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Speculative Pragmatism and Minor Practices in Palestine: The Art of Living and the Cultivation of Futures

Abstract: This paper considers the aesthetic-political dimension in Palestine and in particular looks at how possible Palestinian futures that emerge from it are evident in what I call ‘minor practices’. Drawing on Deleuze and Guattari’s conception of minor literature, minor practices work within the interstices of the occupation and draw upon what is around them in a radically creative way. Aesthetics then is not only a subjective realm linked to an art object or beauty but can be understood as a way of grasping and feeling the world. Whereas the dominant literature on aesthetics and politics reads the art object backward to the intentions of the artist and focuses on the visual, this paper aims to attend to the generative and forward-moving forces that come together in the process of making. By taking the example of a women’s embroidery co-operative in the West Bank, it demonstrates that speculative pragmatism enables us to attend to the moreness in minor practices, aesthetics, and life itself, and how it can vector alternative futures. A speculative pragmatist approach makes perceptible how minor practices can offer space for people to release new energies and forms of creativity, that themselves can produce new potentialities and the soul of a new society. Aesthetics is thus capable of making the potentialities of life felt not only through fine art, but perhaps most keenly, through minor practices that, stitch by stitch, instaurate new arts of living.

Keywords: Palestine; speculative pragmatism; aesthetics; aesthetics-politics; minor; Deleuze; Guattari; speculative philosophy.

Introduction

In trying to understand the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the context of Palestine, and how possible futures can emerge through it, my visits to the West Bank in 2019 pointed me to something beyond the coupling of aesthetics with fine art practices and its objects. I came into contact with initiatives and practices that were operating independently either from the government or non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Rather than being oppositional or relational to these entities, these initiatives and practices were defined in their own terms, in what Isabelle

Stengers and Philippe Pignarre call “the interstices”.¹ They worked from the interstices of the occupation in a radically creative way, by experimenting, drawing on local resources and connecting to their wider community. For example: a design label bringing together local designers and artisans, or a rooftop garden in the middle of an overpopulated refugee camp.

Such practices revealed to me that potential futures were being crafted within and from the creators’ own milieu, in ways that connected to their local community, while fabricating their own politics. Possible futures were created within reality in a seemingly minor way yet were invented for the purpose of a different reality. These practices constitute what I would like to call *minor practices*, a term that builds on Deleuze and Guattari’s ‘minor literature’. Attending to these practices, aesthetics seemed not only a subjective realm that is linked to an object and evoking feelings of satisfaction or beauty, but perhaps more an extended ‘way of grasping the world’. Intertwining events, people, politics and materials in reality, it thus entrenched aesthetics into the social field, not as an expression extracted from that reality.²

Seeking to understand how Palestinian futures can take shape, I wish to consider aesthetics in making those futures, and in particular the aesthetic dimensions that belong to minor practices. This paper will focus on one of those practices, a women’s embroidery co-operative initiated by a woman called Sara, and the way in which it uncovered a new understanding of aesthetics and politics. Previous research on aesthetics in Palestine connects this study to visual or fine art in Palestine and its response to politics, inclined to read an object *backwards* to the intentions of the artist, and thereby interpret the work.³ What often goes unnoticed, however, is what is at stake in minor practices and what social and political forces come together in their making, thus necessitating a *forward* reading of the practices in a generative way.

As this paper deals with embroidery as a minor practice, it is important to acknowledge that literature on embroidery that frequently emphasises the stories of the women and the practice itself, while lacking a philosophical perspective capable of intensifying the multiple futures these practices make possible.⁴ Minor practices are therefore undetected and often fall between the gap of these literatures, as they harbour a wider aesthetics that goes beyond objects of fine art, the visual, and feelings of satisfaction or beauty.

¹ Philippe Pignarre, Isabelle Stengers, and Andrew Goffey, *Capitalist Sorcery: Breaking the Spell* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 110.

² Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 70.

³ See e. g. Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon, *The Origins of Palestinian Art* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013); Kamal Boullata and John Berger, *Palestinian Art 1850–2005* (London: Saqi, 2009); Gannit Ankori, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion books, 2006).

⁴ E.g. Tina Sherwell, “Embroidering the Motherland: The Fabric of Palestinian National Identity,” in *Reinventing Textiles Vol. 2 Gender and Identity*, ed. Janis Jefferies (Winchester: Telos Art Publishing, 2001), 117–30; Widad Kamel Kawar, *Threads of Identity: Preserving Palestinian Costume and Heritage*. (Nicosia: Rimal Publications, 2011); Hagar Salamon, “Embroidered Palestine: A Stitched Narrative,” *Narrative Culture* 3, 1 (2016): 1–III.

Rather than looking at the objects and working backwards to uncover the intention of the artists, this paper makes the case for a speculative approach attending to ‘the creativity of the productive processes that brings the artefact[s] themselves into being,’ and does so by looking at both the ‘generative currents of the material’ and the gestures and movements of practitioners themselves.⁵ By focusing on Palestinian cross-stitching, this paper explores the way in which speculative pragmatism may provide tools to attend to the role that such minor practices play in opening up a multiplicity of possible futures. It begins by reflecting on some of the more prominent literatures on aesthetics and politics in Palestine, as well as acknowledging some of the literature on the practice of embroidery. Between the two, we see that minor practices like the one of Sara, fall between the crack. I will then proceed by telling the story of Sara through a speculative pragmatist lens, which forms the central focus of this paper. What can we learn from her minor practice of embroidery, which forces come together in its articulation, and how are divergent futures immanently created? This leads me to propose that by drawing on speculative philosophy, the aesthetic-political dimension in minor practices can be attended to and taken seriously in the production of different possibilities and futures.

Aesthetics and Politics in Palestine

Various studies have explored the relationship between aesthetics and politics in the context of Palestine; some more descriptive, others more philosophical. In the section below I will trace the presence of minor practices and the aesthetic-political dimension predominantly found in the literature on Palestinian art. In what ways is the aesthetic-political dimension in Palestine formulated? And to what extent is the literature capable of attending to the aesthetic-political dimension in minor practices? I will also touch upon some of the literature on Palestinian embroidery, in order to understand the way in which minor practices, aesthetics and politics have been theorized, thus revealing how the capabilities of minor practices remain unaccounted for in the relevant literatures.

In his seminal book *Palestinian Art*, Kamal Boullata attempts to formulate a Palestinian aesthetic language that is connected to various forms of cultural production and its development alongside the increasing fragmentation of the Palestinian state and people after the declaration of the state of Israel in 1948.⁶ By paying attention to a wide range of aesthetic output, Boullata makes an important contribution to the field as he scrutinizes the innovations in the visual arts and its link to the applied arts. He demonstrates that the prominence of the revival of crafts is connected to a distinctive Palestinian identity formed during the national struggle. And yet, despite

⁵ Tim Ingold, “The Textility of Making,” *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 34, 1 (2009): 97; Tim Ingold, *Making Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture, Making Anthropology, Archaeology, Art and Architecture* (London: Routledge, 2013), 6.

⁶ Cf. Boullata and Berger, *Palestinian Art 1850–2005*.

its immense importance, Boullata's interest in the long history of the arts in Palestine eventuates in the loss of the specificity of practices and what they make possible in the effort to map broader trends.

In a similar way, Israeli art historian Gannit Ankori attempts to uncover, not without controversy, the cultural foundations that underly the lives and works of Palestinian artists.⁷ In dealing with the complexities of the field, Ankori tries to read the 'visual voices' backwards by reconstructing 'the diverse, sometimes broken, narratives'.⁸ However, treating objects of visual arts in this way – through an 'interpretation' of the object and intentions of its maker, the book turns its back on the possibilities that can come into existence. Ankori thus also falls short in paying attention to the intertwining of aesthetics and politics within minor practices and its resulting potentials.

A more recent publication from Bashir Makhoul and Gordon Hon engages with the way in which Palestinian contemporary art is intricately interwoven with nationalism and the role art plays in the construction of national identities.⁹ Makhoul and Hon elaborate on the link between cultural production and the production of a nation through forms such as photography, painting, and installations. By reading politics as nation-building through an object-oriented approach, aesthetics is presented as a series of artistic choices supporting a political cause or is understood in terms of beauty or pleasure. As with Boullata and Ankori, the aesthetic and the political appear to consist of two separate realms that interact intimately with each other as a tool for political communication or co-producing each other.

Many recent studies have adopted a wider understanding of aesthetics and politics by drawing on the work of French thinker Jacques Rancière.¹⁰ Centring around the concept of the 'distribution of the sensible', Rancière relabels politics as the dominant 'police order' that determines who is important to be heard and seen and thus distributes the roles and identities in society.¹¹ What we therefore would normally understand as politics, Rancière's relabels as the "police", with the force disrupting the police as "politics" fuelled by an egalitarian logic of the unrecognized group in society, i.e. those who are not heard or seen. Following this, aesthetics is formulated as ways of doing and making that interfere with the forms of visibility that are prescribed on society by the police order. Aesthetics, thus, concerns the image of society and the realm of appearances and is therefore articulated as 'the political distribution of the sensible'.¹²

⁷ Cf. Ankori, *Palestinian Art*. The problematics of Ankori's book were outlined by many articles, see e.g. Maymanah Farhat's publication on the Electronic Intifada in 2009.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 217.

⁹ Cf. Makhoul and Hon, *The Origins of Palestinian Art*.

¹⁰ E. g., Gil Z. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015); Najat Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists after Darwish* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2015); Gregory Burris, *The Palestinian Idea: Film, Media, and the Radical Imagination* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 2019).

¹¹ Jacques Rancière, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (London: Continuum, 2010), 36.

¹² Jacques Rancière, "The Thinking of Dissensus: Politics and Aesthetics," in *Reading Rancière*, ed. Paul Bowman and Richard Stamp (London: Continuum, 2011), 8.

Building on Rancière's thinking, Gil Hochberg investigates in her book *Visual Occupations*, the making of the Israel-Palestine conflict in visual terms, where she equates power with vision. Rather than explicitly examining aesthetics, Hochberg does so implicitly by concentrating on the visual more generally, ranging from techniques of surveillance, to films and literature of both Israeli and Palestinian origin. She argues that the manipulation of forms of representation can be mobilized as a political instrument of change and thus hinges political emancipation on interventions in the realm of the visual.¹³

In a similar vein, Najat Rahman explores Palestinian artistic practices after the Oslo Accords through the lens of the Rancière's framework of dissensus, such as poetry, visual art and music that have been influenced by the legacy of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. She claims that the aesthetics of these practices allow for a rethinking of politics that is both dissensual and democratic in the absence of politics after Oslo.¹⁴ By focusing on the modalities of political expression in various art forms, Rahman provides an insight into what kind of politics are articulated through aesthetics but does not reach beyond that expression to gain a deeper understanding of its political capabilities.

For Greg Burris, politics is located in culture as the 'very field in which politics occasionally erupts' and from which emancipatory visions of a different world can arise.¹⁵ Following this interpretation, Burris makes a case for Palestinian film and media with its egalitarian dimensions as political objects that are capable of 'break[ing] the Israeli stranglehold on reality and open[ing] a window into another world' and thus proposes an aesthetics and Rancierian politics that is formulated in relation to the imposed reality of the occupation, rather than in its own terms.¹⁶

What these three publications have in common, is not only the echoing of Rancière's thinking, but also their formulation of an aesthetics harboured in visual practices and the realm of appearances. This is an aesthetics defined in opposition to politics and therefore excluding an understanding of minor practices that goes beyond the visual and mere perception, able to attend to their ways of *making* and the invention of their own co-ordinates within the interstices of the occupation.

Thus, while previous art historical research focuses on the aesthetic-political dimension as aesthetics *and* politics - two separate realms engaging with each other - it is unable to appreciate practices that include a wider conception of aesthetics that goes beyond beauty or pleasure. More recent publications have built on Rancière's theory of dissensus, and articulated the aesthetic-political dimension as a disruptive force in the dominant Israeli order.¹⁷ Yet by drawing on Rancière's philosophy and

¹³ Gil Z. Hochberg, *Visual Occupations: Violence and Visibility in a Conflict Zone* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2015), 164.

¹⁴ Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic: Palestinian Artists after Darwish*, 129.

¹⁵ Burris, *The Palestinian Idea: Film, Media, and the Radical Imagination.*, 6.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ E.g., Hochberg, *Visual Occupations*; Rahman, *In the Wake of the Poetic*; Burris, *The Palestinian Idea*.

theories, these studies tend to remain narrow in focus with *visual* aesthetic-political practice such as film and other visual arts remaining the central point of research. But what does the aesthetic-political mean when we attend to minor practices, practices that require attention to the *making* and its own coming into existence within the interstices, rather than a primacy on appearances or perception?

It is important here to note the existing literature on Palestinian embroidery as a minor practice. A selective but not exhaustive body of literature dedicated to Palestinian embroidery discusses, for example, the construction of a Palestinian national identity through embroidery and Palestinian costume (Sherwell 2001); the story of embroidery throughout the 20th century as national heritage, as well the personal stories of the women behind the embroidery (Kawar 2011); and a more recent example that looks at the stories behind embroidered maps of Palestine in the framework of ‘folklore creativity’ (Salamon 2016).¹⁸ While the majority of these studies deal with the significance and aspect of making along with attention for the practitioners themselves, they lack the philosophical perspective capable of intensifying the minor practice to open up to the coming into existence of possible futures. Hence, if I were to adopt either of these approaches, as can be found in the literature on art or embroidery in Palestine, my story of embroidery as minor practice would be reduced to no more than a visual object or practice with a political message *or* a tool to disrupt dominant power relations. That is to say, it would fall between the gap of these bodies of literature and would go *unnoticed*. In the remainder of this paper, I attempt to bridge this gap by turning to speculative pragmatism to propose what may be considered a different kind of aesthetics, focused in and around minor practices endowed with political capabilities.

Speculating the future, stich-by-stich

We now need to shift our attention from reading the work and object *backwards* to the intention of the artist or maker, towards attending to the generative and *forward moving* forces that come together in the process of making.¹⁹ In other words, what happens in the making of these minor practices and how do they make futures available? To answer these questions, speculative pragmatism might provide a new theoretical and philosophical perspective on (the capabilities of) minor practices and its aesthetic-political dimensions in the context of contemporary Palestine, generating insight into how these practices *themselves* are speculating about the futures of Palestine, rather than *us* speculating about the potentialities of those practices.²⁰

¹⁸ More recently in 2018, the Palestinian museum in Birzeit in the West Bank, organized an exhibition that deals with Palestinian embroidery showing the material history of Palestine. The exhibition catalogue is available online and offers a comprehensive and rich overview of the practice, while acknowledging that the practice has been labelled as “marginal” and emphasizing the intimacy of the practice.

¹⁹ Ingold, “The Textility of Making,” 97.

²⁰ Cf. Brian Massumi, *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and Occurrent Arts* (Cambridge and London: MIT, 2011), 80.

The story that follows is composed of conversations I had with Sara²¹ inside her home in Kaubar, which is half an hour's drive from the capital of the Occupied Palestinian Territories, Ramallah. During the Second Intifada (2000-2005), Israeli forces closed down the community centre she worked for, therefore rendering her unemployed. The political event of the Second Intifada, or Al-Aqsa Intifada, ignited in Jerusalem when the then Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon made a visit to Temple Mount. The majority of the Palestinians considered his visit a provocation, leading to violent eruptions spreading over the West Bank and also affecting Sara. In order to survive, she told me, she began to do the thing she has always done, embroidery. She 'inherited' the practice from her family, as she and her sisters together with her mother, worked on embroidery pieces within the Birzeit women's coalition to help out their father financially.

As a consequence of the political unrest following the Second Intifada, Sara set up a women's co-operative in embroidery as a kind of resistance, she mentioned to me, since embroidery is a traditional Palestinian practice. If politics is understood as relational/participatory in nature through the lens of speculative pragmatism, then the inauguration of her co-operative contains a political quality, as the formative and organizational forces of the Second Intifada impacted the locality that Sara is inhabiting.²² The aesthetic dimension, following Brian Massumi, is cultivated in the way Sara decided to react to the political ecology and effects of the disruptions, qualitatively and creatively, positively and generatively.²³ It follows that the aesthetic and political dimensions are not separate or opposites, rather, 'co-occurring dimensions of every event's relaying of formative potential', tightly interwoven and both productive of Sara's initiative acting as one politico-aesthetic force.²⁴

Sara considers her co-operative hence as a way to resist the political oppression, because the embroidery practice expresses the Palestinian culture and identity that is engrained in the history of Palestinian resistance.²⁵ The practice of Palestinian cross-stitching is not just passed on from generation to generation, it is rather *inherited*, as Sara jokingly told me. For a lot of women working in the co-op, the practice is 'in their blood', an expression of their history as individuals and as a people. The practice is, in other words, intimately tied up in their cultural history, but also within the histories and stories of their families and their land.²⁶ Palestinian embroidery thus becomes to a certain degree a practice of *resistance*, as it articulates the existence of the Palestinians on the land and the historical ties that are connected to it. For this reason, Sara not only founded the co-operative but also teaches embroidery in schools

²¹ This is an anonymized name.

²² Cf. Erin Manning and Brian Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 106.

²³ Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 12; Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act: Passages in the Ecology of Experience*, 106.

²⁴ Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 12.

²⁵ Sherwell, "Embroidering the Motherland: The Fabric of Palestinian National Identity," 119.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 120.

to keep the craft itself alive. Certainly, this indicates that the practice is an active and immanent recreation, a making and remaking, which inherits and sustains the life of culture through its very doings.

Indeed, as Sara highlighted, preserving the tradition of Palestinian cross-stitching does not mean that their practices are static: they are and always have always been dynamic. As the patterns change with time and adapt to different situations, one can view embroidery, Tina Sherwell rightly argues, ‘as a living tradition which is not stagnant but rather evolves with time and changes in lifestyle.’²⁷ While on the one hand this minor practice has historical significance, on the other hand it is underlined as *living* practice, that lives with and within the people. Therefore, conceiving new designs, patterns, introducing innovations and new colours to the traditional black and red palette, and thus ‘making something people have never seen before’, as Sara put it, forms a key element of the practice. In other words, to create new ideas and make it more “attention grabbing”, according to Sara, adds *more life to the practice of embroidery*.

It is the life instilled in the practices that reverberates the speculative pragmatist heartbeat of technique-based practices; instauration; or simply creation and its oscillating in between the virtual and the actual.²⁸ For Massumi, technique-based practices, such as the technique of composition, bring together potentials of existence, inventing new styles and new forms of life through careful experimentation, care, and paying attention to details.²⁹ French thinker Etienne Souriau introduces the concept of *instauration*, referring to ‘progression’ or ‘anaphoric experience’ together with *the work to be made*, which is the virtual work that is in-the-making and comes into existence through the act of making.³⁰ As he explains:

When we create, we are not alone. In the dialogue in which the work questions us and calls to us, it guides and leads us in the sense that with and for it, we explore the paths that lead it to its final, concrete presence.³¹

In composing potentials, Souriau draws attention to the instauration, the passage of one mode of existence into another, the gradual metamorphosis from the virtual to the actual that can guide our understanding of the pragmatic difference minor practices can make in a situation like the one in Palestine.³²

²⁷ Ibid., 124.

²⁸ Manning and Massumi, *Thought in the Act*; Etienne Souriau, Isabelle Stengers, and Bruno Latour, *The Different Modes of Existence* (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2015); Felix Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995).

²⁹ Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 73–4.

³⁰ Souriau, Stengers, and Latour, *The Different Modes of Existence*, 20.

³¹ Ibid., 238.

³² Ibid., 224.

As such, in the creation of the embroidery pieces, Sara draws on the endless possibilities of forms, shapes and colours, by opening the virtual reservoir of potentialities and exploring stitch by stitch the path that leads to the actual piece of embroidery.³³ The embroidery to-be-made is passing from one mode of existence to another and *experienced* in the making, imbuing the embroidery with life.³⁴ In that sense, existence is always multiple and so are the futures woven into the present, informed by the past. Unlike the conservative take on embroidery as mere cultural reproduction, Sara remarks upon the inventive dimension of the practice as well, the future that is woven into the present is not simply a return of the past, but the actualization of something indeterminate, that sustains a history under siege by recreating and reinventing stitch by stitch. This experience of making is what Massumi would call *Semblance* and refers to the way in which the virtual appears, the seeping of it into the actual, and the experiencing of an indeterminate future as it is cultivated in the process of embroidery.³⁵

The aesthetic effect of semblance is what Guattari in broader terms would call the *aesthetic power of feeling*.³⁶ Rather than turning to art as having the monopoly on creation, Guattari writes that we should not only look at art in the western sense of the word, but rather at what I would propose, minor practices such as Palestinian cross-stitching, in order to enquire about the potential and intensity of aesthetics and creativity.³⁷ The driving force of this new aesthetic paradigm is what Guattari labels ‘proto-aesthetics’, referring to a dimension of creation in a ‘nascent state’, that is ‘perpetually in advancement of itself, its power of emergence subsuming the contingency and hazards of activities that bring immaterial Universes into being.’³⁸ Minor practices in Palestine can be understood in this way, I would argue, as they contain the potential and intensity of a proto-aesthetics that is always in development and evolving with the lifeforces that run along with it. Palestinian embroidery is thus above all a minor practice that is *alive*, and continuously developing as the needle moves through the fabric, instilling the aesthetic power of feeling.

Some of the women that are part of the co-operative are housewives, unemployed, or confined within the walls of their houses. The coming together in a social setting that is a different environment than their own homes, therefore provides them with a space to put their energy and creativity into the creation of embroidery pieces. Sara told me that ‘it adds to their life because they are producing something’ and referred to the embroidery as a ‘coping mechanism that distracts them from the worries about their lives’. The act of creation thus seems to me, as a way of creating an alternative reality that differs from the one in which their lives are centred in, in

³³ Steven Shaviro, *Without Criteria: Kant, Whitehead, Deleuze, and Aesthetics* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 2009), 34.

³⁴ Souriau, Stengers, and Latour, *The Different Modes of Existence*, 225.

³⁵ Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 15–6.

³⁶ Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, 101.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 106.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 102.

which they can be creative. Moreover, a physical alternative reality is provided by the women's homes in which they meet alternately. Some women come from relatively conservative families that do not allow them a space beyond their own home. Hence, the coming together of the women allows them an outside space, to get out of the house, socialise with others and create together and consequently open up ways of making sense in common of reshaping their world and realities.

Drawing on Guattari's new aesthetic paradigm, it is thus not so much the perception of an object, but rather the process of creation within the minor practices that brings forth the aesthetic power of feeling.³⁹ As the women in the co-operative exemplify, it is through the making and creation of the embroidery along with the innovations introduced, that futures are *felt*. The potentials for change within the virtual reservoir are being enmeshed in actuality and imbue the women with a new sense of reality, where previously unimaginable achievement can become possible. Thus, when the women find themselves in an alternative reality outside their own home, or when they create a new reality effected through making, innovating and adding novelty to the practice, they are forming new assemblages of creation. The lure of these new realities and potentialities are joined by the *qualitative fringe* betokening 'a moreness to life' that can be brought into existence and above all felt.⁴⁰ Sara pointed out to me that women in the co-operative have creative ideas and realized 'they can make things they can envision', making them flourish and thrive within potentialities of the qualitative fringe, a true vitality effect.⁴¹ Like the fringe of embroidery, it is half open, half closed, half virtual, half actual, leaving space open for potentialities to come into existence. This echoes William James in explaining that our fields of experience are not delimited in a definite way as our field of view does, but 'are fringed forever by a *more* that continuously develops, and that continuously supersedes them as life proceeds'.⁴²

Likewise, Sara's embroidery project does more than offer a means for these women to attain some degree of financial stability. Besides providing their makers with the *feeling of financial power*, it especially offers the *aesthetic power of feeling*. Taking me outside, Sara proudly showed me her garden, with a small olive tree, vegetables, and beautiful flowers. A colourful oasis from which she draws inspiration. During the tour of her garden, we walked past a chair in a narrow pathway along her house, which faced a fully blossoming rose branch. She told me that this is one of the places where she would sit to be inspired and draw up her designs. Many of the colours, flowers, and plants I see translated in the embroidery she showed me, some more abstracted, other patterns more figurative. These designs and ideas are additions to the more traditional visual language of Palestinian embroidery that refers to specific places indicated by vegetation and plants that grow in the area of these

³⁹ Ibid., 106.

⁴⁰ Massumi, *Semblance and Event*, 44.

⁴¹ Ibid., 45.

⁴² William James, *Essays in Radical Empiricism* (Project Gutenberg, 2010), 95 [emphasis added].

specific villages and places.⁴³ She pointed out that one of the most important aspects of her practice is creating something new and original, pushing her creativity into something entirely new, that makes herself, the women and the ones who see it, *feel*. Aesthetics is therefore not only tied to objects of fine or visual art, or even to the reproduction of cultural symbols through crafts, but arguably dwelling more so in the minor practice and released through the process of making, passing through its own potential and constituting an intensification of life itself.

The minor practice of embroidery exemplified in Sara's co-operative provided insight into a different kind of aesthetics, an aesthetics of life and *feeling* alive. As the embroidery practice already indicates, it is as alive as its maker and is kept alive by introducing novelty and innovation to the minor practice. The women who do the embroidery work *care* for the practice, and as the story illustrates, they also care for themselves and others. They therefore do not only 'add life to the craft' but also to *their worlds*. It is thus both the practice and practitioner that relate to the flow of life itself, the dynamic unfolding passing through its own potential and thriving in it. As Souriau suggests: 'The soul of a new society is not made by itself, it must be worked toward and those who work toward it really effect its genesis.'⁴⁴

Conclusion

The minor practices of embroidery that the women in the co-operative enact are by no means a grand political gesture. However, the difference that it instaurates can be found in the *making* that vectors the possibility of a new society, a new way of existing, and constitutes what Guattari would call *a new art of living*. This new art of living is fundamental for the production of change for a better future. As he explains:

The refoundation of politics will have to pass through the aesthetic and analytical dimensions [...]. We cannot conceive of solutions to the poisoning of the atmosphere and to global warming due to the greenhouse effect, or to the problem of population control, without a mutation of mentality, without *promoting a new art of living in society*.⁴⁵

Beyond the narrow confines of that which modern philosophy once called "the aesthetic", speculative pragmatism enables us to attend to a *moreness* in minor practices, in aesthetics, and life itself and how these can vector alternative futures. A speculative pragmatist approach makes perceptible the way minor practices can offer the space for people to release new energies and forms of creativity that can be made productive of new potentialities, of a soul of a new society. Aesthetics then, is capable

⁴³ Sherwell, "Embroidering the Motherland: The Fabric of Palestinian National Identity," 120.

⁴⁴ Souriau, Stengers, and Latour, *The Different Modes of Existence*, 227.

⁴⁵ Guattari, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm*, 20. [emphasis added]

of making the potentialities of life *felt* not only through fine art, but perhaps particularly, through minor practices that, stich by stich, instaurate new arts of living.

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