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Theorizing checkpoints of desire: multilingualism, sexuality and (in)securitization in Israel/Palestine

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we explore how people in conflict-affected societies use language to navigate the affective constraints that political conflicts impose. Specifically, we consider the role of multilingualism in enabling sexual and romantic intimacy between Jewish and Palestinian Israelis in Israel/Palestine. Our data are drawn from a close examination of the speech of Fadi Daeem, one of the protagonists in the 2015 documentary *Oriented*. Building on studies of (in)securitization and everyday bordering, we show how the ongoing armed conflict between Israel and Palestine serves to instantiate a regime of affective checkpoints, a space in which sexual and romantic relations between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians are discursively blocked. We describe how Fadi and his friends use strategic instances of code-switching between Arabic, Hebrew, and English to navigate this ideologically fraught terrain. Our primary goal is to demonstrate how multilingualism can be employed as a resource for managing affect and desire in a conflict-ridden context like Israel/Palestine. In doing so, we further highlight how the intimate domain of romantic desire is inevitably situated within a broader matrix of power and constraint.

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Introduction

In sociolinguistics, the notion of (in)security has recently been proposed as a heuristic lens through which to better understand how everyday practices of surveillance and lived experiences of vulnerability are mediated through linguistic means (Rampton and Charalambous 2020). We will return to this concept in the theoretical section below; suffice it to say for now that, in the existing scholarship, (in)security is not conceptualized as a static condition – being/feeling (un)safe – but as a series of practices and as something that individuals and institutions accomplish through meaning-making and material resources (McCluskey, Rampton, and Charalambous 2022, 18). To emphasize such a dynamic character, it might be more appropriate to talk about (in)securitization rather than (in)security (Bigo and McCluskey 2018). In this context, the parenthetic prefix seeks to visually convey the double-edged nature of the phenomenon, forcing analysts to trace how the basis for some people's security may be the springboard for others' insecurity (Levon 2020, 113).

Sociolinguistic research informed by (in)securitization has offered nuanced analyses of the intricate interplay between language ideologies – what people believe about languages – and language practices – what people do with languages – in the case of language advocacy (Flubacher and Busch

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2022), language requirements (Khan 2022), and multilingual education (Charalambous, Charalambous, and Rampton 2016) to name just a few areas of inquiry. Given its privileging of everyday activities in official institutional settings (e.g. activist organizations, public authorities, schools) as objects of investigation, this body of work has largely neglected to consider how more intimate domains such as sexual and romantic relations may also become charged spaces of (in)securitization (see however Levon 2020 for a notable exception).

Against this backdrop, the aim of this article is twofold. First, in line with the remit of this special issue, we seek to give an empirical example of the role played by multilingualism in the (in)securitization of sexual and romantic intimacy in the context of the ongoing armed conflict between Israel and Palestine. For this purpose, we analyze some mediatized interactions from the documentary *Oriented* (Witzenfeld 2015), which was produced by the British director Jake Witzenfeld together with the Palestinian collective Qambuta Productions. *Oriented* presents the lives of three gay Palestinian men, Fadi Daeem, Khader Abu-Seif and Naeem Jiryes, who are citizens of Israel, and thereby find themselves in a double-bind; they '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). Unlike earlier work on this documentary, which has concentrated mainly on Khader Abu-Seif (see e.g. Milani and Levon 2019), we focus here on Fadi Daeem and those moments in which he overtly discusses his intimate relationships with Jewish Israeli men.

Second, on a more conceptual level, we draw upon work in geography (Ritchie 2010a, 2010b) to advance the notion of the *checkpoint* as an analytical tool through which to theorize more precisely the discursive accomplishment of (self-)surveillance. The point we want to make is that checkpoints are not only external barriers that determine the kinetic regulation of people and goods; they can also be internalized 'technologies of the Self' (Foucault 1988) and 'structures of feeling' (Williams 1977) that regiment how people police themselves, their identities and their emotional attachments to others in everyday interactions. And, as we will show in the analysis below, multilingualism can play a key function in regulating the interactional push-and-pull of desire in relation to (in)securitization (see also Charalambous 2013 on the 'burden of emotions' in conflict-ridden Cyprus).

In what follows, we first contextualize the documentary *Oriented* in relation to the politics of sexuality in Israel/Palestine, before moving on to give an overview of the theoretical framework that informs this article, followed by an analysis of relevant data excerpts.

Oriented and the politics of sexuality in Israel/Palestine

Over the past twenty years Israel has marketed itself as a progressive LGBTQ + oasis vis-à-vis what is portrayed in orientalist terms as a retrograde Middle East. This marketing initiative can be viewed as a form of soft diplomacy through which Israel has sought to change its international image as a warzone with a view to enhancing its appeal to a broader constituency of tourists. Through images of muscled men and (to a letter extent) beautiful young women in scanty dresses, partying throughout the night or sunbathing on the beaches of Tel Aviv, international audiences of 'pink' consumer audiences have been enticed to visit Israel (Milani and Levon 2016). Whatever position one might wish to take vis-à-vis this campaign, it is undeniable that it has been quite successful: Tel Aviv is frequently voted in international surveys as one of the world's most LGBTQ + friendly cities, and the annual pride parade in the city attracts over 50,000 tourists every year.

Variously labelled as homonationalism and/or pinkwashing, Israel's nation-branding strategy has been scrutinized in a growing body of work within queer studies and activism (see e.g. Atshan 2020; Puar and Mikdashi 2012). Originally formulated in the context of the U.S. (Puar 2007), homonationalism indicates the process through which individuals and institutions defend the inclusion of LGBTQ + rights into the very definition of the nation-state while simultaneously having the harmful agenda of legitimizing the exclusion and/or repression of others who are portrayed as lacking the criterion of 'tolerance of sexual diversity'. In the case of the U.S. studied by Puar (2007), the imagined Other that needs excluding is the figure of the Muslim, who is represented as inherently homophobic.

In the case of Israel, the public face of homonationalism has been aptly labelled pinkwashing, an expression that captures how Israel presents itself to the rest of the world as a beacon of sexual liberalism in the Middle East, and concomitantly washes away its neo-colonial actions against Palestinians.

Scholars and activists disagree profoundly about whether, and if so how, Israeli homonationalism/pinkwashing should be studied. Some would go as far as advocate a total refusal to engage. They argue that any involvement, even overt critique, is problematic because it is bound to reiterate, at least implicitly, the very terms upon which homonationalism/pinkwashing rests (Maikey 2017). Others, however, take a less uncompromising position. Commenting on the complex relationship between the extensive international network of LGBTQ + allies to the Palestinian cause and queer Palestinian activism and lived experiences on the ground, Atshan points to a current tendency for some scholars and activists to become so 'self-righteous … [to] think that they have a monopoly on truth and morality' (Atshan 2020, 24). In contrast, Atshan proposes a less intransigent, but no less critical approach, one that exposes and condemns the systemic conditions that have made 'Palestinians dependent on Israeli institutions and economic structures while treating queer Palestinians who are struggling to survive with compassion' (2020, 218). By the same token, we do not wish to downplay the pernicious and discriminatory logic underpinning homonationalism/pinkwashing, but we also find it analytically imperative *qua* critical scholars to engage respectfully with the emotional incongruities and fluctuations that homonationalism/pinkwashing may create for Palestinian citizens of Israel, like the protagonists of *Oriented*.

At this juncture, a few words are necessary to justify the choice of this documentary as the object of our analysis. We believe that media texts – both fiction and non-fiction – are no less authentic sources than 'naturally-occurring' interactions for investigating the social life of language (see also Stamou 2018). This is because the media are institutions, practices and technologies of 'social envisioning' that 'make society imaginable to itself' (Mazzarella 2004, 357) through linguistic, visual and aural means.

Such social imagining becomes particularly tangible in documentaries, which aim to be prisms that 'reflect their time', and thereby seek to 'contribute to the understanding of past and present developments and societal forms of expression' (Pollak 2008, 77). Despite their claims to truth, objectivity and credibility, documentaries are nonetheless inherently ideological since 'the representation of any issue for a mass audience has implications for the ways it is understood' (Cameron 2007, 268). As such, they 'play a significant part in the production and reproduction of societal images and in the formation, affirmation or contestation of world views' (Pollak 2008, 77). To judge from the wider distribution of *Oriented* through mainstream media circuits such as Netflix, as well as its screening at several international film festivals and on many university campuses, the experiences of its protagonists have already had a substantial impact on a diverse group of constituencies. Such a broad uptake is testified *inter alia* by the flurry of diverse reactions in favour or against this documentary (see Atshan 2020, 171–176 for a review).

We do not dispute that *Oriented* offers a partial viewpoint on the lives of the three main protagonists and their friends. However, we concur with Atshan that 'the fact that the documentary contains very little editorializing and is mainly devoted to showcasing the perspectives of its queer protagonists … is reason enough to regard their experiences as authentic and worthy of representation' (Atshan 2020, 171); and, we would add, of analysis. Not because what is shown in the documentary is representative of the lived experiences of all queer Palestinians, but rather because it offers an empirical window onto some fleeting accounts of intimate relationships to which it would otherwise be difficult to have access. These are moments in which queer Palestinians display how they are 'navigating their sense of identity and belonging amid the regimes of control and societal homophobia that shape their lives' (Atshan 2020, 173). It is the theorization of such regimes of (self-)control to which we now turn.

Theorizing checkpoints of desire

Born out of an interdisciplinary dialogue between sociolinguistics and international relations (see e.g. McCluskey, Rampton, and Charalambous 2022; Rampton and Charalambous 2020),

(in)securitization has provided sociolinguists with a useful analytical lens through which to study 'an intensifying apprehension of institutionally authorized vulnerability and existential threat, produced (and received) in communicative practice in a range of social settings (both more and less elite)' (Rampton and Charalambous 2020, 80). Three elements in this definition need highlighting for the purpose of this article. First, (in)securitization is a dynamic process: it is a set of practices which are performed by individuals and institutions with the help of discursive and material resources (languages, visuality, the body, the materiality of the built environment, etc.). Second, these practices are entwined in the (re)production of broader macro-structures of power. And, third, there is a deeply emotional and embodied component to (in)security in the form of (perceived) threats to one's well-being, fear, and vulnerability to premature death (see Gilmore 2002). Taking all these elements into account, (in)securitization can be defined as a 'spatio-temporal configuration that includes the affective and imaginary as well as the infrastructural and concrete' (Maguire and Low 2018, 12). And it is precisely an affective aspect of (in)securitization that is under the spotlight in this article, namely same-sex desire in a conflict-ridden context.

At this juncture, it is important to clarify that, unlike psychoanalytic approaches, we do not view an emotion like desire as something that resides somewhere in the unconscious (see Cameron and Kulick 2003 for an overview). Rather, following Ahmed (2004), we take a performative approach that treats emotions – desire included – as social forces that 'do things', that 'align (or disalign) individuals with communities, and that mediate between the personal and the collective' (Ahmed 2004, 119). This understanding of emotions as a social phenomenon is not new to sociolinguistic research, and a large body of work has examined how emotions flow and circulate with and through language (see e.g. the contributions to Milani and Richardson 2021). However, in line with current discussions about (in)securitization, we are also interested in understanding how an emotion like desire may be *blocked* or disavowed, by, say, social differences that may be perceived as threatening one's sense of selfhood. In saying so, we are inspired by Cameron and Kulick's observation that.

> sexuality – whether viewed from the perspective of identity or desire – will also be inflected by other kinds of socially salient differences, for instance those of race, ethnicity generation, class and culture … in certain cultural and historical contexts the desire for particular kinds of difference has been more than just a personal idiosyncrasy; it has been socially institutionalized. (Cameron and Kulick 2003, 144)

Conversely, the desire for particular kinds of difference might be institutionally outlawed, such as in the case of apartheid South Africa where interracial relationships were considered illegal during the state-driven system of racial separation. Or, even when not prohibited outright, they may be frowned upon and strongly discouraged because of culturally specific rules and practices of endogamy/exogamy, as in the case of Israel/Palestine (see e.g. Gafter and Milani 2021 for an analysis of a media debate about a celebrity marriage between a Jewish Israeli actor and a Palestinian Israeli TV personality).

While there is a growing body of scholarship illustrating the function of linguistic and other meaning-making resources in how individuals navigate their romantic and sexual attraction to others (see e.g. Kiesling 2011; Mortensen 2017), the role played by multilingualism and language choice in producing and disciplining sexual desire has remained somewhat unexplored. From a Bakhtinian perspective (Bakhtin 1981), language is never innocuous. And this has not just to do with the words, expressions or rhetorical devices we might select in a particular situation, erotic or otherwise, but also with the (named) language(s) one chooses. Scholarship inspired by Bakhtin has demonstrated that using a language (and not another) serves to position a speaker within a given moral universe and helps to legitimate a speaker's belonging in that socio-semiotic space (see Hill 1995). This is because of the indexicalities that a language accrues over time as a result of language ideological processes that create *ties* between language varieties and broader socio-cultural categories (gender, ethnicity, sexuality, etc.) and imbue them with aesthetic and moral values. Through such language ideological processes, a language may be believed to be a better suited or more appropriate code for a speaker to express their sexual attraction for others (see e. g. Milani and Levon 2017). Needless to say, such beliefs about language(s) can change over time and context.

Put differently, language choice is a performative act through which speakers/writers 'make space and locate self' (Jaworski and Thurlow 2010), that is, they discursively construct space at the same time as they position themselves as subjects within the spaces they create. Such an act of positioning, however, is never fully unrestricted but is regulated by a plethora of constraints. These can be external – other people questioning or even blocking one's discursive emplacement – or internal, within speakers themselves. We argue in this article that this system of control also applies to the multilingual management of desire. And the notion of the checkpoint can be particularly useful to capture this discursive regulation of identities and affect, sexual or otherwise.

In the context of Israel/Palestine, it has been pointed out how, in its material manifestation of soldiers, gates, turnpikes and fenced paths, the checkpoint is 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). We certainly do not downplay the dreadful effect of the materiality of the checkpoint on Palestinians' lived experiences. However, we concur with Ritchie (2010a, 2010b) that the notion of the checkpoint could be expanded beyond its literal meaning as a gate-keeping infrastructure so as to also encompass a capillary discursive technology of surveillance through which 'citizens and noncitizens alike check themselves – and others – against 'the field of signs and practices' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992, 27) in which the nation-state is represented' (Ritchie 2010a, 134; see also Paul 2020 for literary and cinematographic counter-responses to walls, barriers and checkpoints in Israel/Palestine)

In a previous analysis of *Oriented* (Milani and Levon 2019), we employed a discursive understanding of the checkpoint to make sense of an interaction, which unfolded entirely in Hebrew, between Khader Abu-Seif and a Jewish Israeli man at a meeting in the allegedly safe space of the Tel Aviv Municipal LGBT Centre. No sooner had Khader identified himself as being part of a new generation of queer Palestinians, than the Jewish Israeli man started to interrogate him, asking Khader what identity documents he held and what his intentions were vis-à-vis Israel and its Jewish population ('what do you want? Do you want us to get out of here? Do you want there to be another Arab State?'). In this context, Khader's mere uttering of the ethnic qualifier *falastini* (Palestinian) was felt by the member of the audience not only as an existential threat to him personally, but also to all Jewish Israelis and the Israeli state.

Admittedly, in our previous analysis we did not overtly rely on (in)securitization. However, re-read in the light of this concept, we could suggest that this interaction is a textbook example of (in)securitization as a dynamic communicative process: Khader's overt identification as Palestinian engenders a feeling of insecurity on the part of the Jewish Israeli man in the audience, who responds with a security check, asking what kind of ID Khader holds. This discursive act of surveillance, in turn, momentarily threatens the legitimacy of Khader's act of self-identification, and makes his very presence in a purportedly LGBTQ + safe space less safe. Crucially, the aggressive reaction of the Jewish Israeli man is not disconnected from the macro-structures of the Israeli occupation, but is a more mundane, albeit no less pernicious, discursive manifestation of those material checkpoints put in place by Israel to control Palestinian bodies and their movements. As a discursive phenomenon, then, the checkpoint instantiated by the Israeli man is the momentary surfacing 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 2010a, 43).

The barrage of questions posed by the Jewish Israeli man to Khader is an example of *everyday bordering* (Yuval-Davis, Wemyss and Cassidy 2019), a process through which a discursive checkpoint is enacted in interaction serving to question Khader's identity credentials via linguistic means, in this specific case through Hebrew. In the analysis below, instead, we want to illustrate how similar checkpoints can also be internal 'technologies of the Self' (Foucault 1988) or 'interior frontiers' (Stoler 2018; see also Lems 2020) through which people police their own belonging and regulate the types of social practices – including affective ones such as desire – that they feel authorized to engage in (or not). We also show how language choice is pivotal for such regimentation of sexual desire.

While Yuval-Davis et al. (2019) highlights external acts of border making and Stoler focuses on internal ones, we believe that the two do not necessarily need to be separated but can be usefully brought together through the notion of the checkpoint.

'I have sinned': Navigating the possibilities of desire

The first example we analyze is a phone conversation between Fadi and his friend Nagham. Fadi is portrayed lying in bed confiding to Nagham how he went home with a man the night before.

Excerpt 1[1]

N: aluw.
Hello.
F: šū il-waḍiʕ?
How are you?
N: šū il-axbār?
How are you?
F: **besēder**. wēnik?
Okay. Where are you?
N: āh, bil-bēt.
Uh, at home.
F: šū ibtiʕmali?
What are you up to?
N: wala ʾisī, ʾissā fiʾt, rasī buddū yitfaǧǧar. wēnik ʾinti?
Nothing, I just woke up. I have a really bad headache. Where are you?
F: w-ʾanā kamān.
Me too.
N: kīf kānat lēltak ʾimbāriḥ?
How did your night go?
F: Oh my God.
N: šū? Tell me, tell me, tell me, tell me.
What? Tell me, tell me, tell me, tell me.
F: ʾiʕmilit xaṭiyyih. [smiling]
I have sinned. [smiling]
N: ha, ha, ha … šū sawwēt?
Ha, ha, ha … what did you do?
F: rawwaḥit maʕ wāḥad.
I went home with a guy.
N: I know, I saw you.
F: Yeah
N: **ḥatīx**.
Hot.
F: āh, ḥiluw ktīr, ktīr, ktīr.
Yes, very very very handsome.
N: šū ʾismu?
What's his name?
F: Binyāmīn. ((*Arabic pronunciation*))
Benjamin
N: **Binyamīn**? ((*Hebrew pronunciation*)) **Binyamīn** ʾēš? **Binyamīn**, **Binyamīn**
Benjamin? Benjamin who? Benjamin, Benjamin
F: yahūdī, yahūdī, yaxtī.
He is Jewish, Jewish, sis!
N: lā.
No.
F: āh.
Yes.
N: ḥabībi.
Oh honey!
F: It's OK. Šū biʕarrifnī, bas ʾinnū … kān kul ʾi-waʾit bil-lēl baddū ʾinnī ʾiʕmillū add ʕal-fēysbok. w-mafhimtiš lēš. ʾissā bas rawwaḥ, bas rawwaḥ ʾiʕmiltillū add. w-Šufit ṣuwaru w-huwwi lābis badlāt ǧēš w … w-aŠyaʾ.
It's OK. I didn't know. But … Last night he was constantly trying to have me add him on Facebook. I did not know why. Now, after he went home, after he came home I added him and saw pictures of him in army suits, and stuff.
N: Did you have a connection? Did you talk about stuff?

F: Yeah. kān fī connection ʾillī mā kāniŠ maʕ ʾay wāḥad ktīr snīn. bas ʾinnū..biddik niṭlaʕ nōkil maʕ baʕḍ? tifṭarī?
Yeah. We had a connection that I haven't had with anyone for many years. But do you want go out to eat together? Breakfast?
N: āh, yēs.
Yes. Yes.
F: ṭayyib. nuṣ sēʕah w-binkū …
Okay in half an hour I'll be …
N: More details, more details.
F: Yes. We have to talk about it.

What is particularly relevant for the focus of this special issue on multilingualism and sexuality is the code-switching[2] between Arabic, Hebrew, and English in the excerpt above. As Hill (1995; see also Milani and Levon 2017) has pointed out, code-switching is often used by speakers as a way of moving across moral worlds, which are perceived as separate and fundamentally irreconcilable with one another. So, switching languages allows speakers to navigate boundaries and borders, which are indeed ideological but are also felt as very real. In this way, code-switching allows speakers to express beliefs and feelings in one language that would not be socially and culturally acceptable or legible in another.

In the specific case of the above extract, it is notable how Fadi begins by saying in Arabic that 'he has sinned' and goes on to clarify his transgression by explaining that he 'went home with a guy.' The lexical choice here might indicate Fadi's voicing a religious discourse that views same-sex relationships as offences. The sinning might also refer to the contravening of socio-cultural norms as a result of the fact that the man in question is Jewish and a soldier, as it becomes apparent later in the interaction. However, Fadi's smiling and Nagham's subsequent laughter are paralinguistic cues indicating that the keying of the utterance is humorous. As such, Fadi's account of his sexual adventure with a man as a 'sin' can be taken as an example of Bakhtinian double-voicing through which he relies on an established discourse about same-sex desire as something that breaks socio-cultural and religious norms, at the same time as he and Nagham distance themselves from it through humour. At this point, Nagham corroborates Fadi's account by authenticating it through her direct involvement in the space of the narrated event ('I know, I saw you'), and goes on to use a single-word switch into Hebrew to describe the man that Fadi went home with as 'handsome' (*hatix*). Up until this point, Nagham does not yet know the ethnicity of the man Fadi went home with, although she might have guessed it and is waiting for Fadi to reveal it to her. So how can we explain this single-word switch? Here we would suggest that the switch is more broadly motivated by the language ideologies that over time have turned Hebrew into an index of the moral universe in which men pick up other men and casually go home with them. As we have illustrated in other analyses (Milani and Levon 2017) of code-switching and sexuality in Israel/Palestine, such an interactional use of Hebrew by some queer Palestinian men reflects and inadvertently reproduces problematic homonationalist ideologies of Israel, and Tel Aviv more specifically, as a gay 'paradise', while replicating the no less questionable idea of the impossibility of same-sex desire in Arabic (see also Ritchie 2010b).

Inquisitive about Fadi's casual encounter, Naghad goes on to ask in Arabic what the man's name was, to which he replies 'Binyamin', pronouncing it as it would be in Arabic. At this point, Nagham's reaction is of stunned disbelief. Her bewilderment manifests itself linguistically in the emphatic repetition of the name 'Binyamin', this time with a Hebrew pronunciation and with a rising voice, followed by addressing Fadi with the Arabic term of endearment 'habibi', uttered in a tone that straddles the line between concern and reproach. After Fadi reassures her that everything 'is ok' and Nagham discovers that Binyamin was in fact Jewish and a soldier, English begins to make its way into the conversation, with Nagham asking Fadi whether he had a 'connection' with Binyamin.

Read through the notion of the checkpoint, the code-switching – however brief – between Arabic, Hebrew and English is in our view the discursive surfacing of the management of two distinct barriers to desire. The first is a checkpoint blocking same-sex desire among Palestinians in the Arabic-speaking moral universe. This blockage is managed, and overcome, via laughter and a switch to Hebrew, and its imagined world of sexual tolerance. Then we have a checkpoint impeding desire

between a Palestinian man and a Jewish Israeli soldier. This impasse is handled via a switch to English. This movement into another world is made possible by the indexicalities of English pointing to a characterological figure of the homonormative global gay and the lifestylization of sexuality, 'a privatized, depoliticized gay culture anchored in domesticity and consumption' (Duggan 2002, 179). Within this moral world, attraction and desire are viewed as *individual* feelings divorced from any social, cultural and political conflict (see also Hall (2019) for an insightful analysis of the link between English and sexual modernity in India). In saying so, we are not making a universal claim about the function of English as global gay language. Rather, we are saying that English with its indexicalities of global gay consumer culture is a linguistic resource through which to express a depoliticized sexual attraction in a context where Hebrew and Arabic are ideologically polarized. So, while fleeting, these could be taken as examples of (in)securitization of sexual intimacy, that is, moments in which desire is about to trespass into unauthorized territory; these breaches do not remain unchecked but instead trigger an internalized checkpoint through which Fadi and Naghad monitor themselves and others, then rely on the indexicalities of other languages in order to resolve the transgression and move on. On the basis of this example, it could be suggested that code-switching in these interactions is like a set of keys that momentarily unlocks the turnstile doors between parallel but incompatible moral universes, and thus allows desire to circulate despite existing socio-cultural and political hurdles.

'Now I am in love with the enemy': Negotiating the (im)possibility of desire

The conflicts of desire presented in the first excerpt above become heightened in a following conversation between Fadi and Nagham at a wedding. Here Fadi explains the conflict he is experiencing by being with Benyamin and by, in his words, being 'in love with the enemy'.

Excerpt 2

F: šū ʕam biṣīr?
What's up with you?
N: šū ʕam biṣīr talā ʾinti? Tell me about Ben.
What's up with you? Tell me about Ben.
F: I feel weak.
N: Weak? Lēš?
Weak? Why?
F: I am falling for a Zionist.
N: Lēš ibtiṭṭallaʕ fīha ʾinnak falling for a Zionist lammā ʾinti falling for a nice guy, for someone who really wants you, who really likes you, someone who really respects you.
What's the problem? That you are falling for a Zionist. That's when you are falling for a nice guy, for someone who really wants you, who really likes you, someone who really respects you.
F: I'm in love with the enemy. I am with everything I fight against. ʾanā mā ʕindīš muškikih maʕ ʾinnū yahūdī.
I'm in love with the enemy. I am everything I fight against. I have no problem that he is Jewish.
N: Ok.
F: e (.) ʕindī muškikih ʾinnū huwwi bifakkirīš ʾinnū hōna fī ʾiḥtilāl ʾisrāʾīli. Lammā ʾannā baḥib binʾādam ʾillī bifakkirīš ʾinnū šaʕbī maraʾ maʾsāh w-nākbih. It's like- yaʕnī ʾinnū kīf mumkīn itḥib hēk binʾādam. ʾinnū ʕam bağarrib ʾaqniʕ ḥālī ʾinnū hāda hāda miš miš binʾādam ʾillī raḥ itḥibbū.
I have a problem because he thinks that there is no Israeli occupation here. That I love a person who thinks my people have not gone through a catastrophe, the Nakba. It's like- How can you love such a person? I am trying to convince myself that it is impossible to love person like this.
N: Fadi, ʾil-ḥayāh muš bas ʾ**idyōlōgyah**. ʾizā ḥāsis ʾinnū bēna ʕam baʕṭīk hāda ʾil-**sippūk** ʾil- **ʕačmī**. As a man, as a gay guy, somebody who loves you, somebody who appreciates you, somebody who likes you, somebody who respects you, why the fuck not? ʕašān he is a Zionist? Is your happiness worth it? ʕan ğad? It's a fucked up world. kulnā ʕāyšīn fī a fucked up world. ʾiḥnā ka-ʾarab, ʾarab ʾittamānyih w-aribʾīn, ʾil-flisṭīniyyīn ʾillī muš maʕrūf wēn ʾaṣilnā, wēn šrāšnā, w-mīn ʾiḥnā, w-wēn ʾiḥnā rāyḥīn. It's a whole fucked up world. Ma-xaṣṣiš ib-šēli šēli šēli bas **lefaxōt** ʾinbaṣiṭ.
Fadi, Life is not just an ideology. Between us, if you feel he is giving you the self-satisfaction. As a man, as a gay guy, somebody who loves you, somebody who appreciates you, somebody who likes you, somebody who respects you, why the fuck not? Because he is a Zionist? Is your happiness worth it? Really? It's a fucked-up world. We all live in a fucked-up world. We as Arabs, Arabs of 1948, the Palestinians who don't know where our origins are from, where our roots are from, who we are, and where we are goingIt's a whole fucked-up world. Regardless of anything, at least enjoy yourself.

F: I'm a hypocrite. Like, ʾanā kul ḥayātī ʕam baʾūl ʾinnū ʾanā ḍiḍ ḍiḍ ḍiḍ ḍiḍ ḍiḍ, w-bilāxir ʾin-nās ʕam bitšūfnī ṭāliʕ maʕ wāḥad ʾillī huwwi …
I'm a hypocrite. Like, all my life I say I'm against against against against against. And at the end people see me going out with a man who …

N: šū ʾinti ʕāmil iḥsāb ʾin-nās. Lēš bitfaḍḍil tibṣiṭ ʾin-nās ʾalā ʾinnak tibṣiṭ ḥālak. hāda ʾil-ʾišī biğaninnī.
Why do you care about people? Why would you rather make people happy than make yourself happy. It makes me go crazy.

F: Because if he ever leaves me, I will stay empty, people will say bistāhal.
Because if he ever leaves me, I will stay empty. People will say I deserve it.

N: kamān marra what the fuck you care about what people say
Once again, what the fuck you care about what people say.

F: That will be right. I will be like biʕ'it kul mabādʾī ʕaŠān hāda ʾil-binʾādam. W-ʾissā huwwi muŠ maʕī, w-wʾanā bdūnu, w-bdūn mabādʾī. I would be like nothing.
That would be right. It would be like I gave up all my principles because of this person. And now he's not with me. I am without him and without my principles. I would be like nothing.

Analogous to what we saw in Excerpt 1, this interaction begins with a sequence of greetings in Arabic, but switches to English as soon as Binyamin is introduced as the topic of conversation ('tell me about Ben'). Quite distressed, Fadi answers, also in English, confessing that he is 'falling for a Zionist'. The following stretch of conversational turns is characterized by a sequence of Arabic/English intra-sentential code-switching, which we cannot analyze line by line because of space constraints. Let us focus instead on the content in relation to the switches between languages. Throughout the interaction, Nagham seeks to comfort Fadi reassuring him that he is 'falling for a nice guy, for someone that really wants you, that really likes you, someone that really respects you'. Nagham's reassurance, however, does not seem to alleviate Fadi's sorrow, as can be seen in his even more troubled reply in English that he is 'in love with the enemy.'

In this example, Fadi's desire is no longer a sin as it was in the first excerpt; now it has transformed into love, but a love that represents 'everything I fight against,' and so Fadi expends a considerable amount of emotional energy to convince himself 'that it is impossible to love a person like this.' The sentiment that Fadi verbalizes here is what we have previously labelled 'vicious belonging' (Milani and Levon 2019), an attraction to someone or something, which represents the 'constitutive outside' (Butler 1997) of who you are. According to Butler, 'constitutive outside is the defining limit or exteriority to a give symbolic universe, one which, were it imported to that universe, would destroy its integrity and coherence' (1997, 180). For Fadi, the importing of the desired other into his emotional universe is the source of the severe distress he experiences.

Even more strongly than in Excerpt 1, this example is revealing of the (in)securitization of intimacy, and its concomitant system of surveillance and management, which manifests itself linguistically through language choice. On the one hand, Fadi clearly voices an internal checkpoint that partially stops his feelings for Binyamin through a composite assessment of identity credentials: on the one hand, through the utterance in Arabic 'I have no problem that he is Jewish', Fadi makes it patent that it is not Binyamin's cultural/religious identity that poses a problem to their relationships; it is rather his ideological views as a Zionist and his profession as a soldier that makes him the enemy. Also through the medium of Arabic, Fadi goes on to describe in more detail what makes Binyamin ideologically incompatible with him: it's the lack of understanding of the *Nakba*, a word that means catastrophe and indicates the ongoing Palestinian collective suffering as a result of the creation of the state of Israel, the subsequent mass expulsion of Palestinians, and the enduring conflict.

We therefore see very clearly in this example how the checkpoint of desire is charged with the broader political loadings that affect Israeli/Palestinian relations. The viciousness of love experienced by Fadi reaches its climax in his description of the potential situation of being left by Binyamin. Here the existential danger to Fadi's subjectivity becomes palpable in his painful account of the prospect of anomie, a sort of living death scenario, in which he is alone, being simultaneously abandoned by the object of desire and ostracized by Palestinian peers because of his failure to abide by political principles.

On the other hand, Nagham seeks to counter-manoeuvre the checkpoint firmly put up by Fadi. Throughout the conversation, she tries to raise the boom, so to speak, in order to let Fadi's love for Binyamin flow more freely. A notable attempt on the part of Nagham to steer the checkpoint occurs directly after Fadi's detailed narration in Arabic about Binyamin's lack of empathy for Palestinian collective trauma. Observe how Nagham inserts a word in Hebrew – *ideologyah* – ideology – at the end of a sentence that is otherwise completely in Arabic ('life is not an ideology'). Here the usage of the Hebrew version of the word, instead of its Arabic or English equivalents, is likely to refer to Binyamin's personal beliefs and the broader Zionist ideological framework that is at the very heart of Israeli politics. However, instead of entrenching the barring of desire on the basis of a clash of viewpoints, as expressed by Fadi, Nagham portrays ideological and political differences as disconnected from one's life and pleasure.

Linguistically, the only way the checkpoint can be opened, and desire can flow despite existing constraints is yet again through English, which enables Nagham to go on and try to 'de-securitize' the emotional conflict described by Fadi. Analogous to what we saw in Excerpt 1, English indexes here a moral world centred on the possibility that individual happiness, self-realization and pleasure can be completely disconnected from social and political conflicts. Moreover, English seems to offer Nagham the kind of emotional distance that has been described in bilingualism research as the foreign or second language effect. This term indicates the emotional differential that speakers experience in relation to languages learned before and after puberty, 'with the first being the language of personal involvement and the second the language of distance and detachment, or at least the language of lesser emotional hold on the individual' (Pavlenko 2002, 47). In the case of Nagham, while she forcefully voices in Arabic the past, present and future complexity of identity troubles experienced by Palestinian citizens of Israel ('Arabs of 1948'), English provides her with a linguistic resource through which she can reach a suspension of conflict of sorts, one in which love and mutual desire trumps everything, even the clash of diametrically opposite political and ideological views.

Towards a resolution?

Despite Nagham's efforts, the checkpoint of desire between Fadi and Binyamin won't be removed but will ultimately lead to the end of their relationship, as viewers will learn later in the documentary when Fadi discusses with his friend Khader how things are developing with his new boyfriend, another Jewish Israeli man named Nadav (see Excerpt 3).

Excerpt 3

F: bilḥaʾiŠ Šūfu. Kul, kul ʾiŠī fiyyū biḥassinī ʾinnī yaʕnī fī ʕindī aktar relationship mature min kul ʾillī kān ʕindī ʾabil. Dāyman kān fī ʾabil zay **miṭʕanīm** bēni w-bēn kul wāḥad kunit maʕū b-ʕalāqah w-maʕ Nadāv fiŠ **miṭʕanīm**.
I don't see him. Everything in him makes me feel like I have a mature relationship more than anything I have had in the past. Always before that there was baggage between me and everyone I was in relationship with. With Nadav there are no charges.

K: ʕaŠān fiŠ ʾil … min barrā fiŠŠi binātkum ʾil-**milxamāh** hāy ʾal-**zehūt kʾīlu** fiŠŠi ʾanā yahūdī w-ʾintā ʾarabī. Fī Fadi w-Fī Nadāv.
Because there is no … from the outside there is no war between both of you on identity. Like there is no 'I am a Jew and you are an Arab'. There is Fadi and there is Nadav.

Unlike what he felt with Binyamin, Fadi expresses a sense of calm and peace with Nadav, an ability to experience desire to its fullest. Whereas with Binyamin the checkpoint barrier was down, and desire was blocked, at least in an Arabic-language moral universe, with Nadav the boom has been raised, and desire can flow more easily. Granted, the checkpoint is still there – it is made salient in the conversation, in the highlighting of the special status of Fadi and Nadav's relationship as 'mature'. But that checkpoint is clearly not obstructing anymore, and desire can flow, even in Arabic. Here we can see how Fadi's experience with Nadav is considerably different than it was

with Binyamin, not least because, unlike Binyamin, Nadav is not a soldier. In this regard, we think it telling that both Fadi and his friend Khader make use of highly militaristic metaphors in Hebrew to the relationship with Binyamin, including 'war' and 'baggage' (a word that in Hebrew also means 'munitions charges'). Conversely, with Nadav, their intimacy seems to have become completely de-securitized, to the point that it has even brought about a dissolution of the ethnic and cultural/religious boundaries that are otherwise so entrenched in the Israeli/Palestinian conflict ('there is no I am a Jew and you are an Arab'). Analogous to what Nagham suggested in the examples above, what is highlighted instead is the primacy of the individual above cultural and political differences. ('There is Fadi and there is Nadav')

Final remarks

In this article, we took some mediatized interactions in the documentary *Oriented* as the empirical entry point through which to illustrate (1) how the intimate realm of sexuality can become a site of (in)securitization, and (2) how multilingualism can be employed to navigate the emotional turmoil of desire in a conflict-ridden context like Israel/Palestine. With the help of Fadi Daeem's interactions with his friends discussing his sexual and romantic relationships with two Jewish Israeli men, we have shown how his subjectivity is built on ambivalence and tension, between different constitutive components of who he is and the checkpoints that he has internalized between these inner positions. Analytically, then, the key is not in trying to locate how Fadi resolves this conflict, but to focus instead on the intricate multilingual work through which he and his friends manage it, using code-switching in order to move in and out of different moral universes in the pursuit of finding some serenity. Discursively enacting this type of serenity can be seen as a highly localized form of *everyday peace* (Mac Ginty 2014), a way of establishing micro-solidarities in deeply divided societies through which conflicts – both external and internal – are (temporarily) calmed.

Theoretically, we have advanced the notion of the checkpoint as a useful tool for the discursive study of (in)securitization. We believe that the application of the checkpoint as analytical device does not need to be confined to investigations of the management of intimate relations in a context of armed conflict but could be expanded more broadly as a means through which to 'track force relations at the molecular level, as they flow through a multitude of human technologies, in all the practices, arenas, and spaces where programmes for the administration of others intersect with techniques for the administration of ourselves' (Rose 1999, 3–5). Using checkpoints allow analysts to capture the complex negotiations, both external and internal, of identities and affects, that is, the back and forth between categories and emotions without falling into the trap of treating one as more primary than the other.

Notes

1. Transcription conventions: Arabic: unmarked text, Hebrew: bold, English original: underlined, English translation: italic.
2. In highly politicized contexts such as Israel/Palestine, even if people are 'translanguaging' in practice, ideological beliefs about what words belong to which variety are nevertheless highly entrenched, and so we use the term code-switching, however imperfect, as a way to remain agnostic with respect to this issue.

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