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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Fauda and the Israeli occupation of Palestine: Gender, emotions, and visual representations of complicity in international politics

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Abstract

This article examines the visual politics of complicity within war, conflict, and military occupation in International Relations (IR). By arguing that complicity is a social relation through which actors navigate violence while drawing on power and resources that are distributed unevenly, it explores the production, articulation, and reception of complicity within the Israeli television series *Fauda*, which addresses complicit behaviour under the Israeli occupation of Palestine. By building on Feminist IR's engagement with emotions, gender, and visual representations, this article provides a twofold contribution to the study of complicity in international politics. Firstly, the complicit entanglement between creators, distributors, and viewers of *Fauda* spotlights the cultural workers' role in shaping public knowledge of war, violence, and military occupation, particularly by creating and circulating cultural representations that facilitate the complicity of audiences with the violence that they consume through certain emotional logics (empathy, compassion, fear). Secondly, this article examines representations of complicity within *Fauda* to shed light on complicit actors' embodied experiences of navigating between different identities while caught in the middle of violence (perpetrator, victim, witness, bystander). To this end, this article develops our understanding of emotions, resistance, and domination in international politics.

Introduction

Gabi Ayub: In our society, someone of your status would have gotten his daughter a kidney transplant in Hadassah [hospital in Jerusalem] long ago … You could save her life, your daughter could live well like her friends do, like she deserves.

Ali al-Karmi: I am doing everything in my power.
Gabi Ayub: Ali, I've gotten five children, may God keep them safe. I promise you that if one of them were in Nadia's condition, I'd jump through hoops for him. Ali, who's behind the nerve gas story in Aqaba? I'd kill anyone on this earth for my daughter. I'd given up my life for her. You, sir, all you need to do is give me one name. One name, Ali, and we'll take care of your kid.
Ali al-Karmi: Abu Ahmed.

(Fauda, 2015)

In one of the opening scenes of the television series *Fauda* (*chaos* in Arabic), Gabi Ayub (an Israeli security operative) uses emotional manipulation to convince Ali (a Palestinian resistance fighter) to become an informer in exchange for a life-saving surgery for his daughter. The scene is representative of the plot of the series (available on Netflix), which depicts controversial topics such as collaboration, treason, and the operation of undercover units in occupied Palestine. Specifically, the first season, which is the focus of this article, shows the efforts of an undercover unit (*Mist'aravim*) to catch a Hamas terrorist, Abu Ahmed, who has been mistakenly declared dead.[1] The action includes killing and abduction of Israeli soldiers and Palestinian civilians, suicide bombings, and conflicts between and among Israeli and Palestinian security services, all while introducing viewers to the characters' personal lives. However, *Fauda* does not only depict complicity. After the launch of the series, its creators, actors, and distributor (Netflix), all have been accused of complicity with the Israeli occupation by developing and distributing a series that glorifies the Israeli military's violence against Palestinians.[2]

The illustration, production, and distribution of complicity within *Fauda* raises questions about the conceptual and empirical understanding on complicity within war, violence, and military occupation, especially since its explorations, not least its politics of representation, remain few and far between in IR.[3] Thus, this article asks: How do visual representations of complicity arise in international politics? How is complicity represented and by whom? What kind of emotions accompany visual representations of complicity? What is the relation between emotions, resistance, and domination within visual representations of complicity?

To answer these questions, this article builds on Feminist IR's engagement with emotions, gender, and popular culture, and argues that *Fauda* introduces us to three different visually related manifestations of complicity within war, conflict, and military occupation: representations of lived experiences of complicity, complicity as production, and respectively, complicity as consumption. These manifestations are part and parcel of a broader governing logic of complicity in international politics; however, they are different from other forms of complicity such as consuming goods that have been produced under substandard working conditions or participating in gig economy as providers or consumers. Although all these examples of complicity disclose different degrees of privilege, needs, interests, financial, and emotional investments, what ultimately unites them is the assumption that complicity emerges from the intersection between imperialism, colonialism, capitalism, racism, and militarism, all of which are sociohistorical processes that shape our contemporary world.[4]

Existing scholarly examinations of complicity have provided a rich background of insights for the development of this research; however, this literature has fallen short of engaging with emotions within complicit contexts. Therefore, this article examines emotions that permeate the production, illustration, and consumption of visual representations to provide a twofold contribution to the existing literature on complicity. On the one hand, this article explores depictions of complicity within *Fauda* to provide an embodied and situated account of complicity that questions legal and moral philosophical examinations of complicity as rational behaviour.[5] Specifically, it explores emotions that agents experience '*before* or *in the course of* one's being

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[1] *Fauda* comprises of three seasons, and has been renewed for a fourth one.

[2] Yasmeen Serhan, 'Watching Israeli TV's *Fauda* as a Palestinian', *The Atlantic*, available at: {https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2018/06/watching-israeli-tvs-fauda-as-a-palestinian/561917/} accessed 2 August 2022.

[3] Debbie Lisle, 'Waiting for international political sociology: A field guide to living in-between', *International Political Sociology*, 10:4 (2016), pp. 417–33; Frank Möller, Rasmus Bellmer, and Rune Saugmann, 'Visual appropriation: A self-reflexive qualitative method for visual analysis of the international', *International Political Sociology*, 16:1 (2022), pp. 1–19.

[4] Devika Sharma, 'Privileged, hypocritical, and complicit: Contemporary Scandinavian literature and the egalitarian imagination', *Comparative Literature Studies*, 56:4 (2019), pp. 711–30 (p. 712).

[5] John Gardner, 'Complicity and causality', *Criminal Law and Philosophy*, 1 (2017), pp. 127–41; Chiara Lepora and Robert E. Goodin, *On Complicity and Compromise* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2013).

complicit'[6] in wrongdoing to show the fluidity of identities, moralities, behaviours, and choices that characterise lived experiences of complicit behaviour within war, conflict, and military occupation. Thus, this article speaks to social and political theories of complicity that question complicity as rational behaviour by insisting that complicit behaviour is always situated within the sociohistorical, economic, and political context within which it arises.[7] On the other, this research broadens the scope of cultural and literary analyses of complicity. Rather than focusing solely on representations of complicity as this literature usually does, this article examines their production and consumption, and particularly the emotional logics that permeate these processes. This is important since visual representations of violence, war, and conflict do not only depict but also elicit emotions that may enhance, obscure, or challenge the violence that is depicted in those representations.[8]

In so doing, this article situates complicity on a continuum between resistance and domination while developing both our empirical and conceptual understanding of international politics. Empirically, it broadens our understanding of gendered representations of occupied Palestine. Visual representations have increasingly offered a nuanced portrayal of Palestinian women as agents of their own destiny, thus departing from their usual depiction as irrational perpetrators of violence or as victims of the Israeli occupation or Palestinian patriarchal culture.[9] Likewise, this article examines the gendered representations of Palestinian women's strategies of survival under the occupation, however it pays particular attention to their role as collaborators, and the shifting of their identities between perpetrators, victims, witnesses, and bystanders. Partly, this is related to the fact that the experiences of women who collaborate with the Israeli occupation have been less visible within popular culture,[10] whereas experiences of Palestinian men who collaborate or are suspected of collaboration with the Israeli occupation of Palestine have been previously depicted in films such as *Omar* (2013), *Paradise Now* (2005), or the documentary *The Collaborator and His Family* (2011). More broadly, *Fauda* introduces us to the embodied experiences of complicity by collaboration, aspects that are not easily captured by historical analyses of collaboration,[11] examinations of collaboration as tool of governance[12] or by the literature on transitional justice, human rights, and collaboration,[13] all of which also overlook women's experiences as collaborators.[14]

[6]Pam Laidman, 'Complicity: What is it, and how can it be avoided?', in Afxentis Afxentiou, Robin Dunford, and Michael Neu (eds), *Exploring Complicity: Concept, Cases and Critique* (London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2017), p. 68, emphasis in original.

[7]Barbara Applebaum, *Being White, Being Good: White Complicity, White Moral Responsibility, and Social Justice Pedagogy* (New York, NY: Lexington Books, 2010); Paula Schwartz, 'The politics of food and gender in occupied Paris', *Modern & Contemporary France*, 7:1 (1999), pp. 35–45.

[8]Roland Bleiker and Emma Hutchison, 'Fear no more: Emotions and world politics', *Review of International Studies*, 34:S1 (2008), pp. 115–35.

[9]Kenza Oumil, 'Re-writing history on screen: Annemarie Jacir's *Salt of This Sea*', *Arab Studies Quarterly*, 38:3 (2016), pp. 586–600; Rachel S. Harris, 'Parallel lives: Palestinian, Druze, and Jewish Women in recent Israeli cinema on the conflict: *Free Zone*, *Syrian Bride*, and *Lemon Tree*', *Shofar*, 32:1 (2013), pp. 79–102.

[10]See, for example, *Huda's Salon* (2021) that tells the story of a Palestinian woman who is blackmailed into collaborating with the Israeli forces. (2021).

[11]Hillel Cohen, *Good Arabs: The Israeli Security Agencies and the Israeli Arabs, 1948–1967*, trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley, CA: University California Press, 2010).

[12]Ahmad H. Sa'di, 'The incorporation of the Palestinian minority by the Israeli State, 1948–1970: On the nature, transformation and constrains of collaboration', *Social Text*, 21:2 (2003), pp. 75–94.

[13]Said Zeedani, 'The issue of collaborators from a human rights perspective', *The Phenomenon of Collaborators in Palestine: Proceedings of a Passia Workshop* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 2001), pp. 40–4, available at: {http://passia.org/media/filer_public/11/a1/11a13be0-c1c2-4dcb-9106-76ea8cda88da/collaborators.pdf} accessed 2 August 2022.

[14]Saleh Jawwad, 'The classification and recruitment of collaborators', *The Phenomenon of Collaborators in Palestine: Proceedings of a Passia Workshop* (Jerusalem: Palestinian Academic Society for the Study of International Affairs, 2001), pp. 17–28, available at: {http://passia.org/media/filer_public/11/a1/11a13be0-c1c2-4dcb-9106-76ea8cda88da/collaborators.pdf} accessed 2 August 2022.

Conceptually, explorations of complicity develop our understanding of the intersections between domination, resistance, and emotions in international politics. On the one hand, Feminist IR has already warned against dominant understandings of violence that distinguish between (passive) victims and (active) perpetrators of violence, thus enhancing our understanding of agency, resistance, and domination.[15] However, they have yet to examine the emotional baggage that actors experience while shifting between these positions. Therefore, this article explores the spectrum of emotions (from fear to desire and love) that complicit agents experience while shifting between victim, perpetrator, and witness identities in the middle of violence. On the other, Feminist IR's engagement with complicity as production and as distribution develops our knowledge of *how* public understandings of violence, conflict, and (in)security are shaped by cultural workers (creators, actors, distributors), who so far have received little attention as 'active agents in the creation and transformation of international political life'.[16] This is particularly important since the cultural representations of war, conflict, and military occupation that they create and circulate eventually facilitate the complicity of audiences with the violence that they consume through certain emotional logics (empathy, compassion, fear).

In order to support these arguments, this article studies the intersection of gender, emotions, and images of complicity in *Fauda* by drawing on Gabi Schlag's[17] multilevel approach that combines multimodality with visual analysis as a means to interpret the emotionality associated with the image content, production, intended audience, circulation, and respectively, intertextuality of visual representations.[18] In order to examine the *content* of *Fauda*, I have watched the first season twice by paying attention to its plot, characters' profile, what is said and not said in their speech acts, and gestures and behaviours with the aim to trace the intersection between domination and resistance within representations of lived experiences of complicity. While examining *Fauda*'s production, (intended) audience, circulation, and respectively, intertextuality, I explored how its plot, distribution, and creation are 'quoted, appropriated, or criticized within and against other texts' such as film reviews, opinion pieces, and general media articles, all while accounting for the broader social, economic, and political context of the Israeli occupation, and its links with the Israeli and Western cultural industries.[19]

By proposing one possible interpretation of *Fauda*'s politics of complicity among others, the article is structured in four parts. The first section builds on Feminist IR's engagement with gender, emotions, and popular culture to develop our conceptual understanding of the production, representation, and consumption of visual representations of complicity in international politics. The second one provides a few insights on the Israeli occupation of Palestine, and its impact on Palestinians' daily life. The third section explores the complicit entanglement between *Fauda*'s creators, viewers, and the global market of media entertainment, while the fourth one examines some of *Fauda*'s characters' lived experiences of complicity under the Israeli occupation. This article concludes by suggesting areas for further research on complicity and visual representations in international politics.

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[15]Maria O'Reilly, *Gendered Agency in War and Peace: Gender Justice and Women's Activism in Post-Conflict Bosnia-Herzegovina* (London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018); Hanna Ketola, 'Withdrawing from politics? Gender, agency and women ex-fighters in Nepal', *Security Dialogue*, 51:6 (2020), pp. 519–36.

[16]Amanda Russell Beattie, Clara Eroukhmanoff, and Naomi Head, 'Introduction: Interrogating the "everyday" politics of emotions in international relations', *Journal of International Political Theory*, 15:2 (2019), pp. 136–47 (p. 141).

[17]Gabi Schlag, 'Moving images and the politics of pity: A multilevel approach to the interpretation of images and emotions', in Maéva Clément and Eric Sangar (eds), *Researching Emotions in International Relations: Methodological Perspectives on the Emotional Turn* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), pp. 209–30.

[18]Due to its focus on a television series, this article excludes Schlag's criterion of mediation/ mediatisation, which analyses images that circulate on social media. Given the complexity of the politics of emotions within social media, the mediation/ mediatisation of *Fauda* will be addressed in a different paper.

[19]Simon Koschut, 'Speaking from the heart: Emotion discourse analysis in International Relations', in Clément and Sangar (eds), *Researching Emotions in International Relations*, p. 282.

Visual representations of complicity: Popular culture, gender, and emotions

The study of complicity through visual and popular culture enriches the discipline of International Relations (IR), which has increasingly focused on the role of the 'everyday' in international politics. In so doing, it has examined 'subjects, practices, relations, sites and things that are usually kept out of [its] political and analytical vision'.[20] As everyday sites of international politics, visual and cultural representations provide a complex understanding of (in)security, war, power, and violence that goes beyond the 'high' politics of diplomacy, foreign policy, and governance. Scholars investigate cultural products, workers, and their audiences that are located beyond state activities to deepen our understanding of actorness, oppression, and resistance in international politics.[21] Therefore, popular culture representations provide an excellent opportunity to develop the study of the visual politics of complicity in international politics.

Firstly, complicity is a contentious subject. Popular culture, particularly visual illustrations, allow researchers to examine 'subjects that may be too provocative or controversial'[22] to be discussed openly, while simultaneously protecting complicit individuals from being exposed to a greater danger. Secondly, the intersection between popular culture and world politics cuts across processes of production, representation, and consumption,[23] thus visual products illuminate different manifestations of complicity that we encounter in 'everyday life in the "real world"',[24] particularly within military occupation, war, and conflict. This article builds on the assumption that there is a 'continuum'[25] between popular culture and world politics because these 'two spheres … are inseparable and inhabit the same space.'[26] In this regard, popular culture enhances our understanding of international politics, especially since it produces, and is the product of, wider narratives that circulate in societies. Thirdly, visual representations are an excellent avenue for studying emotions and complicity in international politics. Since 'one of the most promising locations to study emotions is how they are represented and communicated',[27] visual representations allow for the study of emotions within different complicit contexts such as depictions of lived experiences of complicity, and the production and consumption of those illustrations of complicity.

Due to their interest in the role of the everyday in international politics, critical and feminist IR scholars have examined the politics of representing bodies, violence, and gender within popular culture.[28] In particular, Penny Griffin has studied the intersection between popular culture, international political economy, and feminist/anti-feminist discourses by developing a three-pronged research strategy that accounts for the *production*, *representation*, and *consumption* of popular culture. Her research roadmap is an excellent starting point for studying complicity and its cultural manifestations in international politics, especially since it illuminates relations of power, gender, and inequality that produce, and are reproduced, through visual representations.[29]

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[20]Xavier Guillaume and Jef Huysmans, 'The concept of "the everyday": Ephemeral politics and the abundance of life', *Cooperation and Conflict*, 54:2 (2019), pp. 278–96 (p. 279).

[21]Merje Kuus, 'Critical geopolitics', in Robert Denemark (ed.), *The International Studies Encyclopedia* (London, UK: Blackwell, 2010), pp. 683–701.

[22]Cynthia Boaz, 'How speculative fiction can teach about gender and power in international politics: A pedagogical overview', *International Studies Perspectives*, 21:3 (2020), pp. 240–57 (p. 241).

[23]Penny Griffin, *Popular Culture, Political Economy and the Death of Feminism: Why Women Are in Refrigerators and Other Stories* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 55–88.

[24]Christina Rowley and Jutta Weldes, 'The evolution of international security studies and the everyday: Suggestions from the Buffyverse', *Security Dialogue*, 46:3 (2014), pp. 513–30 (p. 514).

[25]Kyle Grayson, Matt Davies, and Simon Philpott, 'Pop goes IR? Researching the popular culture–world politics continuum', *Politics*, 29:3 (2009), pp. 155–63.

[26]Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton, 'Introduction', in Federica Caso and Caitlin Hamilton (eds), *Popular Culture and World Politics: Theories, Methods, Pedagogies* (Bristol, UK: E-International Relations, 2015), p. 3.

[27]Bleiker and Hutchison, 'Fear no more', p. 128.

[28]Griffin, *Popular Culture*; Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2013).

[29]Griffin, *Popular Culture*.

This is even more important since these aspects have received limited attention within existing cultural and literary analyses of complicity.

Nevertheless, this article develops Griffin's work further by exploring the emotional logic through which domination and resistance operate within the production, representation, and consumption of visual popular culture. By viewing emotions as 'a site of oppression as well as a source of radical social and political resistance',[30] it builds on the extensive literature that regards emotions as cultural and social practices that circulate in the public realm.[31] Specifically, it draws on Sara Ahmed's investigation of the relationship between bodies, emotions, and texts, which shows that the circulation of emotions in the public sphere aligns some bodies with or against others, thereby (re)producing their gendered, racialised, and sexualised meanings. Inspired by this work, this article examines emotions of complicity that are embedded within the production, illustration, and reception of visual representations of violence to trace how 'feelings and affective states [of complicity] can *reverberate* in and out of cyberspace, [while being] intensified (or muffled) and transformed through digital circulation and repetition.'[32]

A feminist critique of cultural production that sits at the intersection between popular culture and political economy steers literary and cultural studies of complicity toward examining the *production* of complicity through the commodification of bodies, violence, and war. Current cultural and literary analyses of complicity focus on the ethics of representing violence and on the (im)possibility to develop critiques of complicity;[33] however, they pay less attention to the embeddedness of those cultural productions within the neoliberal economic relations that govern the production of popular culture. Since 'all forms of contemporary Western culture are shaped by, and produced in, the economic systems of capitalism',[34] this article argues that the commodification of violence facilitates the complicity of cultural workers, authors, and distributors with the violence that they represent in two ways.

Firstly, complicity as production is facilitated through the creation of cultural artefacts that reproduce limited understanding of war actors and identities. This is the result of a broader logic that operates within the entertainment industry, whose production apparatus is dominated by white, male figures,[35] which in turn produce narrow cultural representations of women, black and brown bodies within media, films, or television series. Whereas 'male gaze' is the act of representing women through sexualised and gendered tropes that objectify them for the purposes of male consumption,[36] the 'white gaze' objectifies non-white bodies both sexually and racially.[37] In this context, the film industry revolves around normative understandings of gender roles within war and conflict, thereby depicting men as heroic and masculine while women are depicted as dependable and vulnerable.[38] Moreover, the film industry has been criticised for providing

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[30]Megan Boler, *Feeling Power: Emotions and Education* (New York, NY and London, UK: Routledge, 1999), p. xvii.

[31]Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (Edinburgh, UK: Edinburgh University Press, 2004); Claire Hemmings, 'Invoking affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn', *Cultural Studies*, 19:5 (2005), pp. 548–67; Linda Åhäll, 'Affect as methodology: Feminism and the politics of emotion', *International Political Sociology*, 12:1 (2018), pp. 36–52.

[32]Adi Kuntsman, 'Introduction: Affective fabrics of digital cultures', in Athina Karatzogianni and Adi Kuntsman (eds), *Digital Cultures and the Politics of Emotion: Feelings, Affect and Technological Change* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, UK and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 1, emphasis in original.

[33]Adam Brown, 'Screening women's complicity in the Holocaust: The problems of judgement and representation', *Holocaust Studies*, 17:2–3 (2011), pp. 75–98; Nicolette Barsdorf-Liebchen, 'Complicity in violation: The photographic witnessing and visualization of war and conflict in the twenty-first century', in Afxentiou, Dunford, and Neu (eds), *Exploring Complicity*, pp. 203–23.

[34]Griffin, *Popular Culture*, p. 29.

[35]Rachel Alicia Griffin, 'Pushing into *Precious*: Black women, media representation, and the glare of the white supremacist capitalist patriarchal gaze', *Critical Studies in Media Communication*, 31:3 (2014), pp. 182–97 (p. 183).

[36]Laura Mulvey, 'Visual pleasure and narrative cinema', *Screen*, 16:3 (1975), pp. 6–18.

[37]Griffin, 'Pushing into *Precious*', pp. 182–97.

[38]Shepherd, *Gender*, pp. 42–55; Yvonne Tasker, *Soldiers Stories: Military Women in Cinema and Television since World War II* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011).

Orientalised representations of the so-called 'enemy other' or individuals that are marked by different degrees of vulnerability (women, children, or refugees).[39] Cultural workers, producers, and distributors are complicit with the violence that they represent because they transform the bodies that they depict 'into different modes of capital',[40] which only serve the career progression and bring about reputational benefits for creators and distributors while hardly ever benefiting those whose lives are visually represented for the purposes of entertainment.

Secondly, the commodification of bodies, violence, war, and conflict provides cultural creators, workers, and producers not only with the social power and reputational resources that they need to develop their craft but also with the financial means required to live while working within an industry (i.e., entertainment), which is characterised by precarity, inequality, and subordination.[41] Although within the entertainment industry that revolves around representations of war, all 'livelihoods depend on its [war's] existence',[42] this is even more significant for individuals whose gender, race, class, age, or ethnicity makes them more vulnerable to precarity in this industry.[43]

This aspect is certainly true for Palestinian Israeli creative workers who are involved in the production of *Fauda*, especially since they operate in an industry that is embedded within war, conflict, and military violence. However, their complicity with the Israeli entertainment industry is hardly ever a totalising experience. Research shows that their participation in the creation and production of this series involves a variety of strategies from accepting to subverting and actively challenging the Israeli narrative of the occupation during their daily interaction with Israeli creative workers on the set of *Fauda*.[44] Therefore, the complicity of cultural workers with the violence that they depict shows that the production and circulation of knowledge about war and conflict is entangled with domination and resistance insofar as cultural workers and creators navigate marginalisation and oppression according to their own potential, resources, and life experiences.

Moving beyond cultural producers, the commodification of violence through visual representations also raises concerns about audiences' *complicity with the violence that they consume*. Feminist IR scholars have already shown that cultural representations of war and violence are a source of leisure, pleasure, and desire that ultimately normalises war in everyday life to such an extent that it become commonsensical.[45] The normalisation of war through visual artefacts builds on gendered and racialised representations that, as already mentioned, reproduce dominant understandings of military violence, which enhances the audiences' complicity with the violence that they consume through visual means.[46] Nevertheless, visual representations carry different meaning for different people. Consumers are not 'passive endpoints of economic

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[39]Delia Konzett, 'War and Orientalism in Hollywood combat film', *Quarterly Review of Film and Video*, 21:4 (2004), pp. 327–38; Dominika Blachnicka-Ciacek, 'How not to eat human stories: Ruts, complicities, and methods in visual representations of refugees', in Peter Adey, Janet C. Bowstead, Katherine Brickell, Vandana Desai, Mike Dolton, Alasdair Pinkerton, and Ayesha Siddiqi (eds), *The Handbook of Displacement* (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), pp. 659–72.

[40]Tero Karppi, Lotta Kähkönen, Mona Mannevuo, Mari Pajala, and Tanja Sihvonen, 'Affective capitalism: Investments and investigations', *Ephemera: Theory and Politics in Organization*, 16:4 (2016), pp. 1–13 (p. 9).

[41]Mark Banks, *Creative Justice: Cultural Industries, Work and Inequality* (London, UK: Rowman & Littlefield, 2007).

[42]Griffin, *Popular Culture*, p. 24.

[43]Anamika Saha, 'Beards, scarves, halal meat, terrorists, forced marriage: Television industries and the production of race', *Media, Culture & Society*, 34:4 (2012), pp. 424–38; Noa Lavie and Amal Jamal, 'Constructing ethnonational differentiation on the set of the TV series, Fauda', *Ethnicities*, 19:6 (2019), pp. 1038–61.

[44]Amal Jamal and Noa Lavie, 'Resisting subalternity: Palestinian mimicry and passing in the Israeli cultural industries', *Media, Culture and Society*, 42:7–8 (2020), pp. 1293–308.

[45]Cynthia Enloe, *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Louise Pears, 'Military masculinities on television: Who dares wins', *Norma: International Journal for Masculinity Studies*, 17:1 (2022), pp. 67–82.

[46]Barsdorf-Liebchen, 'Complicity in violation'.

activity' insofar as 'they are capable of actively transforming the world and being transformed by it.'[47] While some segments of the audience may experience pleasure and desire in watching visual representations of war, others might experience compassion, empathy, anger, distress, discomfort, ambivalence, or a combination of these emotions altogether.[48]

Finally, yet significantly, a feminist critique of *representations of complicity* queries legal and moral philosophical assumptions that complicity is always intentional, deliberate, and rational.[49] Mihaela Mihai[50] argues that moral and legal philosophy provide a universal explanation for complicit behaviour according to which complicity is always driven by a cost-benefit analysis, which results in ignoring the agentic capacities of complicit individuals. Instead, the author believes that complicit behaviour emerges at the intersection between their memory of a painful past (dominated by oppression), their hope for the future, and what the agent could do to bring about a desirable future, especially through an intersubjective engagement with the social world.[51]

Although I agree with Mihai that complicit behaviour is linked with hope for a desirable future, I believe this argument does more to illuminate the nuances of the political, sociocultural, and economic context that determines complicit behaviour than to account for the spectrum of emotions that actors experience, especially '*before* or *in the course of* one's being complicit' in violence.[52] Therefore, this article draws on Feminist IR's interest in war 'stories, experiences, and representations of people/individuals/ bodies other than those of states and political elites'[53] to challenge rational explanations of complicity that ignore the variety of identities, moralities, emotions, and choices that characterise complicit behaviour, particularly involving actors that collaborate with enemies. Some people might display complicit behaviour to enhance their socio-economic and political capital. Others might enjoy resources, abilities, and social capital to resist, while some others would have no other option than to become complicit to survive, to protect a loved one (as Ali does), or to alleviate economic hardship. Individuals interact in multiple ways from suspicion and animosity to cooperation and association, thus challenging a clear division between domination and resistance in international politics.

A caveat. This article examines the reverberation of emotions within and across online and off-line spaces to reveal identities, roles, and relations that constitute and are constituted through individual and collective experiences of complicity. However, it does not assume that lived experiences of complicity as they are represented in *Fauda*, complicity as production, and complicity as consumption involve the same level of responsibility or have the same consequences for the individuals involved. Therefore, this article distinguishes between these manifestations of complicity by drawing on Chiara Lepora and Robert E. Goodin's taxonomy of different forms of complicity.[54]

Specifically, *representations of complicity* within *Fauda* refer to a particular form of complicit behaviour, that is, collaboration, which is defined as an instance of complicity whereby someone 'works with an enemy, where the wrong in view is of a very specific sort (betraying one's country, family, or organization)'.[55] Allegations of *complicity within the production* of visual representations is similar to what Lepora and Goodin define as complicity by connivance, which refers to contributing to wrongdoing by displaying a wide range of behaviour from 'ignoring another's wrongdoing (shutting one's eyes to it) to tacitly assenting to it (winking, nodding, twinkling)'.[56]

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[47]Griffin, *Popular Culture*, p. 43.

[48]Barsdorf-Liebchen, 'Complicity in violation', p. 217.

[49]Gardner, 'Complicity'; Kutz, 'Causeless complicity'; Lepora and Goodin, *On Complicity*.

[50]Mihaela Mihai, 'Understanding complicity: Memory, hope and the imagination', *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, 22:5 (2019), pp. 504–22.

[51]Mihai, 'Understanding complicity', pp. 508–12.

[52]Laidman, 'Complicity', p. 68.

[53]Åhäll, 'Affect as methodology', p. 41.

[54]Lepora and Goodin, *On Complicity*, pp. 31–58.

[55]Ibid., p. 42.

[56]Ibid., p. 45.

By ignoring/ closing their eyes to the political context within which they work, and its relation to the cultural products that they create or disseminate, cultural creators are responsible for complicity by connivance. *Complicity as consumption* echoes the authors' definition of complicity by contiguity, which involves a contribution to wrongdoing by simply finding oneself in the proximity of those who perform wrongdoing, especially by giving implicit approval for wrongdoing or failing to condemn the harm that is being done.[57] This definition speaks to audiences' consumption of violence, especially since the etymological roots of 'contiguity' refers to 'touching or being in contact'.[58] Given that audiences are 'touched' by the violence that they consume visually, their complicity emerges through the consumption of cultural representations that objectify subjects or through the expression of emotions that reinforce, rather than undermine, stereotypical representations of bodies affected by violence. Moreover, different interests and needs accompany these manifestations of complicity. If representations of complicity refer to collaboration in the interest of saving a life, complicity by production is defined in terms of financial, reputational, and social interests. The complicity of consumers/audiences with the violence of the occupation speaks to their interest in enjoying themselves, perhaps in their spare time.

To conclude, this article investigates emotional investments and social relations that constitute, and are constitutive of, visual representations of complicity within war, conflict, and military occupation. Since complicit behaviour cannot be isolated from the social and historical contexts that produce it, complicity is defined as a social relation through which actors navigate violence while drawing on resources and power that are distributed unevenly. Feminist IR provides adequate conceptual tools to study gendered power relations that generate, and shape, complicity without putting too much emphasis either on individual's rationality or the structural context that enables complicit behaviour, all while accounting for the multiplicity of actors, emotions, and experiences of complicity in international politics.

On the Israeli occupation of Palestine

During the Six-Day War (1967), Israel seized and occupied the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem, the Golan Heights (Syria) and the Sinai Peninsula (Egypt).[59] Ever since, Palestinians from East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip have been living under the Israeli occupation and control. Under the guise of emergency and security, the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem restricts the mobility of Palestinians through military checkpoints, a colour-based permit regime system, and the Separation Wall, all of which have an impact on Palestinians' daily life. Moreover, Palestinians are continuously affected by the Israeli soldiers' and Israeli settlers' violent attacks, and they are routinely subjected to surveillance, administrative detention, extrajudicial killing, torture, and house demolitions. Israel's expansive policy of building settlements and transferring population to the Occupied territories affect even further Palestinians' precarious existence. Settlements do not only breach international law but also dispose Palestinians of their land, which denies them self-determination and the possibility to build a future state.[60]

Although the Palestinian Authority (PA) was established in the aftermath of Oslo Accords to exercise civilian and security control in certain areas of the West Bank (Area A and Area B),[61] its powers are severely limited by its security cooperation with Israel. More importantly, PA has been increasingly accused of collaboration with Israel, particularly due to its human rights abuses,

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[57]Ibid., pp. 51–2.

[58]Ibid., p. 51.

[59]The Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt in 1982 after the signing the Israel-Egypt peace treaty (1979).

[60]Avram Bornstein, 'Military occupation as carceral society: Prisons, checkpoints, and walls in the Israeli-Palestinian struggle', *Social Analysis*, 52:2 (2008), pp. 106–30; Amnesty International, 'Israel's Occupation: 50 Years of Dispossession', available at: {https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/campaigns/2017/06/israel-occupation-50-years-of-dispossession/} accessed 2 August 2022.

[61]Area C, which comprises mainly of Israeli settlements, remains under Israeli control.

harsh treatment of protestors, journalists and activists, and its overall compliance with the Israeli authorities.[62] Moreover, the PA has stopped having *de facto* control over the Gaza Strip in 2006, in the aftermath of Hamas's victory in the Palestinian legislative elections. Although Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005, it continues to subject the Gaza Strip to an ongoing blockade that prohibits the movement of people and goods, restricts Palestinians' access to appropriate resources, and erodes the overall socioeconomic and political well-being of Palestinians living there.[63] Described as an 'open-air prison',[64] the Gaza Strip has been repeatedly affected by Israeli invasion, destruction, and unlawful killing during ongoing attacks that have escalated in war in the recent past (2008–09; 2012; 2014; 2021).

Given Israel's violent and discriminatory treatment of Palestinians, the occupation rests on a 'settler-colonial' logic whereby Israel seeks to control the Palestinian land and resources by exposing Palestinians to violence, precarity, and war, all of which being aimed at eliminating their presence and influence on the settler colonial society.[65] Settler colonialism distinguishes between the 'colonizer (Israel) as "civilized" in relation to the Palestinian native' who is assumed to be primitive, dangerous, and inferior.[66] This narrative is rooted in early Zionist thinking that articulated Jewish people as a modern, civilised European nation that would transform the 'empty' land of Palestine and 'make the desert bloom'.[67] Ever since, this discourse underpins all Israeli violent/racial practices against Palestinians from the regime permit that regulates their movement across the West Bank and East Jerusalem to extrajudicial killings of Palestinians and the indiscriminate attack on their residential areas in the Gaza Strip. Significantly enough, within this discourse, race, gender, and class intersect to 'determine who must be evicted, eliminated and erased to make space for the settler colony'.[68] This is clearly manifested in the violent attacks on Palestinian women, including sexual violence, since an attack on their bodies, families, and homes represents an implicit attack on their communities and the Palestinian land. Therefore, within the Israeli settler-colonial context, violence against Palestinian women (and men) is justified through their representation as oppressed, backward, threatening, or as subhuman Others.[69] In this regard, cultural artefacts that provide racialised and sexualised representations of Palestinians that live under the occupation contribute to the justification the Israeli military's violence against Palestinians. These cultural representations enhance the growing visual asymmetry between Israelis and Palestinians and, more broadly, strengthen the neoliberal and colonial narrative through which the Global South, particularly the Israeli/Palestine conflict, is presented as a source of pleasure, entertainment, and danger. This aspect is certainly true for the production, articulation, and consumption of complicity within *Fauda*.[70]

Producing and consuming *Fauda*'s complicity within the Israeli Occupation

This section argues that the production and distribution of *Fauda* links audiences, image-makers, and injured bodies in 'a global network of state-corporate-military relations',[71] a web of complicit

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[62]Michelle Pace and Somdeep Sen, *The Palestinian Authority in the West Bank: The Theatrics of Woeful Statecraft* (London, UK: Routledge, 2020).

[63]Ron J. Smith, 'Isolation through humanitarianism: Subaltern geopolitics of the siege on Gaza', *Antipode*, 48:3 (2016), pp. 750–69.

[64]Helga Tawil-Souri and Dina Matar (eds), *Gaza as a Metaphor* (London, UK: Hurst, 2016).

[65]Patrick Wolfe, 'Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native', *Journal of Genocide Research,* 8:4 (2004), pp. 387–409.

[66]Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 'At the limits of the human: Reading postraciality from Palestine', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 39:13 (2016), pp. 2252–60 (p. 2256).

[67]Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Sarah Ihmoud, and Suhad Dahir-Nashif, 'Sexual violence, women's bodies, and Israeli settler colonialism', *Jadaliyya*, available at: {https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/31481} accessed 2 August 2022.

[68]Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 'At the limits of the human', p. 2256.

[69]Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Ihmoud, and Dahir-Nashif, 'Sexual violence'.

[70]Majed Abusalama, 'From *Fauda* to the Messiah: The "us-them" narrative – a Netflix disorder', *Jadaliyya*, available at: {https://www.jadaliyya.com/Details/40898} accessed 2 August 2022.

[71]Barsdorf-Liebchen, 'Complicity in violation', p. 214.

actors that disregards, normalises, or accepts the impact of Israeli violence against Palestinians in favour of economic, professional, or personal interests. This complicit entanglement circulates compassion, empathy, and fear, generates economic value, and reconfigures identities at the expense of Palestinians, who continue to lack access and capital to tell their stories, especially in a media market dominated by Western in-demand television actors such as Netflix.

Fauda was created by Lior Raz, who plays Doron Kabillio, the protagonist of the series, and Avi Issacharoff, a journalist, whose reports cover Middle East affairs. They met while serving in an Israeli undercover unit and agreed to develop a television series based on their own military experience, which would capture the emotional complexity of living and serving under the occupation.[72] Although initially Israeli television executives believed that Israeli audiences would be reluctant to watch a fictional story about the occupation, *Fauda* quickly became the most successful show in the history of the Israeli satellite network *Yes*. Since its launch, *Fauda* was awarded multiple national and international awards,[73] and the *New York Times* voted it the Best International TV Show.[74] This success is partly due to Netflix's involvement in distributing the series to wider audiences.[75]

Lior Raz believes that *Fauda*'s success is explained by its power to humanise the occupation and to produce an emphatic and compassionate response among audiences: 'I'm getting emails from Israelis who are saying for the first time in their life they feel empathy and compassion for the other side. And the same from Gaza and Kuwait and Lebanon and Turkey.'[76] However, *Fauda*'s success and ability in producing compassionate and empathic responses has broad implications for the dissemination of knowledge about the Israel/Palestine conflict, especially if situated within the broader logic of consuming visual representations of violence for entertainment purposes.

Although Susan D. Moeller has warned about 'compassion fatigue' among audiences whose constant exposure to visual representations of violence, death, war, and genocide ultimately renders them indifferent,[77] an increasing body of literature cautions against expressions of empathy and compassion,[78] particularly towards representations of violence against black and brown bodies.[79] According to Sherene H. Razack, emphatic and compassionate reactions towards such representations involve a process of identification with the pain of others, which allows viewers to imagine themselves '*in place* of the other', which is an emotional experience that ultimately conceals 'privilege and complicity' in the violence represented.[80] Rather than contributing to 'outrage and … action', these responses invite audiences to 'stea[l] the pain of others',[81] which only reinforces the racialisation and dehumanisation of those bodies, especially since their violent

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[72]Rachel Shabi, 'The next Homeland? The problems with *Fauda*, Israel's brutal TV hit', *The Guardian,* available at: {https://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2018/may/23/the-next-homeland-problems-with-fauda-israel-brutal-tv-hit} accessed 2 August 2022.

[73]Yes Studios, 'Fauda', available at: {https://www.yesstudios.tv/fauda} accessed 2 August 2022.

[74]David A. Halbinfinger, '"Fauda", an Israeli TV hit, lets viewers escape – into the conflict', *The New York Times*, available at: {https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/22/arts/television/fauda-an-israeli-tv-hit-lets-viewers-escape-into-the-conflict.html} accessed 2 August 2022.

[75]Netflix started co-producing this series from the second season onwards.

[76]Raz quoted in Halbinfinger, 'Fauda'.

[77]Susan D. Moeller, *Compassion Fatigue: How Media Sell Disease, Famine, War and Death* (London, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 1999).

[78]According to Megan Boler (1999, p. 157), empathy, sympathy, and compassion operate slightly differently. Empathy refers to fully identifying with the experience of the other, while compassion involves identifying with the other while simultaneously treating them as inferior. Sympathy refers to a similar yet not identical experience of suffering among individuals. Although these emotions involve various degrees of identifying with others, all of them raise questions about power relations.

[79]Sherene H. Razack, 'Stealing the pain of others: Reflections on Canadian humanitarian response', *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, 29:4 (2007), pp. 375–94; Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (London, UK: Harvard University Press, 2013); Gada Mahrouse, *Conflicted Commitments: Race, Privilege, and Power in Solidarity Activism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014).

[80]Razack, 'Stealing', p. 377, emphasis in original.

[81]Ibid., p. 376.

experiences are consumed for entertainment purposes. However, compassion and empathy operate slightly differently within *Fauda*. While the audiences' compassion and empathy towards Palestinian characters contribute to the racialisation and victimisation of the Palestinian people, compassion and empathy towards Israeli characters obscures the violence that they enact against Palestinian characters, and more generally, the violence that the Israeli military routinely deploys against Palestinians.

Specifically, Raz's belief that watching *Fauda* is a transformative process for the Israeli audience, particularly because empathy and compassion allows them to change their attitudes towards Palestinians, speaks to Razack's warning against presenting others as sources of self-transformation. Relying on Sara Ahmed, Razack cautions that the 'move to appropriate the other's pain can also happen when we think we are recognizing not only the other's pain but his or her *difference*'.[82] Similarly, Sayed Kashua, an Israeli Palestinian writer and activist who raised concerns about the representation of Palestinians within *Fauda*, cautions that '[i]f an Israeli creator feels he needs to humanize Palestinians, it means that he begins with the idea that they're not human.'[83] Although apparently challenging the binary discourse about the Israel/Palestine conflict, Israeli emphatic reactions towards *Fauda*'s depictions of life under the occupation and the Israeli creators' efforts to 'humanise' Palestinians reinforce, rather than undermine, the antagonism between Israelis and Palestinians. In this regard, *Fauda* constitute Palestinians as objects rather than subjects of their own experience, thereby serving only as 'the conduit' to the Israelis' 'sense of self as compassionate'.[84]

In exchange, expressions of empathy and compassion towards Israeli characters depoliticise and even conceal the violence that it is enacted against Palestinians. Compassion and empathy towards Israeli characters is particularly inspired by Lior Raz's character, Doron Kabilio, who returns from retirement to catch Abu Ahmed. Attempts to catch Abu Ahmed have serious consequences for Doron because one of his operatives (Boaz), who is also his brother-in-law, is killed during a prisoner exchange. Given his failure to complete his mission and to protect his brother-in-law (as he had promised to his wife), Kabilio does not return home from the West Bank, yet walks aimlessly until he is reunited with Dr Shirin al-Abed (played by the French Lebanese actress Laëtitia Eïdo). Shirin tends to Doron's wounds, and they become romantically involved.

Describing his role as a therapeutic process to cope with his post-traumatic stress disorder,[85] Raz and his character recall the contemporary representation of the Israeli traumatised military professional who is affected by the violence that he/she has enacted against Palestinians. In this respect, Doron Kabilio's character, and the entire series, may be easily situated within the wider Israeli discourse of 'shooting and crying'. Manifested across a variety of cultural representations such as testimonies,[86] documentaries,[87] films,[88] or popular music,[89] this discourse usually draws on the Israeli soldiers' personal narratives of military service to raise concerns about the moral and psychological impact of the occupation. However, these cultural narratives have been widely criticised for concentrating on the Israeli soldiers' military experiences while simultaneously

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[82]Ibid., pp. 378–9, emphasis in original.

[83]Sayed Kashua quoted in Halbfinger, 'Fauda'.

[84]Razack, 'Stealing', p. 391.

[85]Shabi, 'The next Homeland'.

[86]Yael Munk, 'Investigating the Israeli soldier's guilt and responsibility: The case of the NGO "Breaking the Silence"', *Bulletin du Centre de recherche français à Jérusalem*, 23 (2012), pp. 1–6.

[87]Shmulik Duvdevani, 'How I shot the war: Ideology and accountability in personal Israeli war documentaries', *Studies in Documentary Films*, 7:3 (2013), pp. 279–94.

[88]Gil Hochberg, 'Soldiers as filmmakers: On the prospect of "shooting war" and the question of ethical spectatorship', *Screen*, 54:1 (2013), pp. 44–61.

[89]Scott Streiner, 'Shooting and crying: The emergence of protest in Israeli popular music', *The European Legacy*, 6:6 (2001), pp. 771–92.

obscuring the violence that they had enacted against Palestinians. More broadly, the discourse of 'shooting and crying' has been criticised for reinforcing, rather than undermining, the Israeli discourse of 'purity of arms', according to which the Israeli military is a morally superior organisation that deploys violence for defensive purposes.[90] By depicting a traumatised military figure that is also heavily inspired from the actor's experience of serving as an undercover operative, Doron's character emerges as the focus of the viewer's 'empathetic gaze'.[91] While conflating sympathy and empathy, Gil Hochberg warns that 'the perpetrator [Doron in this case] becomes not merely the narrative's sympathetic protagonist, but also its victim – the victim of the injustices and horrors of war.'[92]

As a character, Doron inspires further empathy through the depiction of his impossible love story with Shirin. Although initially Doron wants to use Shirin to find Abu Ahmed, he ends up by falling in love with her. In this regard, Shirin and Doron's romantic relationship represents the typical heterosexual love story between a masculine, traumatised hero, and a beautiful and vulnerable female character. As a cliché that appeals to Israeli and Western audiences alike, their story draws on sentimentalist notions of tragic love that conceals the violence of the occupation, and especially the gendered and racialised power relations that sustain Israeli militarism. This is particularly true when noting that the marriage between Tzachi Halevi, one of *Fauda*'s Israeli Jewish actors, and Lucy Aharish, an Arab Israeli TV presenter, was met with significant criticism in Israel.[93]

At the same time, the representation of Shirin as a vulnerable figure elicits empathy among audiences. Issacharoff himself presents Shirin 'as representative of the innocent people in the conflict' by insisting that '[s]he just wants to live her life, and this is what's so sad about this character.'[94] Significantly enough, Issacharoff's description of Shirin evokes the creators' 'male/white gazes', especially since she is the object of manipulation and desire for Doron's strong character. Just like Doron, Shirin allows audiences to 'feel' her pain. Her suffering become the audiences' suffering, an emotional process that ultimately decontextualises and divorces Shirin's character and *Fauda* from the sociopolitical context within which they were created. Megan Boler believes that cultural representations that allow for an 'easy identification' with suffering provoke 'passive empathy' that 'do[es] not change radically the reader's [in this case, the viewer's] point of view'.[95] Since identification rests on an assumption that 'I take up your perspective, and claim that I can know your experience through mine',[96] passive empathy not only turns attention towards the self but also enables the consumption of the pain of the other. By identifying with/consuming Shirin's pain, audiences privilege their painful experiences while simultaneously failing 'to identify [their] complicity in structures of power relations mirrored by the text'.[97] Although this critique shows that Shirin, as a beautiful, weak, vulnerable character, erases the agency of Palestinians, especially the role that women have historically played in the national resistance movement against the Israeli occupation,[98] the next section adopts a more critical reading, and shows that Shirin should not be constituted solely as a passive victim of the occupation. This ambiguous representation of Shirin only enhances our understanding of the visual politics of complicity.

[90]Rebecca L. Stein, 'Impossible witness: Israeli visuality, Palestinian testimony and the Gaza War', *Journal for Cultural Research*, 16:2–3 (2012), pp. 135–53 (p. 150).

[91]Ibid., p. 150.

[92]Ibid.

[93]Nahuel Ribke, '*Fauda* television series and the turning of asymmetrical conflict into television entertainment', *Media, Culture & Society*, 41:8 (2019), pp. 1245–60 (p. 1252).

[94]Avi Issacharoff quoted in Jane Corbin, '*Fauda*: The drama lifting the lead on Israeli snatch squads', *BBC News*, available at: {https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-42566284} accessed 2 August 2022.

[95]Boler, *Feeling Power*, p. 156.

[96]Ibid., p. 159.

[97]Ibid.

[98]Julie M. Peteet, *Gender in Crisis: Women and the Palestinian Resistance Movement* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1991), p. 41.

However, the audience's complicity with the violence of the occupation rests not only on their compassionate responses towards *Fauda*'s characters. Palestinian and Israeli characters may also be perceived as 'objects of disgust, fascination, and desire'.[99] This is particularly relevant concerning the media campaign that accompanied the official release of *Fauda*'s second season, which included the display of billboards written in Arabic across Israel.[100] These billboards recreated the Israeli collective experience of fear that constructs Palestinians as threatening and dangerous, thus reinforcing the desirability of the Israeli militarised bodies to defend the Israeli nation. In this regard, *Fauda*'s racialised PR campaign enables the normalisation of violence by 'bind [ing] the [Israeli] audience into complicity with the belief that it is always *the others* who are to blame for whatever is going wrong, the others who are a threat to our *native* interests'.[101] Therefore, the articulation of 'relations [of fear] within, between and beyond [online and offline] bodies' contributes to the myth that the Israeli military uses violence defensively, which ultimately shields it from accountability for the violence perpetuated against Palestinians.[102]

Given that *Fauda* perpetuates Israel's dominant view of the Israel/Palestine conflict among Israeli and Western audiences, Sayed Kashua or the Palestinian writer activist Majed Abusalama warn that the television series whitewashes the occupation, romanticises Israeli forces, and provides Israeli and Western audiences with a racialised representation of Palestinians who are living under the occupation.[103] The Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions Movement (BDS), an umbrella organisation that calls for the cultural boycott of Israel, has demanded that Netflix withdraws the distribution of the series and accused Raz and Issacharoff of complicity with the violence of the occupation. According to BDS, the creators (and Netflix) are 'directly complicit in promoting and justifying … grave human rights violations'[104] because they developed a television series that is inspired by Raz and Issacharoff's military experience of having served in an undercover unit that kidnaps and violently assaults Palestinians.

Avi Issacharoff addressed this criticism by emphasising that although *Fauda* tells the story from the Israeli point of view, it also provides viewers with the opportunity to observe life under the occupation, particularly due to his and Raz's unique insight into the Israeli occupation: '*We* wanted to bring the complexity of this conflict to audiences, not only the undercover units and what they do, but also what it looks like on the other side, the Palestinian side.'[105] However, Issacharoff's explanation is not sufficient to challenge accusations of complicity, particularly since the series perpetuates the dominant view of the oppressor side in the Israel/Palestine conflict. In this respect, Issacharoff's defensive position shows how the 'pain and suffering of Black people can become sources of moral authority and pleasure, [thereby] obscuring in the process [one's] participation in the violence that is done to them.'[106]

Moreover, the complicit entanglement between cultural workers and the Israeli occupation is visible within the experiences of the Israeli Palestinian actors who joined the series. The Israeli media continuously questioned the Israeli Palestinian actors regarding their stance on the Israel/Palestine conflict, while Palestinian voices accused them of othering Palestinians by

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[99]Mari Lehto, 'Bare flesh and sticky milk: An affective conflict over public breastfeeding', *Social Media + Society*, 5:4 (2019), pp. 1–10 (p. 2).

[100]Ribke, '*Fauda*', p. 1251.

[101]Thomas Docherty, *Complicity: Criticism between Collaboration and Commitment* (London, UK and New York, NY: Rowman and Littlefield, 2016), pp. 72–3, emphasis in original.

[102]Sean Carter and Derek P. McCormack, 'Film, geopolitics and the affective logics of intervention', *Political Geography*, 25:2 (2006), pp. 228–45 (p. 235).

[103]Sayed Kashua, '"Fauda" creators think Arabs are stupid', *Haaretz*, available at: {https://www.haaretz.com/opinion/.premium-fauda-creators-think-arabs-are-stupid-1.5730664} accessed 2 August 2022.

[104]Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), 'Netflix, Time to Nix War Crimes Glorifying Series', BDS Movement, available at: {https://bdsmovement.net/news/netflix-time-nix-war-crimes-glorifying-series} accessed 2 August 2022.

[105]Avi Issacharoff quoted in Corbin, '*Fauda*'.

[106]Razack, 'Stealing', p. 376.

portraying terrorists and traitors.[107] More signifying, the Israeli Palestinian actors were accused of complicity with the Israeli occupation. For instance, Luna Mansour, who appears in the second season of the series to portray Marwa, Nidal 'Al Makdasi' Awdallah's sister-in-law.[108] Mansour has disclosed in an interview that she and other actors were accused of complicity with the Israeli occupation by having been told: 'Shame on you. How do you take part in it? You only see money. You only see dollars.'[109] She acknowledged that her relatives did not agree with the portrayal of the Israeli occupation of Palestine in *Fauda*, but they ultimately understood her precarious position as an Israeli Palestinian actor working within the Israeli cultural industry: 'It's our job, and as actors we're kind of limited in our opportunities here.'[110] Although the actress ultimately noted that she accepted the role because she liked the story otherwise she would have rejected the role, it is undeniable that Mansour's (and her colleagues') ability to work is shaped by personal and professional desires, external perceptions of their personal and professional life, and the discriminatory socioeconomic and political context within which they are situated.

Mansour and her peers' somewhat limited ability to resist the Israeli occupation by refusing to take part in the development of an Israeli series about the Israeli occupation is even more obvious if it is compared with the decision of the Emmy Award winning American actor David Clennon to refuse to audition for a Netflix series developed by Lior Raz and Avi Issacharoff. In an op-ed published online, Clennon justified his refusal to audition for the new Netflix series by expressing his support for the BDS Movement, his solidarity with Palestinian people, and his unwillingness to be associated with an industry that whitewashes the violence of the Israeli occupation.[111] As a well-known actor-activist in Hollywood, Clennon's refusal to work with Raz and Issacharoff is made possible through his (white, male) privilege of having access to broader work opportunities than his Israeli Palestinian peers have, especially since their access to the cultural industry in Israel (or somewhere else) is hindered by their race, ethnicity, class, or gender.

Although the production and reception of *Fauda* shows that visual representations of violence 'involv[e] image-makers and viewers alike in a wholly unintentional act of complicity',[112] this article cautions that resisting or perpetuating dominant visual representations of violence is entirely dependent on 'the intersections of individual acts, national histories, and transnational cultures of militarization and economic gain' that acquire even more complexity under conditions of war, conflict, and occupation.[113] Therefore, it is particularly important to examine not only the role of cultural creators and distributors in shaping international politics but also the emotional logics through which their cultural products are distributed and consumed by wider audiences, all of which are important for shedding light on the intersection between emotions, domination, and resistance in international politics.

Love, pain, and complicity by collaboration in *Fauda*

While the previous section has explored complicity in the Israeli occupation through the production and reception of visual representations, the current one investigates representations of complicity by collaboration within *Fauda*'s plot. Although collaborators are almost always pressured

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[107]Ribke, 'Fauda', p. 1253.

[108]Al Makdasi seeks revenge on Doron for having killed his father during the first season.

[109]Luna Mansour quoted in Serhan, 'Watching Israeli TV'.

[110]Ibid.

[111]David Clennon, 'I Said No to a Netflix Series Audition Because I Support Palestinian Rights', Truthout, available at: {https://truthout.org/articles/i-said-no-to-a-netflix-series-audition-because-i-support-palestinian-rights/} accessed 2 August 2022.

[112]Barsdorf-Liebchen, 'Complicity in violation', p. 206.

[113]Carolyn Nordstrom, *Shadows of War: Violence, Power, and International Profiteering in the Twenty-First Century* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2004), p. 10.

into complicity,[114] an aspect that is certainly true for Ali, whose complicit behaviour was presented at the beginning of this article, this section shows that power is not simply inscribed on bodies. Identities shift and blur during war insofar as a victim may suddenly become a perpetrator, a perpetrator may quickly become a bystander, or a victim could become an informer to survive violence.[115] In this respect, this section investigates how complicit actors' 'aspirations, hopes and fears can become mutually, if antagonistically, entangled with one another'[116] while navigating resistance and domination.

Ali's collaboration with the Israeli occupation forces in exchange for a life-saving surgery for his daughter, Nadia, at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem has serious consequences for him and his family. In a different scene, his wife expresses uneasiness about the rumours that link the sudden improvement in Nadia's health with Ali's alleged collaboration with the Israeli authorities. Although initially Abu Ahmed refuses to believe rumours that Ali has betrayed him by insisting that the latter is committed to the Palestinian cause, Abu Ahmed is eventually convinced of these allegations and orders Ali's killing for treason.

Ali's transformation from a freedom fighter into a collaborator and eventually a victim of violence shows the fluidity of lived experiences, contradictory subjectivities, and the complexity of moral reasoning that shape complicit behaviour under domination. He must choose between his daughter's life and his commitment to the Palestinian cause, both carrying significant moral weight on his shoulders. Ali's betrayal of the Palestinian cause condemns him to alienation, loss of social status, and his very own existence. More significantly, Ayub's manipulation of Ali's feelings shows that complicity 'forges, in fact forces new constructs of identity, new socio-cultural relationships, new threats and injustices that reconfigure people's life-worlds'.[117] Even though Ali's experience of complicity shows that regimes of oppression thrive on betrayal and treason, their power may not fully undermine resistance because any coercive regime has weaknesses and is subject to subversion. This is certainly true for Nassrin, Abu Ahmed's wife, who also collaborates with the Israeli occupation to save her daughter's life.

Although Nassrin goes through a similar situation to Ali's, her behaviour reveals a more complex course of action insofar as she transgresses domination while being bound up in the power relations that shape her life. She supports the Palestinian resistance movement by living as a widow to protect her husband from Israeli authorities that also harass her to disclose his location. Despite accusations of complicity and treason from her community, Nassrin accepts the Israeli security forces' help and allows her daughter, Abir, to have life-saving eye surgery at Hadassah Hospital in Jerusalem. Ayub takes advantage of this situation and spends time at the hospital to convince Nassrin to disclose Abu Ahmed's location in exchange for the possibility to live in Germany.

Nonetheless, Nassrin is not powerless. She remains an agent of her own destiny, even within the constraints of the power relations that shape her life. She does not betray her husband despite accepting Israeli medical treatment for her daughter and finding herself under Ayub's constant emotional manipulation. Moreover, Nassrin's determination and refusal to disclose her husband's location challenges the image of Palestinian women as domesticated figures. Ever since 1917, when the first protests against Jewish immigration in Palestine took place, Palestinian women have played an active role in the resistance movement, including by safeguarding the identity

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[114]Ron Dudai and Hillel Cohen, 'Triangle of betrayal: Collaborators and transitional justice in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict', *Journal of Human Rights*, 6:1 (2007), pp. 37–58 (pp. 233–4).

[115]Christine Sylvester, 'Experiencing war: A challenge for International Relations', *Cambridge Review of International Affairs*, 26:4 (2013), pp. 669–74; Kevin McSorley, 'The fangs behind the mask: Everyday life in wartime Chechnya', in Christine Sylvester (ed.), *Masquerades of War* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2015), pp. 118–35.

[116]Tobias Kelly, 'In a treacherous state: The fear of collaboration among West Bank Palestinians', in Sharika Thiranagama and Tobias Kelly (eds), *Traitors: Suspicion, Intimacy and the Ethics of State Building* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2010), p. 184.

[117]Carolyn Nordstrom, *A Different Kind of War Story* (Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997), p. 141.

of freedom fighters.[118] Nassrin's complicit experience hardly ever exposes an antagonism between resistance and domination. Rather it illustrates the continuous tension between oppression and subversion, sometimes within the same individual who navigates domination according to his or her emotional dispositions, sociopolitical resources, and opportunities of action.

Dr Shirin al-Abed, Doron's love interest, is a Palestinian-French doctor who returns from France to Ramallah to live with her mother. Abu Ahmed and Walid, Shirin's cousin, kidnap her mother to determine Shirin to plant a bomb in one of the Israeli undercover forces, Boaz, who was kidnapped and would be eventually killed in the prisoner exchange during which Nassrin's daughter, Abir, would also be wounded. To save her mother's life, Shirin agrees to perform the surgery on Boaz, thus displaying a 'multiple, disparate and perhaps contradictory agent, victim and spectator involvements with the planning, execution, endorsement, opposition and pain of violence'.[119] She also becomes inadvertently complicit with Israeli forces when she falls in love with Doron, who disguises himself as a Palestinian operative to seduce her to find Abu Ahmed.

Shirin's complicit experience reveals complex moral choices. To save her mother, she agrees to perform Boaz's surgery, which is tantamount to torture, and which also contradicts the Hippocratic Oath. Whatever Shirin's course of action, someone would suffer, therefore her behaviour challenges the assumption that complicity is avoidable, 'that there is always *a right course* of action to take, rather than *two* courses of action, *both* of which are *wrong*'.[120] Despite her gesture of saving one life at the cost of another, Shirin tries as much as she can to alleviate the (un)intentional harm that she has caused, thus showing that complicit individuals are not entirely powerless. While performing the surgery Shirin asks Boaz for forgiveness. She also asks Walid to give Boaz antibiotics to ease the pain. Although her course of action is constrained and dire consequences are inevitable, Shirin is not simply a victim of the occupation. Her complicit behaviour manoeuvres between a daughter's love and commitment to medical ethics. Caught between difficult choices, Shirin manages to control (at least partially) the consequences of her actions.

Ali, Nassrin, and Shirin shift between domination and resistance, thus indicating complicit agents' ability to 'choose alternatives and act within (and even peek beyond?) the conditions of possibility that governing discourses define and that material circumstances dictate' under Israeli occupation.[121] Their collaboration with Israeli authorities and Palestinian freedom fighters indicate that individuals' complicit agencies are entangled with the social structures that constitute their subjectivity. Representations of lived experiences of complicity in *Fauda* show that people do not always simply challenge or submit to domination. They may adjust their behaviour, thereby manifesting their agency neither against nor outside the power structures that shape their lives.

Sometimes, complicit individuals transgress the pain of oppression by finding joy in the middle of despair, thus showing the profound entanglement between grief, love, and pleasure under occupation.[122] For instance, both Ali and Nassrin experience brief moments of respite, joy, and happiness despite facing the unbearable situation of being accused of treason and complicity, thus risking exclusion from their community. Ali's daughter is portrayed playing with dolls under her parents' loving gaze, whereas Nassrin is filled with joy when she finds out that her daughter's eye surgery has succeeded. Furthermore, Nassrin visits her husband in hiding where he offers her a

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[118]Peteet, *Gender in Crisis*, p. 41.

[119]Sylvester, 'Experiencing war', p. 670.

[120]Bob Brecher and Michael Neu, 'Intellectual complicity in torture', in Afxentiou, Dunford, and Neu (eds), *Exploring Complicity*, p. 146, emphasis in original.

[121]Maria Stern, Sofie Hellberg, and Stina Hansson, 'Studying the agency of being governed? An introduction', in Stina Hansson and Sofie Hellberg with Maria Stern (eds), *Studying the Agency of Being Governed* (Abingdon, UK: Routledge, 2014), p. 1.

[122]Julia Welland, 'Joy and war: Reading pleasure in wartime experiences', *Review of International Studies*, 44:3 (2018), pp. 438–55 (p. 446).

perfume for her upcoming birthday, and they spend a few moments together before being warned that Doron's team is approaching the safe house to catch Abu Ahmed. During these moments of levity, complicit agents 'break free temporarily from the disciplined constraints of daily life, normative obligations, and organized power' to simply live their lives.[123]

Nevertheless, moments of joy, love, and passion may also be intertwined with complicity. As already mentioned, Doron does not return home after the failed attempt to exchange prisoners during which Boaz is killed and Nassrin's daughter is wounded. While being seriously affected by Boaz's death and the failure to keep his promise to his wife to bring her brother back home, Doron walks aimlessly through Ramallah and visits Shirin. The romantic relationship between Doron and Shirin shows that intimacy and desire are bound with politics, violence, and treason while the touching of their skin 'form[s] a bond that secures complicity in acts of love'.[124]

Deception and disguise are important for Doron to survive in the enemy's territory and to achieve his goal of catching Abu Ahmed. However, by falling in love with Shirin, Doron betrays his wife, his team, and his community, thus raising questions regarding his complicity with the opposing side. Similarly, by falling in love with Doron, Shirin risks accusations of complicity. Although she is unaware of Doron's true identity, their love affair shows that complicity assumes different 'degrees of involvement, degrees of knowledge, degrees of intention and degrees of agency'.[125] Complicity does not necessarily involve knowledge of wrongdoing because one may become complicit even 'without having the slightest clue that this is the case'.[126] Shirin's situation shows the complexity of lived experiences of complicity, which is not easily grasped by examinations of complicity as a rational behaviour that is always based on 'thought, will and judgment'.[127]

Lived experiences and social relations of complicity in *Fauda* show that 'heroes, victims and villains can shape-shift over the course of a war and post-war or blur into instances of moral ambiguity',[128] thereby contributing to our understanding of the fluidity of moralities, emotions, and choices that people experience within war, violence, and military occupation. The depiction of these characters' complicit behaviour and their resistance while simultaneously contributing to and complying with the violence of the occupation shows the intersection between emotions, resistance, and domination within war, conflict, and military occupation. Agents are bound to each other and to social structures, and in so doing, they articulate and subvert power relations to navigate violence in the most unexpected ways, including forming social bonds despite occupying opposite sides of the conflict.

Conclusion

By building on Feminist IR's engagement with emotions, gender, and images, this article shows that complicity is a useful concept for interrogating capitalist, hetero-patriarchal, and racial power relations that (re)produce violence through cultural representations of international politics. Firstly, the study of the production and distribution of *Fauda* leaves us better equipped to shed light on the continuum between popular culture and world politics.[129] Specifically, this article examined the cultural workers' role in shaping public knowledge of war, violence, and military occupation, particularly by creating and circulating cultural representations that facilitate the

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[123]Asef Bayat, *Life as Politics: How Ordinary People Change the Middle East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2013), p. 130.

[124]Docherty, *Complicity*, p. 54.

[125]Cornelia Wächter, 'Introduction: Complicity and the politics of representation', in Cornelia Wächter and Robert Wirth (eds), *Complicity and the Politics of Representation* (London, UK: Rowman and Littlefield, 2019), p. 4.

[126]Afxentis Afxentiou, Robin Dunford, and Michael Neu, 'Introducing complicity', in Afxentiou, Dunford, and Neu (eds), *Exploring Complicity*, p. 5.

[127]Ahmed, *Cultural Politics*, p. 3.

[128]Christine Sylvester, 'War experiences/war practices/war theory', *Millennium*, 40:3 (2012), pp. 483–503 (p. 493).

[129]Grayson, Davies, and Philpott, 'Pop goes IR?'.

complicity of audiences with the violence that they consume through certain emotional logics (empathy, compassion, fear). Secondly, this article has examined gendered depictions of complicity within *Fauda* to show the diversity of agencies, emotions, behaviours, and moral choices that complicit actors experience. It has argued for a better understanding of the emotional baggage that actors experience while shifting between perpetrator/victim/witness/bystander identities in the middle of war and conflict. To this end, the examination of the visual politics of complicity within *Fauda* has developed our understanding of the intersection between resistance, domination, and emotions in international politics.

By examining the complicit entanglement between actors, audiences, and characters that reveals, intensifies, or numbs violence against Palestinians, this article eventually raises the question whether popular cultural artefacts such as *Fauda* may be consumed in a way that does not facilitate complicity with violence.[130] Although this aspect is worth examining in further research by engaging with audience studies, there are cultural products that focus particularly on querying our complicity in violence against Palestinians and other vulnerable bodies. For instance, in 2019, the Common Wealth Theatre (Bradford) launched the interactive/immersive theatre play, 'I Have Met The Enemy (And the Enemy is Us)'. Focusing on the arms trade industry in the UK, it tells the war stories of three different performers: Mo'min Swaitat, a Palestinian actor, Alexander Eley, a former British soldier, and a Yemeni artist, Shatha Altowai, who interprets her part via a video screen, which also reminds of her inability to receive a UK visa to perform live in front of her audience.

The play creates an atmosphere of discomfort and unfamiliarity among audiences. Early on, Alexander Eley shouts military commands at the audience as they are transported into a combat zone. The audience and Mo'min Salawit then travel to Palestine, where he gives them advice on how to stay alive while crossing Israeli checkpoints to go to a rave party. Shatsha Altowai invites the audience to have dinner at her house and to taste the Yemeni cuisine while narrating the destruction of her house by arial bombing. According to Richard Horsman, the play does not only expose the devasting consequences of the British arms trade industry but also reminds audiences/participants that they are 'all involved one way or another in the death and devastation wreaked by the arms trade.'[131]

The play's name, immersive/interactive format, and its topic, all develops, in Megan Boler's words, a 'collectivist account' that challenges 'passive empathy' because it encourages audiences to express empathy while simultaneously 'recogniz[ing themselves] as implicated in the social forces that create the climate of obstacles the other must confront'.[132] Launched with 'the hope that audiences come away from it wanting to act and calling for change',[133] the play asks audiences to reflect upon themselves, their relation with others, and the socioeconomic, political, and historical context within which they and others are collectively, yet differently, situated. Although different from *Fauda*, both in terms of its subject and format, this play represents a productive way of challenging visual representations of complicity, particularly because it breaks the division between perpetrator/witness/bystander/victim within war and conflict.

The circulation of complicity between online/offline spaces inspires new work on the cultural representations of complicity in international politics. For instance, digital media represents an excellent site for unravelling the politics of scale that are inherent to the constitution of complicity along the 'intimacy-geopolitics' continuum.[134] This is certainly true not only for the play mentioned above but also for *Fauda*, whose launch was accompanied by an aggressive social media campaign, which gave local and international audiences the opportunity to engage with, respond,

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[130]I would like to thank one of the reviewers for raising this point.

[131]Richard Horsman, 'I Have Met The Enemy (And The Enemy Is Us) from Common Wealth Theatre', The Culture Vulture, available at: {https://theculturevulture.co.uk/reviews/i-have-met-the-enemy/} accessed 2 August 2022.

[132]Boler, *Feeling Power*, pp. 164–5.

[133]Andrew Smith quoted in Horsman, 'I Have Met The Enemy'.

[134]Rachel Pain and Lynn Staeheli, 'Introduction: Intimacy-geopolitics and violence', *Area*, 46:4 (2014), pp. 344–60.

comment, and share content related to this series. A closer examination of how audiences situated across different temporalities and geographies of social media engage with cultural products would eventually reveal how complicity is felt, constituted, and challenged within the digital sphere, thereby contributing to the increasing interest in studying the role of audiences within popular culture and world politics.[135] Moreover, the examination of the cultural politics of complicity provokes new ways of thinking about accountability and justice in international politics, thereby shifting attention from the responsibility of states and military actors for the violence perpetuated[136] towards transnational actors such as celebrities or multinational companies such as Netflix. Therefore, the examination of the production, distribution, and reception of cultural representations of complicity only enriches our understanding of emotions, resistance, and domination in international politics.

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[135]Roland Bleiker, 'Multidisciplinarity', in Xavier Guillaume and Pinar Bilgin (eds), *Routledge Handbook of International Political Sociology* (Abingdon, UK and New York, NY: Routledge, 2017), pp. 319–27.

[136]Neta C. Crawford, *Accountability for Killing: Moral Responsibility for Collateral Damage in America's Post 9/11 Wars* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2013).