguration would entail a one-state solution in which 'this country' (that is, Israel) is turned from an ethnic into a civic nation-state, where distinctions on the basis of ethnic identity are made irrelevant. Fadi exemplifies this point with the help of a reference to the United States, which is represented through an idealized discourse of the 'melting pot' (see e.g. Ricento 2003 for a critique). Applied to the context of Israel, Fadi says, the realization of a civic polity would only be possible through an active refusal of the defining principle of Israel as the Jewish state. Through a redefinition of the very core of Israeli nationalism, so the argument goes, a more equal dialogue and cohabitation would be possible. In saying so, Fadi not only stakes a claim of belonging to the geopolitical space of Israel, but also anchors hope and the prospect of change to his own sense of agency, as is forcefully expressed in the expression 'never never give up'.

Fadi's hopeful stance towards political transformation in the future, however, is set in contrast to Khader's disillusionment. According to Khader, a one-state non-ethnic polity is a chimera that will never materialize because Israel will not allow a non-Jewish majority to emerge, nor will it allow for a true two-state solution. While Fadi represents—perhaps optimistically—his agency as an authentic possibility to act and make a genuine difference in the political future of Israel, Khader denaturalizes Fadi's discursive move as an imposture through a reference to the *we/here/now* of the current interactional moment: friends sitting around discussing politics instead of taking action while other Palestinians are being killed in Gaza. We saw earlier in extract (1) that Khader envisioned a form of Palestinian/Jewish co-habitation in Israel through the metaphor of 'being stuck into one another's ass'. Here, it becomes even clearer how this image is indicative of the suffocating proximity

among uncommunicative partners, partners who may indeed be wedged to one another but can neither take pleasure nor do anything to disentangle themselves from the situation. The severity of the stalemate is perhaps most powerfully captured in the declarative statement made in Hebrew that 'there is no one to talk to… no no no one to talk to nothing', which, in terms of content ventriloquizes the common Jewish Israeli refrain that there is no one to talk to among Palestinians ('no partner for peace').

Throughout the extract, we see two kinds of ideologically meaningful code-switches. The first is a *voicing switch* when Khader animates two utterances made by the ultra-conservative politician Naftali Bennett in 2013 and 2014, respectively. Since 2012 Bennet has been the leader of the settler nationalist party The Jewish Home (*HaBayit HaYehudi*). At the time of these pronouncements, he was occupying three positions in the Israeli government: as Minister of Economy, Minister of Religious Services, and Minister of Jerusalem and Diaspora Affairs. The first of the utterances voiced by Khader refers to a comparison made by Bennett between the Israeli/Palestinian relationships and the pain suffered by a soldier as the result of a bomb fragment that cannot be dislodged from the soldier's rear. Once again, the anal simile strongly conveys the visceral nature of the Israel/Palestine conflict. And it is precisely the affective loading of prolonged future pain for Israel that was strategically employed by Bennett to dismiss the possibility of a two-state solution and led him to propose Israel's total control over Palestinian territories. The second utterance—'we're moving from Iron Dome to iron fist'—was made in the context of Israel's ground invasion of Gaza at the time when *Oriented* was being made, and indicates Israel's shift in strategy from a defensive posture (represented by the 'Iron Dome' missile defense system in Israel) and outright, offensive military attack.

The other type of switch to Hebrew is perhaps more interesting, but also more fleeting. We see Khader consistently switch to Hebrew every time he wants to express disenchantment, speak of Palestinian/Israeli power imbalances, and ultimately refer to the impossibility of a way out. These switches also function as intensifiers in his argument with Fadi, a way to overcome Fadi's opposition to Khader's point of view. Right at the beginning of (3), Khader describes his loss of 'hope', with 'hope' switched to Hebrew. Later, he talks about Arabs 'being only 20% of the population', again in Hebrew, and thus signals Palestinians' relative lack of power vis-à-vis the Jewish majority, and the concomitant impossibility of having an impact on Israeli politics. A similar argument can be made for his use of the Hebrew colloquial phrase *nira lexa*, which literally means 'what does it look like to you?', and is a sarcastic way of saying that something definitely will not happen. Against this backdrop, it is possible to understand Khader's final utterance—'there is no one to talk to'—as a counterpoint to Fadi's 'act of hope' (Borba 2018). It is an ACT OF DESPAIR, uttered in Hebrew and so encoding a specific moral, affective, and political worldview that is hostile to Palestinians and ultimately leads to Jewish/Palestinian incommunicability.

Bringing together all of these observations, we would argue that the sitting room of the documentary is a microcosm of Israel as a heterotopia, 'capable of juxtaposing in a single real place several spaces, several sites THAT ARE IN THEMSELVES INCOMPATIBLE' (Foucault 1986:25; emphasis added). Specifically, incompatibility takes discursive form in the interplay between, on one hand, Fadi's assertion of belonging to the space of Israel and concomitant 'act of hope' (Borba 2018) through which Palestinian agency will be able to contribute to a better future, and, on the other hand, Khader's disillusioned act of despair that encapsulates a spatial and temporal sense of immobility. Incompatibility is also encoded in the very linguistic texture of the exchange, with Arabic being employed by Fadi to express the possibility of future change, while Hebrew indexes the eternal stalemate. Temporally, while the concert in Amman was the 'heterotopia of the festival' (Foucault 1986:26), transient, precarious but gratifying, for Khader, Israel embodies the 'accumulation of time' (Foucault 1986:26) par excellence; it is a cemetery both in its real sense of a place of death for the Palestinians killed in Gaza, but also metaphorically as the place where Palestinian self-fulfillment will NEVER be possible. The attachment to the place and one's own realization become a zero-sum game, and that is where the viciousness of belonging—an affective attachment to a place that can nevertheless never be one's true home—is perhaps most clear.

A brief attempt to break with the vicious attachments to Israel is made by Khader and his boyfriend David during a three-month stay in Berlin. However, when the option arises to move more permanently to Berlin with David, Khader ultimately decides to remain in Israel. The main reason lies in the weakening of Khader and David's erotic passion, turning their romantic relationship into an intimate friendship. What is perhaps most interesting for the purpose of this article, however, is the spatiotemporal act of (re)attachment to Israel when Khader declares at the end of the documentary: *aval ani kanire nišar po le od e- le od tkufat hitnasut ba-gehenom haze* (Heb.) 'it looks like I'll stay here for a little- for another go at living in this hell'. This is perhaps the most vivid example of the effect of the heterotopic character of Israel, a space that 'claws and gnaws' (Foucault 1986:23) at queer Palestinian Israelis like Khader, luring them into a state of vicious belonging to an endless space of death ('hell') where their attainment of the good life will never be fully possible.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

Through this article, we have attempted to demonstrate that the experience of gay Palestinians in Israel cannot be captured by analytical frameworks based on binaries: of love or hate, belonging or exclusion, victim or hero. Instead, with the help of Foucault's heterotopia, we argue for a perspective that embraces SIMULTANEITY and AMBIVALENCE as guiding analytical principles. We do so in an effort to identify the various ideological causes and effects of the practices we observe among the men in the film, and in a way that does not 'ignore the subjectivity of those [our

research] was initiated to defend' (Hall 2013:640). From the extracts of *Oriented* analyzed above, it is clear that the subjectivities of Khader, Fadi and the other protagonists include a strong affective attachment to Israel. Admittedly, this attachment is fleeting, complex, and, at times, a source of profound tension and distress. But it is nevertheless a part of who they are, and we believe that it is our responsibility as sociolinguists and discourse analysts to model this complexity rather than simply dismiss it as politically problematic, as suggested by the normative stance of much critical scholarship on homonationalism. We approach this task by suggesting that for the men in the film Israel functions as a homotopia, a space of ambiguous juxtapositions where the men feel simultaneously attached and unmoored, liberated and deeply constrained. The spatial affordances of this perspective allow us to map the specific strategies that the men adopt to navigate their positioning across contexts, in a pattern that we describe as one of vicious belonging—an identitarian project that we argue is characterized by inherent incongruity and irresolvable tensions. Ultimately, we hope to have shown that individual experience is always more complex than the political forces that constrain it, and that while norms (and anti-norms) certainly exist, analyses that focus on classifying social practice as falling on one or the other side of a normative binary risk overlooking the inherent tensions and multiplicities that form the backbone of identity construction in everyday life.

NOTES

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[1]See http://www.heterotopiastudies.com/#.

[2]The extract in (1) presents our transliteration and translation of the original Hebrew.

[3]The extract in (2) presents our transliteration and translation of the original Arabic and English. Arabic is transliterated in Roman face; English used by Khader in the original clip is underlined.

[4]On July 19, 2018, the Israeli Knesset passed the Basic Law: Israel as the Nation-State of the Jewish People, which, among other things, removed official language status from Arabic in Israel, instead conferring it with a lesser 'special' status.

[5]The extract in (3) presents our transliteration of the original Arabic and Hebrew. Arabic is in Roman face, Hebrew is underlined.

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