

Recommended Queer Theory & Palestine Readings October 2023

(edited by @mxgdo, this is not an exhaustive list, please send recommendations to magdo@magdo.digital)

- **Alqaisiya, Walaa. *Decolonial Queering in Palestine*. London: Routledge, 2022.**
<https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003273585>.
 - **Amireh, Amal. "Afterword." *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 4 (2010): 635–48.**

p. 636
The visibility of Palestinian queers in Israeli discourse is determined by Israel's colonial project, the core of which is the denial of Palestinian national rights. In Israeli discourse and consciousness, Palestinian queers occupy two extreme locations: either they are hypervisible or they are invisible. In both cases, it is their Palestinianness, not their queerness, that determines if and how they are seen.
 - **Atshan, Sa'ed. *Queer Palestine and the Empire of Critique*. Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2020.**

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this text constitutes a historical archive that clears the pinkwashing record and renders more nuanced narratives related to Queer Palestine.

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Queer liberation cannot be realized while colonial subjugation persists, but the movement toward dignity for queer people should not be expected to wait until the realization of national liberation. Decoupling these struggles is ultimately impossible; they are inextricably linked.
 - **Anonymous. "Palestine Between German Memory Politics and (De-)Colonial Thought." *Journal of Genocide Research* 23, no. 3 (July 3, 2021): 374–82.**
<https://doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2020.1847852>.
- p. 375
The German majority continues to believe that the way to make amends for Germany's murderous behaviour towards Jews in the past is to ignore and support Israel's murderous behaviour towards Palestinians in the present. German moral supremacy then deflects from Germany's responsibility for Israeli domination and destruction of Palestinian lives.
(...)
In the German psycho-drama, Palestinians now stand in for Nazis because they are seen as ontologically opposed to Zionism – which Germans, like Zionists, equate with all Jews – and thus need to be vanquished like Nazis. The combination of atonement and redemptive proxy colonialism is channelled into Manichaeian cleansing

*campaigns to declare as persona non grata those who decline to discuss Palestine on the ordained German terms. For even to utter the name of Palestine brings to consciousness these disavowed investments, provoking righteous indignation in order to repress the disturbing connections.*⁹

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To undo the German gaze on Palestine would allow centreing the Palestinians in their own story. The unseen becomes seen, ungrievable life becomes grievable, the “non-Jewish communities” of Palestine, become a people in their own land, rather than victims of German history.

- Barakat, Rana. “Writing/Righting Palestine Studies: Settler Colonialism, Indigenous Sovereignty and Resisting the Ghost(s) of History.” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 3 (July 3, 2018): 349–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1300048>.
- Boyarin, Daniel, Daniel Itzkovitz, Ann Pellegrini, Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini. *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*. NEW YORK: Columbia University Press, 2003.
 - ALISA SOLOMON “Viva la Diva Citizenship: Post-Zionism and Gay Rights
- Butler, Judith. “The Compass of Mourning.” *London Review of Books*, October 13, 2023. <https://www.lrb.co.uk/the-paper/v45/n20/judith-butler/the-compass-of-mourning>.
- Darwich, Lynn, and Haneen Maikay. “The Road from Antipinkwashing Activism to the Decolonization of Palestine.” *WSQ: Women’s Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3 (2014): 281–85.
- Kouri-Towe, Natalie. “The Politics of Attachment in Transnational Queer Palestine Solidarity and Anti-Pinkwashing Activism.” Department of Social Justice Education University of Toronto, 2015.
- Kouri-Towe, Natalie. “Textured Activism: Affect Theory and Transformational Politics in Transnational Queer Palestine-Solidarity Activism.” *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice/Études Critiques Sur Le Genre, La Culture, et La Justice* 37, no. 1 (2015): 23-34.
- Naber, Nadine, Sa’Ed Atshan, Nadia Awad, Maya Mikdashi, Sofian Merabet, Dorgham Abusalim, and Nada Elia. “On Palestinian Studies and Queer Theory.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 3 (187) (2018): 62–71.
- Ritchie, Jason. “How Do You Say ‘Come Out of the Closet’ in Arabic?: Queer Activism and the Politics of Visibility in Israel-Palestine.” *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16, no. 4 (2010): 557–76.
- Schotten, C. Heike. “To Exist Is to Resist: Palestine and the Question of Queer Theory.” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 3 (187) (2018): 13–28.

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For queer theory is also acutely attuned to that which will not or cannot be made to disappear. Queer's inevitably fugitive purview, meaning, and method can be seen as a kind of commitment to those forms of being deemed troublesome, unnatural, perverse, or fake, a commitment that resonates with Said's decolonizing insistence on Palestinian existence. For Palestine is a matter apart, uncertain, and problematic not by definition, but rather only to those who would deny its existence. So too with queerness (and queer theory): it is only a question to those who seek to deny its existence, its utility, its importance, and, perhaps most importantly, its integral place in a radical politics and liberated world. Viewed from the perspective of power, of course, the unthinkable and unaccounted-for is troublesome—a question, a problem. Viewed from the perspective of the oppressed, however, the persistence of the unthinkable and unaccounted-for is resistance to elimination. As both Said and alQaws make clear, this existence is resistance. And radical queer commitment to this decolonization may be the very meaning of liberation.

- **Stelder, Mikki. "Other Scenes of Speaking: Listening to Palestinian Anticolonial-Queer Critique." *Journal of Palestine Studies* 47, no. 3 (187) (2018): 45–61.**

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By rejecting the existing parameters of critique and placing Palestinian liberation front and center in the path of engagement, Palestinian anticolonial-queer activism opens up other avenues for responding to a Palestinian call for justice that are predicated on creating more socially just futures beyond the settler state that persists under occupation (...)

For its part, the politics of Palestinian anticolonial-queer activism creates a decolonial-queer imaginary beyond the racial-sexual parameters of the settler state, envisioning a future beyond the settler state and beyond conventional understandings of Palestinian national liberation. In fleeting moments, these modes of engagement experience a freedom that is not yet come, that is simultaneously denied and imagined, as well as felt, lived, and embodied.

- **Stelder, Mikki, and Haneen Maikey. "Dismantling the Pink Door in the Apartheid Wall: Towards a Decolonized Palestinian Queer Politics." *The Global Trajectories of Queerness*, 2015, 83.**

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The impact of hegemonic pinkwashing discourse is most visible in the recurring story of "the gay Palestinian" who desires to "run" or "leave" "homophobic" Palestinian society in the West Bank/Gaza, in exchange for a life as a gay refugee without status in Tel Aviv. The false promise of safety underwriting this story and the promise of "the good life" under Israeli rule is reinforced by the growing pinkwashing campaign and its division between "modern" and "backward" societies. Part of alQaws' queer work is therefore aimed at challenging this binary of Palestinian society being "backward" and "unsafe" for queers, while Israel is a queer Palestinian's "safe haven."

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By interpellating Palestinian queers within a logic of gay rights, coming-out (gay visibility), and pride, pinkwashing continuously reifies a division between liberated gay Israelis and oppressed Palestinian queers. This incitement moreover fosters and is based on Islamophobic and anti-Arab hatred that portrays Palestinians and Arabs as "collectively homophobic" and "therefore backwards," and Palestinian queers as

“weak” and “immature.” Pinkwashing is a powerful means to make Zionism and Israel more appealing to gay people around the globe, but particularly to those who have assimilated Islamophobic, racist, and anti-Arab messages into their vision of “progress.” Pinkwashing not only promotes racist fictions about Palestinians to the world but it also relies on the fact that racism and Islamophobia already exist within liberal LGBT communities and politics in other parts of the world.

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(...) pinkwashing works because it appeals to western LGBT projects that seek to implement their understanding of sexual politics, gay rights and gay identity to the rest of the world (...) Gay rights seem to have become a litmus test to measure a country’s (neo)liberal modernity and human rights standards.

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*In 2011, Israel’s Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu addressed the US Congress. He argued that “in a region where women are stoned, and gays are hanged, Christians are persecuted, Israel stands out. It is different” (“Address to US Congress”). The sense of difference that he alludes to can be understood within a cultural politics of emotions (Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotions*) that uses difference as a (neo)liberal strategy of governance and surveillance that depends on inclusion and assimilation of some forms of difference, like homosexuality, into the national narrative at the expense of the bodies that can never fully belong. Netanyahu’s quote participates in what Jasbir K. Puar calls homonationalism, which operates “as a regulatory script not only of normative gayness, queerness, or homosexuality, but also of racial and national norms that reinforce these sexual subjects” (Puar 7). Israel’s Prime Minister in a US Congress speech, pre-repeal-of-DOMA-and-DADT,¹⁴ publicly celebrates Israel’s gay tolerance that now allows Jewish-Israeli gays and lesbians to “come-out” as Zionist homos proudly waving Israeli national flags mixed with the colors of the rainbow wearing a soldier’s uniform at Tel Aviv’s gay pride parade.*

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Zionist pinkwashing not only brands Israel as a vibrant place, but, more crucially determines the way in which Palestinian queers become recognizable as victims of their society rather than political agents, which undermines a transformative discourse that seeks to articulate a vision of social, political, and economic justice that does not reify a gay subject in its wake. In pinkwashing, pride, visibility, coming-out, and solidarity on the basis of a reified sexual identity circulate as dominant frameworks imposed on Palestinian queers.

- **Stelder, Mikki. “‘From the Closet into the Knesset’: Zionist Sexual Politics and the Formation of Settler Subjectivity.” *Settler Colonial Studies* 8, no. 4 (October 2, 2018): 442–63. <https://doi.org/10.1080/2201473X.2017.1361885>.**

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The normalisation of gayness within Zionism, or rather the construction of a Jewish-Israeli gayness that sets itself apart from the ‘degenerate’ and threatening sexuality of Palestinians shifts Zionist sexual politics in which some forms of gayness, or gay visibility can now be imagined and reproduced within it as a way to articulate Israel as exceptional. Gayness articulated within Zionism performatively consolidates

Orientalist images Palestinians as those who can either become objects of desire, or those who have to be kept at bay because they would be threatening to these shifting Zionist sexual politics and the Zionist state. These politics pass for 'democratic pluralisation', while at the same time reiterate masculine and militaristic modes of belonging in which Israel's ongoing settler colonialism remains unchallenged, formative, and invisible.

- **Maikey, Haneen. "Signposts from AlQaws: A Decade of Building a Queer Palestinian Discourse."** Accessed October 23, 2023.
<http://alqaws.org/articles/Signposts-from-alQaws-A-Decade-of-Building-a-Queer-Palestinian-Discourse>.
- **Ritchie, Jason. "Pinkwashing, Homonationalism, and Israel–Palestine: The Conceits of Queer Theory and the Politics of the Ordinary."** *Antipode* 47, no. 3 (2015): 616–34.
<https://doi.org/10.1111/anti.12100>.