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Dani Gal's cinematic and activist engagements with Israel/Palestine in Germany

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Abstract

This essay contributes to current debates about the problematic conflation of support for Palestinians with anti-Semitism in Germany by focusing on the cinematic and activist work of Dani Gal, an Israeli migrant in Berlin. Gal's film, *White City* (2018), deals with intersections between memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba by reformatting archival materials – namely, a Nazi propaganda postcard and Zionist leader Arthur Ruppin's diary – in ways that rethink migrations of architectural aesthetics and racist practices. By upending the expectation to document the past, the photographic stills in *White City* instead performatively re-imagine historical and contemporary predicaments around ethnic discrimination in Germany and Israel/Palestine. By bringing together the proximal victimisation Jews and Palestinians suffered from the Holocaust and the Nakba, as well as the linked perpetrator pasts of some Zionists and Nazis, *White City* inspires us to understand the power of 'multidirectional memory' and 'cocitizenship' anew.

Keywords: future-oriented photography, Israelis in Berlin, postcards in film, Holocaust/Nakba memories, cocitizenship

Events can lie both before us and behind us – in the past where an event may have been missed, forgotten, or not fully realized and in the future where an event might re-occur as it is (re)encountered, (re)discovered, (re)told and/or (re)enacted. – Rebecca Schneider[1]

Introduction: Signing Off

In September 2020, the Berlin-based art magazine *Texte zur Kunst* received tremendous backlash for their 'Anti-Anti-Semitism' issue. The editorial team's aim

for this issue was to reflect on the increase in anti-Semitism in contemporary Germany, and what they called 'the implicit and latent anti-Semitism among us' – leftist and left-leaning liberals.[2] After being criticised for what readers perceived as equating Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) with anti-Semitism and foregrounding the issue of BDS in a discussion of anti-Semitism in Germany, where the majority of anti-Semitic acts are conducted by the far right, the editors scrambled to solicit counter-positions in the form of a postscript. Rather than engaging in what they saw as a 'half-hearted' call to action, the artists and authors asked to contribute to the postscript rejected this request. They instead wrote a response in the form of an open letter to the editors, in which they expressed their disappointment in the magazine's inability to deal with the contemporary crisis of Israel/Palestine inclusively.[3]

This was not an isolated incident. On 10 December 2020, the open letter titled 'Nothing Can be Changed Until it is Faced', which responded to the German parliament's 2019 decision to effectively stop funding cultural projects that support BDS was signed by over 1,500 people as part of the GG5.3, Weltoffenheit Grundgesetz 5.3 (German Government's Basic Laws Article 5, Paragraph 3, World-Openness) project. This joint initiative, spearheaded by several cultural institutions in Germany, seeks to support open dialogues about fraught topics such as the displacement of Palestinians. The organisation does not support BDS, since inclusive cultural exchange is essential to its mission, and therefore excluding Israel would be antithetical to their aims. The mission does, however, insist that the parliamentary anti-BDS sentiment is misguided and problematic because it wrongly accuses people who support Palestinians as being anti-Semitic. Both letters instigate crucial dialogues about the way that liberal German institutions sometimes silence discussions that could foster change.

One person who signed the aforementioned letter to the editors at *Texte zur Kunst*, and a signatory of the December 2020 letter, was the Israeli-born, Berlin-based filmmaker Dani Gal. Gal is one of approximately 25,000 Israelis who migrated to Germany over the last twenty years.[4] Many Israelis migrate during their 20s, 30s, and 40s for economic and/or political reasons.[5] This burgeoning community includes a number of authors and artists, many of whom signed the December

letter. In addition to the fact that a large number of them work in the cultural sphere, many of their aesthetic cultural projects deal with both the Holocaust and the occupation of Palestine.[6] These artists and authors seek to stand in solidarity against discrimination and to face historical and contemporary injustices. As such, their works call attention to the particularly complex memory and moral dynamics of third-generation Holocaust descendants who move to Germany, primarily Berlin.[7] These works address intertwined and competing histories and raise a series of timely questions which literary scholar Yael Almog, anthropologist Daniz Kranz, and historian Fanina Oz have begun to broach.[8] Namely, what memory dynamics emerge when Israeli third-generation Holocaust descendants *migrate* to the place in which some of their grandparents suffered and subsequently *fled*? How does being in Germany, and Berlin in particular, encourage Israelis to renegotiate their relationships to Israel/Palestine? And how do German institutions limit and/or enable this kind of renegotiation? Dani Gal's film *White City* (2018) provides a provocative case study to begin exploring these questions.

White City is the final film in Gal's historically-based fictional trilogy that deals with interconnections between the Holocaust and the Nakba. The plot is centered on archival documents: a photograph of the Weißenhofsiedlung (Weissenhof Estate) in Stuttgart that is superimposed on two postcards and diary entries from the 1930s of Zionist leader Arthur Ruppin. The original postcard was created in 1927 and featured a photograph taken that year of Stuttgart's newly-built Weissenhof Estate. The estate was designed by Swiss-French architect Le Charles-Édouard Jeanneret-Gris, known as Corbusier as part of the Deutscher Werkbund (German Association of Craftsmen) exhibition that took place the same year, headed initially by Walter Gropius and then Ludwig Mies van der Rohe. Five years later, the Nazis manipulated the photograph on this postcard by populating it with indexical associations of Arab oriental ethnic others, such as camels and people in Arab attire. They did this to highlight the Levantine nature of the space, and to denigrate a modernist architectural aesthetic, since the Middle East was widely considered inferior to Europe. Gal begins *White City* by transitioning from the 1932 doctored version of the image back to the original. *White City* depicts Ruppin conducting race research, travelling through different parts of Germany, meeting with Profes-

sor Hans F.K. Günther, and remembering his trips to Palestine. Rather than reconstructing the aforementioned meeting with Günther and his movements between Germany and Palestine exactly as they supposedly were, *White City* re-narrates Ruppin's story and personal monologues to show them as intricately intertwined with the history of the Arab expulsion from Palestine in 1948, five years after Ruppin died. Although Ruppin did not possess the aforementioned postcard in real life, Gal depicts him as if he did. *White City* uses the material of the postcard in order to connect Ruppin's experiences of moving between Palestine and Germany with migrations of the Bauhaus architectural style and racist thought-patterns based on eugenic practices from Nazi Germany to Zionist Palestine. The 25-minute film ends with a live re-enactment of the transition of the images from the postcards, in which we see Ruppin walking through Stuttgart – at first with the people and camels and then through the black-and-white empty scene.

Ruppin was born in 1876 in Rawicz, joined the Zionist movement in 1905, and headed the Jewish Agency for Palestine between 1933 and 1935. All of the diary entries that Gal found are from Ruppin's *Tagebücher briefe* (Ruppin's Diary Letters), and Ruppin's speech in the film is taken from his own writing.[9] Ruppin, played in the film by Alexander E. Fennon, conducted sociological research on race, spearheaded settlement plans during his time heading the Jewish Agency for Palestine, and brought the German-Jewish architect Richard Kauffmann to Palestine, who, as the lead architect of the Palestinian Land Development Company, developed the Bauhaus architectural style in Tel Aviv.[10] Kauffmann shaped the architectural face and facades of Tel Aviv in the Bauhaus tradition. Ruppin's diary entries on which the film's plot is focused describe his discussions with Professor Hans F.K. Günther on 11 August 1933 in Jena, Germany. Günther was a eugenicist who influenced National Socialist racial thought. He served as Heinrich Himmler's mentor.[11] The discussions between Ruppin and Günther as well as Ruppin's monologues while he moves between Germany and Palestine constitute fictionalised reimaginations based on his diary and book *Soziologie der Juden* (Sociology of the Jews).[12] Ruppin lays out his ideas about eugenics in this book, he references Günther's work several times, and also published his own photos of Jewish types. Ruppin believed Ashkenazi Jews were the most superior followed by Sephardim, Babylonians, Yemenite, and Bukharan.

The few scholarly interpretations of *White City* until now have focused on its relation to the trilogy and have remained primarily thematic.[13] In contrast, I focus specifically on *White City*, and I approach the underexplored material dimensions of the film, namely the playful and provocative reenactment of archival materials. I bring together Michael Rothberg's theory of 'multidirectional memory', which situates historical traumas as connected, rather than in competition with one and other, and media theories that position photography, film, and postcards cross-temporally.[14] These lenses help unpack how *White City* memorialises both the Holocaust and the Nakba while shedding novel light on shared stories of perpetration and the migration of certain racist practices and architectural styles from Nazi Germany to Zionist Palestine. Gal's thematic and aesthetic choices coalesce around Palestinian, Israeli, and German histories and realities of violence. The reenactment of these silenced stories is pertinent to the current controversies about Germany's relation to Israel/Palestine. I read Gal's participation in the letter to *Texte zur Kunst* and his work on *White City* as connected acts of 'cocitizenship'. 'Cocitizenship', as Ariella Aïsha Azoulay describes, is the process of striking against imperial forces and unlearning nationalist histories in order to visualise repair and freedom for all people.[15] The reimagined archival materials in *White City* engage in this process by urging viewers to unlearn some of Israel's national narratives about its Zionist 'heroes'. *White City* highlights the multidirectional nature of counter-memories constructed by Zionists and Nazis. This raises the important question of how 'multidirectional memory' operates differently when the 'sources of renewal' are transnationally linked histories of both perpetration and victimhood.[16] In multidirectionally reenacting history, *White City*'s act of cocitizenship inspires us to get a new handle on the future.[17]

Flipping from Nazi fantasy to Middle Eastern nightmare

From the very first shot of *White City*, it is clear that the photograph is something to be possessed by the film viewer's eyes and hands (Fig. 1). The surrogate hands on screen demand a closer view of this snapshot of what appears to be an everyday scene in an indeterminate Middle Eastern city. The bodies in the scene covered in white robes, with white structures curving around them on one side, and a park bordering them on another, are significant because they are barriers, directing and

determining peoples' movements. The white fingers that refuse to be cropped out
of the frame draw attention to the white border in this image, which is often over-
looked. The white frame invokes the genre of documentary photography. How-
ever, this photograph did not in fact document anything indexically. Instead, as
mentioned in my introduction, the figures are superimposed on an image of
Stuttgart that is framed in the form of a postcard doctored by the Nazis. The doc-
tored image upends our typical expectations of encountering stills in film as mark-
ing what 'has been'.

Fig. 1: Still from *White City*. Camera: Itay Marom. Courtesy: Dani Gal, Pong films, and Gallery
Kadel-Willborn.

Photographs in film usually function as historical snapshots and/or memorabilia
of the past because they are usually presumed to be static records of what took
place. However, since the Nazis manipulated the image to include people who are
coded as Arab-looking (because of their skin color and clothing) and camels they
did not actually document anything. Instead, they disrupted the architectural
space of Stuttgart by placing people and animals arbitrarily in the photograph.[18]
Beyond highlighting the repercussions of adding people to the image with regard
to Germany, Gal brings this into dialogue with Arthur Ruppin. Specifically, the film
visualises the Nazis' belief that Arab-looking people denigrates the modernist Bau-
haus architecture as migrating to Jewish settlers fleeing to Palestine. Furthermore,
by re-enacting the Nazis' inclusion of random Arab-looking people and camels in

the image, *White City* exemplifies how hegemonic forces, in this case the Nazis, used photography to construct manipulative counter-memories. According to Roland Barthes, 'counter-memories', are photographs that 'block [actual] memory' and instead create new contradictory ones.[19] Rather than documenting truth, photographs as counter-memories obstruct actual memories of events and instead become representations of alternative 'memories'. The multifaceted and multidirectional construction of counter-memories becomes more apparent during the transition to the later version of the image (Fig. 2).

Fig. 2: Still from *White City*. Camera: Itay Marom. Courtesy: Dani Gal, Pong films, and Gallery Kadel-Willborn.

The sound during this transition and opening scene at large, in collaboration with the visuals, reinforces the violence that is implied in the movement between the two images. When the camera focuses on the first image, we hear birds chirping softly in the background, painting a picture of life during this time as being peaceful and harmonious. Then, we hear a loud swoosh when the man's hand flips over the photograph, and afterward the birds chirp again. The swoosh exaggerates the noise that is created by Ruppin's hands flipping over the postcards. This shift in sound from calm birds chirping to the noise of a harsh page flipping hauntingly suggests that there was a type of pastoral existence before and after the Nazi's false insertion of Arab people and symbols into the photograph. The swoosh has a cacophonic effect that aesthetically suits the violent nature of creating propaganda

like the Nazis did. Furthermore, it is fitting for a scene that speaks to a population removal. The movements between the two versions of the photographs on postcards inspire us to rewind *White City* to inspect how the two images are different, evoking additionally important considerations about power, materiality, temporality, and historicity.[20] This action of rewinding and pausing while the white hands hold the postcard inspire us as viewers to consider our implication in the futural gestures of the postcards and photographs in this film.

The photographs' placement on the postcards is significant in several ways. First, the two materials – the back of the postcard as something we generally associate with the verbal and the photograph on the front of it as something inherently visual – cause us to move between these medial forms in unfamiliar ways. Moreover, as we engage with a third medium, film, our typical viewing experience is replaced by a disorienting affect. Second, the nature of postcards, as 'hotel texts' simultaneously open yet intimate, addressed to someone specific yet also available for anyone to look at, draws our attention to the dualities and contradictions inherent in the medium.[21] This contradictory double nature of postcards parallels the many oppositions and tensions that exist in the propagandistic photographic image itself. More broadly, there are also parallels between its nature and that of the national memories and open controversies about German-Israeli-Palestinian histories and realities, especially when we take into account the long history of postcards and state power.[22] Thus, the very first scene confronts us with the many layers of history and manipulation discoverable through re-visualising and re-enacting archival material.

The power dynamics and counter-memories at work reveal even more when we turn our attention to the color and frames of these images. The white border in both versions and the sepia tone in the first image, compared to the pure black-and-white tone of the second, have an effect of unveiling different layers of racism. As Ute Holl posits, the movement from color to black-and-white in film is often associated with transitions between historical depictions, memories, dreams and/or fantasy. Holl suggests that changes in coloration in cinema 'mixes and confuses personal memory', and temporal transformations can 'be achieved by a change of material from color to suddenly black and white'.[23] Analysed through

this perspective, the change from the sepia tone version of the postcard with people to the black-and-white version of the image without people visualises Ruppin's fantasy of removing Arabs from Palestine and filling it with white Bauhaus architecture and Ashkenazi Jewish architects such as Kauffman. Notably, because we typically associate color versions of film and photographs as being more recent than black-and-white versions, flipping this through the reverse order draws attention to the regressive reality unfolding. In other words, since the sepia-toned photograph with people was created later yet shown first, our temporal expectation is shifted. In their performative nature the photographs address what is, what 'will be' or 'could be', rather than what 'has been'.[24] Rebecca Schneider, Heike Behrend, and Barbara Bolt have all contributed to conversations that situate photography as future-oriented and it is in this vein that the images in *White City* operate on multiple levels.[25] The change in coloration from the first image, which includes people who have brown skin in a similar shade to the sepia tone, to the second image of white architecture without people, draws out attention to the fantasised transitions of the newly 'clean' Lebensraum (living space) in the imagined Middle East and thereby situates the Nazi concept in dialogue with the Zionist project.[26] The crowds of brown-skinned people are violently juxtaposed with and then subsequently removed from scenes of monumentality, of shining white architectural accomplishments. The image performatively anticipates the literal removal of Palestinians from their land and highlights the white people who perpetuated this and white structures that surrounded it.

This performativity is accomplished in *White City* through displacement of the Nazi's fantasies of having a 'clean' Lebensraum (living space) free of oriental ethnic others and modernist aesthetics onto the space of Palestine. The fact that the white Bauhaus structures, designed by modernist architects such as Corbusier and van der Rohe who were opposed by the Nazi regime, speaks significantly to the way Gal's rearticulation of the Nazi fantasy cinematically calls on the viewer to imagine the connections between the removals of Arabs from Palestine and Jews from Germany while not hastily equating them. Moreover, it was not the modernist architects' vision to have these spaces free of Jews. Notably, despite van der Rohe's apolitical views and eventual attempt to try and please the Nazis with his

designs, many members of the Modern Movement in the 1930s were against fascism and fled to the United States, Italy, and England.[27] Although *White City* does not delve into these architects' personal stories, the film's focus on the postcards creatively reimagines the Nazi rejection of modernism as well as the migrating architectural aesthetic and racist ideals. By displacing the modernist architecture onto the space of Palestine and imagining that space as becoming desolate, Gal's remediation of the postcards anticipates the Bauhaus architectural changes and demographic shifts that occurred in Palestine. Since the Nazis rejected the Bauhaus architectural style, the scene connects the idea of desired population removals, but also disables us from seeing the population removals based on race that it reconstructs, in conflated, simplistic, or exacting ways. The complex analogy created through the performative photographic stills that visualise competing and at times coalescing fantasies of the Nazis and Zionists smartly connects, without equating, material dimensions of fascism across time and space. Finally, beyond connecting the aforementioned fantasies of the Nazis and Zionists, Gal explains that the doctored version of the postcard may be understood as a projection into the future because it is akin to contemporary German 'rhetoric of the AFD (Alternative for Germany) and Pegida (Patriotic Europeans Against the Islamisation of the Occident) following the refugee crisis in 2015'.[28]

Beyond the reanimated postcards evoking cross-temporal discriminatory ideas, if we consider the white frame and hands as holding the photographs and locking the people into the first scene in sepia, then viewers have an increasingly eerie association with the white people in power. The military forces in Germany and Palestine effectively did just that – locked and then removed certain populations from both spaces. Thus, by focusing on the change in tone and the positioning of the hands, we can see a connection being depicted between the anti-Semitism of the Nazi Germans and the anti-Arab stance of the Jewish European settlers. The hands holding the frames and covering certain corners of the postcards echo Harun Farocki's argument in Der Ausdruck der Hände (The Expression of Hands). The decision to focus on the way Ruppin's hand holds the postcards evokes how close-ups of hands have long been used in film to emphasise criminality and power, functioning as allegorical representations of hegemonic forces.[29]
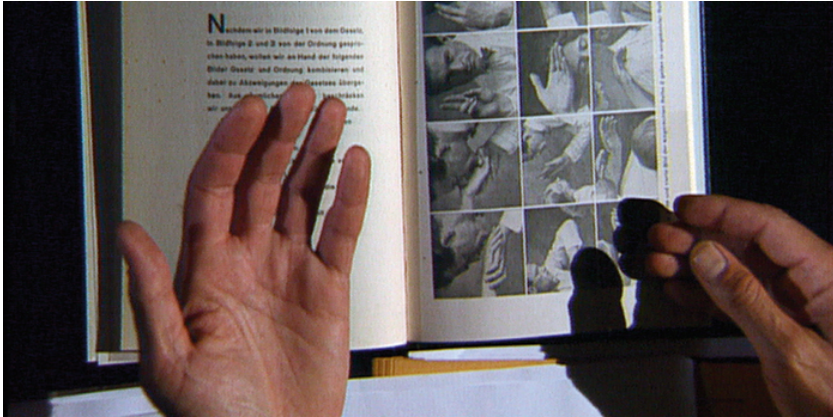
Fig. 3: Harun Farocki GBR. Der Ausdruck der Hände (The Expression of Hands). Film still.

In the case of *White City*, Ruppin's hands holding and using the material postcard to communicate to his wife Hanna function as a synecdoche of the Zionist movement. The white hands holding the manipulated picture represent the way many of the white Zionist settlers manipulated the image of the Palestinian land. On another level, when we now consider how Gal is the one orchestrating Ruppin's movements in this film, his rehandling of that migrant history calls attention to how racist thinking that categorised people according to their skin color and skull size moved from Nazi figures to Zionist leaders in materially complex and visually striking ways.

Re-enacting the future

The way Gal's work functions as an artistic act of cocitizenship, multidirectionally highlighting the construction of counter-memories and flipping hegemonic efforts to hide away histories of manipulation, is further seen at the end of *White City*. By bringing the doctored photograph into being through his film, Gal's work functions as both re-enactment and re-imagined fantasy.[30] Gal revisualises the Nazi fantasy of arbitrarily placing people who do not inherently belong to a place in that space of Stuttgart and complicates this picture by showing how it played out differently in Palestine. In a twisted way, the Nazi fantasy visualised through the postcard images joins the Zionist pioneer's social fantasy of removing the Arabs,

resulting in a feeling that there is a missing image. Ruppin's fantasy of using hierarchically-based racial knowledge to reach a 'pure' (Jewish) society in Palestine, ideas of which he speaks about during his meeting with Hans F.K. Günther, come to life through the film's ending.[31]

Rebecca Schneider's theories of re-enactment in film illuminate the ways in which this ending scene is not only situated in our present experience of viewing but is also future-oriented. Schneider explains that re-doing events places us in a nonlinear relationship to time and as viewers, we participate in the unfolding scenes.[32] Re-enactors, in this case Gal, do not only re-imagine archival and documentary materials of the past to understand and subsequently show those moments in time in morally correct lights. Instead, performative reenactment work gets it right, as it 'will be', in the future by contributing to new archives.[33] The new 'archive of imagination' that Gal contributes to faces the interconnections between the Nazi racist desires and the Zionist pioneers' racist visions.[34] Re-enactors, according to Schneider, do not preserve history but regenerate it.[35] Viewed from this perspective, Gal's re-enactment of the Nazi doctoring shows his re-imagination of their manipulative behaviors as belonging not only to the German past, but also to Israel's history and both countries' futures. By reconstructing Ruppin's story now, Gal exemplifies Schneider's argument that 'history is not remembered as it was but experienced as it will become'.[36] *White City* re-handles the connected histories of Nazism and Zionism by calling on our recognition of how these racist actions based on eugenic practices that place people in ridiculous hierarchies based on their ethnicity, religion, skull size, and skin color are very much still in motion today. This picture of removing populations is still unfolding today as Palestinians continue to be displaced and right-wing groups in both Germany and Israel try to create spaces free of ethnic others.

The high moral stakes of this travelling fantasy-turned-nightmare are further accomplished through Gal's sound choices. As Ruppin walks through what appears to be Palestine, the soundtrack offers a mix of European piano sounds with Arab electronic music from the German-Palestinian artist Ghazi Barakat.[37] The music in this ending scene is all from one synthesiser track created by Barakat. Although Barakat is playing one synthesiser, the twinkling piano at 20:39 juxtaposed with a

woodwind flute at 21:15 creates a powerful contrast. This contrast draws our attention to the way European culture co-existed and clashed with Palestinian Arab culture. By juxtaposing the two types of sounds (the European classical piano and Arab electronic music), we again think of the colonial migration of aspects of European culture to Middle Eastern spaces. While the music plays and Ruppin walks, we see the live scenes captured in the photographs on the postcards with which *White City* begins. However, rather than moving straight from the image with people to the one of the empty spaces in Stuttgart, as is the case with the filmed postcards in the opening, we now see the Palestinians loading themselves as well as their belongings into a truck that a man in uniform drives up to the street (Fig. 4).[38] At this point, the piano music stops and we hear Barakat's electronic music in conjunction with field recordings of a Muezzin and people chatting from an Arab city. Furthermore, as the color from the first part of the scene fades, and the music softens, we do not see Stuttgart as empty but with Ruppin walking through the street, his back facing the camera.

Fig. 4: Still from *White City*. Camera: Itay Marom. Courtesy: Dani Gal, Pong films, and Gallery Kadel-Willborn.

The missing piece of the postcard sequence (Fig. 4) paired with the silence, the part of the scene in which the Arabs climb into a truck driven by a man in a yellow and green uniform, recalls Jews being rounded up into trains in Germany. Consequently, Gal's re-enactment connects the injustices that occur(ed) in Europe to

those in the Middle East. Approaching this scene through the lens of Rothberg's 'multidirectional memory' framework illuminates how Gal expresses moral claims through audiovisual elements.[39] According to Rothberg, recognising the movement of memories as intercultural and productive allows us to see how multiple histories of injustice can be looked at together in ways that form solidarity rather than competition. By reminding us of both histories, the film's ending exemplifies Rothberg's claim that when one 'gives up exclusive claims to ultimate victimisation and ownership over suffering, other people's histories and memories can serve as sources of renewal'.[40] In *White City*, memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba are connected rather than in competition. Furthermore, by having the Palestinians go into a car as opposed to a train, Gal shows that these were not the same situation, which echoes Rothberg's emphasis on forming solidarity through a logic of similarity rather than equation. This is accomplished through the music overlaying the film, the inclusion of a doctored image on a propaganda postcard, and the reconstruction of Ruppin's diary. Moreover, the film's multidirectional memorialisation brings these histories of interconnected injustice into focus by rearticulating silenced dialogues and sketching out migrations of racist thought, without erasing differences nor confining these histories to the past. Instead, the re-enactment is demonstrated as a process of becoming that memorialises both the Holocaust and the Nakba and memorialises the multidirectionally constructed counter-memories of the 1930s by the Nazis in Germany and the Zionists migrating to Palestine.

Hannah Arendt's writing about the aftermath of the Holocaust in *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951) helps historically contextualise the migrations of racism that Gal depicts in *White City* and his own migration and actions as countering these phenomena. Arendt explains,

> After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insolvable one, was indeed solved – namely by means of a colonized and then conquered territory – but this solved neither the problems of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of stateless and rightless by another 700,000 to 800,000 people.[41]

Arendt calls attention to how the wave of European Jewish emigration to Palestine led to another group of people, the Palestinians, to become displaced victims. Decades later, the current Israeli occupation of Palestine can be seen as inspiring another reversal, that of Israeli Jews emigrating out of Israel. The occupation inspires many Israelis to come to Germany and in doing so try to distance themselves from being connected to the dehumanisation of Palestinians. Their continual engagement with Israeli politics from abroad through aesthetic interventions contributes to this. Denouncing their connections to the Israeli hegemonic military does not reverse the power imbalances between Israelis and Palestinians. Unlike the large number of Palestinians who arrive as refugees and migrants in Germany, Israelis generally enjoy privileges of being welcomed that the Palestinians often do not. This is of course not black and white as there is unfortunately also prevailing anti-Semitism. However, because of Germany's past guilt about the Holocaust and long state policy, Israelis are particularly welcomed there. Said Atshan and Katharina Galor offer pathbreaking insight into understanding the contemporary climate of Berlin for both Israeli and Palestinian migrants, the interconnections between historical and current injustices that Palestinians face, and possible alternative, ethically-oriented ways that these groups can co-exist.[42] In light of prevailing power inequalities, merely migrating to Germany does not however reverse the inhumane nationalistic actions. Instead, creating literature and art that intervenes in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict and/or protesting the occupation can be seen as attempts to recognise and begin to counter inhumane actions.

Azoulay's concept of 'cocitizenship' helps further think through these kinds of artistic efforts. According to Azoulay, Israelis have 'the right not to be governed by the regime […] to go on strike together with those whose rights were disabled'.[43] While Azoulay does speak about *Israelis in Potential History: Unlearning Imperialism*, it is important to note that she discusses 'cocitizenship' in relation to other cases of violence, such as slavery, and possible approaches to repair in the United States. The act of going on strike against the mistreatment of Palestinians is a form of 'cocitizenship'. This is a moral practice shared by scholars, artists, authors, and others who oppose all forms of imperialism and ethnic and racial discrimination. This process involves radically unlearning the imperial structures of knowledge and re-examining archival materials to reimagine possible forms of togetherness

between communities who have been framed as intrinsically separate. Additionally, an important part of Azoulay's theory is the ability to denounce one's status as a perpetrator through acts of repair. Therefore, while their physical move alone is not an act of 'cocitizenship', the Israeli migrants' aesthetic creations can be. If like Gal they highlight Israel's injustice towards Palestinians as well as reimagine their shared victim histories and the shared histories of racism among some Zionists and the Nazis, then they create artworks as cocitizens. Furthermore, 'cocitizenship' operates on the level of reversal through its inclusion of and emphasis on the 'co'. By challenging the Israeli dictum of being a nation of one people, the Jews, the practice of 'cocitizenship' rather re-asserts a co-existence with others and rebels against the Israeli governmental emphasis on self-preservation at any cost.[44]

Gal's acts of 'cocitizenship' are present on aesthetic and activist levels. Aesthetically, his future-oriented approach to photography, through re-enacting the scene on the postcards, situates photography as never only backward-looking (an index of 'death' or 'the past') but forward-looking, inviting us as viewers to take the past in-hand now just as cocitizenship calls on us to do. His film's insistence on photography's cross-temporality and calls to the future urge us to think with the images as they unfold into the future rather than passively accept them as static records of the past. Furthermore, in *White City*, engagements with the multidirectional nature of counter-memories constructed by Zionists and Nazis through re-enacting the photographic scene expresses solidarity with histories and realities of dispossession and displacement.[45] On the level of personal activism, Gal's cocitizenship arises with his migration to Germany. Returning to a place where much of modern fascist thought emerged inspires his critical aesthetic investigation of its past connections with his home country's political history and subsequent activist actions against contemporary re-emergences. Notably, Gal, and many of the other Israeli migrant artists and authors who like him memorialise the Holocaust and Nakba in their works, only began broaching these topics after moving to Berlin. Germany's perpetrator past and contemporary Holocaust memory focus can be seen as a catalyst for Gal's increased desire to undo the pervasive erasure of Nakba memories and silencing of Israel's and Germany's shared perpetrator histories.

Thus, it is not only the movement away from Israel and criticism of it from a distance, but the particularly loaded nature of doing so in Germany, because of its history and contemporary climate of increasing censorship, in which these acts of 'cocitizenship' are especially inspired.

Being in Germany in the 21st century, a country in which expressions of solidarity with Palestinians are often labeled anti-Semitic, especially encourages Gal and other Israeli migrants there to push back against this. Although attacks of this sort against artists and authors who are wrongly accused of being anti-Semitic because of their support for Palestinains and criticism of Israel's policies are in no way limited to Israelis and also occur in the US, UK, and other parts of the world, Berlin has become an epicenter for these attacks over the last few years.[46] Beyond the pervasiveness of the German climate increasingly being intolerant towards positions critical of Israel's policies, encouraging acts of cocitizenship, the particular history of that space and its historic intolerance towards Jews because of their otherness is surely a reason for Gal and other people raising their voices when dehumanisation toward an ethnic other continues to occur overseas. Cultural venues in Berlin and the German government's attempts to exclude voices that support BDS by effectively discontinuing funding for their projects prompt the Israeli artists' acts of 'cocitizenship' in especially timely ways. Collectively, by writing the letter to the Berlin-based art publication *Texte zur Kunst*, and creating *White City*, Gal holds Israel responsible for its current perpetration and past actions of removing things from its dominant discourse and also reminds Germans of their complex role and implication in remembering the Nakba *today*.[47] These acts of 'cocitizenship' importantly oppose the ongoing conflation of solidarity with Palestinians with anti-Semitism. Instead, Gal's cinematic and activist work boldly criticises Germany's and Israel's racist pasts, present conditions, and foreseeable futures.

Conclusion

Conceptualising *White City* through the lenses of artistic 'cocitizenship' and 'multidirectional memory' both responds to some of the questions with which I open this essay and raises a series of others related to Germany, and Berlin in particular, being a catalyst for Israeli intergenerational, solidarity-based archival memory

work. Specifically, when aesthetic works like *White City* manifest 'cocitizenship', to what extent are we as viewers called on to critically engage ourselves as cocitizens in complex co-histories? How do the post-memorial aesthetic creations of these migrants shift depending on the medium and language in which they are working, as well as their familial or affiliative position in relation to the Holocaust?[48] How does Gal's project, and similar works like his, intervene in the cultural memory landscape of Germany at large and Berlin in particular? How does *White City* and works like it combat attacks on artistic freedom that express controversial opinions? How does the work of these Israelis compare with the progressive provocative aesthetic work of non-Israeli third-generation descendants who also migrate there? Although these questions remain open, looking at Gal's actions at large, and *White City* in particular, promotes a sense of hope that there will be increased engagements like it among his cohort of Israeli migrants that may lead to positive changes between Israelis, Palestinians, and Germans.

The controversy surrounding the *Texte zur Kunst* issue with which I opened this essay remains signed yet unsealed. The fact that it remains unresolved leaves open questions of artistic freedom and the responsibility of cultural venues and individuals to think critically towards the future. Gal's work shines light on the previously under-noticed links between the migrations of Nazi eugenic practices and ideologies about 'pure clean-living spaces' to Zionist pioneers in order to re-examine the present and future stakes of Germany, Israel, and Palestine all while never conflating these histories in exacting or facile ways. His careful attention to the material conditions of these migrations brings our awareness to the frames around which history is curated. By showing the migration of eugenic practices and architectural styles from the Nazis to some of the Zionist pioneers – such as Ruppin – with the materials of postcards and photographs, Gal's film rethinks the photograph as solely being a documentary index, just as his actions of signing the letters re-think migrations of racist thought-patterns as being frozen in the past. By upending the expectation to document the past, *White City* illuminates how stills can instead re-imagine historical and contemporary predicaments around ethnic discrimination. Gal's careful constellations of visual and verbal materials across multiple mediums through his re-enactment of archival documents inspires us to rewind and re-think the images of expulsion as *upcoming and unfolding*, calling on us to *respond*

and *re-articulate* a more ethical future. Ultimately, *White City* brings together the proximal victimisation Jews and Palestinians suffered from the Holocaust and the Nakba, as well as the linked perpetrator past of some Zionists and the Nazis, inspiring us to understand the power of 'multidirectional memory' and 'cocitizenship' anew.

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Acknowledgments

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Notes

[1]   Schneider 2011, p. 22.
[2]   Graw 2020.
[3]   Gal et al. 2020.
[4]   Atshan & Galor 2020, p. 54.
[5]   Kranz & Rebhun & Sunker 2022; Dekel 2014.
[6]   Reich 2018- present, Bartana, June 2021 – present, Berlin, Shemoelof 2019; Amit-Abas 2018.
[7]   Aarons & Berger 2017, pp. 1-40; Gershenson 2018, pp. 67-90.
[8]   Almog 2015, pp. 1-7; Oz-Salzberger 2001; Kranz 2016, pp. 5-28.
[9]   Gal 2021, pp. 21-22.
[10]   Dogramici 2021, p. 103.
[11]   Morris-Reich 2006, pp. 1-30.
[12]   Ruppin 1930.
[13]   Dogramici 2021, pp. 81-107; Buchmann 2020; Atshan 2021, pp. 111-123.
[14]   Rothberg 2009.
[15]   Azoulay 2019, pp. 22-65, 255-260.
[16]   Knittel & Forchieri 2020, pp. 6-19.
 [17]   Rothberg 2009, p. 132.
[18]   Biro 2012, pp. 353-366; Nitzan-Shiftan 1996, pp. 147-180.
[19]   Barthes 1981, p. 91.
[20]   Gal 2018, 00:19.
[21]   Derrida 1987, pp. 1-60; Kao, pp. 69-81.
[22]   Siegert 1999, pp. 6-9, 18-21.
[23]   Holl 2014, pp. 160-175; Cavel 1979, pp. 81-89.

[24]   Barthes 1981, p. 77.
[25]   Bolt 2004; Behrend 2013; Schneider 2009, pp. 254-269.
[26]   Dogramici 2021, pp. 81-107; Rotbard 2011, p. 104.
[27]   Welch, pp. 105-109.
[28]   Gal 2021, p. 58.
[29]   Farocki 1997, 5:00-7:00, 27:00-28:00.
[30]   Holl 2014, pp. 2-8.
[31]   Gal 2018,14:00-20:00; Banai 2021. pp. 13-34.
[32]   Schneider 2011, p. 9.
[33]   Ibid., pp. 10-11.
[34]   Hochberg 2021, pp. 1-60.
[35]   Schneider 2011, p. 24.
[36]   Ibid., p. 23
[37]   Gal 2018, 21:00-22:10.
[38]   Ibid., 22:00.
[39]   Gal 2021, p. 6.
[40]   Rothberg 2009, p. 132.
[41]   Arendt 1953, p. 290.
[42]   Atshan & Galor 2020, chapters 1, 3, 4, and 7.
[43]   Azoulay 2019, p. 255.
[44]   Basic Law: The Nation State of the Jewish People.
[45]   Butler 2012.
[46]   Rothberg 2020; Neiman 2022.
[47]   Rothberg 2019, pp. 134-145.
[48]   Hirsch 2012, pp. 35-40.