

Epistemic injustice against Palestinians: instrumental for the Dutch cultural archive

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This thesis is a philosophical exploration of the concept of the cultural archive applied to the Netherlands, and its effects on knowledge production about Israel and Palestine.

Explaining the cultural archive within an epistemological context, I argue that the epistemic injustices done to Palestinians within Dutch public and political discourse stem from the Dutch cultural archive and its relation to Zionism.

I argue that the Dutch cultural archive has a need for Zionist ideology in order to uphold a positive cultural self-image. This self-image has been tainted by Dutch antisemitism and its complicity in the genocide on its Jewish citizens during the second world war, to which Zionism offers a penance that can restore the image of a just country.

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Introduction

Epistemic injustice is the injustice of unfair treatment of (a group of) people when it comes to issues of knowledge and understanding.¹ For example, if knowledge producing practices such as reporting on a media platform do not name the perpetrators of the violence the victims undergo, the knowledge produced is not false per se, but incomplete and inaccurate. It leaves out important information necessary to fully understand the situation, creating a gap in knowledge, i.e., ignorance. It excludes epistemic resources, the concepts and languages we use to know *with*, that give a more complete and accurate depiction of the situation.

This thesis starts from the observation that such epistemic injustice exists regarding the present Dutch debate on the situation in Gaza. According to Marieke Kuypers, for example, Dutch media copy Israel's own description of what is happening in Gaza. She illustrates this with examples from the news site NOS and the newspapers Volkskrant and NRC, among others.² According to her, it is from a pro-Israel frame that journalists call the bombardments of Israel on the civilian population of Gaza 'retaliation' for the Hamas attack on the 7th of October that year, stating that Hamas wanted to ignite a war with Israel, implying that all current violence started with that attack. Another example she uses to illustrate the framing she observes is when journalists write about 'the fate of the Palestinians' who are victims of rockets 'falling in Gaza', leaving out the actor behind the act and thus making it sound like the rockets just happen to fall, not unlike the rain.³

Such formulations, where the doer behind the deed is obscured from view, constitute an epistemic injustice against the victims of said violence. When reading these news articles, those gaps are supposedly filled in with prior knowledge on the readers part, namely that it is the Israeli army that is carrying out airstrikes on Gaza. However, words like 'fate' and 'rockets falling' create an image of inevitability and blamelessness that works in the advantage of the doer behind the deed. This incomplete and skewed depiction in which the perpetrator of the violence is left out of the reporting, is an indication of epistemic injustice against the Palestinians.

Also political discourse offer examples of an anti-Palestinian bias. During a debate titled 'The situation in Gaza', on the 16th of May 2024, party member of the extreme-right party PVV Raymond van Roon uttered the following statement: "*Finally, Chairman. "The Palestinians" is a fake people. That never existed and doesn't exist now. It's a collection of all kinds of Arabs from other countries who thought they could take over that area for a while once the Jews started developing it. That's what happened. It is not a people, and it will not be a people.*"⁴ There are several noteworthy things about this statement.

¹ Ian James Kidd, José Medina, Gaile Pohlhaus, 'Introduction to The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice', in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 1-9.

² 'Media-analyse Marieke Kuypers: "Nederlandse media kopiëren taal Israël"', *OneWorld* (blog), October 20, 2023, <https://www.oneworld.nl/mensenrechten/media-analyse-marieke-kuypers-nederlandse-media-kopieren-taal-israel/>.

³ 'Media-analyse Marieke Kuypers: "Nederlandse media kopiëren taal Israël"', *OneWorld* (blog), October 20, 2023, <https://www.oneworld.nl/mensenrechten/media-analyse-marieke-kuypers-nederlandse-media-kopieren-taal-israel/>.

⁴ 'Plenaire verslagen', Text, geraadpleegd 10 augustus 2024, https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2023-2024/73.

1. This statement is factually wrong, there are people who call themselves Palestinians who share a cultural and national identity and have been for centuries. They live on land that has been called “Palestine” for centuries, and Palestine is recognised as a state by 142 of the 193 member states of the UN.⁵ It is also factually wrong that the Palestinians consist of Arab people from surrounding countries who arrived after Zionist settlers started to colonise the land in the early 1900s. The population of Palestine was largely Arab and Muslim, with religious minorities such as Christians and Jews making up a smaller part of its people.⁶
2. This statement was met with almost no contradiction, except from the member of parliament who had opened the debate before being interrupted by Mister Van Roon.⁷
3. Denying a people's existence constitutes an epistemic injustice, as it attempts to delegitimise those people's claim to being of a specific nationality or culture and belonging to a particular area of land. As such, it denies a part of the identity of those people.
4. Knowingly or unknowingly (I will leave that up for discussion), Van Roon repeats a Zionist line of argument that Edward Said expands on in his book “The Question of Palestine”, which I will use to delineate Zionism.

Another example is the statement made by Frans Timmermans, leader of the Labour Party PvdA. In November 2023, when talking about Hamas, he stated “They are a culture of death, and we, we are a culture of life.”⁸ This statement defines the culture of Hamas as a culture of death, which is questionable for several reasons. Because of the use of the word ‘culture’, we are left with His statement is particularly interesting to this thesis, since he uses their ‘culture of death’ to contrast the cultural self. This way of defining the cultural self by defining the cultural other, where the other is represented as the negative to the positive self, is an epistemically unjust way of treating the cultural other and as it reduces the cultural other to a certain trait or characteristic that it ascribes to the cultural other. This stigmatization is epistemically problematic for several reasons, mostly because it does not allow a more honest depiction of the cultural other to exist, thus hindering any attempts to gain a more accurate knowledge of this cultural other.

Of course, these examples only illustrate the situation. An empirical proof of epistemic injustice towards Palestinians in Dutch media, politics and public discourse, would require a separate study which is not performed in this thesis. Instead, this thesis will assume this epistemic injustice to exist and investigate its source. Looking for the source of these occasions of epistemic injustice is an epistemological and ethical question as well as an anthropological one; it is not only concerned with the notion of how specific knowledge shapes dominant cultural ideas on identity and morality, but also with how those ideas in their turn might perpetuate an unjust production of knowledge. To understand Dutch culture in relation to knowledge and knowledge production, I will use

⁵ Inti Landauro e.a., ‘Spain, Ireland and Norway Recognise Palestinian Statehood’, *Reuters*, 29 May 2024, sec. World, <https://www.reuters.com/world/spain-ireland-norway-set-recognise-palestinian-statehood-2024-05-28/>.

⁶ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books 1980), 7 .

⁷ ‘Plenaire verslagen’, Text, geraadpleegd 10 augustus 2024, https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2023-2024/73.

⁸ ‘Is zeventuizend vermoorde kinderen nog proportioneel? We vragen het deze leuke BN’er’, *De Groene Amsterdammer*, November 29, 2023, <https://www.groene.nl/artikel/een-cultuur-van-het-leven>.

the work of anthropologist Gloria Wekker, whose book 'White Innocence: Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race' examines Dutch knowledge production in relation to its colonial history. My hypothesis is that Dutch knowledge production and dominant cultural ideas are still organised along the lines of the same colonial episteme (a framework of what constitutes as knowledge). This means that the violence done unto the colonised is being erased or downplayed, and the colonised are misrepresented as either negligible or deserving of this violence (i.e. the frame's starting point is the violent act of Hamas, not the violent colonising acts perpetrated by Israel before that). I will examine the knowledge production of this episteme when researching the concept of the Dutch cultural archive, an anthropological concept that in this context can be defined as the repository of shared and dominant knowledge and ideas within a certain culture. The question that I hope to answer in my thesis is the following:

What elements of the Dutch cultural archive explain the epistemic injustices against Palestinians in Dutch public and political discourse?

To answer this question, the setup of this thesis is as follows. In the first chapter, I will research the Dutch cultural archive, an anthropological concept that explains how a repository of knowledge functions as the source of shared languages, ideas, practices and norms that constitute a culture. In the first section of Chapter 1, I will explain the concept of the cultural archive with the help of Edward Said, who theorised on Western imperial states' cultural archives. He argues that these archives are for a large part dependent on the positive self-representation that is set in opposition to the colonised or cultural other. This opposition, he argues, is done in order to rationalise and justify the colonial violence done to, or marginalised position of the other, from which the cultural self benefits. In the second section of chapter 1, I will zoom in on the Dutch cultural archive, using Gloria Wekker's book 'White Innocence: paradoxes of colonialism and race.' She shows the contradicting images, languages and beliefs the Dutch cultural archive holds when it comes to the self-representation in opposition to the cultural other. She describes different ways in which Dutch racism organises these images, which I will argue are in line with the colonial episteme that organises the archive.

In chapter 2, I will delve into the ideology of political Zionism and the way it has affected not just Palestinian lives, but the Dutch cultural archive as well. In the first section of the chapter, I will once again turn to Said, this time using his book 'The Question of Palestine', to delineate the different lines of thought within political Zionism that are being replicated in the Netherlands. Said argues that Zionism is inseparable from Western colonial imperialism, which I will explain in this first section. Additionally, I will show how discursive strategies that are epistemically unjust toward Palestinians are instrumental in justifying the Zionist, colonial project of establishing the state of Israel in Palestine. In the second section of chapter 2, I will focus on the historical and political development between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive, for which I will use the book 'Een Open Zenuw: Nederland, Israel & Palestina' (A Raw Nerve: the Netherlands, Israel & Palestine), by Dutch historian Peter Malcontent. I will show how Zionism became a part of the Dutch cultural archive, and how it is inseparable from it.

Finally, in chapter 3, I will explain how the epistemic injustices that are done to Palestinians in the Netherlands are rooted in the Zionist aspect of the Dutch cultural archive. To explain this, in chapter 3.1. I will delineate the theoretical field of epistemic injustice, contextualising it in larger epistemology. Additionally, I will explain the relevant concepts that are necessary to understand how these epistemic injustices are

instrumentalised to maintain the colonial episteme and positive Dutch self-representation within the Dutch cultural archive, in 3.2. I will show exactly how the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive perpetuates these epistemic injustices, and why. The specific configuration of the colonial episteme that organises the Dutch cultural archive and Zionism makes for easy integration of the latter into the first. The epistemic injustices that are already familiar to the Dutch cultural archive when it comes to the common 'cultural other', the Arabis or Islamic other, are being directed toward the Palestinians as well. In chapter 3.3. I will analyse exactly how the concept of the Dutch cultural archive needs the addition of Zionism and how this reproduces the epistemic injustices against Palestinians on which it is discursively dependent.

1. Delineating the Dutch cultural archive

In order to understand the mechanism of epistemic injustice within the context of the Dutch cultural archive, first I will delineate this cultural archive. Even though the term is mostly used in anthropological practices, it has an important epistemological component as well, which is what I will focus on, delineating the Dutch cultural archive in this chapter. In this chapter, I aim to answer the question what exactly the Dutch Cultural Archive is, and how we can use the concept of the cultural archive in an epistemological context.

Starting out, I will broadly define the concept of the cultural archive, and how I will be using it in this thesis. I will do this by using the main authors on this subject, namely Palestinian scholar Edward Said who popularised the term in his book 'Culture and Imperialism'. He uses it to analyse the cultural mechanisms of Western imperial states and explain the configurations of colonialism, and racism.

The second author whose work I will use to delineate the Dutch cultural archive is Gloria Wekker. In her book 'White Innocence', Wekker builds upon Said's definition, specifying it to the Netherlands. I will throughout the chapter ask how both definitions can be contextualised into the field of epistemology.

1.1. Development of the concept

To understand the concept, I will discuss how it developed throughout the last decades. The term 'cultural archive' was first introduced by social anthropologist Wendy James in the 1990's, who developed the concept to understand traditions of knowledge and culture within the Uduk people of Sudan.⁹ It is a historical concept, meaning that it is used to analyse the way in which a culture develops and differentiates itself from other cultures. In James's work, the cultural archive functions as a repository of knowledge, where the past is both consciously represented and where unremembered events from distant pasts make themselves known in habitual ritual action and languages.¹⁰ Not only habits and rituals of a culture are 'stored' within this archive. If we want to use it in an epistemological sense, we focus on the knowledge that this archive maintains and reproduces, and the means with which it does that. As such, the cultural archive is a collection of shared concepts, languages, attitudes and ideas that people from a culture use to know the world and understand themselves with. It encompasses both explicit knowledge and knowledge production such as education, as well as implicit or 'hidden' ideas and knowledge that happen in any social interaction. It has a normative aspect, as it catalogues and reproduces cultural norms both on a conscious and unconscious level. For instance, within the Dutch cultural archive, we find that the concept of the 'Golden Age' plays a role in the historical understanding of the culture. It was an age in which the Dutch overseas endeavours flourished and put the country on the map as a country of tradesmen and commerce.¹¹ As such, many Dutch people understand themselves within the context of this historical concept, it helps shape the cultural identity and as such reproduces Dutch cultural norms such as entrepreneurship, bargaining and negotiating. These qualities are assigned a certain moral meaning, and are seen as a positive trait. The normativity lies therein that these traits in a different culture might be assigned a different moral value, they may be seen as indicators of greed or frugality. The story of the Dutch Golden Age is one that is

⁹ Naomi Ruth Pendle, *Spiritual Contestations – The Violence of Peace in South Sudan* (Suffolk: James Currey, 2023), 35.

¹⁰ Pendle, *Spiritual Contestations*, 36.

¹¹ Gloria Wekker, *White Innocence; Paradoxes of Colonialism and Race* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 2.

consciously taught to school children in the Netherlands as a part of history, tradesmanship and seafaring skills playing a central part in the story. As such, school children in the Netherlands might subconsciously add these values and norms to their understanding of their shared Dutch identity.

Philosopher Gaile Pohlhaus uses the term 'epistemic resources' or 'hermeneutical resources' to define the means we have to know the world and ourselves with, among which she counts concepts, languages and criteria.¹² In this epistemological context, we could understand the cultural archive as the storage space and the source for our epistemic tools or resources. If we experience something in our lives which we need to make sense of, these epistemic resources are the tools at hand with which we do this. For example, a Dutch gay man will understand himself as gay, because the concept of homosexuality is an epistemic resource with which a lot of people in the Netherlands are familiar. In addition, he might feel that expressing his sexuality is relatively safe and accepted, since it is a shared value of the Dutch culture to be tolerant toward that which differs from the sexual norm.

Tolerance is another concept within the Dutch cultural archive that can be seen as an epistemic resource, a concept which helps us to understand our cultural self and the world. On the website of the online encyclopaedia "Merriam Webster", tolerance is defined as "the capacity to endure hardship or pain", or in social context "sympathy or indulgence for beliefs or practices differing from or conflicting with one's own." Tolerance as an epistemic resource to understand a part of shared Dutch identity is strongly tied to other resources, languages, within the cultural archive. Dutch tolerance is often associated or mentioned within the contexts of religious freedom within the country, signifying that people of all religions are tolerated in the country, or the context of homosexuality, signifying that people who deviate from the heterosexual norm are tolerated and socially allowed to exist as openly homosexual. In this way, the concept of 'tolerance' becomes an epistemic resource, it helps make sense of the Dutch identity and knowing it an aspect of Dutch culture perpetuates expectations on the manner in which Dutch people will treat certain social interactions with persons who deviate from the norm. Later in the chapter, the Dutch cultural archives will be discussed in more detail, as well as the epistemic or hermeneutical resources used to know and understand the Dutch identity with.

Edward Said on the Cultural Archive

In order to reflect on Western hegemony, Said adopts the concept of the cultural archive. He argues that the cultural archive of Western imperial countries is *where the intellectual and aesthetic investments in overseas dominion are made*.¹³ In his book "Culture and Imperialism", he dissects Western cultures by delving into their cultural archives. These Western cultural archives, he finds, are demarcated by the colonial episteme; the conditions of what counts as knowledge or knowable are defined by colonial logic. He explains how imperialist and colonialist cultures understand not only the other, the colonized, along this logic but equally understand themselves contrapuntally to the other.¹⁴ In the following fragment, he describes the development of the colonial episteme that is inherent to the cultural archive of countries like France and the United Kingdom, which he calls metropolitan cultures.

¹² Gaile Pohlhaus, "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of "Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance", *Hypatia*, 27 (2012): 715-735.

¹³ Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1994), xxi.

¹⁴ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 51.

*'In British culture, for instance, one may discover a consistency of concern in Spenser, Shakespeare, Defoe, and Austen that fixes socially desirable, empowered space in metropolitan England or Europe and connects it by design, motive, and development to distant or peripheral worlds (Ireland, Venice, Africa, Jamaica), conceived of as desirable but subordinate. And with these meticulously maintained references come attitudes-about rule, control, profit and enhancement and suitability-that grow with astonishing power from the seventeenth to the end of the nineteenth century. These structures do not arise from some pre-existing (semi-conspiratorial) design that the writers then manipulate, but are bound up with the development of Britain's cultural identity, as that identity imagines itself in a geographically conceived world.'*¹⁵

The relationship between the colonial episteme and the cultural archive of the Western imperialist states, as Said describes in the quote above, is such that the latter is arranged by the logic of the former. This means that those concepts or languages that do not comply with the rules of the colonial episteme have a hard time surviving within the cultural archive. This does not mean that those epistemic resources cannot survive anywhere within a culture at all, only that they do not easily integrate within the most dominant culture that uses this specific episteme. An example to illustrate this relationship between a certain episteme and the cultural archive is the struggle that gender non-conforming people have had to make themselves known: the binary gender system can be seen as an organising episteme of the Western cultural archive, within which one can be known as either 'man' or 'woman', or at the very least 'masculine' or 'feminine'. It has been culturally difficult to understand the human experience outside of this episteme because the Western cultural archive is organised and demarcated by it. Difficult but not impossible, as this episteme is slowly shifting its goalposts to allow other epistemic resources to enter that are needed to have a different understanding of gender. Because of this, it has now become more normal in certain environments (such as a university lecture hall) to add pronouns to the introductory round. This shows how cultural and social habits can change overtime when the dominant cultural episteme picks up on resources (such as the concept of nonbinary pronouns) that were developed within a specific (marginalised) subculture.

Said explains how the cultural archive of Western imperialist states is organized by a colonial logic: those who belong to the 'peripheral worlds' can be understood to be subordinate to those who are part of the metropolitan world. The cultural archive of these imperialist countries divide the world along those hierarchical lines, which gives meaning to the peripheral other simultaneously with the metropolitan self. The colonial episteme is used in this way to not only understand the world and the cultural self, but consequently to assign them a place within this hierarchy.

When we look at how knowledge is produced, this delineation of the cultural archive can be a useful tool with which to understand the way in which epistemic resources are developed within this demarcation of the colonial episteme. Part of the cultural archive of Western imperial countries is the epistemic resource of binarism, the ordering of the world and the understanding of oneself and the other as oppositional. This practice of meaning giving is one that defines things by defining that which it is not, that which it is the absence of. As such, Said describes the way in which Western metropolitan culture has in some sense needed the colonised other, the periphery, to identify itself.

¹⁵ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 52.

*'In an important sense, we are dealing with the formation of cultural identities understood not as essentializations (...) but as contrapuntal ensembles, for it is the case that no identity can ever exist by itself and without an array of opposites, negatives, oppositions: Greeks always require barbarians, and Europeans Africans, Orientals, etc.'*¹⁶

As such, the epistemic resources that arise from the dominant side of these oppositionally understood cultural identities are ones that are primarily used in order to perpetuate a positive self-image and a negative image of the other to contrast it. The dominantly situated knower needs these colonial epistemic resources in order to rationalise the unjust treatment of marginalised groups from which they benefit. If we imagine “our” culture as being superior to the other culture, and the other culture inferior by contrast, then there is a certain righteousness, or even a moral duty, in colonialism. After all, people from the inferior culture would benefit from sharing in ours, it is in their best interest. This type of rhetoric is often deployed in foreign policy of countries like the United States (who claim to “bring democracy”) or indeed the United Kingdom, who deemed themselves in the position to civilize the barbaric and uncivilized others of the areas they colonised.¹⁷

Organising the cultural archive, the repository of knowledge within a certain culture, along the logic of the colonial episteme has in this sense two causes. Firstly, it defines the cultural self contrapuntally to the cultural other, organising them hierarchically: the other as the inferior or subordinate to the cultural self as superior and dominant. Secondly, this hierarchical division is instrumental in order to rationalize the continued injustices to which the cultural other is subjugated to the benefit of the cultural self. These two causes work in tandem with each other, and cannot be seen as separate: defining the cultural other is done in part because it benefits the cultural self.

As outlined above, I argue that the cultural archive of Western imperialist countries is organised along the logic of the colonial episteme. The borders of what can be known, what counts as knowledge within dominant culture, are colonially demarcated. This means that the concepts, languages, ideas and attitudes within the cultural archive are organized along the divide of the colonised, or the peripheral/cultural other, and the coloniser, or the metropolitan/cultural self. This contrapuntal defining of the cultural other and the cultural self serves the causes to not only order them hierarchically but also to rationalize the injustices done to the colonised.

1.2. The Dutch cultural archive

To understand the Dutch cultural archive and how it relates to the colonial episteme, we will turn to Gloria Wekker, specifically her book ‘White Innocence’. In it, she describes the different ways in which racism manifests within the Netherlands, how it intersects with gender or other marginalised identities, and how they are rooted within the Dutch cultural archive.

Wekker’s analysis of the Dutch cultural archive and its colonial logic will be fundamental to answering the question how epistemic injustices are embedded into it and how it reproduces them. As described in the paragraph above, the cultural archives of Western imperial countries are organised and demarcated by a colonial episteme. In order to understand the source of any epistemic injustices that are done to Palestinians in the Netherlands, it is important to understand the functioning of this colonial episteme

¹⁶ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 52.

¹⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, xxi.

within the Dutch cultural archive. The presence of the colonial episteme explains how the framework for these epistemic injustices is already in place. Instrumental in facilitating these injustices is the colonial logic used within the Dutch cultural archive to give meaning to others and self. To take a closer look at how this colonial episteme manifests itself within the Dutch cultural archive, we will analyse 'White Innocence'.

White Innocence and the Dutch cultural archive

Although she essentially builds on Said's interpretation of the cultural archive, Wekker adds that her focus will not be on the works of fiction written by writers from the metropole during imperialist times, as Said has done. Her conceptualisation of the cultural archive is much broader and more focussed on the social and interpersonal realm. Her objects of study, she notes, "pertain to dominant white self-representation, to policies, principles and practices, and to feelings."¹⁸ Wekker conceptualises the cultural archive along the lines of Bourdieu's habitus: "that presence of the past in the present."¹⁹ In her own words, she describes encountering this cultural archive as follows: "Standing at the end of a line, (...), I read imperial continuities back into a variety of current popular cultural and organisational phenomena." These phenomena are dissected in what she calls the 'scavenger method'. Through vignettes; discourses, and illustrations that she then contextualises historically and anthropologically. This provides a broad-scope analysis of Dutch racism and its historical roots. Showing how different types of racism are being reproduced within Dutch culture and discourse, she sketches the outlines of this Dutch cultural archive throughout the book.

Her focus on the intersections between race, gender and sexuality function somewhat like a house of mirrors to the white Dutch self it exposes. Observed and analysed from different angles and directions the Dutch self-image, filled with conflicting beliefs, becomes apparent. The subversive strategy of this reversal of roles wherein the white Dutch subject is being studied and is as such dissected as belonging to a certain race or culture, is in itself an act of epistemological resistance. It shifts the epistemic power from the individual, white academic who studies the other, to the plurality of others through which the white Dutch subject is studied.

Relevant aspects of the Dutch cultural archive

To understand the source of the epistemic injustices against Palestinians in Dutch media and political discourse, I distinguish several aspects that facilitate and perpetuate these injustices. These aspects are the following:

- The specifics of the positive self-representation of the white Dutch identity within the cultural archive.
- The knowledge producing practices and epistemic resources as demarcated by the colonial episteme.
- The shift of the Islamic other becoming the main cultural other instead of those who were colonised by the Netherlands.
- The place of WWII within the Dutch cultural archive and its configuration with the colonial episteme.

¹⁸ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 19.

¹⁹ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 20.

I will use examples of Dutch media or politics in order to illustrate each aspect. The aspects are not completely separate from each other but are working in configuration with each other. In the next paragraph, I will delineate the specifics of the white Dutch self-representation that is central to understanding the Dutch cultural archive. I will show how this self-representation is upheld by the knowledge producing practices of the colonial episteme, and how the Islamic or Arab immigrant has become the cultural other to oppose the white Dutch self. Additionally, in the final part of this paragraph, I will focus on the concept of World War II, what role it has come to play within the Dutch cultural archive and its configuration with the colonial episteme and the positive Dutch self-image.

The particular Dutch self-representation, Wekker states, is that the Dutch think of themselves as a 'small, but just, ethical nation; colour-blind, thus free of racism; as being inherently on the moral and ethical high ground, thus a guiding light to other folks and nations.'²⁰ Certain historical events or habits are prominent in the construction of this self-image: the fight against the water, the emancipation of gays and women, which is seen as largely complete, the German occupation, the religious freedom and the merchants mindset and its negotiating practices are all important aspects of the Dutch cultural archive that help shape the self-image of the white Dutch self.²¹ The reiteration of these historic events and habits within knowledge producing practices and the meaning they are assigned with can also be seen as the epistemic resources (languages, concepts, criteria etc.) that the Dutch understand themselves with. The dominant ideas about what white Dutch cultural identity is, are being conveyed by these resources, they are *how* we know. In that sense, to understand yourself as Dutch, when using these dominant ideas, is to understand yourself as part of a culture that is fair and just, innocent and victimised by the German occupier, colour-blind and non-racist. This self-image and the epistemic resources that convey it show the outlines of the colonial episteme of the Dutch cultural archive; the positive cultural self, ready to oppose a cultural other that is, by default, inferior as explained in the previous part of this chapter.

As an important aspect of this self-representation, Wekker relates the notion of *innocence* to this self-image in different ways. Since Christianity has shaped Dutch values and culture, the image of Jesus as the ultimate innocent man is one that Wekker relates to this self-representation of innocence. He turns the other cheek, lives in poverty, does not commit sins or crimes, he is innocent. Even though the Netherlands has less and less devout Christians, according to Wekker, the identification with innocence and goodness maintains within the cultural archive.²² Another way in which Wekker associates innocence to the Dutch self-representation is through it being a small country. Smallness is often associated with innocence, she argues, because it has the image of harmlessness, childlike and not able to play with the big guys. Although, Wekker emphasises, the Dutch have taken care of that by being a trustworthy and overeager U.S. ally.²³

How people are talking, or not talking, about race and racism in the Netherlands is a clear indicator of the traces that centuries of colonialism have left in the Dutch cultural archive. One of the things that Wekker notes is the absence of race in the narratives for Dutch self-understanding. In those historical and cultural narratives that shape the shared consciousness and the self-image of the Dutch people, some of which are mentioned

²⁰ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 2.

²¹ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 21.

²² Wekker, *White Innocence*, 16.

²³ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 17.

above, race is not named as such.²⁴ Epistemically, this is problematic because it leaves out an organising grammar of Dutch society.²⁵ Wekker delineates Dutch racism as appealing to innocence through humour or ignorance. She shows the relation of innocence to ignorance, using Mills's concept of the epistemology of ignorance. "The claim of innocence, however, is a double-edged sword: it contains not-knowing, but also not wanting to know (...)." ²⁶ She quotes from Sullivan and Tuana: "the epistemology of ignorance is part of a white supremacist state in which the human race is racially divided into full persons and subpersons. Even though – or more accurately, precisely because – they tend not to understand the racist world in which they live, white people are able to fully benefit from its racial hierarchies, ontologies and economies."²⁷ This fabrication of ignorance is an important aspect of knowledge production within the Dutch colonial episteme, which I will illustrate by the following example. This example shows ignorance is consciously instrumentalised in a Dutch political debate on Dutch history as slave traders and -keepers. Following the official apology of the Dutch state for this history, a fund for initiatives that create awareness on it is being debated in parliament. In a fragment of this debate, held on the 25th of January 2023, Martin Bosma, again from the PVV, stated the following:

"This minister wants to make us aware. But I don't want to be made aware by this minister at all. A lot of Dutch people do not want to be made aware. (...) I don't want to be made aware by this minister at all. Go do something else with that money. Go do something useful. Go make people aware of something else. I don't want to be made aware. Stop that!"²⁸

Bosma does not want to be made aware of the contemporary effects of the Dutch colonial history, and, according to him, neither do a lot of other Dutch people. Him being a politician gives him above average epistemic power, since his statements will be heard by more people and because he has more influence on what is culturally demarcated as knowledge since he directly helps to shape the policies that regulate knowledge production. This means that him refusing to be made aware of something in political debate and speaking for a lot of other Dutch people as well, can be seen as an attempt to keep this knowledge that he does not want outside of the dominant episteme. After all, he is not just talking about his own preference to not be made aware, but about not allotting funding for other people to be made of it as well, which has epistemic consequences for more than just himself. It is a normative statement, claiming that other Dutch people do not want to be made aware. This example illustrates the colonial episteme and the ignorance necessary to keep it in place. In the example above, this ignorance is explicitly and purposefully instrumentalised to keep financial resources away from initiatives actively combatting the colonial episteme.

Connecting innocence and ignorance, Wekker highlights a specific feat of the Dutch racism within the cultural archive. Simply 'not knowing' that something might be racist or have racist connotations is often used as an excuse for comments made by white people, claiming innocence of racism. The idea is, if you didn't know then you cannot be held

²⁴ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 22.

²⁵ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 22.

²⁶ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 17.

²⁷ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 17.

²⁸ 'Plenaire verslagen', Text, geraadpleegd 10 augustus 2024, https://www.tweedekamer.nl/kamerstukken/plenaire_verslagen/detail/2023-2024/73.

responsible. However, as will be discussed in the chapter on epistemic injustice, that is a misconception.

It is crucial to keep in mind that the mechanisms of knowledge production within the Dutch cultural archive have the aim to uphold the positive self-representation. In order to keep the self-image of a just and innocent country intact, the Dutch cultural archive has to exclude the languages, concepts and other epistemic resources necessary to think critically about race. If we think back to the example of the concept of the Golden Age as an epistemic resource with which Dutch people can understand their cultural history, the very name 'Golden Age' portrays this absence of race and the racist, colonial violence. This period in time probably would not have been called 'golden' from the point of view of the large numbers of African people who were sold and traded by the Dutch, descendants of whom are Dutch and live in the Netherlands. The Dutch were commercially very successful in the slave trade and kept enslaved people to work on their plantations.²⁹ When teaching about the Golden Age in secondary school, this perspective, (a possible point of view of the black students who maybe descent from people enslaved by the Dutch), is mostly left out. This way, relating current racist practices to the racist practices of the Dutch empire during the golden age and finding a continuum, is not being practiced and the systemic and historical context of racism is left out. This example of how ignorance is built into Dutch knowledge producing practices is one of the ways in which the Dutch self-representation of innocence is being maintained. It is also exemplary of how the colonial episteme is kept intact, since, as Wekker states, no real efforts are being made to reflect on this part of Dutch history, the part where the Dutch are not the innocent victim but the perpetrator of violence, inflicting harm on others. If that part of Dutch history is not emphasised, not understood as being something also belonging to the Dutch culture, then the epistemic resources necessary to understand and recognise this aspect in the present are not being developed properly and it becomes more difficult to spot these patterns, or traces as Wekker calls them. According to Wekker, one of the ways in which Dutch racism differentiates from other forms of racism elsewhere, is the 'inability so far to seriously work through and come to terms with the Dutch colonial past.'³⁰ She argues that this inability has been the cause of several other forms of Dutch racism, because the racist images that come with the colonial episteme are left intact.

Wekker quotes Toni Morrison to emphasise the effect slavery must have had on the psyches of the slave owners: " (...) it made them crazy. You can't do that for hundreds of years and it not take a toll. They had to dehumanize not just the slaves but themselves. They have had to reconstruct everything in order to make that system appear true."³¹ However, within the Dutch cultural archive, no real work has been done to acknowledge and research this effect. This lack of deconstructing and working through the Dutch colonial history has prevented the Dutch from discovering what traces are left of it in the cultural psyche.

Wekker purposefully focuses on the Dutch as the 'dreamer of the dream', uncovering the 'construction of the white self as superior and full of entitlement.'³² To talk about the 'cultural other,' on the subordinate side of the colonial divide, concepts are developed that obscure rather than clarify the hierarchical ordering of the colonial episteme. Instead of race, Dutch discourse surrounding otherness uses different words

²⁹ Trouw, 'Hoe Goud was die Eeuw?'

³⁰ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 49.

³¹ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 3.

³² Wekker, *White Innocence*, 3.

such as 'ethnicity' or 'culture.' The use of these 'softer entities' as Wekker describes them, are symptomatic of the dominant attitude within the Netherlands, which is one of avoidance and denial.³³ By avoiding talking about race and denying race is an organising principle within Dutch society, but instead talking about ethnicity and culture, the colonial episteme is being kept in place within the cultural archive, without being made explicit. The self-presentation of the colour-blind people survives.

In this way the 'softer entities' like culture and ethnicity, which can be seen as epistemic resources with which to understand the racialized or cultural other, are being instrumentalised to covertly perpetuate the same racist ideologies. As Wekker states: 'In the move to ethnicity and culture, and subsequently to culturalization, the work that race used to do, ordering reality on the basis of supposed biological difference, is still being accomplished.'³⁴ However, those new categories of 'us' and 'them' do not seem to be demarcated with the same essentialist finality that race appears to be, since it is possible for groups to move from one category to the next. Those who were once defined as 'allochtoon' like Indos or Surinamese people, have moved out of that group and, as Wekker notices 'it is now Islamic people, constructed as the ultimate other, who seem firmly lodged within it.'³⁵ This shift in who is defined as the cultural other to oppose the self is interesting, since it comes with new epistemic resources, new concepts, and new dichotomies that are developed to understand this other. The Dutch values find an adversary in what is being represented as Islam.

Wekker elaborates on the binary opposition that is created between these cultures when she talks about the Islamophobic political party of Geert Wilders. Party leader of the far-right PVV, he has built his party largely on anti-Islam and anti-immigration standpoints and rhetoric.³⁶ The fact that this party has received the most votes of all parties in the parliament elections of 2024 is illustrative of how widely accepted these standpoints have become. One of the ways in which Wilders uses his epistemic power as a politician is to redefine Islam not as a religion but as an ideology.³⁷ This meaning-giving is an epistemic act, and a very sly one at that. Ideologies are mostly acceptable to criticize without having to be too careful to be accused of discrimination or racism. I would argue that this redefining, this meaning-giving has the purpose of dodging that accusation. In addition to that, it would take away the constitutional rights of Muslims to practice their religion under the law for freedom of religion.

Islamophobia is further spurred on by contrasting the white Dutch cultural self with the Islamic other. The positive self-representation of being a just and tolerant country is opposed by the racist imagery of the barbaric, Islamic other who have only come here to profit from 'our' wealth, take 'our' jobs, attack 'our' gay people and rape 'our' women. A threat is being fabricated, borrowing from the rich imagery in popular culture of Arabic people as terrorists: Islamic fundamentalists who want to destroy Western liberal countries because 'they' hate what 'we' stand for.³⁸ These tropes show the colonial episteme at work. The role of innocence within the self-representation is apparent here: the innocent Dutch people under threat of the barbaric, Islamic other need to be protected.

³³ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 23.

³⁴ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 23.

³⁵ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 23.

³⁶ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 110.

³⁷ <https://www.nieuwwij.nl/achtergrond/geert-wilders-islam-is-geen-religie-het-is-een-totalitaire-ideologie/>

³⁸ Wasif Shadid, "Berichtgeving over moslims en de islam in de westerse media: Beeldvorming, oorzaken en alternatieve strategieën", *Binnenwerk, tijdschrift voor Communicatiewetenschap*, 33 (2005): 334.

Recently, a signification that is emphasised more and more as belonging to the Islamic and Arabic other, is that of being antisemitic. The opposition between the 'Jewish-Christian culture' of the Netherlands and the Islamic or Arabic other was already passively present in Dutch debate surrounding Arabic and/or Muslim immigrants, especially because Wilders uses the term 'Jewish-Christian culture' a lot when he means to oppose it to that of Arabic people.³⁹ However, this opposition has become a lot more explicit in the period starting in October 2023, after the attack of Hamas. In the Netherlands, people protesting the genocide on Palestinians were often called antisemitic, also by Dutch members of parliament.⁴⁰ At a talk show table, a member of the BBB, the right-wing farmers party, noted that Muslim people are Jew-hating people, when she argued that the Holocaust should become part of the integration policy of the Netherlands.⁴¹

Before discussing the influence of Zionism on the Dutch cultural archive in the next chapter, we will first turn to an aspect within that archive that Wekker discusses in her book, namely the Second World War. Although it doesn't take central stage in the book, the Second World War figures as one of the paradoxes within dominant Dutch self-representation. Within this dominant self-representation, the Dutch are the innocent victims of the German occupation. Wekker describes the slow transformation that this particular aspect of the self-representation has undergone in the past decades. She notes that the fate of the majority of the Dutch Jews who were transported and killed in concentration camps has only in the past three decades become more of a focus point in the Dutch knowledge production surrounding World War II. From no other Western country, except for Poland, were as many Jews abducted and murdered in concentration camps as from the Netherlands. It is perhaps illustrative to the *modus operandi* of the Dutch cultural archive that only in 2020, the Dutch prime minister Mark Rutte, apologised for the role the governmental bodies played in the deportation of the Dutch Jews during the occupation. Coming to terms with the less than heroic and humane ways in which the Dutch government handled the deportation of the Jewish part of their population is a slow and gradual process.⁴²

Wekker notes that another often overlooked aspect of the Second World War is the violence that the Dutch perpetrated against Indonesia, which was fighting for its independence during the same period. This violence, Wekker notes, "hardly forms a part of the Dutch self-image, much less the more than 100.000 victims of 'pacification' outside of Java at the turn of the twentieth century."⁴³ These two aspects, the slow and gradual process of coming to terms with the Dutch complicity in the abduction and murder of a large part of its Jewish population and the neglect for the violence the Netherlands was perpetrating overseas in their colonised land, show the colonial episteme at work, shaping the memory of the second world war. In this way, the Dutch self is being reproduced as the innocent victim, both by ignorance (ignoring the Dutch violence in Indonesia) and by

³⁹ Frank van Vree, 'Beroep op "joods-christelijke traditie" lijkt vanzelfsprekend maar is pervers'. *NRC*, 27 maart 2010. <https://www.nrc.nl/nieuws/2010/03/27/beroep-op-joods-christelijke-traditie-likt-vanzelfsprekend-11869347-a685650>.

⁴⁰ Marcel Wiegman, 'Jodenhaat of protest tegen Israël? "Je bent niet meteen een antisemiet als je protesteert tegen de catastrofale situatie in Gaza"'. *Het Parool*, 30 maart 2024. <https://www.parool.nl/nederland/jodenhaat-of-protest-tegen-israel-je-bent-niet-meteen-een-antisemiet-als-je-protesteert-tegen-de-catastrofale-situatie-in-gaza~b3eacd8e/>.

⁴¹ 'Mona Keijzer niet vervolgd voor groepsbelediging bij talkshow', 12 juli 2024. <https://nos.nl/artikel/2528619-mona-keijzer-niet-vervolgd-voor-groepsbelediging-bij-talkshow>.

⁴² Wekker, *White Innocence*, 12.

⁴³ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 12.

denial (of the role of the Dutch government in the Holocaust, however it is now reluctantly shifting toward acknowledgement of that role). Ignorance, avoidance and denial are again instrumental, methodical and strategic in upholding the white Dutch self-image.

As the Holocaust has gradually become more and more visible within the European shared memory as the crime against humanity that it was, Wekker argues that it is used to erase the crimes that were perpetrated against the colonised for four centuries. The fact that it happened on the European continent, in the metropole, to use Said's framework, and targeted the European Jews, is largely to blame for this erasure. Wekker notes that the history and reality of Europe are located on the continent, and that what happened in the colonies has no constitutive part in it.⁴⁴ If that is the logic of the colonial episteme, which I argue, it is, then it explains why, as Wekker states, trying to insert memories of the colonial violence in Indonesia during the Second World War into the general memory of that war is being met with resistance. To put it in epistemological terms: the dominantly shared epistemic resource that is the concept of World War II is demarcated by the colonial episteme. This colonial episteme does not allow epistemic resources to enter the dominant discourse (of WWII) if they are developed from the perspective of marginally situated knowers, in this case, the previously colonised. They do not belong to the shared memory of the World War in the Dutch cultural archive, since the colonial episteme notes that whatever happened outside of the continent is not part of European reality.⁴⁵

In this last part of the paragraph, we focussed on three relevant aspects to the role that the Second World War plays in the Dutch cultural archive. Firstly it affirms the dominant, white Dutch self-image as the innocent victim of the German occupation, alongside the Dutch Jewish population. Secondly it maintains this image by methods of ignorance and denial about the role the Netherlands played in the victimization of that Jewish population and the violence against its colony during that same period. Thirdly, the Holocaust and WWII are presented as the epitome and model of racist transgression in Europe, erasing the colonial violence that European states have done for centuries to their colonies overseas.⁴⁶

1.3. Problems with the concept of the Cultural Archive

One of the things that make the concept of the cultural archive more difficult to work with in this epistemological context, that counts for both Wekker and Said, is the somewhat open-ended definition. To both Said and Wekker the concept is quite central in their work, however they do not clearly demarcate what belongs to the cultural archive and what does not. For Said, literary works take the foreground in his analysis of the cultural archives of Western imperial states, Wekker shifts her focus to the collective unconscious that shows itself in interactions. This lack of a clear definition gives rise to other problems, at least in Wekker's work. Not specifying whether the cultural archive is something everyone who shares in said culture ascribes to in equal amount or whether it only applies to the most dominantly situated within a culture, for instance, leaves room for the cultural archive to become monolithic in some sense.⁴⁷ A clear definition that demarcates the

⁴⁴ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 4.

⁴⁵ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 4.

⁴⁶ Wekker, *White Innocence*, 4.

⁴⁷ Agnes Andeweg, 'Layering the Cultural Archive: A Critical Reading of Gloria Wekker's *White Innocence* and Rembrandt's *Painting of Two Black Men*', *Dutch Crossing* 46, nr. 3 (2 September 2022): 230-43, <https://doi.org/10.1080/03096564.2022.2145047>.

concept might also help to differentiate it from culture in general, which is now not always made explicit.

Some critics also note that when Wekker speaks about the archive as having this unconscious element, the knowledge within it submerged, she closes its access to us. If the archive is only visible in symptomatic manifestations, how can we hope to unlearn the beliefs that underlie these thoughts and behaviours?⁴⁸ According to Dutch researcher Agnes Andeweg, this last problem could be solved by not only looking at the symptomatic outcomes of the colonial history of the Netherlands, but also how the colonial mentalities were formed over time.⁴⁹ This is something Wekker does not do in her book, her focus, other than in Saids work, lies not so much on the historical causes and developments of this colonial episteme. This is understandable, since the book is not meant to be a historical examination of the Dutch colonial mindset, but rather a psychoanalytic analysis of the effects of this colonial mindset in contemporary Dutch society.

The problem of the cultural archive as monolith, with little nuance and differentiations that contest dominant culture, Andeweg addresses by taking inspiration from Williams's 'culture of feeling'.⁵⁰ This concept leaves room for dynamic and differentiation within a certain culture. According to Williams, dominant culture can never be total but is always contested. In his view, culture can be seen as 'an arena of contesting and contested discourses, habits and behaviours, in which new patterns can emerge.'⁵¹ Adding this nuance to Wekker's analysis of the Dutch cultural archive would strengthen it in my opinion, since it would allow for a more accurate and complete picture. If we demarcate the cultural archive as a repository of knowledge and ideas that solely supply the dominant culture with epistemic resources, it becomes a static and closed system, without the ability to grow alongside any cultural change or indeed allow for this change to happen within a dominant culture. I would therefore propose to take up Andeweg's suggestion and view the panels that hold the knowledge of the cultural archive as porous. Any strong contesting ideas or practices that win enough ground within culture as a whole can be added to the cultural archive, making it easier for next generations to access this way of thinking as well. An example of this would be the one I already gave once in this chapter; that of the use of nonbinary pronouns, a habit that is slowly becoming more accepted within a larger part of the general culture due to the work that the marginalised queer communities have done to develop the necessary epistemic resources. However, in line with the authors who have been developing the concept of the cultural archive, the cultural archive does seem to take on the role of providing those who ascribe to the dominant culture with knowledge and ideas about identity and morality more, than those who are situated closer to the periphery. If the cultural archive is not monolithic and static but contested from within the culture in general, this also leaves room for change to happen asymmetrically. In the legal system, change happens very slow, since it has a certain distance from culture as a whole. However in University or higher education in general, contemporary practices are picked up on more quickly for a number of reasons, one being that the general population is younger. Adding these nuances leaves room for the seemingly contradictory elements of the cultural archive and culture in general, and ensures that the concept does just that which it was developed to criticize: reducing a certain culture to a monolith.

⁴⁸ Andeweg, 'Layering the Cultural Archive'.

⁴⁹ Andeweg, 'Layering the Cultural Archive'.

⁵⁰ Andeweg, 'Layering the Cultural Archive'.

⁵¹ Andeweg, 'Layering the Cultural Archive'.

1.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have delineated one of the main concepts of this thesis, the Dutch cultural archive. Firstly I have turned to Said to help us understand the more general definition of the concept. In the second part of the chapter I concentrated on describing the Dutch cultural archive with help of the book 'White Innocence', by Dutch anthropologist Gloria Wekker. Throughout the chapter I have attempted to translate some of the relevant aspects of the concept toward an epistemological understanding. In order to that, early in the chapter I introduced the notion of epistemic resources, tools of knowledge with which we make sense of the world and our experiences. Additionally, I delineated the concept of the colonial episteme, the field of knowledge that is demarcated along the logic of colonialism. With these two epistemic concepts I have attempted to reframe some of the anthropological theory into the field of epistemology.

In the first part of the chapter, I have shown that the cultural archive of Western imperialist states are organised along the logic of the colonial episteme, since they need the cultural other or the colonised other to be inferior to the cultural self in order to rationalise and justify colonisation and/or the beneficial position of the cultural self. This means that the knowledges, concepts and languages that make up the archive are demarcated by colonial ideas about race, culture, gender and sexuality. This creates an episteme within which knowledges are reproduced that function along the logic of this binary opposition of the inferior cultural other and the superior cultural self. Knowledges or epistemic resources that fall outside of the demarcation of this hierarchical binary opposition or that prove to contradict it are excluded from the episteme, or twisted in such a way that it follows the same logic. The reason for this episteme to be in place is to rationalise and justify colonial practices that harm the colonised and/or cultural other while benefiting the coloniser and/or cultural self.

In the second part of this chapter, I argued that the Dutch cultural archive is organised along the logic of the colonial episteme and contains certain knowledge producing practices and epistemic resources in order to maintain the positive self-representation that it is centred around. Several of these knowledge producing practices and epistemic resources are crucial in facilitating and perpetuating epistemic injustices, such as the concept of 'colour-blindness', the denial of racism and the refusal to acknowledge the effects of colonialism on Dutch society. Refusal and denial and avoidance are strategies used to uphold the self-image of an innocent and just people. Related aspects that are facilitating the epistemic injustices against Palestinians are the growing Islamophobia, the shifting of the cultural other from the previously colonised countries toward the Islamic or Arab immigrants present within the Netherlands and the role the Second World War plays in the collective memory of the Netherlands.

In the last part of this chapter, I addressed some problems that occur when defining the cultural archive. One of them is that the cultural archive, as used by Wekker and Said, lacks a clearly demarcated definition, leading to challenges that are in need of addressing within the epistemological context we are working. Said focuses on literary works in Western imperial contexts, while Wekker examines the collective unconscious in interactions. The open-endedness risks making the cultural archive appear monolithic. Critics argue that Wekker's approach limits understanding by not exploring how colonial mentalities formed over time. Andeweg suggests viewing the cultural archive as dynamic,

incorporating contesting ideas, which would prevent it from becoming static and allow it to adapt to cultural changes, such as the acceptance of nonbinary pronouns.

2. Zionism and its relation to the Dutch cultural archive

We discussed the cultural archive in the Netherlands, and how the concept can be used to explain the Islamophobia and racism there. The question I hope to answer in this chapter is if Zionist ideology is part of that archive, and if so, how exactly it is embedded into it. We need to gain a better understanding of what constitutes Zionism as an ideology and how it conducts itself in relation to the Palestinians before we can move toward the question of Zionism in relation to the Dutch cultural archive.

I will start by delineating the development and rise of political Zionism within Western imperial states and its allegiance to Western colonial imperialism, analysing the pamphlet 'The Jewish State', by Zionist founder Theodore Herzl. In the second part of the first paragraph, I will discuss Edward Said's book 'The Question of Palestine', in which he gives an account of Zionism from the perspective of a Palestinian scholar. In the second part of this chapter, we will focus on how Zionism relates to the Dutch cultural archive and lastly, analyse some examples of Zionism becoming apparent within Dutch public discourse.

2.1. Zionism and Western Colonialism

In this paragraph, we will focus on what constitutes Zionism as a political ideology, and as such, how and why it is inherently tied up with Western colonialism. In order to do this, we will start by an analysis of one of the founding texts of Zionism: the Jewish State, by Theodore Herzl. Analysing this text from a postcolonial and epistemological perspective, the aim is to not only show the development of Zionism as a viable political ideology, but also to clarify the anti-Palestinian racism that Zionism needed in order to gain and maintain that status.

For a further understanding of the way Zionism both instrumentalises and facilitates epistemic injustices against Palestinians, and how this specific aspect relates to Western colonialism, we will turn toward Edward Said's 'The Question of Palestine'. This work was chosen because it examines Zionism from a postcolonial and above all, Palestinian perspective, which is a necessary perspective to fully understand how and why Zionism gives ground to epistemic injustices against Palestinians. It is a work that develops epistemic resources to understand the experiences of the Palestinian as the victims of Zionism. Since we want to focus on the epistemic and ideological justifications for the Zionist political undertaking, specific historical or political details will serve as examples of how Zionist knowledge production gained ground within Western political discourse. Additionally, I will focus on the discursive elements with which Zionism as an ideology managed to get more and more ground within the Western world and how it finally emerged as a widely accepted political ideology, rather than a form of racism as it was shortly defined by the UN.

Herzl's "The Jewish State"

To understand the ideological link between modern Zionism and Western colonialism, we will look at its historical and ideological source. One of the founders of political Zionism, if not the most important one, Theodore Herzl, pleaded in his 1896 pamphlet 'Der Judenstaat' (The Jewish State) for the creation of a Jewish state in either Argentina or Palestine.⁵² His reasoning for this was the growing antisemitism in Europe and the pogroms in Russia, which showed, according to him, that Jews would never be safe and

⁵² Theodore Herzl, *A Jewish State: an attempt at a modern solution of the Jewish question* (New York: Federation of American Zionists, 1917), 12.

accepted within the countries they inhabited. Jewish integration was not historically successful, according to Herzl this was because of the antisemitism that grew along with the growing emancipation of the Jewish people.⁵³ He states that whenever the Jewish people arose from poverty and entered into bourgeois society, the Jew-hate rose with them. The core of antisemitism is the deeply ingrained prejudice against Jewish people, inherited over the ages. To Herzl, it is evident that the Jewish people will never fully be accepted and allowed to integrate into society. Those who still hold out hope for this, he calls utopian.⁵⁴ Herzl argues that the Jewish people are stuck in a circle of oppression, which leads them to become hostile to their oppressors, which then again leads to more oppression.⁵⁵ He sees no way in which this circle can end, but he does offer the solution to simply step out of it: remove either the oppressed or the oppressor and the circle ends, is the logic behind this thought. Obviously, the oppressed are in no position to remove the oppressor from anywhere, so Herzl proposes the oppressed Jews remove themselves, and develop their own, separate nation state. This is his political solution to the 'Jewish Question', as it was called.

The pamphlet can be seen as a starting point of modern political Zionism, and within it we can recognise aspects of Western colonialism and imperialism. Herzl aligns his goal of colonising a strip of land with the interests of the Western powers without distancing himself from the ideology behind the colonial projects of the Western world. Also visible in this founding text is a racist logic: it was simply a matter of accepting the unequal treatment Jews received in their respective states as a given, an unavoidable fact of life that it surely had proven to be. For the Western imperial states, this was a solution as well: the difficulties of racial inequality within one society, instead of worked through and truly solved, were to simply disappear with segregation. Since this was the hegemonic framework of that time, it is not surprising to come to the conclusion that removing the oppressed from the circle of oppression was the only solution.

The pragmatism with which Herzl presents his plan to colonise either Palestine or a part of Argentina is another sign of the racism and Western colonial mindset within his work.

"Should the Powers declare themselves willing to admit our sovereignty over a neutral piece of land, then the Society will enter into negotiations for the possession of this land. Here two territories come under consideration, Palestine and Argentina. In both countries important experiments in colonization have been made, though on the mistaken principle of a gradual infiltration of Jews. An infiltration is bound to end in disaster. It continues till the inevitable moment when the native population feels itself threatened, and forces the Government to stop the further influx of Jews. Immigration is consequently futile unless based on an assured supremacy. The Society of Jews will treat with the present masters of the land, putting itself under the protectorate of the European Powers, if they prove friendly to the plan. We could offer the present possessors of the land enormous advantages; take upon ourselves part of the public debt, build new roads for traffic, which our presence in the country would render necessary, etc. The creation of our State would be beneficial to adjacent countries, because the cultivation of a strip of land increases the value of its surrounding districts in innumerable ways."⁵⁶

⁵³ Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 3.

⁵⁴ Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 10.

⁵⁵ Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 10.

⁵⁶ Herzl, *A Jewish State*, 12.

Herzl pleads with the 'European Powers' for their protection in more places in his book, expressing how within the already existing colonial 'endeavours', the creation of a Jewish state would benefit the (colonial) masters of the land. This plea to the powerful colonising and imperial Western states for a 'neutral' piece of land to build the Jewish state on is exemplary of the colonial episteme within which colonialism itself wasn't seen as inherently problematic but a rather a natural result from the hierarchical ordering of the metropole and the periphery.⁵⁷ Both the notion that antisemitism was somehow unavoidable, something that would always arise wherever Jews went, and the notion of colonialism as a natural and logical result of the hierarchical ordering of cultures and races are fundamental presuppositions upon which Zionism as an ideology is built.⁵⁸ Thinking along the logic of this episteme of unavoidable antisemitism and the logic of colonialism, the idea of building a Jewish state on colonised land under the protection of the coloniser, was seen as an efficient solution to the difficulty that the Western imperial states had in realising equal treatment for their Jewish citizens.⁵⁹ In this manner, Zionism as a political movement cannot be seen apart from Western colonialism and all the racist ideologies it instrumentalised in order to rationalise the violent undertaking of colonisation. It is exactly this allegiance between Western colonialism and Zionism that made it possible for Zionism as an ideology to get so popular and eventually successfully create the state of Israel.

Part of this allegiance was the Zionist adoption of the Western colonial episteme, that comes with certain discursive strategies and epistemic resources about the cultural self and the cultural other, as we have discussed in the previous chapter. Already we can see some of this language and these concepts reflected in the fragment quoted above. The 'cultivation of a strip of land', for instance, implying it was in need of improvement and that this task was suited not for the native population already living there, but for the Zionist colonists. This Lockian idea about cultivating land in order to appropriate it was one of the main justifying rationalisations for capitalist colonialism, which is another resemblance between Zionism and Western colonialism.⁶⁰

Where it differentiates within the colonial episteme is also already hinted at. The idea that this strip of land would have to be under 'assured supremacy' of the Zionist colonisers, and the complete absence of the Palestinian in this founding work are betraying of the specific Zionist line of argument that we will discuss later on in this chapter, in which the erasure of Palestinians is fundamental. How these ideas develop into the political Zionism that was fundamental to the creation of the state of Israel, will be discussed in the next paragraph, with help of Edward Said's book 'The Question of Palestine'.

The Question of Palestine

Above, we focussed on political Zionism as it was drawn up by one of the founding theorists. In the following paragraph, we will examine it from the perspective of the victims it created. To understand the Zionist ideology from the perspective of the Palestinian, its victim, Said's book is instrumental. It is essential not only to give a more complete account of Zionism that we could get from Herzl, but also to delineate the

⁵⁷ Said, *Culture and Imperialism*, 59.

⁵⁸ Edward Said, *The Question of Palestine* (New York: Vintage Books 1980), 15.

⁵⁹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 24.

⁶⁰ Jeanne Morefield, "'In the Beginning All the World Was...': Political Vision, Critical History, and the Possibilities of the Present', *Political Theory* 37, nr. 4 (2009): 571-81.

knowledges, images, language that Zionism produces about the Palestinians and the Jewish Europeans whom it posits on the other side of the contrapuntal opposition. These will show us the mechanisms with which Zionism as a colonial ideology justifies itself. I will point out some of the most prominent and relevant aspects of Zionist ideology in relation to the Palestinians, and expand on the mechanisms of the allegiance between Zionism and Western colonialism.

Erasing the Palestinians

In this book, Said gives voice to the Palestinian Arab as citizen, cultural and political agent, and human being. His ambitious attempt to expand the narrative on Israel/Palestine beyond that which the mainstream Western discourse has demarcated as acceptable, starts by outlining the ways in which that demarcation has negated the Palestinian as a locus of human rights, cultural and political agency, and epistemological substance. One of the discursive strategies that Zionism applies in order to gain more popularity within Western states is the denial of the very existence of Palestine/Palestinians. Said counters this attempt with emphasising the very material and identifiable existence of Palestinians who had for hundreds of years lived on the land that had been called Palestine.⁶¹ The British imperialist and the Zionist visions were, according to Said, united in 'playing down and even cancelling out the Arabs in Palestine as somehow secondary and negligible.'⁶² He sketches this attempt to erase the historical and material reality of Palestinians in Palestine as the Zionist 'denial of the existence of Palestinian Arabs who are there not simply as an inconvenient nuisance, but as a people with an indissoluble bond with the land'.⁶³ He consequently defines this dissonance as the 'struggle between a presence and an interpretation'.⁶⁴ To illustrate this attempt at erasure, Said elaborates on the idea of a 'land without a people for a people without a land'. This popular phrase perfectly shows Zionist colonialism: the Palestinian people are erased in word first, since clearly, there were people on the land. The framing works toward the constant downplaying and dehumanizing of Palestinians, to the point where they are so insignificant that they become almost non-existent.

Another way in which this erasure of Palestinians was achieved by Zionists during the time of the Balfour declaration was by speaking about the 're-constitution' and 're-building' of Palestine to be home for the Jewish people. Even though is not directly addressed, this implies that there already was a constitution. Implicit language and euphemisms, are used to cloak the reality of a colonizing force: Arab villages were destroyed completely, even the tombstones in the cemeteries.⁶⁵ These implicit statements and euphemisms are the language of the colonial episteme as described in the first chapter when talking about the 'softer entities' Wekker mentions. As are denying the reality of the marginalised or colonised cultural other, simply not allowing the epistemic tools necessary to understand that reality, to develop within the episteme. The discursive role of the cultural other within the colonial episteme is, after all, twofold: to contrapuntally define the cultural self and consequently, to help rationalise the beneficial position of their cultural self that they acquired, not in spite but because of the marginalisation of the cultural other. This is achieved by the cultural other being represented as inferior to that cultural self, or in this case, as being of so little consequence that they almost disappear

⁶¹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 7.

⁶² Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 18.

⁶³ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 8.

⁶⁴ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 8.

⁶⁵ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 14.

from view entirely. Erasure, denial, avoidance and the use of euphemisms are all discursive strategies that we recognise from the first chapter on the colonial episteme and the Dutch cultural archive. This shows one of the ways in which the allegiance between Zionism and Western imperial states is solidified: resemblance in the cultural selves and similarity in strategies to deal with the cultural other.

Representing the Palestinians

Other resemblances and mutually beneficial factors come into play when we zoom in on the allegiance between Zionism and the Western states. Of these resemblances, shared enmity toward Islam and the Arab world in general is one of the strongest. But, it wasn't just the already wide-spread anti-Arab racism within the Western world that made it easier for the Zionists to posit themselves as the cultural self and the Palestinian as the cultural other.⁶⁶ That image was also encouraged by the lack of Palestinian perspectives in Western discourse on Palestine. Said argues that they 'were always *being represented*, never able to speak for themselves',⁶⁷ which would leave all interpretation of the Palestinian people and their political life to the already biased Western journalists, politicians and historians. Again, the struggle between a material reality (that of the Palestinians) and an interpretation appears. No hermeneutical tools or epistemic resources were developed to give an accurate account of the lives of Palestinians, since they were not allowed to take part in the public debate. This means that the interpretation would always be second hand at best, and highly prejudiced or purposefully stigmatizing at worst. There was no discursive space in which to truly speak for the Palestinians, or for the Palestinians to speak themselves, since any association with the Palestinian cause was laden with images belonging to the cultural other: terrorists, barbarians, uncivilized farmers, etc. It continued to function exactly like this: when one is critical of Israel, one is accused not only of antisemitism but of aligning oneself with a people who have perpetually been framed as backward at best and terrorists at worst.⁶⁸ Meanwhile, 'the Zionist fuses with the white European against the coloured Oriental, whose principle political claim seems only to be quantitative (his brute numbers) and otherwise lacking in quality.'⁶⁹

The Western imperialist colonial episteme

The misrepresentation of Palestinians serves a purpose, which is not just discursive or ideological but material and political as well. Politically, Zionism claimed the alliance with the Western world by appealing to the idea of a Western ally in the Middle-East to hold both Islam and the Soviet Union at bay. Not in the least for economic reasons, support for the Zionist cause was expressed in western media as the most logical course to follow. Said illustrates this with an excerpt from a signed letter to the New York Times from 1947, which states that 'Politically we would like to see the lands of the Middle East practice democracy as we do here. Socially and economically, we would want these lands to develop in a manner which would improve local conditions of life and open up both the resources and the markets of the region.' It proceeds to name the Zionist project as the 'only vanguard of progress and modernization in the Middle East'.⁷⁰ Two things are notable in this fragment, starting with the obvious economic interest expressed. Opening

⁶⁶ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 26.

⁶⁷ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 25.

⁶⁸ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 25.

⁶⁹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 28.

⁷⁰ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 30.

up resources and markets of the regions is probably one of the most important incentives for Western allies to support the Zionist cause. Material and economic gain are not often emphasised in the argumentation to support the cause, however they are always implicitly present when talking about the cultivation of a land not already belonging to a Western state. Secondly, the idea appears again that the Arab world is in need of improving, up to Western standards of living, in need of 'modernization.' As Said points out, there is however a complete lack of interest in what the native population of 'these lands' would wish.⁷¹ Again, the Palestinians do not get a voice, are not regarded as a people with political agency or even citizens at all. If they are considered, they are considered as a people in desperate need of modernization by the enlightened West, which shows the colonial episteme once again: the Palestinian as inferior, in need of help by a superior and colonising (Western) state that will bring modernization and cultivate the land in a proper way.

It is this Lockian, capitalist episteme, fundamental to Western imperial colonialism, that Zionism works within. Arguments in favour of the Zionist project centre around epistemic resources, ways to know and concepts to know with, that are native to European capitalism: property based on the Lockian notion that who 'better' the land by working it, becomes owner of this land.⁷² This idea, if not developed as an instrument to justify colonisation, is as an argument in favour of it, since Locke was a great supporter of the colonisation of the Carolines in North America.⁷³ This notion of ownership is one of the ways in which the colonial episteme justifies the colonisation economically. It further shows the ties to Western imperial thought that Zionism uses this same argument when expanding efforts to colonise Palestine.

To illustrate the discursive and ideological achievement that the misrepresentation of Palestinians has brought, Said focusses on the dissonance necessary to support Israeli crimes. He condemns the omission of the major American newspapers to write about the reports of torture of Arabs in Israel, condoned by the state. Nothing less than a political censorship seems to explain this silence on the fate of the Palestinians, in order to justify the continuous support of the state of Israel. 'The power of a consensus', Said writes, 'of a tradition, of a coherent discourse (...) can convert what one would expect to be devastating challenges to [Israel], into *support* for it.'⁷⁴ He proceeds to describe how Menachem Begin, a known Israeli terrorist who has written a book where he describes his responsibility for massacring hundreds of Arab women and children, was elected statesman without any protest. He was even awarded part of the Nobel Peace Prize in 1987.⁷⁵ This kind of cognitive dissonance, the complete denial of the reality of how the state of Israel treats the original population of the land it is colonising, is grounded not only in the stubborn denial that such a population even exists in the first place, but also on the anti-Palestinian racism that Zionism spread by continuous misrepresentation. This misrepresentation found fertile ground within the colonial episteme of the Western countries and its racializing grammar.

Victimhood of, and self-defence against antisemitism

Another way in which Zionism ties itself to Western countries ideologically and politically, we have discussed in the first paragraph of this chapter. Offering Zionism as a solution to

⁷¹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 30.

⁷² Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 75-76.

⁷³ Morefield, "In the Beginning All the World Was", 571-81.

⁷⁴ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 44.

⁷⁵ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 44.

and a defence against antisemitism, and finally being able to equate anti-Zionism with antisemitism and thus a claim to victimhood. Segregating the Jewish settlers from the native Palestinian and Arab population was one of the strategies necessary in order to keep ignoring the native population as a people, and denying any violence done unto the native populations. By means of invoking 'Avoda Ivrit' (Hebrew Labour), settlers were encouraged to hire Jewish labourers for building or other jobs instead of that of the native population. The Zionist settlers 'created a subculture, free from the demands of the larger society, not parasitic upon it, and above all, enjoying that kind of immunity from 'reality' (...) permitted its members to indulge in their dreams.'⁷⁶ Said adds that in this way, Zionists could omit fighting *against* anyone, they were merely there on their own ground. The native resistance was played down or ignored, and between 1922 and 1947 the Zionists presented the struggles they were having as struggles against the British empire, who were blocking them from further taking over parts of the land. Said calls this 'spin' on the narrative an epistemological achievement since it 'blots out from knowledge almost a million natives'. Positioning themselves as the victims and enemies of a colonial power like Britain, and ignoring the natives entirely, was a political strategy that appealed to the Western world. This is another resemblance with the Dutch cultural archive: the claim to victimhood and denial or avoidance when it comes to acknowledging any violence done unto the colonised.

Said further develops his argument in opposition of Israel and Zionism, with the knowledge that any such opposition will be misconstrued as antisemitism, a misconception he thinks will be used 'for years to come', which unfortunately proved to be true, as I will show later in chapter 3.⁷⁷ Said describes not only the impossibility to maintain an anti-Zionist standpoint in the period right after the Second World War, he also delineates the complete reversal of roles; the Arab or the Palestinian as the antisemitic nuisance who attack the Western democracy that is Israel.⁷⁸ The reason that this reversal was not met with more scrutiny by the Western allies of Israel, is the strategic dehumanizing misrepresentation of the Palestinian people. He further describes the difficulties one runs into when criticizing Israel. 'To criticize Zionism now then, is to criticize not so much an idea or a theory, but rather a wall of denials'⁷⁹ This denial of the Palestinian reality and the accusation of antisemitism are the two strongest obstacles that Said describes when opposing Zionism.

The concealment of Zionism as ideology of Israel

Said distinguishes another rhetoric strategy with which Zionism makes its colonial ambitions palatable to the Western public, one that may remind of a feat of the Dutch cultural archive, namely the hiding of certain parts of one's own history. In order to become this universally accepted ideology in the West, Zionism depends on this concealment. Not only because of the extent to which it depends on the oppression of the Palestinians, but also because of the meagre claims it actually has to the land: 'a period of 60 years two millennia ago.', whereas the Palestinian people have inhabited the land for hundreds of centuries.⁸⁰ Said argues that this concealment was successful, partly because of the lack of historical information of Western non-Zionist sources. The way in which the debate surrounding Zionism gets simplified by Zionists is possible because of this absence

⁷⁶ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 22.

⁷⁷ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 50.

⁷⁸ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 36.

⁷⁹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 51.

⁸⁰ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 58.

of available historical knowledge from non-Zionist sources. This all leads to a hegemonic support for Israel throughout the West and especially the US. This particular lack of unbiased historical sources is one that we find in the Dutch cultural archive as well: the erasure or downplaying of certain parts of history in order to maintain a positive self-representation centred around victimhood, without acknowledging the acts of colonial violence done unto the cultural other.

Zionism as racism/teleological knowledge production

Said argues that the distinction between ideas and reality is a false one in the case of imperialism. 'Laying claim to an idea and laying claim to a territory – given the extraordinary current idea that the non-European world was there to be claimed, occupied and ruled by Europe – were considered to be different sides of the same essentially constitutive activity (...).' ⁸¹ He goes on to argue that the prevalent 'scientific' ideas of the end of the 19th and start of the 20th century, for instance that on the inequality of the races, attempted to 'change confusing or useless realities into an orderly, disciplined set of new classifications useful to Europe.'⁸² This notion of scientific 'facts' and objective truths being produced in order to align with certain political ideologies and goals is something Said sees clearly also happening in the case of Zionism and Palestine. He urges the reader to see how science runs the risk of being 'deformed into a rationalization for imperial domination.'⁸³ To assign moral values and traits to not only the biological and cultural but also the linguistic differences between peoples is a practice that we would now recognise as inherently racist, however it is what happened during that time. All so-called 'logical' and 'enlightened' European ideas and sciences were indeed instrumentalised as rationale for deeply racist, colonial and immoral practices that needed to be validated in order to be palatable for the larger public. In this way, the epistemic practice of producing knowledge is being misused, instrumentalised as a means to an end, which is what Zionist racism has in common with other forms of racist knowledge production. As such we can conclude that epistemic resources developed to understand the cultural other within the colonial episteme are inherently racist, since they are produced for the sake of rationalising the injustice against this cultural other.

Said argues that to conquer territory is only in part a 'matter of physical force.' and has a strong moral component as well. The moral component is the idea that there is no society more advanced or in any way superior to the Western European society, so to have that society replicate itself in other parts of the world without taking into account the native population is only logical. It is exactly this conviction of the own superiority as a culture and this disdain for native populations that has informed the Zionist attitude towards the Palestinians.⁸⁴ As discussed in the first chapter, this colonialist mindset comes with the idea of a superior people or race ruling to the benefit of the inferior natives who will in the end have to be 'civilised' or 'modernised' for their own good. This same rhetoric is what Said describes in the first chapter when he discusses the allegiance between Zionism and Western liberalism, and shows Zionism as inseparable from Western imperialist colonialism

⁸¹ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 74.

⁸² Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 74.

⁸³ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 74.

⁸⁴ Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 77.

2.2. The link between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive

In the first chapter, we have seen how the cultural archive of the Netherlands functions, and how it is reproducing the same colonial epistemes as it used to do, in order to understand the cultural other and thus the cultural self. The ideological link between Zionism and Western colonialism shown in the previous part of this chapter, can give us some idea of the role of Zionism in the Netherlands as well. If we work within the conceptual framework of the cultural archive, Zionism in the Netherlands is an aspect of this archive that has not yet been fully uncovered. I will attempt to add to uncovering it in this paragraph. I do so as it will help us see how the Dutch colonial archive contributes to epistemic injustices against Palestinians which are central to Zionism, like the erasure of Palestine, the attempt at erasing Palestinians, the misrepresentation and stigmatization of Palestinians, the erasure of knowledge about any violence done unto them etc.

Political history: A Raw Nerve

To understand how and why Zionism became a part of the Dutch cultural archive, I will give some historical and political context. In his book 'Een Open Zenuw' (A Raw Nerve), Dutch historian Peter Malcontent examines the history of the relationship between the Netherlands and Israel and Palestine. He sketches the development of this relationship on a political level, describing both the sudden and the gradual changes of the Dutch position in relation to the Zionist project throughout the previous century and what events played a role in these changes.

During the first half of the 20th century, the Netherlands attempted to keep itself at a political distance of the Zionist question. While the British parliament was running a zig-zag course in its attempts to negotiate a Jewish state in Palestine, which it supported openly after the Balfour-declaration in 1917, the Dutch government did not get involved with the creation of this state in any significant way until after WWII.⁸⁵ This did not mean there were no problems with antisemitism, which was one of the reasons the Zionist project gained support in Britain and other Western states, as we saw in the previous paragraph. When in the 1930s a growing number of Jewish refugees sought a safe haven in the Netherlands, the NSB, the Dutch nazi-party that would later collaborate with the German occupiers, proposed to house the Jewish refugees in Palestine or Surinam, which was still a colony of the Netherlands at that point.⁸⁶ This illustrates the way the colonial episteme aligns with ideas about racial segregation, antisemitism and even Nazism. All are based on the logic of a hierarchical order between the races. This alignment was found in the cultural archive of the Netherlands as well, perhaps in a most significant way with the antisemitic Nazi party of the Netherlands aligning with Zionist ideas about relocating the Jewish population of their Western country to one of their colonies.

The lack of Dutch political support for the Zionist project mainly had to do with the slipping grasp the Dutch had on their colony Dutch-Indonesia. Preventing any further offence against the mostly Islamic population of the colony for the Dutch government was crucial in maintaining power in the colony, which is why the Dutch parliament chose to stay neutral on the question of the Zionist project in Palestine.⁸⁷ This shows how the Dutch cultural archive operated along the lines of the colonial episteme: policies in line with it were prioritised over other policies that might endanger the hold on the colonies. The biggest turning point in Dutch politics in the support for Zionism, came when the Dutch

⁸⁵ Peter Malcontent, *Een open zenuw, Nederland, Israël & Palestina* (The Hague: Boom, 2018), 57.

⁸⁶ Malcontent, *Een Open Zenuw*, 61.

⁸⁷ Malcontent, *Een Open Zenuw*, 6.

were forced to give up Indonesia as a colony, and did not have to contend with its largely Islamic population anymore. After that, the Dutch position in support of Israel went further than any other European nation or even that of the US during this time. The Israeli ambassador in the Netherlands concluded that 'this wasn't just sympathy, the Netherlands has identified itself with Israel.'⁸⁸ Here we can see the start of the entanglement of Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive: Israel as the Jewish state, solidified in the cultural archive as inseparable of the Dutch cultural self.

Malcontent explains the surge in support during this time, when Israel was ethnically cleansing Arab villages in the newly occupied lands, to be largely a public response to the growing awareness of how the Dutch complicity in the Holocaust. The self-image that the Dutch cherished until then was that of heroic resistance against the German occupation and the deportation of the Jewish part of the population. However, the Dutch weren't ready for 'critical self-evaluation', as Malcontent states.⁸⁹ The sobering reality that in no other West-European country, apart from Germany, the percentage of deported Jews had been so high, was one that the Dutch did not want to come to terms with. To escape the realisation that the resistance against the mass-deportation of the Jews was far less heroic than the myth that had dominated the Dutch collective memory, the full and unconditional support of Israel offered a welcome way out.⁹⁰ The self-representation of the just country that had fallen victim to the German occupation *alongside* its Jewish citizens, had to be upheld. The way to uphold this self-image: full support of Zionism. Even though there is a slow development in taking responsibility for the Dutch part in the deportation of Dutch Jews during WWII, as can be illustrated by the previously mentioned apology by Prime Minister Mark Rutte, the support of Israel in the Netherlands still holds up.

The Dutch cultural archive embracing Zionism

As we have seen above, the link between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive goes a little further than the one described by Said when he delineates that between Western liberal states in general and the Zionist project. The self-representation of the just, innocent and small country that was victimised by the German occupier finds its salvation from a reality-check in the form of Zionism. When the Netherlands is confronted with the misdeeds against their Jewish population in and right after WWII, instead of allowing critical self-evaluation to rectify this self-image in accordance with a more truthful representation, a sort of trade-off happens. Focussing on the support of the Israeli state functions not as an apology for the atrocities of the Holocaust, but rather as a way to avoid having to apologise. This way, the strategy of denial that we find in both Zionism and in the Dutch cultural archive, can continue holding the colonial episteme in place.

Altogether, a few aspects are noteworthy in the link between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive. Firstly there are the ideological similarities between them. Both produce knowledge, language, concepts and ideas along the logic of the colonial episteme. Zionism does this in order to maintain the self-representation of the victimised Jewish population, who, although not allowed to integrate there, are aligned with the Western liberal societies. The discursive strategy is to not only keep this self-image intact, but also to emphasise the political and economic benefits the support of Israel would provide for the Western colonial states. The reason this last argument did not immediately sway the

⁸⁸ Malcontent, *Een Open Zenuw*, 118.

⁸⁹ Malcontent, *Een Open Zenuw*, 119.

⁹⁰ Malcontent, *Een Open Zenuw*, 120.

Dutch into support for the Zionist project was not because the Netherlands was such a just country that realised the historic errors of colonialism. On the contrary, the benefits of supporting the Zionist project did not outweigh the importance of keeping Indonesia as a colony, for which that support would not be beneficial at all. As soon as the Dutch are made to give up Indonesia altogether, and the Dutch interest aligns with that of the Zionist, support for Zionism and the state of Israel is a given. Even more so: the Dutch cultural archive *needs to adopt Zionism* in order to avoid any painful self-evaluation about the treatment of the Jewish population, in order to uphold the positive self-representation. It adopts Zionism along with the epistemic injustices that uphold Zionism's legitimacy as a political ideology, using the strategies that are already well practiced: denial, avoidance, wilful ignorance, and the misrepresentation of a cultural other (the Palestinians) in order to define the cultural self.

Victimhood and innocence are used as discursive imagery in both the Zionist strategy and in the Dutch self-representation. By supporting the Jewish people in their creation of a safe haven, in their promised land, the Dutch regained the moral high ground it threatened to lose when the myth of heroic resistance against deportation of the Dutch Jews was revealed. The aspect of the moral high ground is vital in the Dutch cultural archive, and depends on the image of innocence, victimhood and justness that it created.

2.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I argued that Zionist ideology is inseparable from Western imperial colonialism, since Zionism adopts the same colonial episteme in order to justify the Zionist project: creating the state of Israel in Palestine. I also argue that this inseparability as well as this episteme is shown in the ways in which Zionism discusses or neglects to discuss the racialized/colonised other (the Palestinian in this case), and the rationalisation it uses in order to justify the violence of colonisation. I have shown that the allegiance between Zionism and the Western imperial states is grounded in this mutual colonial episteme, the economic and political benefits for the Western states to have an ally in the Middle East, and as a way to avoid dealing with antisemitism within the metropole. I have also elaborated on the strategies with which Zionism has discursively made itself a palatable and viable political ideology, most which are rooted in epistemic injustices against Palestinians: the denial of their existence, misrepresenting them, denying the violence done unto them and weaponizing the victimhood of the Jewish people by accusing anti-Zionist arguments of being antisemitic are a few of those strategies.

Furthermore I have argued that there is a Zionist aspect within the Dutch cultural archive, rooted in *necessity* and *recognition*. The Dutch cultural archive needs Zionism to maintain a positive self-image, and recognises aspects of this self-image in the Zionist ideal. There are several points of recognition distinguishable between the Dutch cultural archive and Zionism as an ideology: (1) both are organised along the colonial episteme, specifically that of the Western imperial state, (2) both have the Islamic or Arab other as a cultural other within this colonial episteme, (3) both are centred around self-representing images of innocence, victimhood, modern liberal values, (4) images they uphold by applying discursive strategies of ignorance, denial and refusal to take into account those epistemic resources necessary to understand the marginalised communities from which dominantly situated people benefit either by strategies of denial and ignorance, and (5) among which the denial of their own colonial history and denial of the violence done to their respective colonised lands and its original inhabitants and

ignorance of the suffering of those original inhabitants. In the case of Zionism, even denial of the existence of such a people.

3. Epistemic injustices against Palestinians rooted in the Dutch Cultural Archive

In the previous chapters, the Dutch cultural archive and Zionism's place within that archive have been discussed. The cultural archive is a useful epistemological concept when we understand it as a repository of knowledge. The metaphor of the archive comes with questions of power, justice and agency: who has access to the archive, who does not? Who is allowed to contribute to the archive and whose input is not included and why? These questions require us to think on the intersection of ethics and epistemology. It is precisely on this intersection that the field of epistemic injustice was developed. In this chapter, I will try to answer the question how the epistemically injustices that are done to Palestinians by some of the Dutch media and politicians arise from the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive.

In the first part of this chapter, 3.1., I will discuss the development of the field of epistemic injustice, contextualising it within epistemology and determine the ideas and concepts relevant to this thesis. A broader understanding of the field is necessary in order to work with the most relevant concepts later on. Once the broader conception of epistemic injustice is clear, I will specify it to the thesis in part two.

In chapter 3.2., I will argue that epistemic injustice in general is perpetuated within the colonial episteme and instrumentalised in order to uphold this episteme. I will then argue that both Zionist ideology and the Dutch cultural archive are organised along the logic of the colonial episteme, and show the ways in which epistemic injustice is instrumentalised in both. To illustrate this I will use examples from Dutch public discourse and political debate. Finally I will argue that since Zionist ideology is a part of the Dutch cultural archive, epistemic injustices against Palestinians are instrumental to upholding the archive.

3.1. Delineating epistemic injustice

3.1.1. The epistemological framework of epistemic injustice

To understand the concepts within the field of epistemic injustice, we need to gain an understanding of the way it is embedded within epistemological theory. Therefore, in this following section, I will focus on contextualising epistemic injustice theory into feminist standpoint theory or feminist epistemology, a social and political epistemology.⁹¹

Feminist epistemology or feminist standpoint theory investigates the way gender and other social or political hierarchical systems influence conceptions of knowledge, knowers and knowledge production.⁹² One of its theses is that knowledge production is a collaborative effort, therefore the social and political situatedness of the knower or knowledge has to be taken into account within epistemology.⁹³

In her article 'Feminist Philosophy of Science: Standpoint Matters', Alison Wylie describes this collaborative process, arguing in favour of standpoint theory. She defends

⁹¹ Elizabeth Anderson, 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science,' *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Fall 2024, Metaphysics Research Lab, Stanford University, 2024.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/feminism-epistemology/>.

⁹² Elizabeth Anderson, 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science,' Stanford University, 2024

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/feminism-epistemology/>.

⁹³ Elizabeth Anderson, 'Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy of Science,' Stanford University, 2024.

<https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/fall2024/entries/feminism-epistemology/>.

the idea that knowers who are in a politically or socially marginalised position are *better* knowers exactly because of their situatedness.⁹⁴ According to Wylie, their epistemic advantage arises both from their experiences as a marginalised person and the epistemic resources they have to understand these experiences, such as concepts, standards and languages.⁹⁵ People who are not in a marginalized position lack these experiences and consequently the necessity to collaboratively create the epistemic resources to make sense of them. Wylie sketches how early Feminist Standpoint theorists explicitly started developing the epistemic resources necessary to understand the experiences from a marginalised person, experiences that were previously conceptualised individually, in isolation from the socio-political context that influenced them greatly. Developing epistemic resources to make sense of the experiences of people is a knowledge producing practice, influenced by the social and political environment. Wylie describes in her article how several scientific disciplines were transformed by the feminist standpoint theorists in their field, illustrating how social change (e.g. the increase in the amount of women scientists) influences knowledge production and the epistemological frameworks within which it is produced. An example of this is historian Jane Kelly-Gadol, who drew attention to how different the "Renaissance" looks if you shift the focus to the fortunes of women, for whom, as Wylie quotes, 'there was no Renaissance during this period', but rather a 'marked restriction of the scope and powers of women.'⁹⁶

Wylie argues that it is these shifts in perspective that are transformative to the producing of knowledge and the demarcation of the episteme within which this happens; widening the scope and accounting for more of the experienced world than was previously the case. She argues that this transformative effect is due to the epistemic advantage of the marginally situated knower.⁹⁷

3.1.2. Relevant concepts of epistemic injustice

In this section, I will focus on the ideas and discussions within the field that are most relevant to understanding exactly how epistemic injustices against Palestinians arise from the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive. Looking at the term 'epistemic injustice' itself, we can delineate it at least from a linguistic perspective: injustices, that is, ways in which people or groups of people are being wronged, treated unfairly/unjustly, that happen on an epistemological level, which means the level of knowledge, knowing, and knowledge-production. We can understand it as the unjust treatment of people in their capacity and/or agency as a knower. In the introduction to the Routledge handbook of Epistemic Injustice, the authors describe the field of epistemic injustice as follows:

Epistemic injustice refers to those forms of unfair treatment that relate to issues of knowledge, understanding, and participation in communicative practices. (...) such as exclusion and silencing; invisibility and inaudibility, (...) having one's meanings or contributions systematically distorted, misheard, or misrepresented; having diminished status or standing in communicative practices; unfair differentials in authority and/or

⁹⁴ Alison Wylie, 'Feminist Philosophy of Science: Standpoint Matters,' *Proceedings and Addresses of the American Philosophical Association* 86, 2 (2012): 47-76.

⁹⁵ Wylie, 'Standpoint Matters': 47-76.

⁹⁶ Wylie, 'Standpoint Matters': 47-76.

⁹⁷ Wylie, 'Standpoint Matters': 47-76.

*epistemic agency; being unfairly distrusted; receiving no or minimal uptake; being coopted or instrumentalized; being marginalized as a result of dysfunctional dynamics; etc.*⁹⁸

As quoted above, there is a broad range of practices related to knowledge or knowledge production that can constitute an epistemic injustice. In the following paragraphs, I highlight some of the concepts that help us understand how epistemic injustice is inherent to the colonial episteme, Zionism and some areas of the Dutch cultural archive.

Miranda Fricker, one of the main theorists within the field, wrote the book ‘Epistemic injustice: power and the ethics of knowing’ in 2007, in which she distinguished two main categories of epistemic injustice: testimonial injustice and hermeneutical injustice. Testimonial injustice is defined by her and later by others as denying a speaker’s credibility due to a prejudicial stereotype.⁹⁹ Whenever someone is denied the status of a knower, i.e. someone in possession of credible knowledge, based on subconscious prejudices and biases, we can speak of testimonial injustice. Other instances where people’s stories are being dismissed because of an aspect of their identity rather than evidence to the contrary of their story also fall under the umbrella term of testimonial injustice. An example would be, not believing a woman when she gives account of something because of the subconscious bias that women are emotional rather than rational and her utterances should be taken with a grain of salt. Or dismissing the account of a black person speaking on systemic racism because they are black and ‘therefore’ not neutral on the topic.

In his article “Varieties of hermeneutical injustice”, José Medina defines hermeneutical injustice as “(...) the phenomenon that occurs when the intelligibility of communicators is unfairly constrained or undermined, when their meaning-making capacities encounter unfair obstacles,” or, as Fricker puts it, “*when a gap in collective interpretive resources puts someone at an unfair advantage when it comes to making sense of their social experience*”.¹⁰⁰ It is an injustice that starts with the lack of epistemic tools or resources to understand one’s own experience. It is this lack of language to interpret one’s experiences that make these experiences unintelligible for the person undergoing them *and* for the person trying to understand the speaker. As Medina states, Fricker has theorised that hermeneutical injustice can hamper the development of self.¹⁰¹ An example of this would be the difficulty trans people have experienced in understanding themselves, making themselves, their struggles and their identity intelligible to themselves and others simply because useful language and knowledge about the shared experiences of trans people only started to develop some decades ago and have only started to become more mainstream several years ago. When you lack the hermeneutical tools in order to make sense of your experiences, it becomes near impossible to communicate them to other people, especially if the hearer in question also lacks the hermeneutical tools to understand them. The above examples help us further understand not only the definition of epistemic resources, but what happens when the

⁹⁸ Ian James Kidd, José Medina, Gaile Pohlhaus, ‘Introduction to The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice’, in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 1-9.

⁹⁹ Jeremy Wanderer, ‘Varieties of Testimonial Injustice,’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice* (New York: Routledge, 2017) 27-40.

¹⁰⁰ José Medina, ‘Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice,’ in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, (Oxfordshire: Routledge, 2017) 41-52, 41.

¹⁰¹ Medina, ‘Varieties of Hermeneutical Injustice,’ 41.

epistemic resources that might be used by marginally situated communities are excluded from the dominant discourse.

In her essay "Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance," Pohlhaus presents a theory that examines how ignorance can be intentionally orchestrated through the use of epistemic agency, which is the capacity of individuals or groups to contribute to or influence collective knowledge. Her theory is particularly relevant for understanding the epistemic injustices faced by marginalized groups, such as Palestinians, by exploring how ignorance is not merely a lack of knowledge but can be a purposeful act of misunderstanding or disregarding certain perspectives to maintain existing power structures.¹⁰²

Pohlhaus introduces the concept of "willful hermeneutical ignorance," which refers to the refusal to understand or acknowledge the epistemic resources developed by marginalised groups to understand and make sense of their experiences. This form of ignorance is not just an accidental oversight but a deliberate act, often driven by those in positions of power who benefit from not recognizing or validating the epistemic resources developed by marginalized communities. The essay outlines two key ways in which knowers (those who possess or seek knowledge) are social beings:

1. **Situatedness:** Knowers are embedded within social power structures, meaning their position in society influences their access to knowledge and their relationship to power. Marginalized knowers, due to their vulnerable social position, must be keenly aware of the expectations and concerns of those in power. They often face epistemic injustices because the dominant epistemic resources—those widely accepted and used by society—do not adequately reflect or address their lived experiences.¹⁰³
2. **Interdependence:** Contrary to classical epistemology, which views knowers as self-sufficient individuals, Pohlhaus argues that epistemic resources are collective in nature. These resources are not inherently tied to any one social position but are used and shaped by collective experiences. Effective epistemic resources must resonate with the experiences of those using them; if they fail to do so, new resources must be developed. This collective aspect is highlighted by a quote from Wittgenstein, emphasizing that a language understood by only one person would be meaningless, underscoring the importance of shared understanding in the creation and use of epistemic resources.¹⁰⁴

Pohlhaus also argues that marginalized knowers often have more comprehensive and objective knowledge because they must be aware of both their own experiences and the perspectives of those in power. This double awareness gives them insight into the limitations of dominant epistemic resources and allows them to identify areas of the world that remain "unknowable" or unexplained due to these limitations—areas that those in dominant positions might not even recognize as gaps.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Gaile Pohlhaus, 'Relational Knowing and Epistemic Injustice: Toward a Theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance,' *Hypatia* 27, nr. 4 (2012) 715-735.

¹⁰³ Pohlhaus, 'Toward a theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance,' 717.

¹⁰⁴ Pohlhaus, 'Toward a theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance,' 719.

¹⁰⁵ Pohlhaus, 'Toward a theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance,' 720.

However, when marginalized knowers develop new epistemic resources that more accurately reflect their experiences, they often face significant resistance from those in power. This resistance occurs for two main reasons:

1. Lack of Tension: Dominantly situated knowers do not experience the same gaps between their experiences and the available epistemic resources because these resources have been developed by and for people like them. Consequently, they see no need to adopt new resources that address experiences they do not share.
2. Self-Interest: It is not in the best interest of those in power to engage with the epistemic resources of marginalized groups. Doing so would challenge their dominant epistemic position and expose the injustices that uphold their power. As a result, they may choose to dismiss or ignore these resources even when they have access to them and are asked to recognize them as legitimate by marginalized knowers.¹⁰⁶

Pohlhaus refers to this deliberate choice to remain ignorant, even when one has the opportunity and resources to learn, as "willful hermeneutical ignorance." It is a form of epistemic injustice where the dominantly situated knower chooses to remain ignorant of the perspectives and knowledge of marginalized groups, thereby perpetuating existing power imbalances and epistemic exclusion.

Coordinated ignorance

In the chapter 'Varieties of epistemic injustice', Pohlhaus delineates several lenses through which to understand epistemic injustice. In describing the first lens, 'Social contract and coordinated ignorance', she explains how epistemic injustices can be understood as any other type of injustice: within a social context. Epistemic injustice is therefore intertwined with existing power relations and oppression, which operate in a systematic and institutional way.¹⁰⁷ She describes how "epistemic injustice take the form of institutions and cognitive practices that maintain and enforce unjust power relations"¹⁰⁸

She uses as an example the way racism (or 'the racial contract', in this specific example) creates two classes not only along the axis of personhood (persons and sub-persons) but also along the lines of epistemology (knowers and sub-knowers).¹⁰⁹ An example of the ways in which institutions maintain this unjust power relation is for instance by forbidding black people to testify against white people, a law that was in practice in the United States until 1872. According to Pohlhaus, institutions and practices like these that create and maintain a class of sub-knowers can be seen as epistemic injustice, since they wrong those who are deemed sub-knowers and constitute an epistemic dysfunction toward them. This class of sub-knowers is created in the service of oppression, of which the class of knowers benefit.¹¹⁰

Pohlhaus argues that the epistemic division between knowers and sub-knowers is put in service of the more general oppression of those people classed as sub-people. It is, in some sense, a tool with which to solidify the divide between the class of people who are

¹⁰⁶ Pohlhaus, 'Toward a theory of Willful Hermeneutical Ignorance,' 721.

¹⁰⁷ Gaile Pohlhaus, 'Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,' in *The Routledge Handbook of Epistemic Injustice*, (New York: Routledge, 2017) 13-26.

¹⁰⁸ Pohlhaus, 'Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,' 17.

¹⁰⁹ Pohlhaus, 'Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,' 17.

¹¹⁰ Pohlhaus, 'Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,' 17.

oppressed in this way and those who benefit from this oppression. Pohlhaus explains that this works because once people are classed as sub-knowers, the testimonies (quite literally, in the above example) of those people about the oppression they face, can be ignored once they are classed along the axis of knower/sub-knower. This way, those who benefit from the oppression can stay largely ignorant of it, which is helpful to maintain the situation. This is what Pohlhaus calls 'coordinated ignorance'. Apart from disqualifying those who are oppressed by classing them as sub-knowers and thus making it more difficult for them to call attention to the injustice they face, there are several epistemic vices Pohlhaus describes that cause the dominantly situated knower to ignore the injustice from which they benefit. Among these vices Pohlhaus counts the epistemic arrogance in maintaining their own imagined status as the generic knower whose experiences are universal, close-mindedness in accepting the reality that others experience the world in ways they cannot and an epistemic laziness with regard in knowing the world well in light of the experiences of others who are not dominantly situated.¹¹¹ These are all crucial to the collective ignorance toward the injustices that oppressed groups face, by virtue of which those injustices can remain intact.

3.2. Epistemic injustice in the Dutch cultural archive

3.2.1. Willful hermeneutical ignorance and coordinated ignorance in the Dutch cultural archive

The theory of willful hermeneutical ignorance is central to understanding the knowledge production and epistemic injustices within the Dutch cultural archive. I argue that choosing ignorance and refusal to learn the epistemic resources developed to understand the experiences of the marginally situated knower is even *foundational* to this archive. I furthermore argue that Zionism, also organised by the logic of the colonial episteme, relies on this type of epistemic injustice to justify the colonial violence it is committing. The epistemic injustices that are done to Palestinians in Dutch media stem from the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive and their shared colonial episteme. Firstly, I will argue that willful hermeneutical ignorance is foundational to the Dutch cultural archive insofar as it is organised by the colonial episteme, secondly I will show that this distinction of situatedness and interdependence of the knower is useful in understanding how Zionism within the Dutch cultural archive functions.

When discussing Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive in the first two chapters, several of the instances of epistemic injustice were already discussed: the misrepresentation of Palestinians, the erasure of them, excluding them from the dominant public and political discourse are some of them. To understand the function of these epistemic injustices within Zionism and the attempt to correct them by authors like Said, we need to return to the context of feminist epistemology. Within the context of feminist standpoint theory as conceptualised by Wiley, it becomes clear what the role is of the book I discussed in the second chapter of this thesis, *The Question of Palestine*. When we follow her argument of the marginalised knower being in some sense the better knower, we can argue that any work that has the goal to shine light on this marginalised way of existing in the world contributes to a more just and complete, a more *truthful* knowledge. Thus, *The Question of Palestine* is transforming the knowledge production within the discourse about Palestine and Israel, widening the scope of what we can know, whose experiences we take into account.

¹¹¹ Pohlhaus, 'Varieties of Epistemic Injustice,' 17.

This is why reflecting on the justice or injustice of certain epistemic practices is a necessary and important addition to the field of epistemology; because, to quote Said again, *‘The power to conquer territory is only in part a matter of physical force: there is the strong moral and intellectual component making the conquest itself secondary to an idea, which dignifies (and indeed hastens) pure force with arguments drawn from science, morality, ethics, and a general philosophy.’*¹¹² I interpret this as follows: the physical reality of colonialism is not so much the direct effect rather than the material manifestation of certain ideas surrounding racial supremacy, capitalist notions of ownership and imperial ambitions of the colonising state. It is in this relation between the idea and the material reality of Zionist colonialism and Western imperialism that epistemic injustice against Palestinians takes place: to be erased in word first, as Said stated. Without the ‘pure force arguments drawn from science, morality, ethics and a general philosophy,’ the support for colonial projects such as Zionism would be more difficult to gather with the general public. If the material reality is reflected to encompass not just the ideas about colonialism that make it palatable, but the epistemic resources necessary to understand the experience of the colonial other, it would be too obvious that it is an unjust and indefensible act. This is why the colonial episteme and its epistemic injustices are necessary to carry out these acts.

In order to maintain the positive self-representation, dominantly situated knowers who are raised with the epistemic resources produced by the colonial episteme, are often choosing to stay ignorant. The ignorance that is part of the defence Dutch people often have when being accused of racism, to which Gloria Wekker alluded, is in many cases willful hermeneutical ignorance. Dominantly situated knowers are often not just blissfully but *willfully* unaware of the experiences of those marginalised people from whose marginalisation they benefit of have benefited in the past. A perfect example of this is the example from the first chapter, where the Dutch politician Martin Bosma repeatedly states he does not want to be made aware (of Dutch history with slavery and all its traces in modern Dutch society). There is almost an annoyance in the repetition of his statement, frustration with the transgressiveness of the sub-knower crossing over into the domain of the knower. As a politician, he adds that ‘many Dutch people’ also do not want to be aware, classifying himself amongst those who would like to remain ignorant of the suffering their ancestors might have caused. It is an act of coordinating ignorance. Not wanting to be aware here means not wanting to get accustomed with the knowledge and languages to understand the experiences of the marginalised other. This is a deliberate attempt to maintain the state of ignorance used to justify the beneficial position of the dominantly situated knower. It illustrates how this specific type of epistemic injustice is instrumental in maintaining the colonial episteme within the Dutch cultural archive. This example of erasure, denial of existence, is one that we also know from chapter 2, where it was discussed with help of Said as one of ways Zionism justifies colonising Palestine. Both Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive are in need of the coordinated ignorance and the willful hermeneutical ignorance necessary to maintain the positive self-representation that in turn maintains a material power imbalance by justifying it.

I argue that this is the same kind of epistemic injustice that occurs when for instance, dominantly situated knowers misrepresent anti-Zionist standpoints as antisemitic. The act of willful misunderstanding, where it is in the best interest of the dominantly situated knower to misunderstand, happens when those who ascribe to the Dutch cultural archive, encounter the epistemic resources used by people who threaten

¹¹² Said, *The Question of Palestine*, 77.

the colonial episteme of this archive: when they run into those who try to draw attention toward the experiences of the marginalised group (Palestinians) or make those experiences intelligible to the dominantly situated, and who reason from their perspective. The Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive, which has attempted to conceal itself, offers no resources to understand the conflict between Israel and Palestine from the Palestinian perspective, it does not allow these epistemic resources to develop within the Dutch cultural archive. And as we have seen in the chapter on Zionism, it counters with accusations of antisemitism.

I argue that this constitutes to another epistemic injustice, namely that of misrepresenting Jewish people as Zionists, which a lot of them are not. Jewish people have been active within the Dutch anti-Zionist movement for a long time, however, they are saying they are largely ignored.¹¹³ This ignoring of anti-Zionist Jews can be explained by the inconvenience they pose in the conflation between Zionism and Judaism, which Zionism discursively depends on. These epistemic injustices, done to Palestinians and done to the non- or anti-Zionist Jews, both stem from the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive.

This is why the Dutch cultural archive is dependent on the epistemic injustices against Palestinians. If the epistemic resources to understand the experiences from the Palestinians during the plausible genocide were allowed to convey those experience, to make them intelligible, that would mean that the dominantly situated knower who ascribes to the Dutch cultural archive and its colonial episteme would lose epistemic power. It would mean that the colonial episteme, which holds in place the positive self-representation of the Dutch, would have to be adjust to allow a more complete and accurate knowledge of the world. The problem here is not that there are no epistemic resources developed with which to understand the experienced world of the cultural other, but that the dominantly situated knower, who in the case of the colonial episteme and the Dutch cultural archive can be defined as the cultural self, chooses to refuse to learn how to use them, even when asked as with the case of Martin Bosma.

To show how this configuration of Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive are instrumentalising ignorance, both coordinated and willful hermeneutical, about the own ideology, I will give an example from the political left. I argue it illustrates how widespread Zionist ideology is within Dutch politics, not just on the right but within left-wing parties as well. In a video from Left Laser, a left-wing journalist YouTube channel, a congress of GroenLinks-PvdA, the collaborative fusion of the Green-left and the Dutch labour party is being documented. At the congress, among other things, a motion to critique the state of Israel is being debated. At the start of the video, we see a party member on a stage, saying ‘Zionism is based on the racist lie that the safety of the Jews can only be ensured by the creation of an ethnostate-’.¹¹⁴ At that point, he is cut off by the host, who holds the microphone, pulling the microphone away, clearly agitated. She later explains to Left Laser’s interviewer Bob Scholte, that she draws the line at conflating Zionism with racism, which the speaker was doing according to her.¹¹⁵ This is a clear example of how the Zionist ideology within the Dutch cultural archive is attempted to be held out of shot, being concealed, through the instrumentalization of willful hermeneutical ignorance: there is

¹¹³ “Wij, Israël-kritische Joden, worden compleet genegeerd”, *OneWorld* (blog), March 15 2024, <https://www.oneworld.nl/mensenrechten/israel-kritische-joden-antizionisme/>.

¹¹⁴ Left Laser, ‘PvdA-GroenLinks schrikbarend verdeeld over Zionisme,’ May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5QJlQl5HoE>

¹¹⁵ Left Laser, ‘PvdA-GroenLinks schrikbarend verdeeld over Zionisme,’ May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5QJlQl5HoE>

no 'place' for conflating Zionism and racism, since, according to the host, it would not 'help the open discussion.'¹¹⁶ The fact is that the only reason that Zionism is not officially classed as racism by UN standards, is because the resolution was revoked as part of Israel's conditions to take part in peace negotiations in the 90's, another successful attempt to erase itself and to exclude epistemic resources necessary to understand it from the perspective of the people it marginalised: the Palestinians. This shows not only how successful it is in erasing its own history, it appears to even be some kind of taboo to try to reinstate these epistemic resources, as the man on stage was trying to do. The colonial episteme does not allow for other representations of the colonial self than positive. The speaker gets silenced and misrepresented, both epistemic injustices, by the host as not willing to have an open discussion, even though she is the one pulling the microphone away when he says something she disagrees with.

Also in the video is a fragment where Scholte interviews Frans Timmermans, party leader of the PvdA and the person from the example in the introduction who states that '[Hamas is] a culture of death and we, we are a culture of life.', contrapuntally defining both the cultural other and the cultural self. In this fragment however, he denies being a Zionist, and when Bob asks him what his definition of Zionism is, he defines it as Jewish people who want to move to Israel to ensure their safety,¹¹⁷ confusing the ideology with the physical and colonial act it ideates. This shows that not only does he not have an accurate definition of Zionism, his definition is incorrect because of the exclusion of epistemic resources necessary to understand Zionism in its entirety, including the material reality of the people it oppresses. This exclusion constitutes willful hermeneutical ignorance. His definition complies with Zionism as it represents itself: no mention of the Palestinians, centred around the victimhood of the Jewish people who are looking for safety. This image of Zionism is doubtlessly the one that is integrated within the Dutch cultural archive, easily making use of the epistemic mechanisms that were already in place there such as denial, willful ignorance, concealment and misrepresentation, in order to keep the representation of the self, positive.

Other epistemic injustices that are founded in willful hermeneutical ignorance look a little bit different, like in the case of Islamophobia in the Netherlands. Epistemic resources developed to understand the experience of Muslim people insofar as they are marginalised within the Netherlands have not been picked up on within public discourse. Islamophobia, or anti-Muslim racism, is abundant within the Dutch cultural archive, as we have seen in chapter 1. The epistemic injustices the Dutch Muslim population faces are similar to that of the Palestinians within Zionism. Misrepresentation and dehumanization of Dutch Muslims are instrumentalised to place them firmly on the side of the cultural other. Geert Wilders, party leader of the PVV, has been persecuted for discrimination against Moroccans, and found guilty.¹¹⁸ This shows that the language and concepts belonging to the racist replacement theory that was used by the Nazi's to dehumanize and demonize Jewish people, find their way into the Dutch parliament when discussing Islamic or Arabic immigrants. PVV members often use the phrase 'Islamisering van dit land' ('Islamization of this country') when talking about the 'threat' that Muslim

¹¹⁶ Left Laser, 'PvdA-GroenLinks schrikbarend verdeeld over Zionisme,' May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5QJlQl5HoE>

¹¹⁷ Left Laser, 'PvdA-GroenLinks schrikbarend verdeeld over Zionisme,' May 2024, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k5QJlQl5HoE>

¹¹⁸ 'Hoge Raad handhaaft veroordeling Geert Wilders in 'minder Marokkanen'-zaak', July 6 2021, <https://nos.nl/artikel/2388153-hoge-raad-handhaaft-veroordeling-geert-wilders-in-minder-marokkanen-zaak>.

immigrants pose to Dutch liberal society. One of the ministers of the PVV claimed that this ‘replacement theory’ is a ‘factual description of the demographic development.’¹¹⁹

The epistemic injustices of misrepresentation and dehumanization of Dutch Muslims are instrumentalised in maintaining the colonial episteme within the Dutch cultural archive, and are linked to the Zionist racism within this episteme. Eventually, the perceived threat of the Islamic other to the white Dutch self is being tied to the Zionist ideology within the Dutch cultural archive, without naming this ideology. The PVV is one of the most outspoken pro-Israel parties of the Dutch political landscape, one of the party members is a Zionist born in Israel who was suspected of having ties with Mossad, the Israeli intelligence service. The Dutch intelligence service is currently investigating him.¹²⁰ The fact that the PVV was the biggest party in the elections of 2023, when it got 37 of 140 seats in parliament, is telling on how widely accepted the biggest talking points of the PVV, and by extension the implicitly present Zionism within the party, actually are.

3.2.2 Instrumentalising epistemic injustices

In this final part of the chapter, I will show how and why epistemic injustices against Palestinians are instrumentalised by the Zionist ideology within the Dutch cultural archive, in order to maintain itself. In chapter 1, I delineated the Dutch cultural archive, aiming to make translatory steps toward the field of epistemology. In chapter 2, I have argued how and why Zionism is linked to and has become part of the Dutch cultural archive. In the first part of chapter 3, I outlined epistemic injustice and how the Dutch cultural archive needs the epistemic injustice in order to maintain itself. In this part I will argue that epistemic injustice necessary for Zionism to justify itself are instrumentalized within the Dutch cultural archive.

Examples have been given throughout this thesis of epistemic injustices such as the misrepresentation of Palestinians as backward barbaric terrorists, downplaying or ignoring the Palestinian perspective in mainstream media and even ignoring or denying the existence of a Palestinian people.

The reason that these epistemic injustices are done to Palestinians in the Netherlands, I argue, is the link between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive. This link, as was shown in chapter 2, can be summarized as being based on *recognition* and *necessity*. Similarities between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive are the basis of this recognition: (1) both are organised along the colonial episteme, specifically that of the Western imperial state, (2) both have the Islamic or Arab other as a cultural other within this colonial episteme, (3) both are centred around self-representing images of innocence, victimhood, modern liberal values, (4) images they uphold by way of willful hermeneutical ignorance: refusal to take into account those epistemic resources necessary to understand the marginalised communities from which dominantly situated people benefit either by strategies of denial and ignorance, and (5) among which the denial of their own colonial history. These similarities make the Dutch cultural archive an excellent environment for Zionist, anti-Palestinian racism to develop.

¹¹⁹ ‘Beoogd PVV-minister Klever noemt omvolking een “feitelijke omschrijving”’, June 21, 2024, <https://nos.nl/collectie/13962/artikel/2525598-beoogd-pvv-minister-klever-noemt-omvolking-een-feitelijke-omschrijving>.

¹²⁰ ‘Oppositie wil weten waarom de blijkbaar staatsgevaarlijke PVV’er Markuszower wel Kamerlid mag zijn - Joop - BNNVARA’, Joop, June 14, 2024, <https://www.bnnvara.nl/joop/artikelen/oppositie-wil-weten-waarom-de-blijkbaar-staatsgevaarlijke-pvver-markuszower-wel-kamerlid-mag-zijn>.

Then to elaborate on the *necessity* with which Zionism is tied to the Dutch cultural archive. In order to uphold the self-image of the innocent victim of the German occupation during the Second World War, suffering alongside its Jewish population, heroically trying to save this Jewish population, the Dutch needed to refuse acknowledgement for their part in the deportation of Dutch Jews to the concentration camps. Support for the creation of a Jewish state functioned not so much as an apology for the harm that the Dutch had done to their Jewish population, but rather as a way to avoid having to acknowledge this harm. This shows an important aspect of the Dutch cultural archive: maintaining the positive self-representation not by examining, self-evaluating and working through the cultural wrongdoings but rather by denying and ignoring them. By supporting the Zionist project, the Dutch could, as it were, 'make up' for their unacknowledged part in the abduction and murder of their citizens, without first having to acknowledge it. This historical, political and cultural reason for the support of Zionism might well be the same reason why many non-Zionist Jews are not heard in the Netherlands. The existence of the non- or even anti-Zionist Dutch Jews is an uncomfortable fact if Zionism is the way the Dutch have avoided taking responsibility for their part in the Holocaust.

3.3 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have answered the question how exactly the epistemic injustices against Palestinians arise from the Zionist part of the Dutch cultural archive. In order to do so, I started out by explaining the epistemological context within which the field of epistemic injustice has developed, which is feminist epistemology. This is a social epistemology, taking the social aspect of knowledge and knowledge production into account. Not only does feminist epistemology take this into account, it argues that the way a knower is situated within social hierarchies such as gender or race greatly influences their epistemic power, and that marginally situated knowers are better equipped to make sense of a larger part of the experienced world; in a sense they are better knowers.

The groundwork for epistemic injustice is also laid here: marginally situated knowers encounter epistemic injustice because of their situatedness. Epistemic injustice occurs when marginalized groups are wronged in their capacity as knowers, facing exclusion, silencing, or misrepresentation. The theory of willful hermeneutical ignorance is crucial to understanding the Dutch cultural archive's knowledge production and epistemic injustices, particularly its colonial episteme. This ignorance involves the deliberate refusal to engage with epistemic resources that represent marginalized perspectives, foundational to both the Dutch cultural archive and Zionism. Zionism, embedded in the Dutch cultural archive, relies on such injustices to justify its actions against Palestinians, manifesting in misrepresentations and exclusion from discourse. This epistemic injustice is rooted in the colonial logic shared by Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive, both portraying themselves as victims while mostly denying or downplaying their colonial histories. Feminist epistemology, particularly standpoint theory, suggests that marginalized perspectives, like those in Said's "The Question of Palestine," offer a fuller understanding of reality. However, Dutch media often misrepresents Palestinians, perpetuating Zionist narratives and erasing Palestinian voices. Dominantly situated Dutch knowers often choose to remain ignorant of these perspectives, as seen in political responses to accusations of racism.

This willful ignorance maintains a positive self-image and justifies the material power imbalance. Zionism's conflation with Judaism and its use of the Dutch colonial framework allows it to evade critique, with anti-Zionist Jewish voices being ignored. The

link between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive rests on shared colonial logic, a need for self-representation, and denial of complicity in historical injustices. Supporting Zionism allows the Dutch to evade acknowledging their role in the Holocaust, while anti-Zionist Jews challenge this narrative. Ultimately, the Dutch cultural archive's alignment with Zionism reflects its need to maintain a positive self-image through denial and ignorance, marginalizing Palestinian and anti-Zionist Jewish voices and reinforcing the colonial episteme.

4. Concluding remarks

In this thesis, I have investigated how the concept of the Dutch cultural archive, and especially the Zionist part of this archive, can be used to explain the perpetual epistemic injustices done to Palestinians in Dutch media, public and political discourse. To answer this question, I have argued that the Zionist aspect of the Dutch cultural archive rests on two things: necessity and recognition. The Dutch cultural archive, centred around a positive self-image, needs Zionism to be able to avoid taking full responsibility for the role of the Dutch in the deportation of and genocide on their Jewish citizens. Not only does the archive need to adopt Zionism and its inherent epistemic injustices against Palestinians, these injustices are so easily adopted with it because of the resemblances between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive. Zionism, aligned with Western imperial colonial thought to begin with, shares multiple traits with the Dutch cultural archive and its self-representation. These traits are the following: innocence, victimhood, 'modern' values, the colonial episteme and the shared cultural other within this colonial episteme: the Arab or Islamic other. These points of recognition make the tie between Zionism and the Dutch cultural archive one that is strong enough to perpetuate the epistemic injustices against the (largely Islamic) population of Palestine.

I argued that Zionism is part of the Dutch cultural archive. This means that, with Zionism, anti-Palestinian racism also becomes part of the Dutch cultural archive, since the ideology is adopted in its entirety, without being made explicit. Zionism hides its own history, hides itself, also in the Dutch cultural archive. In the last chapter I have shown exactly how this works because the epistemically unjust mechanisms to do so are already in place: denial of racism, ignorance and denial of their colonial history, refusal to acknowledge or address any accusations in that regard. As such, I argue that Zionism has integrated fully into the dominant cultural archive. This means that anti-Palestinian racism, upon which Zionist ideology depends to justify the colonial project of Israel, has also developed within the Dutch cultural archive. The growing Islamophobia and anti-immigration sentiments can be explained to have spurred on this development. Epistemic injustices such as the misrepresentation of Palestinians or people protesting the genocide in Gaza as antisemitic, the denial of the existence of a Palestinian people, inviting the president of Israel to open the Holocaust museum, are all signs that Zionist racism, anti-Palestinian racism, is a type of Dutch racism like the ones that Gloria Wekker delineates as part of the Dutch cultural archive.

Epistemic resources developed within this cultural archive to understand the cultural other, I have argued, are inherently racist because the archive is still organised along the logic of the colonial episteme. This episteme needs the cultural other to be

inferior to the cultural self in order to justify or rationalise colonisation, so resources are produced with which to understand this cultural other as inferior: the concept of the Islamic terrorist, the Islamic other as backwards, oppressive to women and LGBTQIA+ people, as antisemitic. The inherent racism of these concepts is then denied or those who explain them as racist are simply ignored. This constitutes to willful hermeneutical ignorance, the epistemic injustice with which the colonial episteme and its mechanisms are protected from any real threat to the dominant position it has within the cultural archive. In order to maintain its positive self-image, the Dutch cultural archive embraced Zionism, along with the epistemic injustices upon which Zionism depends for justifying its existence. The fact that this has gone largely unnoticed is because of two reasons: firstly because Zionism shares many similarities with the Dutch cultural archive and secondly because the Dutch cultural archive already has several dark and dusty drawers in which it hides its own colonial crimes.

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