

CLOTHING WITHOUT BODIES

WATCHING CARE AND CONNECTION IN IMAGES FROM GAZA

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Abstract

This essay responds to two images shared on Instagram from occupied Gaza: a Palestinian child's bloodied pink jacket, laid out and covered in blood, and a field of scattered clothes left behind after a group of Palestinians were forced by the Israeli Occupation Forces (IOF) to undress. In both images, the people have gone, but the clothes remain powerfully embodied. They prompt us to see clothing as something that carries the weight, warmth, and presence of a human body as well as the community from which it comes. We live in a time of relentless exposure to horrific acts captured in images and shared on social media by Palestinian citizens and journalists, but these two images affect us differently. They show no bodies, no wounds, only clothing. It is images of clothing without bodies that resonate with us. In a political climate of denial and deflection, where mainstream media constantly denies that anything is happening, the clothes insist that something has. Clothes become a political site that bears the trace of the body, speaking to what has been done even when the body is gone. This essay explores how fashion studies, through its focus on embodiment, can facilitate a reparative reading of images depicting Palestinian dispossession and Israeli state violence. Using affective and reparative methods, we emphasize the possibilities for care, solidarity, and political awareness in our engagement with these images. We further develop this approach through an analysis of photography and political theory, addressing the ethical responsibilities involved in viewing images of atrocity.

Keywords: *Social Media; Embodiment; Fashion Studies; Political Affect; Image Ethics.*

“Perhaps we can say that grief contains the possibility of apprehending a mode of dispossession that is fundamental to who I am. This possibility does not dispute the fact of my autonomy, but it does qualify that claim through recourse to the fundamental sociality of embodied life, the ways in which we are, from the start and by virtue of being a bodily being, already given over, beyond ourselves, implicated in lives that are not our own” (Butler, 2004, p. 28).

BACKGROUND

This essay addresses how images of atrocity reach us within a contemporary visual culture shaped by the constant stream of social media posts on Instagram. A large proportion of images in our feeds— photographs, screenshots and video reels—

depict apocalyptic scenes of death and destruction from occupied Gaza. Images arrive as a steady stream of human suffering. They are confronting in their immediacy, often marked by timestamps such as “posted 1 hour ago”. These temporal details are important in grounding genocide in the present. In some of these images, the absence of human bodies in relation to everyday objects, especially clothing, emphasizes a rupture between life and death. This essay proposes that fashion studies, particularly as it attends to the relationship between clothing and bodies, offers a mode of interpretation—one that responds to these images not merely as representations of violence, but as affective and ethical provocations that demand witnessing, care, and political consciousness.

We came of age in the 1980s in Sydney, Australia. At school, we read *The Diary of Anne Frank* (1947), visited Holocaust museums and made paper cranes for Hiroshima. We were drip-fed images through the daily news, in newspapers, television documentaries, current affairs shows and editorials from *Time Magazine*. Images in the media exposed us to scenes from the Cold War, bombs in Belfast, the Lebanese Civil War, Iran v. Iraq and the war in Afghanistan, among other conflicts. In those days, images of atrocities were carefully edited by picture editors.¹ The ones we remember as “iconic”, that live in our collective memory, are the same ones judged by the news media to possess the perfect confluence of composition, photojournalistic craft, and suffering.²

Seared into memory is Khalil Dehaini’s black-and-white photograph of a woman crying in the street, arms outspread, her white T-shirt splattered with blood, minutes after a car bomb exploded in a crowded neighborhood of West Beirut in 1986, killing 13 people, including three children. Behind her is a billowing black cloud spread across the horizon, transforming the rubble and detritus-strewn street into a stage for the woman’s shocked expression. Our grief is focused on her bare and bloodied feet, the vulnerability of her skin against the shards of broken windscreen glass. And of course, the photograph that claimed to have stopped the Vietnam War shows nine-year-old Phan Thi Kim Phuc running naked among other screaming children, severely burned by napalm. Can there be another “iconic image” of atrocity that brings an end to the killing of Palestinians, just as the “trophy” images of torture and degradation from Abu Ghraib prison in Iraq brought the criminality of American soldiers into the minds of Western audiences?³

Against this historical background of atrocity, two images from Gaza, shared and reshared on Instagram, stay with us. In one, a small Palestinian child’s pink parka lies bloodied on broken concrete, arms spread (Fig. 01). The child is gone. In another, a screenshot from a wide-frame video reel reveals

hundreds of garments scattered across a dusty grey expanse (Fig. 02). Despite the staggering number and diversity of images from Gaza, these two demand from us further consideration and care. Though the bodies are absent, the garments remain distinctly embodied. These are not fashion images, they do not belong to the aestheticized or spectacular fashioned body, yet they are filled with clothing and remind us that clothing need not be worn to be evocative of human form.

We approach these images from intersecting perspectives of political theory, photo theory, and fashion studies. Our primary aim is to consider how fashion studies, particularly those aspects that emphasize the relationship between clothing and the body (Entwistle, 2015), provide a framework for understanding the affects of these images. As practitioners and scholars attentive to both visual culture and fashion, we are especially attuned to the deep, inextricable connection between garments, bodies, and images. We undertake a reparative reading of these images, drawing on Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick’s formulation of “reparative reading” as an interpretive practice that privileges affect, attachment, care and relationality over objective analysis and critique (Sedgwick, 2003). Sedgwick’s work reminds us that scholarship need not keep us at a distance, in theory alone. In this sense, this analysis becomes a way of refusing the passivity of detached scholarship.

Our reparative method of reading these images emphasizes the bodily, social and affective dimensions of them, how they have impacted us as viewers in the present, and how they invite action and solidarity beyond the fatalism of memorialization. This method allows us to register in the textures of fabric, the common fragility of clothing and bodies, and binds us to the resistance of the Palestinian people. Images from Gaza do not stay on screens; they move into bodies. This way of working asks us to acknowledge how images act on us, how they move us to wear the keffiyeh, to march in protest, to share pictures of our refusal to stay silent on genocide and occupation, and, in turn, to write this essay.⁴

Our question is twofold: first, to mobilize the conceptual and disciplinary tools of fashion studies and photography theory to illuminate

1 For an in-depth examination of documentary photography and pictures of war, violence, and atrocities, see *Picturing Atrocity: Photography in Crisis* (Batchen, Gidley, Miller, & Prosser, 2012).

2 The aesthetics of suffering and the paradox of artistic beauty in images of atrocities are examined in *Regarding the Pain of Others* (Sontag, 2003).

3 A critical reading of the Abu Ghraib images is undertaken in relation to the civil responsibility of spectatorship in *The Civil Contract of Photography* (Azoulay, 2008, pp. 254–256).

4 On 16 September 2025, Israel’s actions in Gaza were found to constitute genocide. See *Gaza: Top independent rights probe alleges Israel committed genocide* in United Nations News. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2025/09/1165856>

how clothing, even when unworn, can operate as a site of embodied trace and affective intensity, particularly within the context of images that reach us in an unfolding and insistent present.⁵ Second, to consider how fashion studies can, in fact, offer meaningful engagement with political and humanitarian concerns. This is not a call to expand fashion studies beyond its limits, but rather to reveal its reparative and political capacities as already embedded within its scope.

This essay is structured in three sections. In the first two, we address the images individually, considering both the content of the images and how they affect us, drawing on studies of fashion and the body. We foreground our affective and embodied encounters with both images and the clothing depicted. Both images first appeared in our feed as still images. They were shared and reshared with their authorship unclear, though eventually we learned that Saber Nuraldin took the original photograph of the pink parka, and the screenshot was from a video reel captured by Belal Mortaja, as detailed below.

It is important to note that these images are authored by Palestinians in Gaza, where foreign journalists are barred from entering. In this respect, Gaza is unique in that the victims are forced to narrate and document their own destruction. These images, like many coming from Gaza, make powerful, affective and ethical appeals to viewers; they draw attention to Palestinian resistance and ingenuity, as well as their grief and suffering. In the third section, we draw on the work of political theorists whose ethical focus on the body, vulnerability, relationality and responsibility recognizes our human-to-human entanglement. In this section, we grapple with the work of Judith Butler and the precariousness of the body and life, before moving on to Ariella Azoulay to reflect on the role of the spectator and ethical demands placed on us to write about these images.

5 It is important to distinguish the images at the centre of this essay from other visual representations of atrocity. For example, the devastating photographs documenting Nazi crimes of the Holocaust, particularly those taken during the liberation of concentration camps of the piles of shoes and the warehouses of clothing. These images initially served an evidentiary function for the prosecution of war crimes, and they have, over time, come to operate as visual forms of testimony, remembrance and memorialisation. In contrast, the images we are discussing here evoke a response from us as atrocities unfolding in the present. We are not writing about past events, though images from past events such as the Holocaust, remain with us as we write and reflect in the present moment.

A PINK PARKA

April 25, 2025. Gaza City. Saber Nuraldin, a Palestinian journalist working in Gaza, posts a photograph of a Palestinian child's pink parka on Instagram (Fig. 01). The parka is buttoned up to the collar, and the arms are outstretched as if reaching out to embrace us or imploring someone to save them. The visual T-shaped form is indexed to a very young child, perhaps two years old. The voluminous folds of the parka fill out the form of a small body. The shoulders rise as soft curves, creases at the sleeves, shoulders, and waist, articulate the tiny joints of wrist, elbow, neck and abdomen. They intimate the movements and gestures of the little child we imagine that once wore it, a wave of the arms, a turn of the head, and the bobbing up and down of the torso. The figure of the pink parka lies on a ground strewn with debris.⁶ The heterogeneity of the materials—shards of wood, brick, rock, dirt, and a nearby floral cloth—speaks to the terrifying destructive force of explosives that not only obliterate the built environment but also rupture the ontological organisation of the world, collapsing distinctions between domesticity and the debris. There are small scraps of paper and bright blue threads of plastic, as well as an empty aluminium bottle that might contain medicine. It's difficult to identify what is in the rubble. It is the bloodied pink parka that devastates us.

We reflect that it does so, not only because it refers to an event in which a small child has been injured or possibly killed by the IOF. It affects us because we are exposed to the child's vulnerability, which moved the parents to dress that small child. Elaine Scarry explains in *The Body in Pain* that artifacts, by virtue of their being designed and made by human action, are sentient of human

6 Save the Children reported that in 2024, an average of 475 children per month sustained potentially lifelong disabilities due to explosive weapons. The report also notes ongoing aerial, land, and maritime bombardments across the Gaza Strip, resulting in civilian casualties and the destruction of residential buildings and public infrastructure. Handicap International reported that over 12,000 bombs, each weighing between 150kg and 1,000kg, were dropped on Gaza within the first seven weeks of the occupation. Additionally, Euro-Med Human Rights Monitor estimated that Israel had dropped more than 70,000 tonnes of explosives on Gaza since October 2023. <https://www.unrwa.org/resources/reports/unrwa-situation-report-155-situation-gaza-strip-and-west-bank-including-east-jerusalem?>



Fig. 01

beings' vulnerability. (Scarry, 1985).⁷ A blanket, for example, internalises "within its design the recognition of the instability of body temperature and the precariousness of nakedness, and only by absorbing the knowledge of these conditions into themselves" (Scarry, 1985, p. 88).⁸ This sentience materialized in the form of a design, in this case a child's parka, embodying two events: first, the perception of a child's suffering (to feel cold, exposed, vulnerable to the elements), and secondly, the parent's wish for that suffering to end (to have the child feel warm, comfortable and protected from the elements). This doubly affects us. We implicitly recognize the protective qualities of the parka as a symbol of active and enduring compassion, yet in this context, it was unable to protect the child from harm.

These observations strike in us a discordant moment of reflection marked by urgency and a need to act now. Near the two small diagonal zipper pockets are blood-soaked stains, bright red. Is it the child's blood, or does the blood belong to a relative who carried the child? We keep wanting to refer to the child as she. Surely, the pink parka must have belonged to a little girl.

In this context, the parka no longer functions only as a piece of clothing. It embodies both the child

living and the child who is missing or dead. It embodies the care of the child's loved ones. Our instinct to care for the child, to find her, to help her, to pick her up, is directed at the image on our phone and linked to the parka. We tap the image on our screen with our index fingers. This contact with the parka prompts a "like." We "like" the post as a gesture of solidarity and witnessing, but how can we genuinely like what the image shows? A child's figure lying amidst utter destruction, utterly alone. Fashion studies over recent decades have developed theoretical resources to account for aspects of our encounter with this image and others like it. This body of research has attempted to move beyond representation to highlight the relationship between bodies and clothing in constituting social life. Joanne Entwistle's work on the socially situated "fleshy body" argued for including the lived body in fashion studies. She draws on the phenomenology of Merleau-Ponty (2002) that conceives human existence as fundamentally embodied, to argue that fashion is inherently an embodied practice. More recently, scholars have similarly employed phenomenological approaches, recognising the centrality of the body in sartorial life, most often from feminist and/or sensory perspectives (Negrin, 2025; Young, 2005; Findlay, 2016); while Ruggerone's notion of the "feeling of being dressed" (2017) draws on affect theory to foreground our relational experiences of clothing. Collectively, these studies consider the interconnection between bodies and clothing as a basis for embodied subjectivity in everyday life.

⁷ For a richer understanding of the relationship between designed artefacts and the human body, see Scarry (1985, pp. 281–282), who notes that the woven gauze of a bandage placed over an open wound as a substitute for the missing skin.

⁸ It's also worth noting, bombs, missiles and bullets carry knowledge of the fragility and vulnerability of human tissues and bones.

Drawing on this work, our focus extends the application of clothing and embodiment in two ways. First, through our spectatorship, we encounter and experience the inseparable connection between clothing and bodies, even when the immediate presence of the wearer/s is absent. Second, we are confronted with a corporeal absence registered in images of clothing that elicits powerful affects in us. This confrontation makes sense to us with reference to scholarly and creative work on the social, affective and material traces in the clothing of deceased bodies in museological and archival contexts (Stallybrass, 1999; Taylor, 1990; Sampson, 2020), as well as in de Perthuis's *Darning for Mark* (2017), which links clothing to an affective domain of loss, bereavement and memory. However, our encounter with these images foregrounds the capacity of images of clothing not only to retain traces of past human presence and sociality, but to reflect incongruously, both forms of care and world-destroying violence in the present. We mourn this child in the here and now of unfolding violence.

A VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY OF SCATTERED CLOTHING



Fig. 02

This violent reality is witnessed in another image circulated as a screenshot from a video reel that has

gone viral. Our view of it is drawn from its shared and reshared pixelated form, rather than from the original videographer's upload (Fig. 02). The screenshot shows a dusty expanse of abandoned clothing scattered across an apocalyptic landscape, framed by two partially destroyed concrete buildings and piles of rubble. There is a small group of clothed figures in the far distance. The subtle blur of motion captured in the screenshot abstracts the image slightly, though not enough to conceal a dystopian image of urban ruin, and the evocation of images that might have inspired CGI imaging of war games like *Call of Duty*. The clothing in the foreground appears at first randomly scattered, as if an entire population had instantaneously de-materialised, the clothing on their bodies falling to the ground, marking the exact spot where they stood. Close observation reveals different kinds of relational order. Dispersed garments and accessories reflect a variety of styles, colours, and patterns that take shape and connect as ensembles of trousers and shirts, shirts with jackets, shoes with socks. The variety of size, style and color suggests the expressivity and agency of sartorial life, where we choose to dress according to taste, mood, age, gender or disposition tuned to the socio-cultural context we inhabit, but also something of the particularity of the individuals who wore them.

Moreover, the spatial arrangement of clothing in this desolate clearing, in clusters composed of six or seven, sometimes three or four, suggests connection and relationships, social and familial groupings—fathers and sons, uncles and nephews, friends and neighbours. We can't help but gender these male, seeing the prevalence of trousers and pants, shirts and jackets and knowing the fate of other men and boys in contexts like this.⁹ Even in their discarded and disembodied state, these strewn garments reveal a complex social fabric, holding in tension social structure and individual identity (Entwistle, 2015, p. 113; Simmel, 1971). We ascertain that the entangled ensemble of discarded clothing is indexed to a group of Palestinian people,

⁹ For evidence of images of men and boys stripped and detained by IOF soldiers, see ABC News. (2023, December 8). Video of Palestinians stripped and forced to sit by IOF soldiers raises concern. <https://abcnews.go.com/US/video-palestinians-stripped-forced-sit-idf-soldiers-raises/story?id=105496215>

Al Jazeera. (2023, December 8). Video, photos appear to show detainees stripped to underwear in Gaza. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/8/video-photos-appear-to-show-detainees-stripped-to-underwear-in-gaza>

profiled collectively, who have been taken away against their wishes by the IOF, where we do not know, but who nevertheless retain and assert their individual and collective presence. Put simply, this image carries the trace of Israeli state violence and of the profound absence and attempted erasure of Palestinians.

AN ACT OF WITNESSING

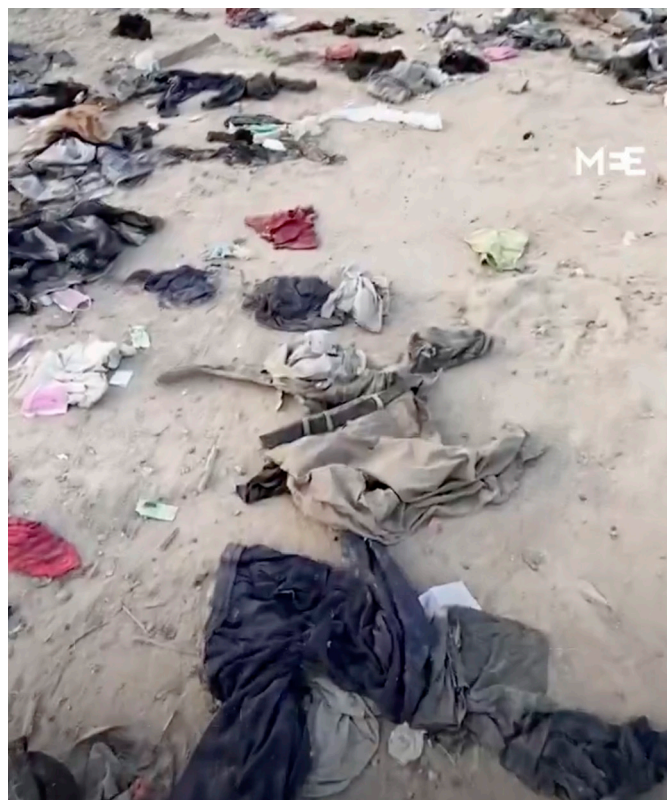


Fig. 03

The screenshot of scattered clothes on the ground was the primary catalyst for this essay (Fig. 02). While we have seen countless images showing far greater violence, destruction and suffering, this image affected us deeply. Through the course of writing this essay, we undertook further research that shed more light on its circumstances. It comes from a video reel posted by the UK-based independent media organisation, Middle East Eye, and time-stamped 21 January 2025, with the location pinned as “Gaza, occupied Palestine”. The video shows Palestinian journalist Belal Mortaja documenting a site located in the northern Gaza Strip. Mortaja is recording himself saying: “You would be standing like this when the army tells you: take off your clothes”. He then pans to the scene, where people in the distance appear to be running, and the flattened rubble of what was once a road is strewn with hundreds of clothes. “Unfortunately, this is what they did to everyone

here in the hall, this place, and the schools”. He pans further, showing the community hall, showing more clothes; “there were almost more than 150 to 200 people present here in this place”. He points to the clothes while walking, saying, “And these are their clothes because they forced them to take off their clothes and kept them naked [...]”. In the words of Judith Butler, we are “*undone*” by this image (Butler, 2004, p. 24).

As sociological accounts of fashion and dress have shown, clothing holds our social identities in place, issuing a sense of self within our communities that confers dignity and belonging (Crane, 2000). To dress is to show something of ourselves on the surface, to be seen and to see others (Entwistle, 2000). Hannah Arendt writes that being visible in public is what makes speaking, acting, and civic life possible (Arendt, 1998). This visibility is implicitly sartorial. In contrast, when clothing is forcibly removed, scarce or taken away, dignity, selfhood and social connection are undermined, resulting in psychological and physical harm. Through the lens of human rights, the forced removal of clothing is a dehumanising mechanism that aims to render those bodies illegible, and subject to a violent form of political, corporeal and social erasure.¹⁰ International law names these acts as violations of human rights under the Geneva Convention III (Art. 13), Geneva Convention IV (Art. 27), the UN Convention Against Torture, and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (James, 2008).

Clothing is, in this sense, ontologically linked to the body even when the body is absent. The act of dressing and undressing ourselves, of clothing our bodies, is an act that recognises, asserts and participates in social life. Bodies, Judith Butler argues, embody vulnerability, mortality and sociality. In *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (2004), Butler notes:

“[...] the skin and the flesh expose us to the gaze of others, but also to touch, and to violence [...] Constituted as a social phenomenon in the public sphere, my body is and is not mine. Given over from the start to the world of others, it bears their imprint, is formed within the crucible of social life [...]” (Butler, 2004, p. 26)

If, as Butler argues, bodies are formed in relation *with* others and *with* the world, then clothing (like the gaze, like touch and like violence) makes that relation visible (Butler, 2004, p. 22). What fashion

¹⁰ For a description of men and boys being forced to undress under occupation, see Azoulay (2008, pp. 316–319).

studies illuminates is how clothing carries the body's impressions, gestures, smells and shapes. As we can see in the pink parka and in the field of scattered clothing, the individual and communal traces of the wearer remain. The warmth, intimacy and vitality of the wearer linger, and the clothing bears the imprint of life. What has *undone* us and made us grieve is how the clothes retain the body's vulnerability, mortality, sociality and most significantly, dignity. Clothing represents a social body that has been held, touched, seen and loved by a community of others.

Our embodied awareness of dressing and undressing ourselves attends to a pair of beige trousers (Fig. 03). They lay on the ground, done up at the waist, still belted. We imagine the man's body; he must have been underweight, so he pulled the trousers down without needing to undo the belt. As spectators, we create the event that lies outside the photographic frame. In this way, the visual field and the Palestinian man lives within us. We read in the buckled knees of his trousers, the collapse of his body. We want to help him. We want to do something to stop the violence.

The specificity of our spectatorship is a convergence of affective and scholarly forces. Through writing this essay, we act and appear in solidarity with Palestinian life and are conscious witnesses to atrocity and state violence. In turn, we catalyze what Ariella Azoulay (2008) calls the "civil contract of photography," whereby, as spectators, we are called upon by the photograph's subjects to reconstruct an event portrayed in the photograph. This is our civic responsibility. Azoulay writes: "When and where the subject of the photograph is a person who has suffered some form of injury, a viewing of the photograph that reconstructs the photographic situation and allows a reading of the injury inflicted upon others becomes a civic skill, not an exercise in aesthetic appreciation [...] The citizen has a duty to employ that skill the day she encounters photographs of those injuries – to employ it in order to negotiate the manner in which she is ruled" (Azoulay, 2008, p. 14).

We heed Azoulay's call to action by employing our civic skills.¹¹ We don't look at the images as artful reportage depicting past events, but "watch"

them in the present moment. We learn from Azoulay that there is a difference between looking at the photograph and watching it. "The verb "to watch" is usually used for regarding phenomena or moving pictures. It entails dimensions of time and movement that need to be reinscribed in the interpretation of the still photographic image" (Azoulay, 2008, p. 14).

In this vein, we watch the pink parka and reconstruct the child's tiny body, the softness of her small hand, her laughter, her delight, her brushed hair, her unsteady walking and running in the streets of Gaza. We watch as her father tickles her, her sister and brother play with her, her grandmother and grandfather feed her, and her mother dresses her in the pink parka, doing the zipper up to the top to keep her warm. We bring the pink parka, its wearer, the wearer's body, her kin, her community and the photographer who encountered her jacket bloodied into our existence, recreating the events as ones that affect and inflect the haunting ordinariness of our everyday lives. Thus, we perform Azoulay's theory of photography, bringing the events of the photographs (their subject), the photographer, and ourselves, the spectators, into contact.

Additionally, through writing this essay, we engage in what Azoulay described as "not only showing the photograph but showing responsibility toward the photographed" (Azoulay, 2008, p. 316). We transform the images we are affected by on social media into "objects of research" by reflecting and writing on what is being watched. Azoulay notes: "On its own, the photograph is incapable of conveying the event to which it attests. The photograph is thus only a point of departure for the reading carried out by whoever stands before it, for who decides to look and to watch. It is the spectator who transforms what is photographed, what happens, into an event" (Azoulay, 2008, p. 316).

CONCLUSION

Our aim has been to use the attention fashion studies brings to the relationship between clothing and bodies to offer a reparative reading of two images from Gaza. We found these images stayed with us, and we wanted to understand why. They certainly weren't the epic, iconoclastic photographs we have come to associate with reportage. Though we recognized them immediately through a history of atrocity pictures as documentary evidence. However, limiting our reading to the political safety

11 Azoulay's work is devoted to the ways photographs of Palestinians under imperialist violence emerge from her own citizenship in the country in which she was born and raised and has since denounced. She states that her project is 'writing about photography, mainly photographs of Palestinians and the continuing injury caused them by the occupation' (Azoulay, 2008, pp. 15–19).

of evidence in a human rights framework would have misled the reader about our intent. As Butler states:

“Perhaps we make a mistake if we take the definitions of who we are, legally, to be adequate descriptions of what we are about. Although this language may well establish our legitimacy within a legal framework ensconced in liberal versions of human ontology, it does not do justice to passion and grief and rage, all of which tear us from ourselves, bind us to others, transport us, undo us, implicate us in lives that are not our own, irreversibly, if not fatally” (Butler, 2004, p. 25). This sentiment accurately captures our need to see these images as emotional and ethical provocations that have stirred grief, anger, and solidarity with Palestinian life in the face of genocidal violence by the IOF on unarmed civilians, who nevertheless continue to resist occupation.¹² Our focus has been to reconstruct the role clothing plays in social life, and the dimensions and instances of care and community intrinsic to Palestinian society. Hence, as we have argued, the photographs in question have an additional function beyond the evidential: they, through representations of clothing without bodies, demonstrate strong interpersonal, familial, and social bonds and, in doing so, counter the dehumanizing rhetoric Palestinians are subject to. These images are a call for help, communicated through an ethical appeal to intersubjective care and compassion. They speak to shared human experiences: we all understand the vulnerability of children, we all understand familial and social connection, and what it means to be part of a community.¹³ The appeal is universal, but also incredibly dignified. It makes perhaps a too generous appeal to our better natures, respond not with pity, but with recognition, and action. And yet, in many ways, we are failing to heed that call.

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¹² On 26 January 2024, the International Court of Justice (ICJ) issued a provisional ruling in the case brought by South Africa against Israel, alleging violations of the Genocide Convention in Gaza. The Court found that the Palestinian people face a “real and imminent risk” of genocide. The full summary of the ICJ’s order is available here: <https://www.icj-cij.org/node/203454>

¹³ We see this notion expressed by Judith Butler when she writes about “we”: ‘Loss has made a tenuous “we” of us all. And if we have lost, then it follows that we have had, that we have desired and loved, that we have struggled to find the conditions for our desire’ (Butler, 2004, p. 20).

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