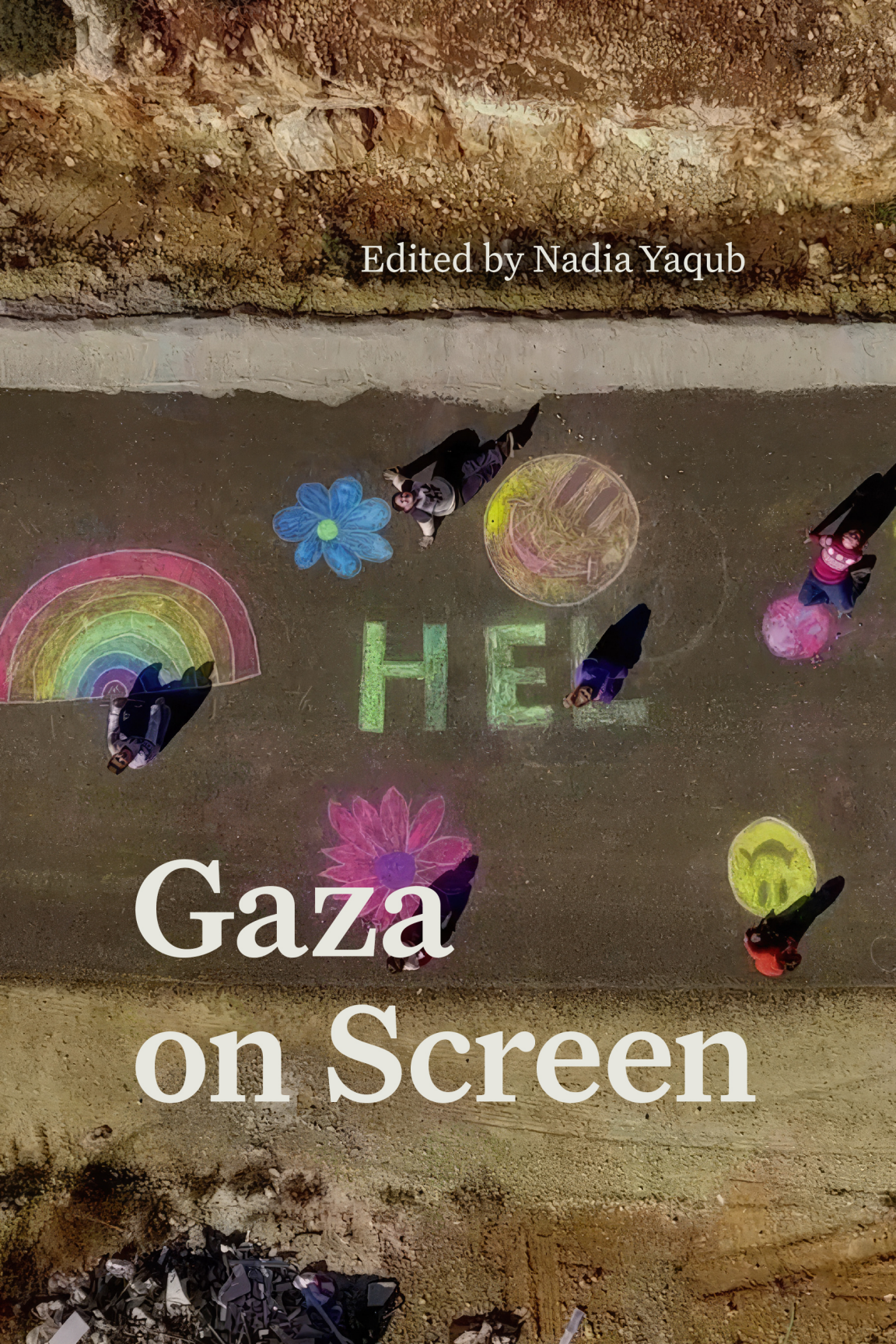
Edited by Nadia Yaqub
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To Christof, Emma, and Thea

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Note on Transliteration

For Arabic we have followed the Library of Congress system of transliteration without diacritics except for ʿayn and hamza with the following exceptions:

- For personal names, we follow the spelling in Latin characters that individuals and organizations have chosen for themselves. For well-known figures we follow the most common spellings in American English.
- Place-names are written as they most commonly appear in American English if they have an established spelling in English. Otherwise, they are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system.
- Terms in spoken (dialectal) rather than modern standard Arabic are transliterated as closely as possible to the Library of Congress system without diacritics except for ʿayn and hamza while reflecting the dialectal pronunciation.
- Film titles and film characters' names are translated and/or transliterated as they appear in the films themselves if such translations exist.

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A Gaza on Screen film festival also took place at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 2019. I thank the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies and the UNC Center for Middle East and Islamic Studies and its staff for their sponsorship as well as ongoing financial and logistical support for the book project. Center leaders Carl Ernst and Charlie Kurzman have supported my research and teaching throughout my career at UNC. Shai Tamari facilitated funding for the festival and the Gazan filmmakers' roundtable that is the basis for chapter 1 of the book. Emma Harver provided essential logistical support. Student volunteer Maggie McKenzie served as an invaluable assistant at the film festival under fraught circumstances. I thank the Center for Experimental Ethnography at the University of Pennsylvania, and in particular Deborah Thomas and Alissa Jordan, for generously supporting a Gaza on Screen event there in spring 2022.

The Gaza on Screen film festivals and book came together during a period of intensifying anti-Palestinian racism, particularly in Israel, the United States, and Europe. Among the many recent troubling incidents was a mendacious attack on UNC–Chapel Hill for its 2019 Gaza Conference, of which the film festival was a part, and subsequent unfounded civil rights investigation of the Duke-UNC Consortium for Middle East Studies by the US Department of Education. I thank the Middle East Studies Association (MESA) and its Committee for Academic Freedom for its ongoing support of free speech related to Palestine and Israel, including the letter written by the MESA board and signed by eighteen professional organizations concerning that investigation. More recently, *Gaza on Screen* contributor Shahd Abusalama has faced similarly baseless accusations of anti-Semitism at her home institution in the United Kingdom. Such attacks rob scholars and others of their time, cause emotional pain and anxiety, and can ruin scholars' careers. Every contributor to and supporter of *Gaza on Screen* and associated events and activities is a potential target for similar attacks. I thank them all for their courage in this toxic intellectual environment. I particularly thank Elyse Crystall for her decades of principled support for Palestinian rights and free speech about Palestine at UNC. In the wake of the 2019 attack on UNC's Gaza Conference and against the wishes of the university administration, Elyse organized a necessary and highly successful teach-in and discussion of anti-Semitism. Her courage has shaped my work on this book.

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Nadia Yaqub

Introduction

In early May 2021, demonstrations by Palestinians protesting planned evictions from the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of Jerusalem spread quickly to al-Aqsa Mosque and other parts of East Jerusalem where Israeli authorities had engaged in several provocative actions throughout the month of Ramadan, including disabling the loudspeakers that broadcast the call to prayer, preventing worshippers from entering the mosque compound, and banishing Palestinians from gathering at the plaza in front of the Damascus Gate. In each case, Palestinian protests against these actions were met with police brutality and hundreds of arrests. On May 10, Hamas demanded that Israeli police and military leave Sheikh Jarrah and the mosque compound and that evening began to fire rockets into Israel from Gaza when Israel failed to do so. Israel immediately responded with airstrikes, initiating its fourth major military attack on Gaza since 2008. By the time a cease-fire was called eleven days later, 266 Palestinians and 13 residents of Israel had been killed (United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2021). Thousands

of Palestinians were wounded and tens of thousands displaced due to the widespread destruction of homes and other infrastructure.

My social media newsfeeds quickly filled up with news reports, cell phone videos and photos, and solidarity statements. Among the material disseminated to distant spectators of events on the ground there appeared information on accessing dozens of Palestinian films. Established Palestine film festivals, Palestinian and other Middle Eastern arts organizations, nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and individuals made works available online for free or for a small fee. Others created and circulated lists of films that were already available on YouTube or various streaming services. Everything from Elia Suleiman's *It Must Be Heaven* (2019), a gentle meditation on exile, and Najwa Najjar's social realist dramas to Kamal Aljafari's experimental essays, as well as emergency documentaries related to previous Israeli attacks on Gaza was made readily available to anyone following events as they unfolded. In this moment of crisis, people were invited not just to sign statements, contact representatives, attend protests, send money, and follow the news but also to virtually immerse themselves in Palestine in all its diversity through the dozens of visual works created over the course of more than seventy years. Older documentary images and videos—for example, a clip of Palestinians in Syria crossing into the Golan Heights during the 2011 Arab revolutions, a widely shared photo from 2015 of children bathing in a bathtub dramatically situated in the ruins of a bombed building in Gaza, another from 2018 from the Great March of Return of a man deploying a slingshot while carrying a Palestinian flag, footage and grave portraits of Palestinian refugees from 1948, women in traditional embroidered dresses, old stone houses, and olive trees—resurfaced and recirculated widely. Films and images enunciating different speech acts and informed by different political frameworks jostled for space with dramatic new photos and video clips of protest, destruction, anguish, and defiance.

What are we to make of this media *cacophony*, to borrow a term from Shaira Valadaria's chapter in this volume? The films and other creative material offered up at this moment of crisis were the product of decades of work by Palestinians and others, including filmmakers, cultural NGOs, and the Palestine film festivals that have proliferated globally since 2000. Palestinian filmmaking has always been an activist enterprise, one helping to sustain communities and serving to document and archive not only narratives and events but also particular structures of feeling (Tawil-Souri 2014). As a communicative act, the circulation of Palestinian films through various networks, including film festivals of various sorts, art museums and

galleries, art house movie theaters, political events, and university courses, as well as online platforms, has been motivated in large part by the desire to build relations with others. The rapid deployment of films and videos at this moment was made possible by the cultural infrastructure around the world dedicated to Palestinian material. Deploying this media archive was not just about sharing information or providing opportunities to "witness" the traumas and injustices that Palestinians have experienced, but to announce belonging and invite others to deepen their ties to a community of conscience. It was a call for a deeper type of engagement with Palestine (however one defined it) and Palestinians in all their complexity through works of contemplation, humor, fantasy, disaster, resistance, escape, melodrama, and other themes, genres, and modes.

Gaza on Screen is a collection of essays exploring the practice, product, and impact of films and videos from and about Palestine. Contributors to the volume assume a political, cultural, or psychological efficacy to Palestinian moving images and ask what that efficacy might be, even as they recognize how other local, regional, and global forces shape the lived experiences of Palestinians and their political possibilities. Palestine has long been associated with both resistance and urgent humanitarian need, associations that have generated a surprisingly complex and ever-shifting range of visual material that includes not only surveillance and military footage, amateur videos, and documentaries but also fictional features, experimental videos, and a variety of social media material. *Gaza on Screen* examines this material and its global and local circulation as a visual ecosystem in which different types of representation interact and inform one another.

The book focuses on the Gaza Strip as a Palestinian space and society that has come to be defined in the global imaginary by catastrophe, impending collapse, and violence. Gaza tests theories of representations of trauma and the power of narrative and aesthetics to process that trauma. Gaza has been instrumentalized, ignored, and magnified by regional and global actors, and its film and media production has played a central role in solidarity activism and militantism. As the global context for Gazan images has changed over time, so too have the narratives and ideologies underpinning its images, particularly on questions of collective identity and individualism. Technological developments and new media have led to the proliferation of films/videos and image-makers, even as prevailing narratives and ideologies have constrained the types of stories that are told and how they circulate.

Gaza on Screen also explores the role of screens, both large and small, in the circulation of visual representations of Gaza. Screens serve as a point

of convergence for technological competence (to deploy screen media is to participate in contemporary modernity), as well as for global, regional, and local circuits of culture and information that have been increasingly dominated by screens since the advent of television in the mid-twentieth century. They are also an increasingly popular site for artistic and political expression. As Helga Tawil-Souri argues in the afterword of this volume, screens are both materially significant and contradictorily evocative of showing and hiding from view. The screen invites questions about the material conditions that allow certain representations to circulate, mediation, and the relationship of the virtual to lived experiences within the Gaza Strip, as well as the nature of connections sustained to the Gaza Strip through the virtual. The history of image-making from and about the Gaza Strip, and Palestine more generally, has been affected by technological developments and the related proliferation of screens on which Gazan images are projected and viewed. The earliest moving images of Palestinians were made with film cameras and projected on large screens. Because of their expense and complexity (every film had to be developed and printed), they were relatively rare. The rise of video in the mid-twentieth century facilitated the spread of new types of images when international news crews were drawn to the Palestinian Occupied Territories with the outbreak of the First Intifada in 1987. Images of children throwing stones, women confronting soldiers, and Israeli soldiers purposely breaking the bones of Palestinian protesters, as well as a discourse on Israel's disproportional use of force, supplemented the preexisting tropes of the needy refugee, armed guerrilla, and airplane hijacker. Both the skills Palestinians developed while working with those news crews and the development of digital technologies facilitated the proliferation of images made by Palestinians; and the Palestinian material that emerged analyzed representations of Palestinians that had been made by others and expanded that visual repertoire to include explorations of social issues, self-critique, intimacy, everyday life, and attention to complexity and diversity within Palestinian communities. The rise of the internet and the spread of social media have afforded Palestinians and their supporters new avenues through which to circulate images. Palestinians have also contributed to new visual cultures related to information sharing, advocacy, and global pop culture.[1]

However, these technologies have developed within structures of power that have always delimited Palestinian images and their circulation both by discursive frameworks that exclude marginalized political and cultural expression and by an explicit campaign by Israel to suppress Palestinian images. The social media circulation of Palestinian images in 2021 arose from

Figure I.1 In *Gaza Cars: Epic Split*, the filmmakers (Tashweesh Productions) participate in online global pop culture by re-creating Jean-Claude Van Damme's epic split from a 2013 Volvo commercial.

long-standing Palestinian understandings of the importance of images for the development of agential selfhood and collective identity. In 1968, when a group of young Palestinian photographers and filmmakers first began creating and disseminating images shot from a Palestinian perspective, they understood their work as a revolutionary intervention into the circulation of images about the region.[2] In particular, they believed that the indexicality of the screened filmic image shot from a Palestinian perspective could communicate a revolutionary truth that eluded other types of representations. This material also allowed Palestinians to see themselves and their own aspirations reflected in the emerging Palestinian revolutionary movement, hence encouraging feelings of belonging (Habashneh 2019; Jawhariyah 2006, 17; Yaqub 2018, 55–58). Similar concerns have informed the work of Palestinian filmmakers and other image-makers ever since.[3] Screens, then, must be understood as sites of struggle and contestation, structured by what Nicholas Mirzoeff calls visuality and Jacques Rancière calls the police, but where it is nonetheless possible to show and see the world differently.[4] The visual ecosystem of Gazan images operates both within that visuality and against it. Sometimes its images confirm the authority of existing power structures, and sometimes they undermine it, but its existence as an archive of Palestinian presence is always a challenge to a visuality predicated on their disappearance.

Screens are a form of mediation and thus define and facilitate relationships between and among Gazans and distant spectators. Communities are

created, defined, and sustained through viewing practices. Large screens, before which people gather to watch Palestinian material together, create the potential for political engagement. Palestinian films circulate through elite film festivals, art house cinemas, and museum, educational, and gallery spaces where they are viewed and critiqued for their aesthetic quality and intellectual or artistic interventions. They more often circulate in politicized spaces such as Palestine film festivals and screenings organized by solidarity groups where gathering together to view a film is an expression of political belonging. Large-screen screenings of Palestinian material are often accompanied by postscreening discussions and so constitute a practice of Third Cinema (Solanas and Getino [1969] 2014).[5] Large screens encourage a thoughtful viewing practice in which films are viewed in one sitting and audience members do not multitask. Small screens, particularly handheld devices, encourage quick viewing and the sharing of materials, sometimes even before they are examined or evaluated, simply because they appear to confirm a preexisting worldview. These are networked images, valued more for their virality than their representational qualities (Della Ratta 2021), but this form of viewing is also a way of maintaining a sense of community and can be particularly important in moments of crisis.

Most important, screens are relational in that they connect people across time and space—thinking about Gazan film and video through the screen encourages us to consider them not as representations addressed to everyone but rather as speech acts inviting viewers into a relationship with the filmed or photographed subject. Considered thus, the act of filming, viewing, and sharing is always agential even if its impact is uncertain. Framing the volume around screens allows contributors to consider not just images but also sound and other senses that are communicated through film and video. It opens the door to considerations of the promise and limitations of the virtual to questions of political voice, including the role of circulated images, sound, and the haptic effects they might evoke in creating and sustaining an Arendtian space of appearance.[6]

A Brief History of Gazan Filmmaking

During the first two decades after the 1948 war, documentary images of the Gaza Strip and its residents were produced by relief agencies, most notably the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). These films and photographs, created in part for fundraising purposes, focused on the dispossession of Palestinians and their reliance on aid rather than the political

context in which Palestinian dispossession had occurred. Scenes of vast tent encampments, the distribution of food rations, basic supplies, health care, and education helped to construct and sustain a global humanitarian gaze whereby Palestinians were defined by their losses and needs rather than by their political aspirations (Abdallah 2009). Similarly depoliticized and victimizing images continue to be made about Palestinians, particularly when egregious acts of violence are perpetrated against them.

Meanwhile, in Egypt, which enjoyed a flourishing commercial film industry, Gaza was represented in fictional films of the early period as a hinterland where young Egyptian men went to resolve personal crises and as a backdrop for Egyptian military heroics after the 1973 war. In other words, for the most part Egyptian commercial cinema instrumentalized the Gaza Strip in its treatment of Egyptian nationalist concerns.[7] When, in 1968 in Amman, Jordan, the Palestinian Film Unit first began to shoot photographs and films from a Palestinian perspective, one of its goals was to represent Palestinians as agential subjects who sought to determine their own futures. However, Palestinian filmmakers in exile could not operate within historical Palestine, and just one film about Gaza was produced within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), Mustafa Abu Ali's *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973), which Samirah Alkassim discusses in detail in this volume.[8] This new, agential understanding of what it meant to be a Palestinian was partially reflected in the relief agencies' films of this period. The agencies' dependence on fundraising still shaped the political framework of their films, but they came to reflect some of the complexities of Palestinian refugeehood, striving for political agency, and frustrations at the failure of Arab governments and international organizations to resolve their situation. The Oxfam film *Until Such a Time* (1970), for instance, which includes long, unnarrated sections depicting the varied activities of daily life in Gaza, tells the story of a Gazan college student and ends with a focus on the desire of women like her to contribute to the collective needs of Gazans; a final intertitle hints at the political conditions that structure daily life even as the film refuses to take a stand vis-à-vis Israel/Palestine.

Otherwise, very few films were made about Gaza until the 1980s, when PeÅ Holmquist, Joan Mandell, and Pierre Björklund directed *Gaza Ghetto* (1985), a feature-length observational documentary focusing on the lived experience and perspective of a single family in Gaza. Like *Until Such a Time*, *Gaza Ghetto* depicts the daily life of ordinary people. Unlike the earlier film, it shows how that life is shaped by the Israeli occupation and allows its characters to express themselves politically. It was during this decade that Rashid

Figure I.2 The film *Until Such a Time* (1970), which includes extensive footage of daily life in Gaza, is exemplary of relief agency films of the period.

Masharawi, the first filmmaker from the Gaza Strip, made his first two short films, *Partners* (1981) and *Passport* (1986) (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 43).[9] By the end of the 1990s, the First Intifada and the subsequent Oslo Accords had generated several documentaries about Palestinian resistance, the possibilities for peace and coexistence, and social conditions within the Gaza Strip. The first fictional feature films set in the Gaza Strip, discussed in detail by Kamran Rastegar in chapter 4, were also created in the 1990s. It was at this time that the second Gazan filmmaker, Abdelsalam Shehada, who, like many other Palestinian filmmakers of his generation came to filmmaking from journalism, began his career. Shehada's early documentaries focused on social issues such as child labor, women's rights, and folk medicine (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 53). However, he eventually developed a self-reflexive film practice that included meditations on filming violence (*Rainbow*, 2004) and the nature of the photographic image (*To My Father*, 2008).

Several developments contributed to an increase in the making of films and videos in and about the Gaza Strip after the turn of the new millennium, including continued technological developments, the outbreak of the Second Intifada and the international attention it brought to the region, and the growing number of local Palestinian filmmakers, in part thanks to the estab-

Figure I.3 *Gaza Ghetto* (1985), which centers on the daily life of a single family, is expressly political in that it frames Gazans' experiences within the Israeli occupation.

lishment of film training programs in Palestine. Until the mid-2000s many filmmakers treated the West Bank and the Gaza Strip together, politically and experientially connected by the Israeli occupation. An understanding of Gaza as a unique space developed out of the 2006 Fatah-Hamas split as well as Israel's blockade on Gaza and concomitant restrictions on travel between the two regions. While many of the tropes about Gaza (overcrowding, poverty, resistance, and harsh suppression of resistance) have informed its representation in film from its demarcation in 1948, the blockade and repeated Israeli attacks added the trope of vulnerability to spectacular violence and the metaphor of the region as an open-air prison and inspired a focus on environmental degradation and trauma in Gazan films. They established Gaza within the global imaginary as a distinct humanitarian space, differing from the West Bank with its own struggles with settlements, checkpoints, and other forms of dispossession. This development in turn has led to creative efforts to alter Gaza's image through thoughtful, nuanced documentaries that expand viewers' understanding of Gazan life, fictional films that decenter political and humanitarian issues, and experimental works that

Figure I.4 Kite flying is a form of survivance in *Flying Paper* (2013).

directly address representations of violence and their relationship to the media economy. In recent years, stories that focus on practices of creativity and survivance (e.g., films about kite flying, parkour, or surfing) and social media and music videos that insert the Gaza Strip into global pop culture have also proliferated.[10]

Cinema and media infrastructure has grown in Gaza in recent decades. A robust cinema-viewing culture was damaged during the 1967 war and destroyed completely during the First Intifada. However, after the Second Intifada, there has been considerable work to develop cinema production and viewing culture in the Gaza Strip. When Hamas came to power, it expanded its media infrastructure to include a film studio where at least two feature films and a television series have been filmed and has facilitated public screenings of its films. Hamas is currently producing a television show as a response to Israel's hit thriller *Fauda* (Arab News 2022). Other projects supporting filmmaking and viewing include the NGO-funded Red Carpet Human Rights Film Festival and training opportunities in filmmaking through al-Aqsa University, news organizations, and various NGOs (Saglier 2019, 184–200).

Refusal, Recognition, and the Humanitarian Image

Much of the scholarship on Palestinian film and video of the past two decades expresses some anxiety about Palestinian image-making, anxiety reflected in analyses that focus on a given work's deficiencies or that build

their study of one type of film on the deficiencies of others. Both Arab critics and filmmakers working within the PLO in the long 1970s critiqued Palestinian films for being too reactive to current events.[11] More recently, Nurit Gertz and George Khleifi have described Palestinian revolutionary cinema of the 1970s as incapable of processing the trauma of the 1948 war and later "roadblock" films of the late 1990s and early 2000s as caught between the stagnant past and a dead-end present (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 63–65, 134–36). In her analysis of post-Oslo solidarity films, Terri Ginsberg (2016) yearns for the ideological clarity of earlier decades. Greg Burris, T. J. Demos, and Gil Hochberg critique the victimizing humanitarian images that proliferate in film and photographic images about Palestine, calling for alternatives that focus on "the holes in oppression rather than the instruments of oppression" (Burris 2019, 97) and opaque works that turn their back to or hide from power rather than seeking to draw power's attention to human rights claims (Demos 2013, 149; Hochberg 2015, 182n15). It is as if the difficult circumstances of Palestinian history—locally, the ongoing experience with settler colonialism and, globally, the waning of international solidarity movements that animated the left from the 1960s to the 1980s—cannot be represented without doing harm.

Certainly, the political frameworks and media circuits within which films and videos are made and seen contribute to this problem, as several contributors to *Gaza on Screen* demonstrate. In her analysis of British Pathé newsreels in chapter 10, Shahd Abusalama explores how in some of the earliest moving images about the Gaza Strip an Orientalist and colonial frame shaped mid-twentieth-century news coverage of Palestine and Israel. Her work encourages us to consider not just how sedimented assumptions about who has the authority to speak and whose story is worthy of narration continue to affect news coverage today, but how all images and narratives related to Palestine are framed and circulated. Such assumptions, for instance, underpin the "balanced objectivity" that Amahl Bishara (2012) critiques in her anthropological analysis of more recent news gathering. Similarly, Shaira Vadasaria's chapter on the 2018–19 Great March of Return illustrates how an ideology of liberal humanitarianism can stymie audiences' abilities to hear what Palestinian protesters are demanding. Rebecca L. Stein's analysis of a 2008 Israeli news broadcast in chapter 8 demonstrates how even credible and immediate information about Palestinian suffering can be enfolded into an Israeli narrative of victimhood. In other words, if an ideological framework is powerful enough, it can subsume contrary evidence within its logic, rendering that evidence impotent to change viewers' minds. Such frameworks

can determine not just how material is received but what types of materials are allowed to circulate. Hatim El-Hibri's analysis of a 2014 Lebanese solidary broadcast in chapter 9 illustrates the limits of what can be said when a program is defined within fragile Lebanese nationalism. In chapter 5, Yaron Shemer considers filmmakers working from the margins of the Israeli film industry, some of whom attempt to evade its liberal but self-serving ideological framework to explore alternative relationships to the Gaza Strip and its inhabitants. However, the limited access most of these filmmakers have to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, particularly since 2007, means that their works also capture the impossibility of coexistence and relations across the Israeli barrier under current political conditions, even as some of them may try to imagine an alternative.

In all these cases, images, utterances, and actions appear to be incapable of altering preexisting perspectives on Palestinians' or viewers' self-image in relation to Palestinians. The power of these ideological frameworks—Orientalist, colonial, humanitarian, nationalist, liberal, and neoliberal—then, can be added to the constraints on the filmmaking of Gazans that Viviane Saglier articulates in her analysis of the film *Ambulance* in chapter 2. Understanding their power and how they operate is important to understanding the limits to what these images and narratives can do as they circulate and to conceptualizing the potential efficacy of alternatives.

The victimizing humanitarian image can be particularly problematic. As Stein demonstrates, in the mainstream Israeli context, even humanitarian representations of Gazans under attack are framed to emphasize Jewish Israeli suffering or reconfigured as a "humanitarian alibi" vis-à-vis its military operations, but such material can be depoliticizing even when it is allowed to speak to Palestinian suffering. In the newsreels that Abusalama discusses, the unexplained rupture that created the Palestinian refugee "problem" depoliticizes the Palestinian condition even within apparent expressions of sympathy. Decades later, as Hadeel Assali, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum, and El-Hibri argue, such humanitarianization can racialize Palestinians. Vadasaria notes the incommensurability of liberal humanitarianism and anticolonialism, exemplified by Israeli soldiers who tell Gazans they want to "save" them from Hamas. Such statements are in line with mainstream Israeli documentaries about Gaza, which, Shemer says, focus on the aid that Israel offers to grateful Palestinians rather than on Israel's role in creating Palestinian need for aid.[12]

However, the humanitarian image, problematic though it may be, cannot be dismissed entirely, especially given the restricted circuits through which

Figure I.5 In *To Shoot an Elephant* (2009), Talal Hamdan crouches in a hospital morgue after bidding farewell to two of his three children, Haya, Lama, and Ismail Hamdan, who were killed in Israeli bombing in December 2008. The film includes graphic footage of the dying children's injuries and medical treatment.

fully emancipatory Palestinian perspectives move. Such material reflects the reality of Palestinian lived experience, which continues to include repeated experiences with violence and ongoing dispossession. Gazans themselves create, circulate, and appreciate such material as reflections of their experiences, and we must take seriously the value of the act of testimony for those who have experienced or witnessed violence and the role viewers play as receivers of that testimony.[13] While the accumulation of decades of recordings of bombings, house demolitions, shootings, tear-gassing, and other victimizing experiences may appear repetitive to distant viewers, each is nonetheless a unique experience for someone for whom the communication of traumatic experiences is vitally important. On a communal level and in the political vacuum created by the Palestinian Authority's incompetence, such images are "put into the service of an anticolonial struggle forced to speak itself through the universalizing idiom of violated human rights" (Allen 2009, 163). Their circulation has also informed Palestinian resistance movements.[14] We can ask, then, whether humanitarian images are always depoliticizing or victimizing, or whether the depoliticization occurs through the inherently ideological frameworks in which such images circulate and whether it is the images of suffering or the actual violence and dispossession that they depict that is victimizing. Perhaps the problem lies less in the images themselves than in their commodification, as the Syrian

collective Abounaddara (2017) has argued. Viviane Saglier notes that both the news and the humanitarian "image-making economy" offer important opportunities for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to develop skills and circulate their films. All of this invites the question of whether the global image landscape without such material would be better for Gazans.

Leaving aside questions related to humanitarianizing images, it would also be a mistake to assume that the prevailing political frameworks and media circuits within which such material circulates are totalizing in their effects. One could argue, for instance, that in the case Stein analyzes, the extensive media coverage of the rare footage of Gazan suffering to run on Israeli television was necessary precisely because of the power inherent within the footage to destabilize Israeli assumptions about themselves and their relationship to Palestinians. Stein's analysis echoes that of Adania Shibli (2017), whose study of the Israeli and Western coverage of the murder of Muhammad al-Durrah at the start of the Second Intifada outlines the extensive media work that Israel undertook to shift the narrative of that event. We cannot dismiss Palestinians' continued engagement within these frameworks even if, with effort, their work can be enfolded into those frameworks' foundational narratives. How those frameworks are subtly affected by the work done to incorporate such material, the effect on viewers of witnessing that material and the media work surrounding it, and the ways such material may help sustain solidarity networks among viewers who are already skeptical of dominant narratives cannot be discounted.

Several contributors also note how filmmakers and other cultural and political actors have refused existing ideological frameworks and/or dominant Western media circuits precisely because they are incommensurable with their political positions or, at times, their very humanity. Vadasaria uses the concept of refusal as articulated in Black and Indigenous contexts in North America to describe the stance of participants in the Great March of Return who, in the use of the word *return*, reject the settler colonialism that anchors Israel's sovereignty and the increasingly narrow framework for negotiations to which the Palestinian Authority is committed. A similar refusal informs the Qassam videos that Nayrouz Abu Hatoum and Hadeel Assali analyze, although there are fundamental differences between their material and that produced within the March of Return. The Qassam videos are designed to project military strength, while the March of Return videos, some of which consist of hours of footage, document the mundane waiting and milling about as well as moments of crisis and activity, and communicate vulnerability in addition to action and determination. In fact, refusal can take many forms.

Figure I.6 *Gaza* (2019) includes several carefully shot scenes that emphasize the beauty of life in Gaza.

Some of the filmmakers Shemer discusses also quietly refuse the separation of "Arab" from "Jew" and/or "Israel" from "Gaza" that the prevailing political framework requires. Some participants in the filmmakers' roundtable in chapter 1 speak of defying expectations of viewers and funders by refusing to center Israel and its atrocities or the nationalist narrative of heroism and martyrdom that is expected of Palestinian filmmakers and instead treating internal concerns—whether social and political narratives related to daily life in the Gaza Strip or psychological issues such as the "many occupied individuals" that filmmaker Shehada feels inside himself. In many cases, the filming is itself an act of refusal, a refusal to respect the blockade on Gaza and the disappearing of the Palestinian people—the "move on, there's nothing to see here" of Mirzoeff's visuality. Some filmmakers stress this point by rendering Gaza cinematic, eschewing Hito Steyerl's poor image to create carefully crafted scenes of beauty and lush musical scores that are designed to draw in new viewers by inserting Gaza and its people within new media circuits and to refuse dispossession as part of a natural order.[15]

As theorized by Audra Simpson for Indigenous peoples, refusal takes place within complex and fraught contexts that require multiple political strategies, including past and present demands for recognition, contexts that she describes as "a study in difficulty, a study of constraint and of contradictions" (2017, 21). The Palestinian experience has been similarly fraught, and Palestinians have made recourse to various, at times appar-

ently contradictory, political strategies. That difficulty not only is reflected in their visual representations but also defines the conditions for creating and viewing such material. Thus, refusal shapes a segment of works from and about the Gaza Strip, but only as one strategy among several. The need to operate through problematic frameworks and media circuits is also a consequence of Palestinian dispossession.

Opacity, Relation, and the Potential of Screens

The humanitarian image operates within an implicit promise of transparency, a promise to inform viewers of what is really happening, of fully communicating the pain of others. As others have argued, the "transparent" image contributes to a trap of continuous representations of Palestinian pain whose repetition blunts its rhetorical effect (Hochberg 2015, 118). Filmmakers and other artists can avoid this trap by engaging in strategies of what Edouard Glissant (1997) calls opacity. For both T. J. Demos and Gil Hochberg, opacity also operates as a type of refusal. In the works they analyze—*Nervous Rerum* by the Otolith Group and *We Began by Measuring Distance* by Basma Alsharif—artists deploy opacity to heighten viewers' awareness of their position *as* viewers and the problems inherent in the victimizing media images of Palestinians to which they have been accustomed.

Such works help viewers to appreciate the subjectival density of Palestinians and their communities and to contemplate their own spectatorial habits vis-à-vis that density, but they operate from an ironic distance that is more effective in some times and places than others. As a result, they constitute just one small segment of the films and videos from and about Palestine. If we accept the necessity, or at least the inevitability, of humanitarian images as long as violence and dispossession continue, then we need to develop strategies for effectively viewing them, as well as other Gazan films and videos—for example, social issue documentaries or narrative fiction—that do not necessarily thematize opacity. Some contributors suggest how practices of opacity apply to other types of texts. Abu Hatoum and Assali argue that the Qassam Brigades engage in opacity in their militant videos as an enactment of their representational agency. Qassam does not reject visibility but rather chooses when to be visible and what to reveal in its videos. This is a different type of opacity from that described by Demos and Hochberg, one that does not hide or turn one's back on power but rather strategically deploys images in relation to both external powers and local community.

The roundtable discussion in chapter 1 suggests that filmmakers from the Gaza Strip are fully aware of the visibility trap and problems inherent in the humanitarian/terrorist image. Nonetheless, they are not ready to give up on any part of the visual field. Political weakness, repeated catastrophe, and ongoing dispossession require representational engagement wherever possible. However, this does not mean relinquishing the "right to opacity" that Glissant articulates (1997, 190). In his film essays exploring the representations of violence, Shehada introduces viewers to alternative visual archives of opacity that Gazans might create and consult in contexts of extreme violence.[16] The Nasser brothers articulate a drive to represent Gaza in their fiction films in all its complexity even as they recognize that most non-Gazan viewers will not understand or perhaps even see much of that complexity. This reminds us that for Glissant opacity is a relational practice as much as it is a stance on the part of individual artists. The Nasser brothers practice opacity not by foreclosing simplistic readings of Palestinian images but by infusing their images with the density (or as much density as is possible in a representation) of life in Gaza. Viewers can practice opacity by approaching their films and their content with humility, by recognizing the density and unknowability of the other and accepting a coming into relation without full understanding.

The Nasser brothers want their works to circulate widely, and, indeed, their films have screened at prestigious film festivals. Arab Nasser talks about wanting to tell "human" stories that the whole world can share. This choice structures the types of films the brothers make such that they conform to what funders and festival programmers understand a fictional narrative film to be, and their characters and aesthetics must be legible within the preconceptions programmers and festival attendees bring to their viewing. Within those constraints, however, they strive for the density that underpins opacity. Glissant speaks of "the penetrable opacity of a world in which one exists or agrees to exist with and among others" (1997, 115). Artists create texts that discourage readings for transparency, but readers and viewers cultivate a respect for the protected depth of the other by approaching texts without seeking to comprehend them transparently and by accepting mystery and ambiguity. Works like *Nervous Rerum* and *We Began by Measuring Distance* remind us of this fact, but spectators can learn to apply practices of opacity to other types of films as well.

Works of film and photography can be particularly useful for engaging in practices of opacity because both their physical and their temporal frames are visible, reminding spectators that what they are seeing has been se-

lected. The indexicality of film and photography also introduces the notion of excess: one can never know everything about what appears within the image because it consists of a trace of an object, person, and/or place in the real world that will always exceed representation (Yaqub 2022). This quality may offer a way out of a unidimensional understanding of humanitarian images. Saglier's analysis of *Ambulance* through the lens of a politics of care is a case in point. Understanding films—even news reports or straightforward documentary films about Gazan suffering that circulate through neoliberal, victimizing networks—as dense and opaque requires that we read such texts for their uniqueness. In addition, the accretion of such images across time forms an archive of Palestinian lived experience with ongoing dispossession and repeated violence that can only be represented through the multiplicity of similar texts.[17]

Arriving at an understanding of the nature and potential of the visual archive that was deployed in May 2021, and more generally of the cultural and political potential of Palestinian film and video, requires a capacious analytical frame that considers how different types of material, created and circulated in diverse but overlapping ways, interact and inform each other, operating as a visual ecosystem characterized by continuity and change, complementarity and contradiction. It requires simultaneously holding in mind the different communicative requirements of different political and viewing contexts. The essays that follow help us to achieve that holistic understanding of the visual archive of Gazan moving images through close analysis of a range of material from across the modern history of the Gazan Strip.

Gaza on Screen begins with five chapters that analyze films from and about Gaza, works designed for circulation through large screens and all the political and community-building possibilities such circulation implies. As a relatively long-form medium (i.e., relative to the very short works that make up most news and social media), films can create opportunities for immersion and contemplation. They have the space to address complexity and ambiguity, and as a result, their meaning is often constructed through reception, as Arab Nasser notes in chapter 1. In that chapter, six Gazan filmmakers, Abdelsalam Shehada, Basma Alsharif, Tarzan and Arab Nasser, Mohamed Jabaly, and Ahmed Mansour, converse with the Palestinian filmmaker and researcher Azza El-Hassan, the roundtable moderator, discussing their relationship to place, history, and narrative, as well as the political frames within which they work.[18] The chapter offers the perspectives of film practitioners on many of the questions addressed by contributors in other chapters.

In chapter 2, Viviane Saglier theorizes filmmaking in Gaza as a form of care work that overlaps with but is nonetheless distinct in its framing and outcome from the care work of humanitarian relief. Her analysis of Jabaly's "care-ful" filmmaking inserts *Ambulance* into Palestinian practices of care that date back at least to the Nakba and the Palestinian institutions that were mobilized or created to address the needs of the newly displaced population. Palestinian representations, including films, have always been imbricated with care work and community building. That imbrication is exemplified in institutions such as UNRWA, whose vast and ever-growing film and photo collection dwarfs all other image archives of the Palestinians. Care has been integral to Palestinian resistance movements, underpinning the success of the PLO in the long 1970s and Hamas in the decades since the PLO's decline. Care was central to the successes of the First Intifada when practices of mutual aid sustained other forms of nonviolent resistance. The diminished capacity for such care that resulted in part from the different geography of conflict in the Second Intifada contributed to the failure of that movement (Johnson and Kuttab 2001). Since then, in part due to the lack of a viable political movement uniting Palestinians, care has emerged as a major area of Palestinian activism.[19] This care is political in the sense that it sustains Palestinian communities across boundaries within global and regional contexts that strive to eliminate such ties and sustains a sense of self as grounded in history and situated in community (Hobart and Kneese 2020). "Care-ful" filmmaking contributes to this sustenance, complicating our understanding of how media circuits circumscribe Palestinian speech, including circuits within problematic areas of humanitarian interventions.

In chapter 3, Samirah Alkassim analyzes the use of archival footage in connection with Gaza by filmmakers Mustafa Abu Ali and Basma Alsharif, arguing for the revolutionary potential of the found footage film. By combining works by these two artists, Alkassim uncovers linkages in strategy and perspective between two very different historical and production contexts, linkages with implications not just for the films but also for the contexts in which they are made and the circuits through which they travel. Abu Ali's film moved mainly through politicized, revolutionary spaces. As yet unrestored, it rarely screens in formal settings today. Alsharif's work, on the other hand, moves mostly through art circuits, where it inserts Gaza into conversations that might not otherwise include Palestine. Both Abu Ali and Alsharif engage in what Gil Hochberg calls activating the archive and "alter the archival conditions that currently limit our political imagination" (2021, 27).

Figure I.7 Lovers who struggle to stay together in the face of family opposition and the Israeli blockade on Gaza in *Habibi* (2012), a film that focuses on the stymied desires of individual characters.

In chapter 4, Kamran Rastegar examines three relatively early works of Palestinian fictional film, demonstrating how they captured tensions within a politics of memory and mode of production that are very much of their time but that also usher in a new period in Palestinian cinema. Rastegar's analysis is important for demonstrating how Palestinian films are embedded in history. It is easy to see the continuities in Palestinian cinema—the repetition of the themes of containment, immobility, deprivation, vulnerability to violence, and resistance that recur time and again in Gazan films. Rastegar's analysis encourages us to think of films from other periods as similarly situated. Gazan narrative filmmaking of the past two decades, for instance, has mostly eschewed any engagement with the national frames that are addressed so ambiguously in the Oslo films, instead focusing on how individuals' aspirations and desires are affected by the Israeli occupation and/or social conditions within the Gaza Strip.[20]

In chapter 5, Yaron Shemer examines how filmmakers in Otef Aza, the area of Israel surrounding the Gaza Strip, treat Gaza and its inhabitants in their films. His analysis, like the Gazan filmmakers' roundtable, demonstrates the importance of place—in this case, a region of Israel that is close to but violently separated from the Gaza Strip—and positionality in shaping filmmaking. These works are politically diverse, but some express a yearning for relations across the blockade surrounding Gaza that a settler colonial logic

Figure I.8 *The Idol* (2015) inserts Gaza into Hollywood genre filmmaking in a rags-to-riches biopic about Mohammed Assaf, the young Gazan who won *Arab Idol* in 2013.

precludes. That yearning, absent and perhaps even unimaginable within mainstream Israeli cinema, marks them as expressions of a kind of refusal.

Chapters 6 and 7 move away from film to focus on videos that circulate primarily through small screens. In chapter 6, Nayrouz Abu Hatoum and Hadeel Assali analyze videos produced by the Qassam Brigades, the armed wing of Hamas, as offering a subterranean and submerged perspective and expressing a militant agency. The subterranean introduces the politics of verticality into the volume whereby control of the ground, where Israel is strongest, is circumvented through an extensive system of tunnels and underground chambers, built in Gaza in response to efforts to contain the strip (Haddad 2018). Gaza's system of tunnels is vast, deep, and complex and has thus far eluded Israel's attempts to destroy it. While the tunnel in the video Assali and Abu Hatoum analyze is used in a military operation, tunnels, which have been built over decades by various political and civilian actors, are also integral to the Gazan economy as conduits for trade and sites for the storage of goods. The tunnels and the politics of verticality of which they are a part point to Gaza's ongoing complexity and dynamism. Gazans continue to be actors (albeit asymmetrically disadvantaged vis-à-vis their adversaries) in their own history who creatively and intelligently deploy resources, political alliances, and physical capacity to ameliorate the conditions imposed upon them.[21]

In chapter 7, Shaira Vadasaria considers the reception of video footage of the 2018–19 Great March of Return through a focus on sound and its haptic effects, paying attention to what videos can capture of an embodiment of political refusal. In its contemplation of what an activist and scholar outside

the Gaza Strip can learn and experience through the screen, Vadasaria's chapter highlights the relational aspect of videos and the screens through which they circulate. The march was an extraordinary series of events, eighteen months of weekly nonviolent protests at the wall sealing the Gaza Strip off from Israel. Media coverage mostly enfolded the march into the narrative that sustains the status quo, one that fails to contextualize the events within history; tars Palestinian political action with the brush of terrorism; and, while it admits to Israel's brutality, also defines its violence as necessary defense. Vadasaria's chapter operates as a double refusal; first, she describes the march as a series of acts of refusal of the narrative that sustains the status quo; second, she engages in refusal herself by attending to the sounds and haptic effects, thereby hearing Gaza's call for return that the containment of Gaza is meant to silence.

The last three chapters focus on news coverage of the Gaza Strip in traditional media, with chapters about film and television material first by Israelis and Lebanese, two peoples whose history is closely intertwined with that of the Palestinians, and then by the British, the imperial power that created the artificial borders of historical Palestine, thereby beginning the process whereby this section of Greater Syria would be cut off from its neighbors. In chapter 8, Rebecca L. Stein describes how one incident in the 2008–9 Israeli attack on Gaza was reported and understood in Israel, reminding us of the political nature of visibility and the power of the Israeli media's discursive frame to neutralize contravening evidence. Her chapter focuses on an incident from the 2008–9 Israeli attack on Gaza, a time when traditional media such as television created and controlled narratives surrounding current events. However, as Stein notes, the inability of most Israelis to *see* Gazans and the violence Israel perpetrates against them has survived the relatively easy spread of Palestinian images globally through new technologies.[22]

In chapter 9, Hatim El-Hibri considers the possibilities and limits of mediated solidarity through an analysis of a special program on Lebanese television that aired during the 2014 Israeli attacks on Gaza. As in the Israeli case that Stein presents, Gazan material is shaped for a national context, but to different effect. The broadcast is remarkable for its exclusion of Palestinian communities that have been living in Lebanon since the Nakba from the Lebanese national frame that it constructs. In other words, the Palestinian struggle is valorized as long as it is external to Lebanon, a struggle to be hailed, a condition to be decried, but not part of a shared concern to be engaged. Finally, in chapter 10, Shahd Abusalama examines some of the earliest filmic images of Gaza, British Pathé newsreels produced from the

1940s through the 1960s and screened in UK cinemas, bringing us full circle back to the large screen. Cinema newsreels are unusual in that they screened Palestinian (and other) images to audiences that did not seek them out; cinemagoers watched the newsreels in anticipation of the fictional feature film to come, one that almost certainly did not concern Palestine.[23] Abusalama demonstrates how this material was shaped by earlier Orientalist understandings of the region and helped to sustain them in ways that continue to shape media coverage of Palestine today, and, in turn, the image of Gaza and Palestine more generally in the global imaginary.

An Image Archive of Steadfastness

I would describe the media archive that has been created over the course of Palestine's tumultuous modern history and that filmmakers, curators, educators, and activists instinctively deployed in the moment of crisis in May 2021 as an image archive of steadfastness. I use the term *steadfast* to evoke the type of politics that Ilana Feldman studies, a politics that is "multivocal and discordant," one that includes refusal but is not limited to it and that often takes place in contexts (e.g., humanitarian relief) that are designed to be apolitical (2018, 23–24). It is an archive created in the present, but one that inevitably operates in the future when the images and narratives collected at a given time are processed, reprocessed, studied, and reused. This archive engages with what Feldman calls the politics of living in addition to the politics of life that is represented in emergency documentaries and other humanitarian images. It operates within the ambiguous and tenuous domain from which alternative political futures can be imagined (Abu-Lughod 2020, 13). Moving between virtual and physical contexts, sustained and deployed under conditions of precarity and compromise, it is shaped by a past when revolutionary change seemed possible and by the constraints of a neoliberal present, including the NGO-ification of Palestinian activism.[24] An archive decades in the making, it is a repository not just of documentary images and reportage related to events, living conditions, relationships, and narratives but also of haptic memories and structures of feeling from different Palestinian places and historical periods (Tawil-Souri 2014). Rastegar's close reading of socially marginalized characters in fictional films made during the Oslo period illustrates how this archive captures the hopes, fears, and ambiguities of that period of Palestinian history. Vadasaria's analysis of mediated clips of the soundscape from the 2018–19 Great March of Return reveals the embodied experiences with political refusal and repression of that refusal

that we can expect to shape the lived experiences, outlooks, and decisions of Gazans for decades to come. This archive can also be self-reflexive, as El-Hibri demonstrates when he argues that nostalgia for an earlier period of Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity informs the 2014 television program he analyzes. Its self-reflexivity can be revolutionary, as Alkassim shows us in her reading of the found footage films of Mustafa Abu Ali and Basma Alsharif.

However, the material conditions within which an archive of steadfastness is created and through which it circulates shape its content. Saglier shows us that the archive of steadfastness is pragmatic. Rastegar makes a similar point when he notes that filmmakers seized on European interest in the Oslo Accords of the 1990s and related demand for films about Israel/Palestine that created new coproduction opportunities for Palestinian filmmakers in the 1990s. Filmmakers took advantage of those opportunities despite their feelings of ambivalence about Oslo itself. Most films from and about Gaza continue to be made interstitially and within contexts of compromise and are shaped by the material conditions of their making (Naficy 2001).

The archive is shaped by Gazans' ongoing experience with violence and dispossession and the immediate need for representation that those experiences create. This problem has informed filmmaking about Palestine and the Palestinians since the Nakba. Images emerging from such contexts may appear repetitive and formulaic. Some may not offer new ways of understanding Palestinian experiences or possible futures, but, as Alkassim demonstrates, they make possible other types of work (which are also part of this vast archive). These representations help Palestinians to process their own experiences and to sustain community on the ground. They also help to sustain networks of solidarity and to maintain a Palestinian presence within the global imaginary, a presence without which Palestinian actual, physical erasure from all historical Palestine would, no doubt, accelerate.

The archive of steadfastness operates like water, with images and narratives flowing through the cracks in the ideological walls of settler colonialism and neoliberalism that have shaped modern Palestinian history. Its sustainers constantly seek out established and new viewers wherever they can. By maintaining a Palestinian presence in the global imaginary, its texts both constitute and sustain Palestinian practices of survivance and overliving. It engages in placeholder politics, helping to preserve a collectivity until conditions allow that collectivity to act politically. It performs what Rayya El Zein, writing about Lebanon, calls a "cacophony of holding open," holding open the possibility of a politics to come however one can (2020, 49). Most important, the archive of steadfastness sustains relation-

ships, both relationships within and among Palestinian communities and between Gazans and others.

Notes

1 Some examples include the Gaza rubble bucket challenge, a localization of the 2014 ice bucket challenge designed to raise awareness about ALS; the spoof of the 2013 epic split Volvo commercial by the Gazan Tashweesh Productions; and the 2021 and 2022 English-language music videos by the twelve-year-old Gazan rapper MC Abdul.

2 See Maasri 2020 for a detailed study of the foundational transnationalism of twentieth-century Arab visual culture. While her work focuses on print culture, film and video traveled along and were shaped by similar circuits.

3 See El-Hassan 2002 for a succinct articulation of these issues; Yaqubi's film *Off Frame AKA Revolution until Victory* (2015) for a direct engagement with the image politics of the past and their continued relevance today; and Kamal Aljafari's found footage works *Recollection* (2015) and *Unusual Summer* (2020), which are informed by the filmmaker's commitment to cinema as a tool for maintaining Palestinian connections to the geography of Palestine and a past when, as he puts it in interviews, Palestinians did not feel like immigrants in their own country ("Archive," Kamal Aljafari, https://kamalaljafari.art/Archive). See also Gazan filmmaker Fida Qishta's articulation of the importance of using cinema to narrate stories that Palestinians themselves want told (DeepDish TV, n.d).

4 *Visuality* refers to a system of organizing the world such that power structures are naturalized. Visuality discourages looking, the authority that tells us to "move on there is nothing to see here" (Mirzoeff 2011, 474). Mirzoeff draws on Rancière's concept of the police, that is, the distribution of the sensible.

5 Third Cinema emerges from a film act, that is, the active viewing and discussion of a film, preferably with the filmmaker present so that she can incorporate that discussion into future iterations of the film. By focusing on the event in which the film is viewed and discussed rather than on the film as a static text, Third Cinema renders the film and filmmaker subordinate to the process and people who engage with the film, thus freeing the filmmaker to engage in radical and ongoing experimentation. Not all filmmakers view their works as open-ended in this way, but the viewing context creates opportunities for both filmmakers and audiences to do so, and early Palestinian filmmakers consciously engaged in such practices (Abu Ali and Abu Ghanimah 2006, 26; Yaqub 2018, 62). In all cases, engagement in discussion in conjunction with a film screening creates opportunities for new understandings of a film and its subject matter. See Solanas and Getino (1969) 2014 for details.

6 Like Ariella Azoulay (2008), I understand this space as one of action but one that, as Hochberg (2015) notes, is also characterized by surveillance. Azoulay's work concerns still photography but can be applied to moving images as well. See Marquez 2012 for a clear description of the imbrication of Arendt's space of appearance and Foucault's space of surveillance.

7 A handful of documentaries about Palestine, some most likely shot in Gaza were also made during the pre-1973 period, including *Man Nahnu?* (*Who Are We?*) (1960) by renowned filmmaker Tewfik Saleh. These works are lost, however.

8 Syria also produced a number of militant Palestinian films including two fictional feature films set in Gaza: Khalid Hamadah's *The Knife* (1971), which is based on Ghassan Kanafani's novella *All That Is Left for You*, and Salih Dahni's *Heroes Are Born Twice* (1977).

9 These early works are not set in the Gaza Strip, but Masharawi did go on to make several films set there or focusing on Gazan characters.

10 Survivance is a concept developed by Gerald Vizenor (2008) to describe a refusal within Indigenous cultures in North America to be defined by loss and victimization through a variety of rhetorical strategies and literary modes. It is related to Derrida's notion of *sur-vivance*, which combines both "more life" in the sense of living longer and "more than mere living" (Honig 2009, 10). See Saglier 2019 for a succinct application of the concepts of overliving and survivance to the Gaza Strip context.

11 See, for instance, Abu Ali 2008; Abu Ali and Abu Ghanimah 2006; and the notes on the discussion of Arab and Palestinian cinema in issue 7/8 of the Lebanese journal *Al-Tariq* (1972).

12 For a detailed discussion of the problem with the humanitarian image from various theoretical perspectives, particularly that of Hannah Arendt, see the various articles in volume 4 of *World Records Journal*, a special issue devoted to applying Hannah Arendt's thought to documentary film (Gamsco and Fox, n.d.).

13 There is a vast literature on the role of witnessing and testimony in the processing of violence and other traumatic experiences. See S. Feldman and Laub 1992; Oliver 2001; Sliwinsky 2011; and Torchin 2012 for diverse arguments for the power of narratives and images of witnessing and testimony for the subjects of violence.

14 The media strategies of Palestinian resistance movements have always included both humanitarian images and an entwining of humanitarian and resistance images.

15 Feature fiction films about Gaza fall into this category. James Longley's *Gaza Strip* (2002) is an early example of such documentary filmmaking. *Gaza* (2019) by Garry Keane and Andrew McConnell is a more recent one.

16 In *Rainbow* (2004), for instance, Shehada profiles the work of Gazan artist Ibrahim Al Mzayen in the wake of the 2004 invasion and siege of Rafah; in *To My Father* (2008), he reflects on the photographic heritage of the Gaza Strip.

17 Reading films from and about Gaza for opacity in this way overlaps with the practice of watching that Azoulay theorizes in *The Civil Contract of Photography*

(2008) in that it is a relational practice that assumes that the world of photography functions as an Arendtian space of appearance. However, it is much more tentative and less optimistic in that it does not assume that a claim documented in a photograph can always be recovered. Rather, the viewer approaches the image with the expectation that full understanding will not be possible.

18 All six filmmakers have close ties to Gaza. All except for Alsharif were born and raised in Gaza. Alsharif was born outside Gaza but has family ties there and has visited frequently. Shehada continues to live in Gaza, but all these other filmmakers have resided outside of Gaza (in Europe or the United States) for at least five years.

19 Here I am thinking of the work of small organizations and initiatives, many supported by diasporic Palestinians, that support arts, education, and sports activities; provide medical care and scholarships; and build playgrounds, libraries, and community centers. Many such initiatives are individual and ad hoc while others take place through formal NGOs.

20 Lebanese American filmmaker Susan Youssef's *Habibi* (2012) retells the medieval Arabic love story of Qays and Layla. *The Idol* (2015), a film by director Hany Abu Assad and scriptwriter Sameh Zoabi (both from the Galilee), tells the story of Mohammed Assaf, the Gazan singer who won *Arab Idol* in 2013. Shot in part on location in the Gaza Strip, the film affectionately inserts Gaza into a Hollywood genre film narrative. One exception is Rashid Masharawi's *Waiting* (2005), in which a small crew embarks on a tour of Palestinian refugee camps across the Arab world in search of actors for the soon-to-be completed Palestinian National Theater in Gaza, only to end up stranded in a camp in Lebanon with news that the theater has been bombed. The narrative effectively forecloses the national frame that was left suspended at the end of *Haifa* from a decade earlier.

21 In their focus on armed struggle, the videos Abu Hatoum and Assali discuss can be read as the political heirs to the PLO cinema of the long 1970s. Like the earlier material, the Qassam videos valorize military resistance and project strength. However, they bear a different relationship to the Palestinian people; in the earlier period, virtually all Palestinians supported the PLO as their legitimate representative body. Today, there is no entity that can make that claim. The PLO films also traveled through different circuits. They were subtitled in multiple languages and sent around the world for screening to global audiences. Qassam videos, on the other hand, appear only in Arabic, which suggests a very different intended audience.

22 There is, however, considerable censorship of Palestinian images and speech on social media platforms. See Kosov 2019 for an overview of Facebook's treatment of Israel/Palestine; and Alimardani and Elswah 2021 for censorship of Palestinian material during the May 2021 Israeli attacks on Gaza.

23 There are exceptions. In the early 1950s, there was a movie theater on Edgeware Road in London dedicated to screening newsreels. No doubt some of the material Abusalama discusses was screened there to audiences keenly interested in the

news of the day. Over the years the theater evolved into an Arab cultural center and, ironically, in the 1980s included screenings of PLO films of the 1970s in its programming (CAMP 2014).

24 I am thinking here of observations by Lori Allen (2013) and Chiara De Cesari (2019) that both human rights and cultural heritage NGOs in Palestine are often staffed by former activists for whom these are the last remaining domains for meaningful political work.

Basma Alsharif, Azza El-Hassan,
Mohamed Jabaly, Ahmed Mansour, Arab Nasser,
Tarzan Nasser, and Abdelsalam Shehada

Editing and commentary by Nadia Yaqub with
an introduction by Azza El-Hassan

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Gaza Filmmaking in a Palestinian Context

A Gazan Filmmakers' Roundtable

In March 2021, I convened a virtual roundtable of Palestinian filmmakers as a means of incorporating the perspectives from Gaza into this book. Interviews with individual filmmakers from Gaza abound, but they usually focus on particular films and are directed at global film audiences. As Azza El-Hassan points out in this discussion, Palestinian filmmakers rarely get a chance to engage in deep discussion about filmmaking with each other. Filmmaking in Gaza has proliferated during the past decade, in part due to technological advances that facilitate amateur filmmaking and in part because of the proliferation of training opportunities; for instance, students from al-Azhar University and al-Aqsa University and Theater Day Productions have all submitted films to the Palestinian student film festival that has run at Duke University since 2017 (Kalow 2021). However, it was important that the roundtable include filmmakers from earlier generations as well. There are dozens of filmmakers from outside the Gaza Strip who have made important works about Gaza, but I chose to focus on those with close family ties and the

lived experience with Gaza that can only be mediated and facilitated by such ties. I wanted the roundtable to be a conversation among filmmakers rather than with me, an academic who studies and writes about film but who has never worked in filmmaking. I thought, rightly, that this would create a kind of intimacy and opportunity for reflection. So, I invited Azza El-Hassan, a Palestinian filmmaker and scholar whose documentary work is informed by a provocative interviewing style and who has engaged deeply with Palestinian cinema history, to serve as moderator for the roundtable. The two-hour roundtable exceeded my expectations and, as a rare opportunity for Palestinian filmmakers to gather for the express purpose of discussing their work, served as a small contribution to Palestinian filmmaking more generally through the community-building work it performed.

This chapter includes a brief reflection on the roundtable by El-Hassan, followed by excerpts from the discussion and my own comments on it. Filmmakers' statements have been edited for clarity and concision.

— N.Y.

Habibti Gaza (Gaza, My Love)

By Azza El-Hassan

Film festivals are usually a space for filmmakers to meet and engage with each other. Yet, when it comes to Palestine and the Palestinians, what is usually the norm is not possible even for cinema, where imagination should be able to materialize dreams. While films can travel across borders and checkpoints, in Palestine filmmakers and their cameras most of the time cannot. The segmentation and segregation of Palestinian communities from each other, which is enforced by a military machine, means that a Palestinian film festival in the West Bank cannot host Palestinian filmmakers except those who are from the West Bank or who have foreign passports that can grant them entrance to the territories as non-Palestinian imposters. The same applies to a Palestinian festival in Jerusalem or Haifa, which cannot host filmmakers from the West Bank or Gaza, and to a Palestinian film festival in Gaza, which would only be able to host Palestinian filmmakers from Gaza itself. This is why when Nadia Yaqub asked me if I wanted to be in conversation with filmmakers from Gaza, I jumped at the opportunity: I wanted to meet them, to talk to them, and maybe to accumulate a narrative about them.

Figure 1.1 An aerial shot of "abandoned Gaza" from Basma Alsharif's *Ouroboros* (2017).

A Gazan Film

As I watched the films of the Gazan filmmakers whom I would soon meet, I could not help but think of what sets the cinema that they are making apart from the one that is being made a few kilometers away, in other Palestinian cities and towns. In the West Bank, borders and checkpoints mark the landscape and can, in a film, signal the beginning or end of a scene, as in *Rana's Wedding* (2002) and more recently in *The Present* (2020). In both films the narrative evolves and changes due to checkpoints and borders. That is not the case in a Gazan film. The space in Gazan cinema is not interrupted by checkpoints. Instead, there is a continuity within scenes that other Palestinian filmmakers crave. Yet, this continuous space is also a confined one. Gaza is an open-air prison, and Gazan filmmakers do not miss an opportunity to illustrate the limitation of the space. In *Ouroboros* (2017) by Basma Alsharif, aerial shots of isolated, abandoned Gaza set the scene in the opening sequence. Gazans are observed by the viewer from a distance in a shattered landscape, as Alsharif presents Gaza as a space separated from the rest the world.

The absence of Israeli soldiers in Gazan films also struck me. Unlike Palestinian films from the West Bank, where Israeli soldiers are present, in Gazan films the soldiers are outside the frame. They control and alter the fate of the protagonists from a distance, as we see in the last scene of *Gaza*

Figure 1.2 The Mediterranean Sea appears in Ahmed Mansour's *Angel of Gaza* (2021).

Mon Amour (2020) by the Nasser brothers. The voice of the Israeli soldier is heard coming from the sky. The sound of a helicopter accompanies it as the soldier instructs the film hero and heroine to not venture farther into the sea. The effect of Israeli soldiers whose presence dominates without their being visible can be clearly seen in *Ambulance* (2016) by Mohamed Jabaly, who records his daily life after acquiring his first camera and begins working in a hospital on the first day of the 2014 Israeli bombing of Gaza.

As I thought of all that differentiates films coming from Gaza from those that are being created in the West Bank, I could not help but also notice that Gazan films always include the Mediterranean Sea, something that Palestinian filmmakers in the West Bank cannot use as a film location because access to Palestine's sea has long been denied. The long shots of the seafront, where Gazan film protagonists usually seek normality within an abnormal existence, seemed to also insist on the sea as an integral part of the Palestinian visual landscape and a reminder that what has been forcefully omitted from Palestinian cinema in the West Bank remains ours. That is what you get when you view a Gazan film.

A Conversation with a Friend

Abdelsalam Shehada is the only one of the filmmakers I knew previously.

Abdelsalam and I have collaborated in the past on several projects. We met in the late nineties, before the Second Intifada, when movement be-

tween the West Bank and Gaza was still possible. We would tour Gaza City, searching for filming locations. Together we filmed *Sinbad Is a She* (1999) and a collection of short films.

We both began making films following the Oslo peace agreement, which was a period of hope, when everyone, even those who did not support the agreement, felt that there was a possibility for things to get better. This optimism translated itself in Palestinian cinema through the exploration of new film themes. Instead of focusing only on the Palestinian struggle for liberation, Palestinian filmmakers began to reflect on their own society and the layered identities and issues that formed its losses and gains. During that period, I filmed *Arab Women Speak Out* (1996) and *Sinbad Is a She*, which, as their titles suggest, deal with women's rights in an evolving Palestinian society. As for Abdelsalam, he filmed *The Shadow* (2000), which focuses on the effect of a problematic past and present on the mental health of a recovering Palestinian society.

Yet, that period soon ended with the collapse of peace talks and the brutal bloody response of the Israeli army to the Second Intifada. At that point, Abdelsalam decided to stop making films and instead focus on documenting and recording what was happening in the hope that if the world knew, then it would act, while I insisted on continuing to search for some kind of normality within our daily existence.

Our different perceptions and approaches to dealing with what was happening around us and how our world was changing captured me so much that in *News Time* (2001) I decided to use it as a prologue for the film. The film begins with a telephone conversation between me and Abdelsalam in which I try to convince him to abandon filming news and the harsh, painful reality and to instead come and join me in shooting a film. But Abdelsalam rejects my offer, leaving me to make a film without a cameraman and, in a situation of war, trying to make a film that does not deal with war. Our documented conversation became the bond with which many people now connect us.

Gaza Is Not a Coincidence

It was now time to meet the other filmmakers.

As a Palestinian who grew up in exile and returned to Palestine only in 1996, first as a foreign imposter and later receiving the right to stay because of the Oslo agreement, I shot my films all over Palestine. I filmed in Nablus, Gaza, Ramallah, Jerusalem, and so on. Palestine was not about a specific city or town. I observed it just as an ex-refugee would: an object of desire

Figure 1.3 Filmmaker Azza El-Hassan tries unsuccessfully to convince the Gazan cinematographer Abdelsalam Shehada to abandon the news and work on her film essay in *News Time* (2001).

and imagination. Returning to it was a cathartic act to undo dispossession in which I was indulging every time I made a shot.

The work of the filmmakers I was now meeting was very different in that respect. These were filmmakers for whom shooting a film in Palestine meant shooting a film in Gaza and nowhere else. Gaza was their subject and location. *Gaza Mon Amour* was not actually filmed in Gaza, but the Nasser brothers re-created and reproduced Gaza in their perfect film set in Amman. The films of Basma Alsharif, who was raised abroad, are not limited to Palestinian narratives, but when she does work on Palestine, it is Gaza that is her location and desire.

This insistence on Gaza intrigues me. Why is it that these filmmakers do not imagine stories outside Gaza? Did the Israeli segmentation and disconnection of Palestinian areas succeed in limiting our imagination? Can we now formulate narratives only within the spaces that are allowed to us by a military machine? I asked the filmmakers why they always choose Gaza, and the answer came simply and straightforwardly from the Nasser brothers and

Mohamed Jabaly: This is the place we know. It is where elements that make our characters come from, and it is where we have memories.

"Is Gaza, then, as a location, a 'coincidence'?" I asked. This idea seemed to provoke Basma, who insisted that Gaza was not a coincidence but a choice—an ethical choice, which is the subject of her film *Ouroboros*.

As I watched the filmmakers on my computer screen, I could not but notice that as much as they differ from each other in their experiences, narratives, film styles, and more, they all shared the act of archiving Gaza. It is the Gaza of Abdelsalam's father, for whom he recorded its past and present in *To My Father* (2008). It is the Gaza that has a history that stretches far earlier than the modern Islamists, which the Nasser brothers bring back to life in the statue their fisherman finds in *Gaza Mon Amour*, and it is the harsh reality that Jabaly films in *Ambulance*. It is the Gaza that we see through their eyes.

The Gazan Filmmakers' Roundtable

Translated and edited by Nadia Yaqub with Ahmed Mansour

Gazan filmmaking begins with a relationship to place—the intimate knowledge that arises from long residency and relationships to people. "I know Basma's grandfather, Dr. Haydar ʿAbd-Shafiʿ and his family. The purple tree in the courtyard of his house enchants me. Every day, I walk by his house in Gaza City and gaze at the purple tree at the door and am reassured because this house is a reflection of the glory of Gaza, its dignity and its rich, human history, the generous inhabitants of Gaza," Abdelsalam Shehada says. The tree that brightens Shehada's immediate environs also brings to mind specific details about Gaza's history and past conditions. ʿAbd al-Shafiʿ was a prominent medical doctor in Gaza and actor in Palestinian national politics from the 1950s until his death in 2007 and was widely known for his principled political stances and commitment to unity. The tree, then, operates as a chronotope for Shehada, imbuing the difficult present with history, nostalgia, and personal memories. Details like this enrich filmmakers' works in ways that may not always be evident to distant viewers who do not share this intimate knowledge of Gaza. Arab Nasser tells an anecdote about making the film *Gaza Mon Amour*:

> There was a discussion about using a song by Julio Iglesias. The copyright holders asked us to explain why we wanted to use that song in particular

Figure 1.4 Issa, the film's protagonist, cooks while listening to Julio Iglesias in Tarzan and Arab Nasser's *Gaza Mon Amour* (2020).

> and what the song means in Gaza. Although our film is set in 2013–2014, the song evokes Gaza in the 1990s when our father would drive us from our home in Jabaliya camp to school in Bayt Lahiya in the north. . . . He always liked to listen to Julio Iglesias. Until now, whenever we hear Julio, we return to Bayt Lahiya, the red flowers around that area, the wild mulberry trees, the green fields, and the beautiful old buildings that have completely disappeared—now Gazan architecture is a solid concrete block, so that you can't even breathe.

Such details are essential for filmmakers working in a mimetic mode. Tarzan Nasser adds:

> We made two fiction films in Jordan. First, we looked for locations that resemble Gaza. Palestinian refugee camps everywhere, in Lebanon, in Jordan, more or less resemble each other, but the camps in Gaza have their specificities. We do all the art directing and design to ensure that it is precisely like Gaza. This is not easy, searching for the exact paint and other details. It's a responsibility if you undertake creating the feeling of Gaza in the film. . . . I watch films made about Gaza but not by Gazan filmmakers and, to be honest, as one who lived in Gaza, and knows Gaza, I feel that they are off.

Nostalgia informs filmmakers' work subtly. The Nasser brothers may feel it particularly strongly after living outside Gaza for more than a decade. Shehada addresses it directly in his film *To My Father*, in which he meditates on the auratic quality of older images and their effect on the present and

Figure 1.5 Nostalgia in Abdelsalam Shehada's *To My Father* (2008).

the future. Theirs is a form of reflective nostalgia in that it is empathetic and questioning (Boym 2001, xviii). The bittersweet feeling of yearning is marshaled to create bonds between viewers and subjects of the film, the filmmaker, and Gazans.

The need filmmakers feel to evoke Gaza as a specific, unique place may be related to an ambivalence toward Palestine as a national question, born of specific experiences in Gaza. Azza El-Hassan, who grew up in the diaspora and whose films are often framed by the national, does not feel this need to represent place:

> For me, as a Palestinian filmmaker and in my films, Ramallah is a coincidence. It's not a space. I am making a film with a Palestinian narrative in it, but the space itself, it could be Bethlehem, Gaza, as far as I am concerned, it doesn't really matter where it's taking place.

The relationship of filmmakers from the diaspora to Gaza is complex. Basma Alsharif is adamant that she does not work from the positionality of a resident of Gaza, although attachment to place, built over years of visits to her family's home and its importance for her mother, is key to her work:

> I was born and raised outside Gaza. I have a US passport. It's not that my life was always easy, but I told myself I can abandon this pain because I haven't experienced it. As the situation worsened in Gaza, I felt as if I were not a Palestinian. But at the same time, I realized that I could not escape it. We visited constantly. My mother's family is from there and they were very political, and because of my grandfather's activism and ideology and the work he did, I grew up with that. Though I have a Gazan ID and have the Palestinian passport, I also have this other experience which is very hard to forget. I feel that always being able to leave and come back is a massive privilege. It [the violence inflicted upon Gaza] is very devastating and impossible to forget. Perhaps it is made more traumatic by the fact that I don't have to endure it so there's this intense guilt and there's this intense . . . I don't know what makes me different from my family or from the rest of the people of Gaza. It's just luck, it's chance. It's the result of where my parents studied and the circumstances of their work, of the political moment in which they had me. There is this constant duality of feeling completely outside and completely unable to escape. I think, through my work, I try to use that as a way to bring audiences into the space where they might not otherwise go, through the vantage point of someone who is straddling the inside and outside of a place that is a wound but is also a strength in my history that affects how I look at the world.

In fact, all the filmmakers except Shehada now live outside of Gaza and so must grapple with how exile affects their relationship to Gaza and hence their filmmaking. Mohamed Jabaly says:

> The experiences we have had [in Gaza] are a part of who we are wherever we go. On the topic of leaving Gaza, we actually never leave it. Look at what I have here [he shows us a plaque]. It is the symbol of the Gaza City municipality, which is a phoenix.

Arab Nasser says:

> Gaza is occupied, but Gaza itself occupies the Gazans themselves. We have been away from Gaza for ten years, partly in Jordan and partly in France. We still haven't learned the French language. Part of it is because I don't focus on it, but the main part is that I don't acknowledge the new place after I left Gaza because it occupies me. Now, it's as if we've never left Gaza. If you come and see how we live here, you would see that we are still living in Gaza.

Alsharif echoes these sentiments:

> We take Gaza with us wherever we are in our houses, this is how my mother raised me in Chicago. I always felt as if she were a caged bird, actually, in America. She didn't know how to live. She re-creates Gaza wherever she goes, and that's how I was raised and maybe that's also why I have such a strong attachment. Whenever we would go back to Gaza, it was clear that this is where she belongs. And this kind of experience has become more talked about in a way that I think is very powerful.

What constitutes the Gaza that filmmakers carry with them in the diaspora? Certainly, family ties and connection to geography and history are important, but it also comprises the trauma of living through multiple Israeli attacks. Jabaly describes his experience with the 2014 Israeli war on Gaza, which was also the beginning of his experience as a filmmaker:

> There was a feeling that there was a war, that, as now, at any moment there could be a war in Gaza. It was a direct moment, as you said. The event was in front of me, and I ran with it. I knew I would create something with the footage, but I didn't know when or where or how. Really, the experience, as an experience, editing the film was much harder than living the actual moment because you relive all the moments again and again in your memory as you edit. If we think about the trauma that they speak about here, all people in Gaza are born and raised in trauma. All the millions are traumatized. Even if it doesn't show, we cure ourselves from ourselves. The trait that distinguishes the Palestinians is that they are like an electric generator full of energy that helps them get rid of this trauma and to continue smiling and to live off the hope that the situation will improve.

The film that Ahmed Mansour is working on currently is related to the effects of trauma that he still carries with him from the 2014 war:

> I have been in the US for five years. After the last war, I left [Gaza] in order to forget. I studied in New York City, and after that I could not forget and wanted to make a film in which I confront the details that Arab, Basma, and Mohamed, and Abdelsalam have spoken about. When I left Gaza, I lived near JFK Airport. The sound of the planes drove me crazy because I would wonder, are they going to bomb now? So, I changed my apartment. But then I said, enough is enough, I can't live like this, always escaping. So, I decided to open that chapter. A wise man once told

me, "Most people can acknowledge their trauma and deal with it but never confront who caused it." So, I spent three years doing research, searching for an Israeli soldier who was in Gaza during the war. I found one in Boston, and I've been building trust with him. I just started filming. This is the toughest thing I have ever done in my life. Sometimes I wish I hadn't opened this chapter. But it feels right because otherwise it will keep haunting me.

In late May 2021 I spoke with Mansour again, just a few days after the cease-fire ending Israel's May 2021 attack on Gaza. This was the first such attack that Mansour had experienced from outside Gaza, and he described the experience as more difficult than any of the three major bombings (2008–9, 2012, 2014) that occurred when he lived there. When 2014 happened, he simply wanted to escape Gaza. Now separated from his family in Gaza during the attack, he said he felt as if he had been sleepwalking through the past five years and had now been shaken awake. Experiencing war in Gaza from afar was galvanizing, prompting him to start a new project, an arts and music festival called We Rise from the Rubble to Resist.

For Alsharif, who was visiting Gaza when the 2012 attacks occurred, experience with violence clarified the difference between her personal experiences and relationship to Gaza and a national sense of belonging, something that other filmmakers also shared:

I grew up outside. My mother only took us to Palestine to go to Gaza to visit her family. Up until 1998 we would stop in Ramallah, but I felt as if it were a part of Amman. Then they [i.e., the visits to Ramallah] stopped, or the visits were briefer because there was no relationship with it, and, then because it [Gaza] has been systematically separated [from the rest of Palestine], that's the only place I was going, so Palestine became Gaza and I started to feel that it's really important to make that distinction. When the war happened in 2012, which was not traumatic by comparison with the other two wars, I was there with my grandmother. It was a surprise for me, but when I spoke with my friends in Ramallah and in Jerusalem or whatever, I felt as if I were speaking to Switzerland. They said, "Oh, how is it going? We're sad for you. We don't know what to say to you." You are Palestine, by the way. We are all Palestine, why are you talking that way? I was surprised and upset. It's really strange, this phenomenon, and to not be aware of it is actually more dangerous, so it's important in my work to make clear that I am not making a film about Palestine, and I am not speaking about Palestine, but I am

speaking about Gaza and there's a reason why I can't talk about the rest of it.

This sense that Palestinians from other parts of Palestine have had different experiences informs her filmmaking, as well as that of others. Arab Nasser says:

> Life in Gaza has changed more—in Palestine wherever you are it's harsh as shit—but in Gaza everything has changed and stopped working, was broken and destroyed, and built, and repaired, et cetera. In Ramallah and the West Bank or other areas, it hasn't changed as much. It is the same details—the Gazan uses Egypt to travel, the West Bank uses Jordan to travel. There you have Israel on the ground, we have them in the air and the sea and in all areas around us. There you have a Fatah government, we have Hamas. From all angles, the situation is similar, but the situation of Gaza changed a lot in the past ten years, more than in the West Bank. In the West Bank there is a little prosperity and opening to some extent. In Gaza everything is deteriorating.

Arab Nasser is describing a key difference between the experiences of Gazans and those of other Palestinians. Palestinians throughout historic Palestine are aware of the inexorability of ongoing dispossession, whether through the erosion of civil rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel or the encroachment of settlements, continued land confiscation, and time theft through checkpoints and imprisonment in the West Bank and Gaza. This reality is reflected in films that engage deeply with the past whether nostalgically, reflectively, or analytically. Filmmakers such as Arab Nasser who came of age after Hamas came to rule Gaza in 2007 have experienced a different temporality, one characterized by both ongoing deterioration but also repeated spectacular destruction resulting from Israel's military attacks. That experience of repeated interruption encourages a radical engagement with the present—at times to process traumatic events as in Jabaly's film *Ambulance* but also to explore the relationship between those events and the everyday as in the Nasser brothers' social realist fiction.

The fragmentation of the Palestinian experience, the fact that most Palestinians cannot travel between the various regions of Palestine—the West Bank, Jerusalem, the parts of Palestine that became the State of Israel, and Gaza—is also important for Shehada:

> I consider myself lucky to be among the filmmakers who visited Palestine, who saw it. When Oslo was signed and they allowed people to travel

between Gaza and the West Bank by bus, I covered the story for Japanese TV. I asked myself, What do I want to do? What should I film? Wide shots and the bus? I decided to focus on the eyes of the young people. . . . Eyes, only eyes that blinked and moved. It is not natural, this yearning that they had been denied, that they were cut off from. I decided to only focus on their eyes to document their experience.

Shehada's description of his reportage speaks to the awareness filmmakers have of their viewership and responsibilities they feel in using their films to connect Gaza with the world. Filmmakers work against the widespread understanding of Gaza as a humanitarian space controlled by a terrorist regime in which victimhood is overdetermined. Arab Nasser addresses this issue in response to Mansour's description of his own viewing of *Gaza Mon Amour*. Mansour said that he cried while watching the final scene because it reminded him of his own experience hiring a fisherman to take him and his sweetheart out to sea to steal some private time together in overcrowded Gaza:

It's difficult to escape politics. In our last film we told a love story, but politics was present in every detail of life, in the main character, in politics, in love, in the electricity, and water, and gas, in the crossings, in everything, between the woman and her daughter. Politics is present everywhere and you can't escape it, but we don't address politics directly. There are two lovers and there is a surveillance drone in the sky filming them. It's hard to avoid politics, there's no escape. But in the end, we chose a story that is human because the whole world shares a human story. It's not necessary for me to tell you to carry responsibility [for Gaza] or feel what happened to the people and cry for them. We are not victims. You, as a viewer, if you choose to call them victims, that is part of your personal freedom, because the Gazan people, or the Palestinian person is like other people, they have their flaws and positive traits. . . . We also have a problem in that over the years all our expression has been politicized. Today there is just one form for the woman, one form for the man, one form for society, one form for the narrative. We always try, as directors, to not deliver a political point of view. We want to tell an ordinary, very simple story. That is its [the film *Gaza Mon Amour*] structure, but it has no point of view. You [Mansour] said you cried at the last scene, but the scene is ironic even though it made you cry. You chose to cry. It was not my goal to make you cry. At some screenings people clapped

at the last scene because the hero chose to pursue his love even though there are Israeli warships around him sitting and shooting at him. He just closed the door.

Mansour describes the oscillation between humanitarian and terrorist representations of Gaza as a trap that all filmmakers must work to avoid. Alsharif does so through a careful awareness of her subject position:

I am not speaking on behalf of people who are living there [in Gaza] constantly and also, it's not my interest to tell Gaza's story. What I'm more interested in, and this is also I think where I have more power, is to bring this part, this history, this conflict, this present outside of its isolation. I am against people looking at Gaza as if it is unique in the history of the world and politics and conflict because it's not. That's actually the tragedy. It's not. This has happened countless times. What's painful is that it's happening and being recorded, and nothing is changing. We're watching this brutal disappearance, this suffocation of a place that's happening very slowly and recorded in real time. So, I feel, rather than speak on behalf of Gaza, which is something I can't do, or as someone from there, I have an intimate connection and I want to connect Gaza with other parts of the world, other histories and to make people understand their complicity in what is happening in Gaza as what has happened in many parts of the world and in our shared history as a civilization, because I think that the more civilized we become and the more aware we become of what is a crime against humanity, the more we are allowing it to happen, the more impotent we are in the face of the tragedies that are happening around us. So, I think that's the aim of the work, to also say Italy is not better than Gaza, and France is not better than Gaza, Mexico is not better than Gaza.

The care with which Alsharif considers her own positionality and that of Gaza within the global imaginary is related to the attention to detail that Tarzan and Arab Nasser discussed earlier. In both cases, filmmakers are concerned with what one might describe as an ethics of accuracy whereby an awareness of what one can and cannot know in relation to one's viewership and one's characters informs one's work. Alsharif also situates her work within a global conversation about social justice in a way that differentiates her from the filmmakers who work from a positionality firmly rooted in Gaza. While Shehada, the Nasser brothers, and Jabaly are keenly aware of their viewership and the work their films do as they circulate globally,

they also engage with Gaza at the local level and, in particular, with social, political, and personal issues that mainly concern Gazans themselves. This is reflected in the way they represent politics, as is evident in this exchange between El-Hassan and Arab Nasser:

EL-HASSAN I found the last scene [of *Gaza Mon Amour*] very problematic because I felt real anger against Hamas in the middle of the film, but I felt as if the operation of the two soldiers in the ship was just a police operation, not occupation. I felt it to be soft on the occupation and that bothered me.

ARAB NASSER The whole world knows that we are occupied. The news [about Gaza], the media, and propaganda are everywhere in the world. "We know that you are Palestinian, so I need to cry over you or hate you." But in this scene, there is more than two lovers present and the Israeli sailors who make them return to Gaza. After the difficult journey of the fisherman who can't find space for his love story [on land], he decided to go to the sea. We thought that what we showed was worse than if [the Israelis] had killed him or shot him or stolen from him. No! There are two lovers in the sea, a sea that is not open. We presented the occupation as the devil that surrounds the love story without focusing on how monstrous it is. To say, in 2021, that we have three nautical miles and after that they shoot and kill you is unbelievable! Regarding Hamas, some portray them as caricatures of stupidity who pray and wear sandals. No! They are not stupid. I'm not saying they are the smartest people in the world, but they are not stupid at all. They have ruled Gaza since 2006 and they came to power legally, through elections. The occupation is definitely the source of all our problems. If we didn't have the occupation, we would discuss other issues, as happens in Egypt. They don't have an occupation, but they debate matters of concern in an Arab country. But today the occupation serves as a peg on which we can hang everything. It's true it exists, but Israel left Gaza in 2005. They left Gaza, but they are present on four sides, and they cover the sky with surveillance planes and the sea. So, now we look inward. Inside, there is Hamas, which maintains Gaza the way that is, through the ways it gets funding, how it trains employees, its structure and strategies. But the presentation of Hamas in the film is realistic. It's an experience we lived. I haven't lived my whole life in Gaza, but we lived under Hamas for six or seven years.

Figure 1.6 A talkative, Tramadol-popping character in Tarzan and Arab Nasser's *Dégradé* (2015) does not represent "the Palestinian woman."

The problem of how to represent Hamas and the occupation relates to the question of self-critique, as Arab and Tarzan Nasser say:

ARAB NASSER I can add to that that as Palestinians we also have a problem with self-criticism. We think that our problem is the occupation or that we shouldn't show certain images to the West or the world in general. Palestinians want a particular image to circulate. As Palestinians, we have started to critique our situation because we also have our internal problems. Really, the moment we accept to criticize ourselves is the moment when we can develop. For example, I have a gossipy aunt who is addicted to Tramadol. I liked the story, so I put it in my film. The criticism I got is "Why do you insult the Palestinian women?" I have an aunt, two aunts, actually, both with long tongues, and this particular one talks with complete freedom. I am not saying that my aunt represents "the Palestinian Woman." I am telling a story. Often people can't distinguish between telling a story and representing the Palestinian woman or the Palestinian situation.

TARZAN NASSER The problem could be a lack of Palestinian films. That's important. How many films are there? How many filmmakers are there? How many Palestinian films come out of Palestine about the Palestinian story? In Egypt, for instance, there are forty to fifty films a year, and they vary between the good and the bad and offer this one's opinion and that one's opinion—we don't have that. How many films come out each year? That affects the structures, the structures

of reference of the Palestinian story as a story, so we are not used to criticism in cinema.

ARAB NASSER Also, our instinct is to hide our problems at home, and this is a problem because we represent ourselves as angels. Angelic characters are not interesting to me.

Shehada also finds self-critique to be crucial:

> At times I try to write, but the sheer amount of destruction and change mean that, for me, characters have become caricatures. Fantasy in Palestine has lost its cinematic meaning in relation to reality. The fantastic nature of what has happened . . . and the number of events that have happened mean that the Palestinian story has not yet been told. We each have to search inside ourselves, but the big questions are not easy [to address]. Let me mention one of our friends, Annemarie, for instance. She confronted reality in her last film and revealed some of our flaws.[1] Why do we want to be preoccupied with the ideal Palestinian all the time? No! I am full of diseases and prejudices. What does it mean that our reality changes every ten years? Yes, we need to change the slogans of Palestinian cinema. There is a lot of grief in our films, and we need to search for happiness to help us live. And the most beautiful thing, I will repeat so as not to forget, is that we have tools with which we can build our nation even if only in film or art or writing [rather than on the land] in all its details. We need theories that explain our experiences and the value of what has been plucked out and implanted [through all these changes]. This isn't easy. . . . Everyone says "Gaza" as if we have become a distant, shattered fragment. We are two million people, and those from '48 have become quite varied.[2] It's a chaotic situation. The idea of the ideal Palestinian? No, I am not perfect. There is a problem inside me. There is an occupier inside me. My inside is occupied. Inside me are twenty-five occupied personas and maybe more! We need to find the courage to tell the Palestinian story.

The need for self-critique and the difficulty of thinking through how to represent the occupation arise in part from the sedimentation of certain types of images and narratives over the course of more than fifty years of filmmaking by Palestinians. That includes representations of heroism, steadfastness, and sacrifice that have come to define Palestinian national culture more generally (Khalili 2006). El-Hassan raises this question directly by noting the difference between Palestinian cinema of the revolutionary period and that being made today:

Figure 1.7 Children write an ambiguous message in sidewalk chalk in Basma Alsharif's *Ouroboros* (2017).

> Let me tell you something. Palestinian cinema in the 1960s [and 1970s] was a cinema that said to the viewer, I have a problem, but I am going to solve it. The cinema that you make now, in my opinion, is completely different, as if there is, at times, a burdening of the viewer with responsibility. In Basma's work it's very clear because her work is a campaign of responsibility, like the clip in *Ouroboros* when the girls write "help" or "hell," and we don't know what they are writing. There is a relationship with the viewer. In the films of Arab and Tarzan there is always the feeling that those people have problems they won't be able to solve because the [challenges of] their condition are stronger than they are, and I think the same is true with Mohamed.

Mansour reflects on Palestinian film history through the lens of generations of filmmakers:

> Abdelsalam and I have talked a lot about this topic. He explained it to me that our generation is different. For the first generation after the Nakba, the Cause was still alive, and there was hope as Tarzan said. The second generation came after Oslo, and what resulted from that was Fatah and then Hamas [rule in Gaza]. We are the third generation. The first generation tried to create a revolution and attracted filmmakers from Arab countries and from around the world, but it failed. Their slogan was that what was taken with violence had to be retrieved with violence.

> With the second generation, Oslo, came peace, and it also failed. So, we are the third generation. As Abdelsalam always tells me, the burden on our generation has become heavy, and it gets heavier every day because of the two failed experiences, the experience with arms and the experience with negotiations. So, I believe that we need, at this time, to enter a reflective mode, to reflect on what vanquished us, because any intellectual renaissance, and I believe the artist is the one who prepares for an intellectual renaissance, needs to clarify the reasons for those two experiences so that the next generation can see them without the slogans and jingoism that we were raised on. Wisdom lies here: how to deal with those two experiences and how, at the same time, to build a bridge to the next generation with investigations into what happened.

Jabaly understands his role as one of responding to a fragment of the history of which he is a part:

> With regard to cinema and history, and the cinema of the revolution, what we do now is a continuation. We are a fragment living for a time, and we have had many experiences during this time period. So, we speak [in our films] from our own experiences, and it's natural that we differ. We each tell a different story, and if I were to make a fiction film it would be in a different style [from my documentary work]. It's also normal that future generations treat the same history differently. Look at how many films are still being made about World War I, for instance. But we have to communicate with each other; I understand the point of view of Arab, Tarzan, Ahmed, Abdelsalam, and Basma. Each of us has a point of view, and it's natural that there would be divisions and there might even be a time when there is competition among us. We each deliver a part of the story that we live.

Shehada elaborates on Mansour's notion of filmmaker generations:

> I wanted to comment on the responsibility of the new generation of filmmakers. Yes, it's a big responsibility, but this responsibility is what will build the bridge between our Palestinian stories and the world. This generation is the one that can allow the Palestinian interior [to emerge], by allowing us to tell a different narrative, this generation that knows Gaza and is tied to its roots. Let me also add that today we are lucky. Before the First Intifada there was almost no capacity for a Palestinian to make a film, and a narrative was imposed from Britain, the United States, and Europe. Filmmakers would come with a producer who had

the plan and film us the way they wanted. Now we have Palestinian eyes and Palestinian cameras and Palestinian equipment. That allows us to remain aware of our cause and of the responsibility we have to tell our story to the world and to ourselves.

Notes

1 Annemarie Jacir's latest work, the fictional feature film *Wajib* (2017), addresses generational conflicts regarding relationship to family, as well as political and social constraints on Palestinian citizens of Israel and divisions among Palestinians. In fact, this type of self-critique has characterized all her films.

2 "Those from '48" refers to the refugees who were expelled into Gaza during and shortly after the 1948 war.

Viviane Saglier

2

Gazan Cinema as an Infrastructure of Care

The Politics of "Care-ful" Filmmaking

Mohamed Jabaly's personal documentary *Ambulance* (2016) begins with a series of statistics assessing the great human and material damage caused by the 2014 Israeli bombings on Gaza. The noise of urban life, which provides the soundtrack to those numbers, is suddenly interrupted by the fall of a missile. When an image finally emerges on the dark screen, it does so from a cloud of dust emanating from the destruction of the house of one of the filmmaker's neighbors. After casting a wary glance from his apartment's windows, the filmmaker, against his family's injunctions, runs toward the scene where the attack has taken place. We follow the shaky handheld camera to the rubble, where the film knits together two complementary points of view: one that accompanies paramedics amid the house's debris in search of trapped dwellers; the other, a drone-generated bird's-eye view, which situates the filmmaker's camera among the many reporters on-site. This

Figures 2.1 and 2.2 Mohamed Jabaly, *Ambulance* (2016). The two distances of care.

opening scene articulates the filmmaker's shifting role within his own narrative and his oscillation between distinct distances and positionalities with respect to the "events" throughout the film. Jabaly is at once emotionally and physically engaged in the rescue operations, which he closely documents during his daily tours with Abu Marzouq's team of hospital paramedics, and he takes on the responsibility of sharing newsworthy images with the world by performing the critical distance of the news anchor.

I start with this vignette to highlight the multiple positionalities and operations at work in what is conventionally grouped under the act of "bear-

ing witness," the documentation of human rights violations for advocacy purposes. *Ambulance*'s narrative is entirely structured around the Gazan filmmaker's decision to follow Palestinian paramedics during their shifts for the duration of the Israeli war on Gaza that lasted from July 8 to August 26, 2014. The film partly reproduces news-informed modes of representation and plays with the subjective aesthetics of the handheld camera that distinctly shaped many of the images produced during the Arab uprisings after 2011 (Shafik 2017). At the same time, as a project partly funded by the International Documentary Festival of Amsterdam (IDFA) Bertha Fund and destined for a variety of human rights, art, and documentary film festivals, *Ambulance* presents the typical characteristics of the "creative documentary." The genre responds to the desire for Palestinians to tell their personal stories without being subjected to narrow or official understandings of politics. Invested in self-reflexivity, Jabaly wrestles with his positionality in the process of filming his own community and with the function that image-making may fulfill in the context of emergency.

Jabaly experiments with what "doing something" can look like, as he repeatedly states his inability to sit idly at home, waiting for yet another bomb. The filmmaker's determination to document stems from a desire to use the camera not simply as a means to yield abstract justice but rather with the self-declared aim "to help" his friends, neighbors, and larger community, while leaving open and contingent the modalities of such assistance. *Ambulance*'s politics of proximity and distancing vis-à-vis the events and the people it documents demonstrate the tension between the care work of rescuing wounded neighbors and the labor of reporting it to larger crowds as a means to activate international networks of solidarity and political accountability. What does helping with a camera mean when the past ten years have witnessed a growing disenchantment with "digital democracy" and the dream that portable cameras may produce viral and transparent images that can immediately further political demands of freedom, both in the context of Palestinian citizen journalism and during the Arab uprisings (Stein 2021; Tarnowski 2021)? What images should be produced under emergency when neocolonial visual regimes have systematically used the documentation of wars to dehumanize Palestinians?

The quest to help with a camera is not simply one of representation alone; instead, it raises questions about how image-making is imbricated within distinct industrial and political networks of circulation imbued with different meanings of care, wherein helping holds multiple, sometimes contradictory, implications. For example, photojournalists have increasingly been

collaborating with nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) as a result of economic, technological, and cultural transformations in photojournalism, and NGOs' need to renew their communication strategies (Hallas 2012, 95). Jabaly's confusion proves symptomatic of the competing economies that are structured around image-making under emergency and that fulfill distinct functions. The Syrian context proves informative here because the practices of citizen journalism that first dominated in 2011 quickly gave way to a form of "media activism" that became increasingly professionalized through workshops organized by television channels. The shift in practice also led to a different mode of address that specifically targeted NGOs and Western media instead of a vague idea of "global audiences." In addition, some Syrian image-makers took up the camera with the explicit aim and desire to make cinema and explore more personal stories. After establishing these distinct trends, Syrian documentary filmmakers Mohammad Ali Atassi and Qutaiba Barhamji and French scholar Cécile Boëx conclude that this complex media landscape created great confusion between the different types of images (Atassi, Barhamji, and Boëx 2020). As this chapter will show, Gaza (and Palestine more broadly) faces a similar situation in which the multiplication of avenues to make images during the permanent humanitarian collapse and the coexistence of different imaginaries of cinematic interventions promise various integrations within global networks of solidarity from which filmmakers need to choose.

Taking *Ambulance* as a road map, this chapter asks: How can Palestinian cinema dispense care in Gaza? I call "infrastructure of care" the ways in which Palestinian cinema is positioned within interconnected global networks of obligations, forms of solidarity, and economies of aid. Since the beginning of Israel's siege of Gaza in 2007, care—understood as the principle to restore and maintain the health of the mind, the body, and the collectivity—is framed by coordinated, overlapping, and/or competing economies of colonization, development, human rights, and humanitarianism as well as Islamic and secular politics of resistance. Today's colliding forms of care often (but not always) emerge out of the reformulations, institutionalization, and corporatization of the politics of human rights developed during the revolutionary period from the late 1960s to the early 1980s (Tawil-Souri 2015).

The ascendancy of a humanitarian discourse has often circumscribed the imagination and modes of collective resistance that Palestinians can mobilize, including through cinema. At the same time, if we examine the filmmaking strategies that Palestinian practitioners marshal within the humanitarian horizon of representation through the prism of what Stefan Tar-

nowski (2021) calls "critical generosity," we can better trace the challenges, compromises, and hopes at play in the labor of producing images with care during manufactured humanitarian crisis and war. Dispensing care through the camera thus presents a crucial double function in the context of crisis: first, it investigates the meanings of care and the possible visual forms of solidarity in a context where both tend to be predefined and determined by dominant news and humanitarian economies; second, it probes the mechanisms through which image-making can implement solidarity *among* Palestinians while addressing global networks of care. What can image-making *do* to enact solidarity during a humanitarian crisis?

Theorizing caring and filmmaking together urges us to identify the forms of solidarity operations that image-making can facilitate under continued settler colonial violence and in a space institutionally defined by humanitarian crisis. It also requires establishing a framework that apprehends the intracommunal relations created through filmmaking as they are inscribed within broader infrastructures and political economies of media production. In other words, despite their intimate history with colonial violence, human rights and humanitarian infrastructures have allowed a space for Palestinian filmmakers to craft their own form of solidarity through cinema. This chapter argues that Palestinians' "care-ful" filmmaking engages with the making of humanitarian representations at the same time as it responds to the colonial fragmentation and isolation of the Palestinian society within Gaza, across (illegal) borders, and with the rest of the world. Palestinian clinical psychologist Said Shehadeh describes colonial strategies as they shift "from managing and controlling the resistance to attempts at destroying it psychologically: mainly by breaking the Palestinian psyche and the social fabric from which it draws its resilience" (2016, 43). As such, filming with care acts as a social glue that strengthens the bonds colonialism seeks to undo. Filmmaking may maintain what anti-colonial clinician Lara Sheehi and visual studies scholar Stephen Sheehi call "the culture and psyche of 'Palestinian presence,'" by reasserting life when colonial biopolitics are designed to draw death as the only possible horizon (2022, 24).

Care-ful filmmaking here mirrors the praxis of *sumud*, which first designated the perseverance and unity of Palestinians who stayed on their occupied lands despite Israel's aggressive politics of population transfer after 1967. For Palestinian anthropologist Leana Meari, *sumud* does not simply represent a set of tactics aimed at preserving Palestinian presence on the land; it is also constitutive of the making of the Palestinian self through the colonial encounter (2014, 548–49). This relational movement between

the Palestinian self and the colonial structure, on which I superimpose the complex entanglements of the Palestinian community with transnational news and humanitarian networks, takes visual shape through Palestinian self-representations. Palestinian filmmakers materialize the desire for social exchange and cooperation by offering modes of self-representation in negotiation with the complex networks that make up the transnational infrastructure of care. As it dispenses care, film functions "as an affective connective tissue between an inner self and an outer world" (Hobart and Kneese 2020, 2) that expands the contours of how the making of Palestinian self-representation may contribute to rearticulating the self and community under threat.

To understand the politics of care-ful filmmaking, we must examine filmmakers' double engagement with the politics of proximity: how image-makers perform various distances with the community they represent, and how such performances articulate representations' positioning within geopolitical relations. This chapter first charts a history of the cinematic infrastructure of care that takes Gaza as its center. By tracing the circulation of distinct forms of care from film representations and filmmaking practices to cinematic institutions, we can map out an affective cartography of Gazan cinema in relation to the financial flows channeled by humanitarian agencies and news outlets that structure a specific global economy of care. I then analyze how the making of *Ambulance* enacted different forms of solidarity that emerged from the filmmaker's labor of positioning himself within the global infrastructure of care. *Ambulance* demonstrates that care unfolds at varied distances and in different directions (one cares *for*, *about*, and even *with*) by performing a visual rescue *for* the filmmaker's Palestinian neighbors and *with* paramedics while simultaneously setting the wider landscape of destruction as a site *about* political inquiry.

The Cinematic Infrastructure of Care and Institution-Building

Gaza's cinematic infrastructure of care articulates Palestinian experiments of self-representation across history with the conditions of production and circulation laid out by distinct networks of aid, solidarity, and resistance. Palestinian cinema has developed alongside varied processes of national institution-building that have constantly negotiated, on the one hand, the disciplining care enforced by transnational humanitarian agencies now closely associated with security imperatives and, on the other, the political

possibilities for reclaiming autonomy and self-determination permitted by those new infrastructures. The paradoxical entanglement of Palestinian rights claims and resistance strategies with supranational institutions historically involved in the partition of Palestine (chief among them, the United Nations) is nothing new. In fact, the managing of care has since the 1948 Nakba constituted a primary site of struggle for the formulation of Palestinian institutions and resistance in Palestine and in exile.

In contemporary Gaza, attempts at organizing cinema production are still faced with the strictures of humanitarian governance, which tackles temporary crises instead of planning for change. Yet, the site where the humanitarian logics most pressingly unfolds, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), holds a paradoxical position. As historian Esmat Elhalaby (2018) explains, while "some see it as a quintessential example of 'humanitarian management,' . . . [o]thers see it as exactly the opposite, an incubator of Palestinian resistance to Israel and [the] United States [one of its main funders]." Since the agency's foundation and establishment in Gaza in 1950, UNRWA camps have provided medical care, essential social and food services, and access to free education, sometimes dispensed by illustrious teachers such as the militant intellectual Ghassan Kanafani in Syria. Camps soon after witnessed the emergence of political and cultural organizations crucial to the revolutionary project in the 1960s and 1970s (Elhalaby 2018).

Palestinian image-making is historically embedded within such paradoxical logics. In the 1970s and in the absence of a Palestinian state and Israeli support (as required by the Fourth Geneva Convention), the magnitude of UNRWA's programs was such that it was often described as holding a "'functional sovereignty' over the refugee population" (Al Husseini 2010, 9)—which represents 70 percent of Gaza's inhabitants. UNRWA also played a key role in creating representations of Palestinians. In the years following the Nakba, the photographs UNRWA units captured both enshrined the image of Palestinians (then referred to as "Arabs") as victims in the international imaginary and served as evidence that Palestinians existed in the face of Zionist erasure. The care these images dispensed addressed Palestinians' suffering in a missionary fashion typical of European humanitarian imperialism as well as the organization's needs for sustained donations (Abdallah 2009). Compassion and vulnerability were used as a currency and remained, until the late 1960s, the dominant representation with which Palestinians could identify in their exchanges with international organizations and interlocutors.

Yet, some members of the filmmaking crew were Palestinians themselves, sent from UNRWA's headquarters in Beirut to Cairo to receive training in filmmaking and script writing (Abdallah 2009, 47). Jerusalem-born artist Vladimir Tamari, among others, learned his trade in the field while working as a film technician for UNRWA in the late 1960s. He produced images that he would later recycle and repurpose in his film *Al-Quds* (1968), which celebrates Jerusalem as a historical symbol of Palestinian life in the wake of the loss of the city in 1967 (Tamari 2006). Sometimes, UNRWA films would also present a basis for discussion around the future of cinema in the liberation struggle, and the piece that Tamari partly edited, *Aftermath* (1967), was screened at the first meeting of Arab filmmakers organized around the theme of Palestine in 1970 in Amman (Yaqub 2018, 20). As a result, the organization did more than contribute to educating some of the filmmakers who would go on to lend their skills to more militant endeavors; UNRWA's collection of films and photographs also importantly provided "an archive *against* which Palestinians defined themselves" by the late 1960s (Yaqub 2018, 18).

Although not the only factor, UNRWA's infrastructures indirectly assisted the emergence of a new strand of production and representation. Palestinian revolutionary cinema originated in Amman in the late 1960s and developed further in Beirut in the early 1970s. These films promoted a different form of collective, politicized care predicated on anti-colonial action, best illustrated in Gaza by Mustafa Abu Ali's *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973) (see Samirah Alkassim's contribution in this volume). If some of the early films subverted the humanitarian registers, they also played with the format of actuality films, producing revolutionary newsreels that redefined the genre. This ensemble of films finally substituted the figure of the victimized refugee for the freedom fighter and by doing so created a different archive as part of the process of institutionalizing both the revolution and cinema's place within it.

From the mid-1980s on, the economic networks and formal experiments of global art cinema started reframing the renewed production of Palestinian self-representations in film, especially for filmmakers who studied abroad. Yet, in Gaza in particular, film production training was and often still is acquired through conventional news coverage due to the absence of film schools outside of communications and journalism programs. For researcher and festival director Alia Arasoughly, by the end of the Second Intifada, "what . . . young filmmakers learnt was news; that is, shooting for news stories. . . . The first generation of post-Oslo filmmakers began making

documentaries in a documentary style consistent with typical news stories" (2013, 106). The opening of a practical and theoretical cinema program at Gaza University in 2017 and the dissemination of portable cameras and recording technologies have, however, contributed to a wider engagement with image-making practices.

The absence of viable movie theaters in Gaza, all destroyed over the years by Israeli foot invasions and arson from Islamist groups, continues to limit access to film culture. Moreover, the current Gazan government's censorship encourages a certain homogeneity regarding human rights themes through the prism of suffering, the weight of colonization, and the necessity for (a specific form of) resistance. More generally, film-viewing culture in Gaza revolves around television series from Turkey and Egypt, as well as Egyptian, Indian, and American cinema readily available via satellite channels (Jahjuh and Jahjuh 2018, 122). The many initiatives around theater and art performance, the increased circulation of Palestinian and Arab films to Gazan audiences, and the expansion of European documentary and fiction markets in search of new talents in the global South have presented opportunities to Gazan filmmakers and introduced more diverse aesthetic frames of references.

The tentative independent film economy in Gaza has taken advantage of the possibilities afforded by the news and the humanitarian image-making economy, which have provided a stepping stone for the emergence of new and established filmmakers. Currently, UNRWA remains an important employer, counting more than ten thousand Palestinian staff members in education, relief and social services, and occasionally within its Camp Improvement Program in Gaza (United Nations Relief and Works Agency 2021).[1] Combining the goals of relief and human development since the beginning of the Israeli siege in 2007, the organization has focused on emergency shelters and creating job opportunities in the context of the recurring Israeli bombings and massive unemployment—up to 60 percent in the youth demographic. Job creation importantly includes some aspects of the film sector that touch on education and advocacy, two major axes of investment for UNRWA. Filmmakers may acquire experience and training through advertising or NGO filming workshops typical of the wider NGO-ization of the Palestinian economy: conducting filmmaking activities in UNRWA schools, producing educational films for UNRWA TV, reporting for international or local news agencies, or working as IT engineers (an industrial sector fast developing in Gaza, also promoted by UNRWA's Job Creation Program).

For example, Gaza-based veteran filmmakers Abdelsalam Shehada and Khalil Mozian most famously started making films with the equipment they could access through their employment in news agencies. Both have, however, also experimented with formal, poetic, fictional, and mixed formats—these experimentations are visible in Abdelsalam Shehada's *Rainbow* (2004) and *To My Father* (2008) and Khalil Mozian's *Gaza 36mm* (2012) among other films. Mozian also mentored the famous twins Arab and Tarzan Nasser, whose films *Condom Lead* (2013) and *Dégradé* (2015) were selected at Cannes. Their most recent film, *Gaza Mon Amour* (2020), which celebrates life in Gaza, was selected at the Venice Biennale and won the NETPAC prize presented by the Network for the Promotion of Asian Cinema at the 2020 Toronto International Film Festival. Jabaly's trajectory is a bit different. Before shooting *Ambulance*, he was first employed by a local hospital to produce a promotional video and would go on to film surgeries as the designated photographer there (Jabaly 2016). This granted him access to the Public Aid Hospital's paramedic crew and oriented the documentary toward specific forms of care, which included an approach inspired by the news.

International film festivals have played a crucial role in Palestinian and Gazan cinema's institutionalization process and the formation of global and diasporic communities of care. During the revolutionary era, they constituted an important strategy for Palestinian filmmakers and solidified networks of solidarity around the Palestine question in the Arab world, in the Third World, and in Western anti-imperialist film festivals (Dickinson 2018; Yaqub 2018). They later structured the circulation of Palestinian cinema in global art cinema circuits while also crossing paths with hybrid events promoting diasporic cinema or cinema and human rights. That these networks intersect different economies and communities of care is a testament to Palestinian cinema's gradual integration into, and instrumentalization of, the global human rights and humanitarian industry.

In fact, film festivals have become crucial partners for international nongovernmental and humanitarian organizations' work of advocacy, while the human rights industry is in turn increasingly sustaining the film industry at large. This shift can be observed in countries where human rights violations are considered high and where the film industry cannot count on official government support, including in Palestine, where it operates according to what I call elsewhere a "not-yet industry" (Saglier 2020). Significantly, the leading Karama Human Rights Film Festival in Jordan receives funds from the European Union and support from the Office of the United Nations High

Commissioner for Human Rights, International Media Support, and Open Society Foundations, among other sources. Since 2010, the multiplication of festivals loosely affiliated with Karama Jordan in the rest of the Arab world—including the Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival in Gaza—speaks to how transregional spaces of solidarity are partly enabled by forms of transnational governance, from which they nevertheless strive to remain independent.

Importantly, recent Palestinian film festivals have connected Gaza with the rest of historic Palestine by holding multisited events in Jerusalem, Ramallah, Jenin, Nablus, Bethlehem, Haifa, and Gaza City, among other locations. Rather than enforcing borders through procedures of humanitarian emergency and forms of exceptionalism, this form of care traverses the two separation walls erected to contain Gaza and the West Bank. In 2015, Mozian cofounded the Gaza Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival, which has positioned Gaza within larger networks in the Arab world. Supported in its first years by a starting grant from Amnesty International's cinema arm Movies That Matter, Red Carpet presents a unique event at which Palestinian films, especially those successfully circulating in the global art cinema circuits, may be showcased in the strip. *Ambulance* opened the second edition of the festival in 2016, thus screening Palestinian self-representations back to the community.

Human rights film festivals have succeeded in attracting financial support and afforded crucial spaces of mentorship by introducing Palestinian cinema to Gazan audiences and by organizing children's and family programs aimed at developing an intergenerational film culture. Similarly, the predominantly West Bank–based Shashat Women's Film Festival, founded by the aforementioned Palestinian scholar Alia Arasoughly, has developed filmmaking workshops in Gaza that both employ local technicians and train young female filmmakers. The varied forms of care these institutions have distributed through film navigate networks of governance, markets, and solidarity that also guide Palestinian filmmakers' own work of self-care and community care.

Local and Global Operations of Cinematic Care

Mohamed Jabaly's *Ambulance* sits at the confluence of the art cinema economy and human rights and humanitarian networks explored earlier in the chapter. In addition to Palestinian, Arab, and diasporic events, the film was screened at international art and political documentary, human rights,

and global health film festivals. The film's essayistic tendencies, manifested through its modest hybrid experimentation, and its appeal to humanity facilitated its circulation within global cinema economies (Steyerl 2017); it presented a typical visual object to the informed crowds of international film festivals while touching close to home for Gazan audiences. *Ambulance*'s position within those networks of humanitarian care and artistic revisiting of Palestinian self-representations through personal and collective narrative crucially inform the film's *operations*—how the process of making images both supports on-site rescuing efforts and responds to the pressure of filming as reporting for the international community (both imagined as news publics and materialized through festival audiences).

According to Jabaly, the aim of *Ambulance* is threefold: it provides a complementary and human perspective to the fragmentary mainstream media coverage of the bombings, it circumscribes Western impositions on what Gazan politics of resistance are, and it takes care of the community through the act of filming. He explains: "It was really hard to make it a personal thing, connected to the people and just to the people. When you say 'Gaza,' it's full of politics. I tried to focus on the human perspective, on the people, on my personal story, on the story of the ambulance, me being with the ambulance unit trying to save people. *That was the main goal, just to go and help*, without any other stuff to think about" (Jabaly 2016; emphasis added). Here I propose that we take Jabaly's impulse very seriously: How does filmmaking help to take care of the wounded?

The focus on filmmaking as a mode of direct humanitarian assistance inscribes the film's operations in a double discourse of impact assessment and community-building through affective engagement. On the one hand, new philanthropist and corporate arrangements around the production of engaged documentaries argue that social change must now be anticipated, audited, assessed, and quantified by focusing on the activist infrastructures made by activist organizations, social movements, decision makers, and policy elites that the film is expected to activate. As Meg McLagan says, "Flipping from the film to the campaign in which it is embedded . . . reveals a film's performative power as it circulates, connecting different actors and arenas, and in so doing, producing political effects" (2012, 312). On the other hand, beyond their simple aesthetic propositions, human rights–oriented documentaries similarly aim to provoke the community into acting for change. In-person screenings in particular present a key moment in the lives of these films when opinions, questions, and affects coalesce into varied articulations of unmeasurable, self-paced, and potential impacts

distinct from, and alternative to, those advocated by the new business model.

While *Ambulance* surely intends to bring forward the latter definition of impact, the broader economies of documentary and human rights and their demands for performative effects continue to underlie the conditions of possibility for the film's production and circulation. The film was produced by the Ramallah-based company Idiom Films, which is headed by Mohanad Yaqubi, himself a filmmaker whose cinematic work has deeply engaged with the archives of the Palestinian revolution. Because of Jabaly's support from Norway national funds and IDFA, *Ambulance* was not directly subjected to those new corporate logics—while still having to follow the evolving demands of the market. The film's "impact" took different forms. In Palestine, the film won the Sunbird Award at the Ramallah-based Palestine Cinema Days in 2016 and opened Gaza's Red Carpet Karama Human Rights Film Festival's second edition that same year.

The film's varied modes of global exhibition, however, have also meant activating the infrastructure of care and redirecting its operations toward the institutions that make physical care possible. Its most spectacular screenings, at the Sheffield Doc/Fest and at the Global Health Film Festival in London's Barbican, displayed and promoted Gaza's health infrastructures to British audiences by including events such as pop-up activities, an ambulance artwork installation reproducing the film's vehicle, virtual reality projects in which the viewer occupies the ambulance's passenger seat, and live talks with doctors from Gaza. In contrast with the more openly militant settings of Red Carpet (whose 2016 theme, "We want to breathe," addressed both the Israeli siege and the Hamas government), the most sophisticated screenings of *Ambulance*, complete with props and roundtables, celebrated the strip's medical institutions of care, in dire need of financial support.[2]

The few screenings of *Ambulance* mentioned here cannot alone define the work of care that the film undertakes. Its focus on the people of Gaza intimates that the film's production and circulation across local and non-institutional communities may simultaneously activate a different type of network. Thus, the film makes rights claims sensible through very specific and situated political effects, which cannot always be measured. In addition to the more material and financial networks, Gaza's infrastructure of care unfolds through the quotidian practices of survival and the social networks that individuals build in order to get by. In a context where Palestinians in Gaza are either isolated across borders from potential international support as well as their own families, or abstracted by discourses of victimization,

dehumanization, and criminalization in global media, Palestinian cinema both articulates ways of visualizing the local fabric of life and contributes to weaving communities around the possibility of being seen. Documentary, personal, and experimental films like Nahed Awwad's *Gaza Calling* (2005), Sobhi al-Zobaidi's *Missing Gaza* (2005), or Hadeel Assali's *Daggit Gaza* (2009) connect Palestinian filmmakers and communities in Gaza, the West Bank, and the United States through phone calls, metaphors, food recipes, and memories. Other fiction and observational films like Rashid Masharawi's *Curfew* (1994), Arab and Tarzan Nasser's *Dégradé* (2015), and Samer Qatta and Al Malik AbuSidu's *Fishless Sea* (2017) compose narratives around the communities that emerge from colonial entrapment.

Taken literally, urban infrastructures directly make care possible by distributing essential resources such as water, electricity, or fuel to sustain basic individual needs as well as hospitals, kitchens, and, importantly for us, film screenings. To follow AbdouMaliq Simone's description of people as infrastructure, cinema-making as a "mode of provisioning" can "make the city productive, reproducing it, and positioning its residents, territories, and resources in specific ensembles where the energies can be most efficiently deployed and accounted for" (2004, 407). Here, it is cinema-making that channels, distributes, and operates as a conduit for care and social relations in the form of attention and visibility. As a result, Palestinian and Gazan communities emerge from social practices, which develop across and despite illegal borders. The framework of Gazan cinema as an infrastructure of care privileges the incessant circulation of affects and the labor of care over the enforcing of moral codes dictated by global empathy. These varied affects (anger, frustration, but also love and desire) always arise from the contradictions of colonial and care economies.

In *Ambulance*, the filmmaker's labor of care constitutes a key site for the movement between seeking the international recognition of Palestinian suffering through an experimentation with citizen journalism and news aesthetics (caring *about*) and the work of building a community of care (caring *for*). The articulation of these two forms of care matters more than their distinction. Caring *about* and caring *for* are often at odds with each other and display complex arrangements of subjectivity and collectivity, which are both open-ended and constantly redefined by their mutual interaction. The filmmaker's labor precisely consists in navigating the promise of mutual care by addressing global and abstract audiences, the paramedics working on-site (in *Ambulance*), the neighbors who survived the explosion next door, and Palestinian families in the West Bank, in historic Palestine,

in refugee camps, and in the diaspora, while also addressing Arab and global South–based organizations and allies, where those images circulate in the news and in the Arab and Palestinian festivals mentioned previously.

Ambulance achieves this by balancing real-time events and reflexive meditations. In this hybrid documentary where the subjective and the news documentary blend, the self is constructed as a "subject always already in-relation . . . in the first-person plural" (Lebow 2008, xii). Conversely, the first-person plural mediates the attachments that form the collective networks of care and self-representations. The subjective negotiation of such modalities of collectivity drives *Ambulance*'s narrative. Jabaly's voice-over, addressing the international festival crowd in accented English, explains how his own presence among the paramedic crew was at first considered a hindrance because the camera got in the way of them acting quickly. Soon, however, it came to be welcome and sought after. The team's gradual acceptance of the filmmaker parallels the shifting roles he embodies, from a news cameraman to a paramedic whose work of care is dispensed through the camera itself. Simultaneously, Jabaly's mode of address changes, reflecting a repositioning from asking the world to care *about* Palestinians toward performing care *for* and answering *to* his own community.

The filmmaker distributes care by channeling visibility and reproducing Palestinian self-representations. This work entails moving across the "preexisting, saturated, overdetermined field of representation" (Hochberg 2015, 125) of Gaza, "an inventory," or "a pile of Palestinian images" that look the same but not quite (Toukan 2019). Images of Palestinians as victims, especially in the strip under siege, have come back to the fore despite the 1960s revolutionary efforts to replace them with self-representations grounded in the dignity of a people struggling for liberation. In his diary of the 2014 war, *The Drone Eats with Me* (2015), Gaza-based writer Atef Abu Saif described journalists' love for catastrophic images in almost anthropophagous terms: "Destruction is a rich meal for the camera. Their camera doesn't observe the fast of Ramadan; it devours and devours. It is constantly eating new images. Gaza is consummately professional in cooking up new TV food, so tasty and delicious for a carefree audience" (2014, 76). Through this metaphor, Abu Saif identifies care and the lack thereof as a central affective mechanism for spectators to relate with Palestinian representations, one that engages the whole body, its senses, and its appetites. More than an aesthetic decision to reproduce or circumvent images of suffering, then, Jabaly must choose from a variety of embodiments, a set of attitudes that belong to multiple economies of care and are reinforced by the constant exposure to colonial

and neocolonial violence. As the website for *Ambulance* reads, "The making of the film itself is a journey that requires Mohamed to search among images of unprocessed pain." In other words, the question of representation is not as important as the affective work of *navigating* images and the filmmaking process.

Provocatively, Oraib Toukan's manifesto "Toward a More Navigable Field" proposes that even images motivated by the cannibalistic desires described by Abu Saif (what she calls "cruel images") can be handled and explored in ways that unearth and reanimate Palestinians' presence. Toukan (2019) formulates a politics of the image that recognizes the nonrepresentational field of affects as a mode of care-ful engagement. Her own short experimental film *When Things Occur* (2016), which prefigured the manifesto, navigates the digital space where images of the 2014 war on Gaza are produced and reproduced. Her digital eye travels across different scales, from the pixels of the mobile phone's picture to the viral reproduction of news images at varied levels of compression—from the "poor" image that put a photojournalist's work on the map to the "quality" image that can be sold to major news outlets. This affective navigation within the texture of the image reveals the very material processes behind image-making during the bombings on Gaza: Palestinian photographers', translators', and fixers' negotiation of their technological instruments, their position in the humanitarian and news market, and their affective relations with those photographed.

One scene of *When Things Occur* illustrates Palestinian photographers' articulation of the market's demands and their respect for their subjects through what Ariella Azoulay (2008) calls a "civil contract," the negotiation of relations between the photographer, the photographed, and the spectator through the photographic encounter, which may enable new forms of shared belonging. There, Gaza resident and photojournalist Hosam Salem describes his approach to photographing the father of one of the four children who died on the beach under Israeli shelling, an event that garnered much media attention. The process of taking the picture resulted from Salem's own position as a member of the community and his understanding of what he could decently ask from his subject at a moment of intense suffering. Moving his camera away from the mother's gesture of ripping up her headscarf, which he deemed inappropriate to capture, Salem redirected his lens toward the father, who was consciously performing his pain for a global audience. "I'm grateful that this father is very understanding," Salem says. "He seemed aware that we as photographers convey messages, so he fulfilled this role well given his unenviable, difficult situation."

At the same time, the father was not simply repeating the part of the Palestinian victim; instead, he was redefining his suffering as a form of resistance. As Salem took the picture, the father claimed: "It's for the resistance . . . we shall be martyred. . . . We're all for Palestine," a call that, however, remained unheard in the still image. Is Toukan's camera, as it enhances specific portions of the picture such as hands tensed in motion, searching for a direct illustration of this man's personal articulation of dignity? Or is the camera investigating the visual and material construction of the picture as an index for its success on the market? According to Salem, the image proved beneficial to all parties involved: the grieving father knew to mobilize his special status in specific ways, while Salem as photographer could produce a photo that would provide more visibility to the cause while enabling him to gain a notoriety necessary to his own survival. Whether or not this account truthfully reflects what went on in the father's mind, it does reveal the logic that governed Salem's own decision-making as he attempted to carve out a space for Palestinian solidarity from within the demands of the news and humanitarian image markets.

Similarly, *Ambulance* navigates the diverse economies sustaining Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care. The negotiation of the "right" distance between the camera and the community, the decision whether to care about or to care for, as well as the hope that both can be achieved at the same time, are most discernible in Jabaly's own struggle with the double role he takes on as photojournalist and essay filmmaker. More often than not, he is tempted to repeat the behaviors and gestures internalized by international and local reporters. When the ambulance he rides in stops to attend to the victims of an attack, he presses Abu Marzouq and the team members for their thoughts. When bombings intensify, he asks a colleague to film him as he comments on the events. To paraphrase Pooja Rangan, Jabaly borrows war reporters' testimonial codes of "live eyewitness" to make himself legible as a humanitarian subject (2017, 66).

As he mimics forms of labor with which he is familiar, Jabaly's first instinct as an improvised documentarist consists of shadowing other camera operators in the field, following them as they push their way into an operating room uninvited. While his previous employment required him to join and document a planned surgery in this very hospital, his new affiliation with global imaginaries of care leads him to indirectly disturb the doctors' urgent interventions. As a makeshift journalist, yet independent from the direct pressure of news networks, he holds the contradictory position of being both too close to the dying bodies and too far from the needs of the wounded.

Gazan filmmakers are faced with the constant, repeated, and never-ending negotiation of the variegated distances of performing care—a situation that reveals complex networks of economic and affective belonging differentially inclusive of the filmmakers, their subjects, and their audiences.

Crucial to this internal struggle is Jabaly's persistent belief in the truth of documentary and the indexical quality of images, also tangible in the way in which the film's duration is tethered to the war's temporal boundaries. In this sense, *Ambulance* is closer to films like Fida Qishta's *Where Should the Birds Fly* (2013), which recounts the 2008 Israeli war on Gaza through the linear interview of a traumatized child from Rafah, than to the contemporaneous experiments of Hadeel Assali's *Shujaʿiyah, Land of the Brave* (2014). In her five-minute short, Assali reflects from a diasporic point of view on the Israeli army's massacre of Gaza City's eponymous neighborhood between July 19 and 23, 2014. While "being there" triggered Jabaly's documenting impulse in the first place, this impossibility for Assali demanded other means to enact care and reactivate the affective connection across continents. *Shujaʿiyah* uses scenes from a home movie shot during a visit the previous summer, a readily intimate yet universally recognizable documentation of family care for a young child, in order to call out international humanitarian agencies' denial of Palestinians' humanity.

The peacefulness of those images from a different time, in contrast to Jabaly's physical and synchronous involvement, collides with the soundtrack. The passionate speech delivered by Palestinian journalist Samer Zaneed accuses the International Committee of the Red Cross of having abandoned Gazans during the bombings by respecting the closed military zone established by Israel. The film's decisive political stance arises from a distinct engagement with distances and embodiment to perform care. The juxtaposition of the personal footage and the visceral condemnation by Zaneed point to the core contradictions of Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care. By creating this aesthetic disjuncture, the film refuses to take for granted the entanglements with the humanitarian economy that maintain *Ambulance*'s imaginary and cohesion. Instead, the anger that drives Assali's film is born out of the shared affects of the Palestinian community across borders—from the filmmaker's location in the United States to the journalist in Gaza—in a way that also reorganizes the affective and physical distances required by war reporting.

Care-ful filmmaking ensures that the social relations engineered and sustained through image-making practices continue to produce representations across networks, so that Palestine and Gaza in particular remain "the

Figure 2.3 In Hadeel Assali's *Shujaʿiyah, Land of the Brave* (2014), affects are shared across borders.

image that will not go away," to quote Edward Said (Said and Mohr 1986, 41). Distributing care in the form of visibility also assembles the networks that make care possible. As he develops his role of documenting the bombings and the people directly affected by them, Jabaly attracts attention with his camera and is asked to put his skills and equipment in the service of the community. When Jabaly visits his friend's neighbors whose apartment has been shelled, the father shows him around and points to meaningful items they lost while his wife interrupts the two of them: "Show him!" The father becomes a guide to the camera's eye, and a substitute filmmaker who selects the scenes that matter. At the Rafah checkpoint where the paramedic team helps transport a young girl heading to a surgery in Egypt, travelers waiting to cross brandish their documents and demand to be filmed while they share details of the obstacles they are facing. The Palestinian community is not simply becoming visible; it gains the power to frame itself through collective work.

While the filmmaker's labor is one of navigating the various distances of caring about and caring for, Jabaly is being approached both as a Palestinian neighbor and as someone holding a camera. He has come to represent the ambiguous position of Palestinian journalists on the ground who work for international agencies. Often labeled "locals"—as opposed to the foreign journalists whose lives are not to be put at risk—they operate as fixers and intermediaries between local danger and global witnessing. They benefit

Figure 2.4 Mohamed Jabaly, *Ambulance* (2016). The father's friend asks Jabaly to document how the window frame popped out due to the neighboring explosion.

from an "embodied knowledge" due to their intimate experience of colonial violence, which is precisely what gives them value on the international labor market. The groundwork of local photographers is, in effect, conducive to developing "skills of proximity," a social intimacy that facilitates the work of fixing and reporting (Bishara 2012, 150). *Ambulance* shows the processes through which the skills of proximity are acquired and how negotiating distances is learned through camerawork: what to film or not to film, how to frame it, the questions that can be asked and those that lose meaning in context. Those skills are therefore not only mobilized to the benefit of filmmaking but also constitute both the condition for, and the effect of, Jabaly's effort of caring *with* the community.

Conclusion

As a framework of analysis, Gaza's cinema infrastructure of care proposes tools to apprehend the role that cinema plays in dispensing care in Gaza. In turn, it points to how modalities of cinematic care emerge from complex economic entanglements now dominated by humanitarian governance. Moving away from debates around aesthetics of suffering, I investigate instead the affective labor of self-representation as a form of care. Rather than questioning what constitutes appropriate images of Palestinians in Gaza and the limitations of humanitarian representations, I redirect the theoretical lens

onto the material conditions of possibility for self-representation, which, to echo Meari's definition of *sumud*, materialize an affective praxis of self and community-building. In other words, if self-representation does produce the possibility for alternative practices of care, it is only through the hard and continuous work of negotiating film economies' predetermined modes of meaning and image-making.

In the final moments of *Ambulance*, Abu Marzouq, the lead paramedic, asks Jabaly to return to the crew with his camera after a short time away from the hospital. Reflecting on his relationship with Abu Marzouq, Jabaly concludes: "My camera had become his friend and it has encouraged me to go back and film." The paramedics whom Jabaly (2016) follows and documents similarly expressed off the record the "need to see [them]selves, see how [they] are working during the war." Their eagerness reflects a desire to witness how the circulation of care fashions self-representations. The filmmaker, whose labor is often diverted toward caring about, learns through practice that long-term work builds the basis for caring for and with. Having to gauge what the camera work does, who the film is addressing, and the ethical implications of self-representation ultimately brings to the fore how the distribution of attention and the mediation of care crucially organize the very construction of community-based trust.

Notes

1 In its annual report "UNRWA in Figures, 2020–2021" (United Nations Relief and Works Agency 2021), UNRWA counts 12,132 area staff members posted in Gaza, in addition to 16 international staff members. In 2018, more than 2,000 new jobs were created as part of the Camp Improvement Programs, but those no longer figure in the 2021 survey.

2 The theme "We want to breathe" resonates with the chant "I can't breathe," mobilized during the Black Lives Matter movement after the murder of Eric Garner by police in the New York City borough of Staten Island in 2014. One member of the Red Carpet festival team drew the comparison between the 2016 theme and the US antiracist protests in a 2020 Facebook post.

Samirah Alkassim

3

Found Footage as Counter-ethnography

Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza and the Films of Basma Alsharif

Often signified by maps presenting cutoff zones and liminal spaces, Gaza is a place many of us visit only through its mediation. Our understanding of the place and the people who live there is enriched by its images, especially those created by Palestinian and Palestine-solidarity filmmakers and artists. At film festivals and in classes, we study documentary, experimental, and (some) narrative films that have come to constitute a body of Gazan cinema, supplementing and countering the on-off flow of corporate mainstream media images by which Gaza has largely been defined. One could consider this body of cinema part of an archive—looted, guarded, and hybrid (Haugbolle 2020, 7–19)—in which there is a special place for found footage films, though they are few and far between. This chapter examines found footage films by two singular filmmakers from contrasting time periods—Mustafa Abu Ali of the Palestinian revolutionary cinema and Basma Alsharif of the millennial art house biennale film economy. The work of Abu Ali and that of Alsharif are distinct in many ways, not least of which is the latter's use of

gathered and appropriated images that oscillate between dialectical statements and autoethnographic futurism. But studying them together, we find the continuous production of a counter-ethnography that rewrites Gaza and Palestine "*into* history and out of its site of abjection."[1]

Although it has acquired different meanings and modalities over time, found footage filmmaking was established in the early days of cinema as an experimental genre deeply connected to documentary and questions of modernity.[2] Our point of entry is the recycling of film and video material into critical, at times entertaining, documentary and performative projects that tackle, among other things, historicity and the archive, the authenticity of the image, and the economies of surplus as a hallmark of modernity and postmodernism.[3] As critical performative projects, these films use appropriated images/footage placed in dialectical combinations with other images and sounds to make viewers aware of the films' reflexive relationships to the mediated images of an already highly mediated place and subject. Recent examples of Palestinian found footage films include Kamal Aljafari's *Recollection* (2015) and Mohanad Yaqubi's *Off Frame: AKA Revolution until Victory* (2015), both of which mined image archives: in *Recollection* to reimagine a neighborhood in Jaffa without any trace of occupation and usurpation by digitally extracting non-Arab characters from the Israeli and American films shot in said neighborhood; and in *Off Frame* to revisit the victorious images of revolution from the locatable remains of films made by the political factions and filmmakers working within the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) from the late 1960s until 1982. These films affirm the importance of the found footage film in the Palestinian context as a means to reexamine and reimagine a past that has been suppressed but not forgotten, and even offer the possibility of hope.[4] Such a project continues in the recently recirculated 1973 film *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* directed by the late Mustafa Abu Ali, as well as in the more recent "art" films by Basma Alsharif, who is "from Gaza" but lives and creates from the diaspora, between countries.

Abu Ali and Alsharif stand on different sides of a timeline defined by rupture, their works pertaining to the pre- and post-Oslo eras, respectively. Although the Palestinian revolutionary cinema was produced through the collaboration of many dedicated filmmakers, including the primary initiator Sulafah Jad Allah, without whom this entire project would not have come into being, Mustafa Abu Ali stood at its helm from its early days until its "disappearance" in the mid-1980s. He was internationally recognized as the voice, even the leader, of a film movement aimed at the collective and na-

tional liberation of the Palestinian people. By the late 1980s, however, the days of making revolutionary cinema were over: Abu Ali had returned to Jordan, where he established his own media production company specializing in *doublage* (dubbing) for foreign cartoons and miscellaneous projects, including music videos. By contrast, Basma Alsharif's work, to date, is informed by the history of the revolutionary struggle, but it expresses the liminal and interstitial conditions of accented cinema through ironic juxtapositions between images and image/sound combinations (Naficy 2001, 10–17). Using a combination of home movie footage and formal experimentations, her films are conceptual art pieces that treat the uncanny aspects of familiarity in the "found" material. Informed by the history of collective aspiration, they speak from and to a dispersed subject, screening mostly in art galleries, biennales, and academic settings (thereby perpetuating their liminality).[5] While springing from different historical contexts, *Scenes from the Occupation* and Alsharif's films participate in constructing, through their cinematic language, "new historiographies" of Palestine, connecting Gaza to the Palestinian struggle, despite the spatial, physical, and social discontinuities that Gaza has long endured.

To discuss a niche experimental genre may seem frivolous given the dire humanitarian crises that have come to define the Gaza Strip. This is not a new issue. Even Mustafa Abu Ali had difficulty convincing the PLO leaders that cinema was a worthy part of the revolution (Habashneh 2019; Yaqub 2018). Deeply committed to creating a cinema that would speak to the Palestinian people and specifically the refugees, he saw the importance of developing a cinematic language that would provoke viewers (Palestinian and those in solidarity) into action. Although in his mind and in the minds of many of his filmmaking associates, art and revolution needed each other, this idea was questioned by the high-ranking leaders of the PLO who were concerned with making the best use of their resources to wage the revolution on multiple fronts. In accordance with Abu Ali's position, and as Alsharif's films demonstrate, we can argue the opposite—that cinema, especially this particular genre of found footage film, is useful as an element of the struggle, allowing us to perceive Gaza, past and present, as more than the site of abjection. Through repetition and reframings, recycled and repurposed components, such films unlock the museal aspect of the archive, using the archive as part of a de-colonial project that challenges and expands ethnography's borders.[6]

For Catherine Russell (1999), the use of archival imagery in the found footage film unleashes an aesthetics of ruin and recovery that engages the

past through an intertextual process of recall, retrieval, and recycling of images. The intertextuality in found footage often serves as an allegory of history where, in the North American and British films she discusses, "end of history" motifs reference apocalyptic scenarios of crisis and destruction that challenge the causal historiography of progress. The result, she argues, is the production and understanding of ethnography as a discourse of representation, but one haunted by the inscription of the "Other" in the form of ghosts lingering just "below" or outside the images of people drawn from long-forgotten narratives. This Other pertains not only to those who are no longer there but also to the colonial gaze of the image archive, the Othering captured by the colonial cinema machine in both its documentary and narrative projections. The tendencies outlined here appear in the Palestinian found footage film, in both its revolutionary and its more recent expressions, but they do so differently and toward different ends.

Russell saw the ethnographic possibilities of found footage in its reliance on a discourse of surfaces (or images), where origins and sources are effaced; such images render the film ethnographic in "being repositioned within another serial organization of images" documenting an Other time and place (1999, 271). She describes a group of films from the 1990s as exploiting the conventions of individual authorship, memory, and vision, as well as offering a new ethnographic discourse founded on traumatic histories of exploitation, colonization, and appropriation.[7] This, she argues, leads to the historiography of (Benjaminian) radical memory that resists the idea of a natural forward-moving historicism (9), emphasizing, rather, the "inscription of the time of the Other" and thus offering the potential of social transformation (239).

This belief in the possibilities of social transformation through art and film is consistent with Palestinian found footage films, which emerge from traumatic histories and produce new historiographies of radical memory that look at the past as part of a continuation of the present. We see this in *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza*, which is about a collective struggle that foregrounds the problem of history as the film's premise and engages this problem in its aesthetic process. We see this also in the post-Oslo films of Basma Alsharif, among other artists of her generation, where the time of the Other is inscribed in an ironic play with subjectivity. But we have to ask, what happens in these Palestinian found footage films that propose subversive ethnographies? What kinds of modernity do these films emerge from and gesture toward—a transtemporality that inhabits and contains space?

To be "found" implies a previous condition of being lost and extracted from a mixture of diverse elements, often understood in the case of North American films as the detritus of mass media culture. It implies its opposite as well as the selective process of extraction—why this and not that? But in the films studied in this chapter, found footage has another meaning. The apocalypse is not the imagined destruction or loss of the real in the surplus of postmodern time, but a real experience of documented destruction and loss that is now part of a collective memory and identity. It is etched in the temporality of traumatic historic time and lingers in the temporality of the everyday. In this apocalypse, the language of the image speaks through retrieval and reframings, sometimes to imply or play with "end of history" motifs but with the knowledge and experience of history as a narrative of setbacks with many chapters. Its haunting by the Other is that of a memory of a collective identity now fragmented, of a steep decline after an extraordinary effort at collective mobilization with belief in the possibility of progress. It acquires new allegorical meanings that propose a counter-ethnography as the subject or object not of the colonial gaze but of an ongoing project of decolonization that speaks through images.

In her elaboration of experimental ethnography, Russell referred to James Clifford's call for resisting the *salvage paradigm*, a term he used to describe "old" ethnography because of its tendency (in both written and film form) to be read allegorically as the salvaging of an imperiled authenticity. Clifford called for "opening ourselves to different histories," to reject a totalizing representation of culture of "the primitive Other" posed in opposition to modernist historiographies of progress (Russell 1999, 5). If, as Russell argued, the found footage film challenges the salvage paradigm to produce an imaginary ethnography or "ethnographic temporality" inextricably linked to modernity, the Palestinian found footage films may belong to a slightly different order. To understand what kind of modernity these films speak from and the kinds of historiography they critique, we must acknowledge temporality and historicity in the Palestinian context, where space and time inhabit each other (it is hard to think of one without the other) and where modernity is anchored to its postcolonial history.[8] Emerging from this are questions unique to Arab modernity and its "aftermath" in the context of Palestine that can never be unchained from the political arena, which I will explore through *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* and two short films by Basma Alsharif.

Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza in the Revolutionary Cinema

Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza (1973) was the only film made by the short-lived Palestine Cinema Group (PCG), a collective comprising Mustafa Abu Ali and other filmmakers (Yaqub 2018, 66–70); it was also the only film made about Gaza in the Palestinian revolutionary cinema, at a moment when Gaza was considered the most resistant of the Occupied Territories. A militant film embracing cinema as a tool of armed resistance, *Scenes* stands in conversation with the contemporaneous global Third Cinema movement that influenced a radical trend in documentary filmmaking in the Arab world centered precisely on the liberation of Palestine. The story of its making is just as important as the film itself because of the unprecedented way in which the Palestinian resistance movement galvanized support, after 1967, not only from non-Palestinian Arabs but also from international intellectuals, filmmakers, and groups in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle.

The Palestine Film Unit (PFU), which emerged in 1968, was founded by Sulafah Jad Allah, who had graduated from the Higher Institute of Cinema in Egypt and was initially tasked with photographing freedom fighters from Gaza before they embarked on operations in the Occupied Territories and Israel (Yaqub 2018, 53). Soon Mustafa Abu Ali and Hani Jawhariyah would join her in the project of documenting the armed struggle. Though idealistic and ideologically catalyzed, the PFU was a short-lived project interrupted by the events of Black September (1970) during Jordan's civil war (1970–71). Khadijeh Habashneh, a filmmaker and film archivist and ex-wife of Abu Ali, recounts in her memoir the disruptions of relocating to Lebanon, the declining health of Jad Allah following an accident that had left her partially paralyzed in 1969, and the general low morale of the PLO and their lack of funds, which prevented them from prioritizing cinema (resulting in limited space to edit their films). There was the additional problem of the lack of cohesion among the disparate film groups affiliated with the different PLO factions, including the Marxist Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine and the Democratic Front for the Liberation of Palestine, which Abu Ali sought to unify under one body that would be more independent of the PLO leadership.

Habashneh describes the impetus for creating the PCG:

> From the beginning of the Palestine Film Unit, and the struggle of Mustafa to establish a role for cinema inside the revolution, he started to

> think of the importance of founding a body to bring together all the filmmakers who were working in the revolutionary cinema. He sought to unite all the cinema units that were working under the PLO in 1972 but did not succeed. After that he started to think about a body for the filmmakers and the intellectuals working in the revolution and its Palestinian and Arab supporters. The idea was proposed for the first time on the periphery of the first Damascus film festival in April 1972. Many participants at the festival discussed this idea, including Samir Farid and Salah Al Tuhami from Egypt, Hamid Bènani from Morocco, ʿAbd al-ʿAziz Talbi from Algeria, Kassem Hawal and ʿAbd al-Hawi al-Rawi from Iraq, Hasan Abu Ghanimah and Adnan Madanat from Jordan, and others. They prepared a preliminary draft of a manifesto for this organization. (Habashneh 2019, 102–3)[9]

In seeking independence from the Palestinian leadership, they were also seeking to "develop a cinematic language unique to revolutionary cinema" (Habashneh 2019, 103).

Abu Ali was extremely happy to receive news footage from a "friendly" European channel, which arrived at the same time that the PCG was being formed. He viewed this project as an opportunity to put the filmmaking objectives of the PCG into practice by repurposing news stories into a militant film about Palestinian life under occupation, to emphasize the Gazan perspective that the revolution was coming. He did so by combining a French news report with translated reports from the Israeli army and broadcasts from the Palestine radio channel (the revolutionary channel), to transform them into a statement of resistance for the people he saw as waiting to revolt against their occupiers:

> My task when I saw this material was to read these images carefully, to feel the facts in the eyes of the people. I was like someone who underlined important words and sentences and then I put them into cinematic notes. I saw the revolution in the eyes of our people while they were trying to hide in the film. Because the original material gave a good idea about the nature of occupation and resistance in Gaza, I chose from this news report eight out of the 20 minutes. I built on it the film in my own special cinematic language. I tried to take the gun from the hand of the enemy and use it against him. (Habashneh 2019, 106)

The manifesto drafted by the PCG and published in 1973 includes the objective to "work toward alternative cinematic form that functions dia-

lectically with content," thereby acknowledging a need for new narratives and critically engaged cinematic language that would do more than theorize revolution (Habashneh 2019, 93). *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* served as the exemplar of the group's objectives, although Abu Ali had already begun exploring film language in his 1971 experimental film *With Soul, with Blood* (Yaqub 2018, 62–64). *Scenes* presents us with reframings, repetitions, and insertions of nondiegetic shots (grenades, pistols) for performative and exclamatory purposes, turning the victimizing frame of an occupied people into one of resistance. This is particularly achieved in the freeze frames of the faces of men being asked to show their identity cards to the Israeli Defense Forces. There are many close-ups of people's faces, starting from the opening shot of the mysteriously smiling face of a young woman who seems to have knowledge to which the camera is not privy. At one point, a sequence of two women (presumably a mother and daughter) crying over the Israeli demolition of their home is repeated, slowing down time not only to allow viewers to see more clearly but to emphasize that the violence determining their existence is a repetition of a larger violence.

Abu Ali's intention was to mobilize the audience by interrupting the original narrative layers to force the viewer to *see* the gaze of the people, and scenes of suffering in the revolutionary films were intended to serve as "the grounds for the armed resistance that would alleviate such suffering through national liberation" (Yaqub 2018, 69). It is noteworthy that we rarely see the faces of Israeli soldiers within their gaze, which centers our focus on the key actors of this film as well as on the streets and spaces that reveal the policed areas of containment. The Israeli soldiers, as Habashneh recounts, appear almost benign in this footage, much less brutal than they were known to be in reality, which she concludes was for propaganda purposes as the Israeli authorities had arranged for the European journalists to make the initial report. In fact, signs of violence are only represented through signifiers of activators (extradiegetic images of a grenade and a pistol) and aftermath (the images of home demolition), but there are no scenes that show the enacting of violence. It is suppressed in the images of the Israeli Defense Forces conducting business in a seemingly orderly fashion (checking ID papers, making a man exit a car to check for weapons), and a promise of things to come, as the chanting of fedayeen music suggests. Abu Ali's interest in foregrounding the subjectivity of the Palestinian at that particular moment, specific to what he saw as a growing movement of resistance in Gaza, within the real "apocalypse" of occupation, works toward a new ethnographic discourse, emphasizing the inscription of the time of

the Other (the one typically represented as Other to the colonizing gaze) in the hope for social transformation through revolution.

This film disrupts the ethnographic film of the original French news report, with its essentializing and distanced gaze, and brings us closer to the subjects inside the image to emphasize their agency. This is enhanced by the soundtrack providing facts about the Israeli occupation and successful fedayeen operations, combined with footage of the streets, roads with barbed wire fencing, scenes after fedayeen operations of bombing and the repeated home demolition. The organized and collective acts of resistance are nondiegetic and off-frame but palpably present. Abu Ali was committed to showing what people sacrifice as a necessary part of collective resistance but not without acknowledging the loss that this entails. In repeating the scene of suffering (the woman crying over her home's demolition) with an accompanying moment of silence, we are given space to register this sacrifice and loss that are justified by the cause of national liberation. This is the inscription of the time of the Other, transforming scenes of suffering into the necessary sacrifice or "*casus belli* that justifies the sacrifice" of armed resistance (Yaqub 2018, 70) as distinct from the tendency of documentary to reproduce the image of the Palestinian refugee as subaltern and abject. The aim of this language was not only to provoke viewers to see but to represent Palestinians as having a vision of resistance. It thus foregrounds the "problem" of historiography as part of the film's aesthetic process.

The PCG would dissolve almost a year after *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* was made, with some members reorganizing into the Palestinian Cinema Institute (PCI). Until recently, the film languished in a metaphoric vault not only because of the interruption of 1982 that led to both the "disappearance" of the PFU/PCI archive after the Israeli invasion of Beirut and the subsequent exodus of the PLO with its associated demise but also because of the change of film cultures that would allow a film like this to slip into obscurity. Thanks to the efforts of Habashneh in restoring and recirculating it, the film is now accessible, but the material quality of the surviving copy, with its overexposures and competing layers of sound, in combination with dialectical editing presents an aesthetic challenge to many viewers whose expectations of cinema (documentary and art film) have been shaped by current advanced technologies of realism and capture, where Third Cinema has been reduced to a historical, nostalgic footnote in academic film studies. The film was well received in certain circles and won an award at the first Baghdad International Film Festival in 1973. Watching it now reminds us that there was a moment of hope and belief in the power of cinema, and

Figure 3.1 IDF soldiers inspect ID cards and bodies from a lineup of men in *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973) by Mustafa Abu Ali.

Figure 3.2 Woman's face observing an off-screen scene, suggesting an anticipatory future of liberation in *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973) by Mustafa Abu Ali.

specifically in the power of documentary as an art form that could assist in delivering emancipation. It is also a reminder of the sustained efforts of a group of international filmmakers, not only Palestinian and Arab, who worked together to forge a new cinema culture whose stories are still being excavated.

Russell's discussion of the relationship between archival imagery and realism as disrupted in the found footage film pertains here, not necessar-

Figure 3.3 Young man's face as he observes an off-screen scene in *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* (1973) by Mustafa Abu Ali.

ily in challenging the allegory of historiography (because Abu Ali and his colleagues did, in fact, believe in historical progress). But, consistent with the films in her study, *Scenes* creates and works with "alternative, invasive, and dialectical forms of temporality and history," suggesting an "already seen" or "already happened" event that contributes to experiencing the film as a "practice of historiography" (Russell 1999, 239). Such a process of invasive and dialectical forms of temporality are evident in *Scenes*, but perhaps even more clearly in the post-Oslo films (Aljafari's *Recollection*, Yaqubi's *Off Frame*, and Alsharif's *We Began by Measuring Distance* [2009] and *Deep Sleep* [2014]), which recycle the already seen, already happened events, some of which the PFU, PCG, and PCI filmmakers documented until 1982. In these films, space is inseparable from its temporal coordinates (of iconic dates) that pertain to locations (from Palestine to Jordan to Beirut to the diaspora) and dislocations (between city, village, camp, diaspora). Time and space inhabit each other in a privileged archive that opens onto the fragmentary and unstable nature of history and memory.

Despite their differences, at stake across these works is a relationship to the past, whether in a militant film inciting collective action or in art films revisiting the past in a process of critical evaluation of images and their meanings. They are all conspicuously rhetorical projects insisting on the connection between visibility and emancipation. Where the militant film calls for the emancipation of an occupied people, the post-Oslo art film re-

flects on the gaps between languages of power (collective popular action vs. political decisions made from the top) that are unreconcilable and linked to the general decline that proceeded from 1982, a pivotal date of rupture in the collective Palestinian imaginary for its association with endings.

Post-Darwish Dispersion and Basma Alsharif

Documentary form and the permutations thereof persist in contemporary Palestinian art. Najat Rahman (2015) describes this art in what she calls the post-Darwish (or post-Oslo) period as summoning new poetic and political subjects that rethink and reimagine ideas of belonging, relationality, and the collective. To be clear, the distinction of post-Darwish does not at all suggest a period of cultural production that rejects the hugely influential figure of the poet Mahmoud Darwish in the collective emancipatory struggle of Palestine but rather the effort to create individuated expressions that are adaptive to the post-Darwish cultural reality of the first two decades of the twenty-first century. This rethinking and reimagining are necessary to dissociate poetic and visual language from the "hegemony of a tired language about Palestine" (Rahman 2015, 26). In this art the ethical and political are joined both in and from a process of dispersion that enables, among other things, a critique of state violence. Key to this concept is a relationality based on heterogeneity wherein the diasporic affirms "difference or plurality as a condition of its own existence."[10] The relationality of dispersion creates an interruption or challenge to the singularity of the subject, thereby dislocating it from the sovereign self that allows the self to enter into forms of collectivity calling for an end to injustice. Dispersion is born from dispossession, which leads to a process of responsiveness, whereby one eventually becomes dispossessed of the "sovereign self" (24).

Rahman sees the struggles of resistance through art as the struggle against erasure. The post-Darwish artists speak to the decentered, diasporic subject—they are engaged in an "active" struggle with others and enter into relation with others against violence and injustice. Their art, which often uses documentary elements, then becomes a tool in challenging the abuse of power that creates both collective conditions of dispossession and the collective struggles of resistance against it. In so doing, they transform the belonging to a collective dispossession from one defined by identity to one founded on solidarity and struggle with the dispossessed (Rahman 2015, 25). This does not seem that far from what Abu Ali and his colleagues were trying to achieve, but it comes about through different processes and is influenced

by a different faith in historical progress, which the practitioners of revolutionary cinema believed would eventually result in victory for the oppressed.

Rahman also reminds us of the processes that art engenders, which become so easily effaced or muted in the totalizing and enveloping experience of conventional documentary cinema. Such processes involve the interruption of perceptual space, "where art allows the subject to appear and where politics allows excluded speech to emerge," compelling our responsiveness to the "act of interpretation at a time of devastation" (Rahman 2015, 30). Here is where the post-Darwish artists connect to Mustafa Abu Ali's interest in developing a new cinematic language that would expand documentary's limits. Rahman also sees the liminal places in which these post-Darwish artists dwell, between home and exile, the familiar and unfamiliar, belonging and dislocation, as creating the conditions for their work, which, like the poetry of Darwish, offer opportunities to reconnect belonging and the human experience.

Among other things, post-Darwish artists wish to reconnect to an ever-diminishing Palestine. As Chrisoula Lionis notes, the elusive nature of Palestine "informs the impetus behind the documentary practices devoted to capturing the 'real' Palestine" (2016, 89). This observation is striking for noting the inherent problem of documentary itself, its performance of representing the real. Many filmmakers approach documentary with this knowledge, as is evident in the reflexive and critical structuring of elements that create dissonant and productive experiences that require active viewing practices. Such films resist the epistemological aims of documentary, which allows for playfulness, reflexivity, and critical performativity.

Art films historically engage with this kind of performativity, which links them to the creative documentary, one manifestation of which is the found footage film. Basma Alsharif's films—which are at times essayistic, abstract, and documentary—provide creative alternatives to the problem of filmmaking about Gaza in a way that allows us to hear, see, think, and make connections that are activating and energizing. In so doing, they affirm the deep bond between documentary and art film that tends to be marginalized by the hegemonic economies of cinema markets that reach into cultural and academic forums and in turn shape reception, knowledge, and attitudes. "Defamiliarizing the familiar" is a common phrase used to describe experimental work, but in her works and others of her generation we have the "defamiliarization of the already defamiliarized familiar," problematizing the tired rhetoric and typical representations of a place, working to demythologize place and resist being reduced to a metaphor. These art films confront

us with experiences through which we must connect seemingly disparate things to produce meaning. This requirement of active reception forces us to apprehend the "meaning" of Gaza, unlike most conventional documentaries that represent the abject horror it has become. This entire process and effect seem not unrelated to the PCG's intention of creating "alternative cinematic form that functions dialectically with content."

Lionis, like Rahman, sees the post-Oslo artists and filmmakers as distinct in their usage of irony and pastiche, and their tendency to use humor as part of their process of "negotiating the question of where/what constitutes Palestine" (2016, 96). She calls Oslo the "punch-line of Palestinian identity" that has led to the emergence of laughter in cultural output because of humor's emancipatory capacities (86). Humor challenges audiences' stereotypes and assumptions and also breaks the "deadlock of the compassionate gaze" (93). Humor is a means to reimagine the current political status quo (or stasis), ultimately forcing audiences to question their assumptions about Palestine. It produces an *unheimlich*, or uncanny, response in the viewer, which leads to a cognitive dissonance that becomes a source of both discomfort and laughter. This laughter is not denial but an appropriate and necessary response to trauma because of its ability to create a common social space and encourage understanding of the political absurdity and violence Palestinians face (19).

This brings us to the work of Basma Alsharif, whose art films draw on the conventions of documentary, home movies, and experimental film but always in an ironizing way and frequently with Gaza as a referent. She is one of the post-Oslo, post-Darwish artists who continues to move Palestine and Gaza from the margins of discourse to the center. Her film *O Persecuted* (2014) takes Kassem Hawal's black-and-white film *Our Small Houses* (1974) and slows down sequences and contrasts them with color footage of Israeli youth partying on the beach, juxtaposing a revolutionary film with footage of the decadent revolution of young people for whom the oppression and occupation of Palestinian life are invisible. This film reflects the limits of language, the end-of-history motif, critiquing historiography, and the inscription of the time of the Other that Russell identified in her studies of found footage film. These characteristics, however, are not exclusive to found footage films, as Alsharif's work demonstrates. Not all her films use found footage or even the home movie aesthetic. Some, like her feature film *Ouroboros* (2017), are carefully scripted and constructed in the profilmic moment as well as in the editing. For the purposes of this study, I will briefly discuss two of her films.

We Began by Measuring Distance, punning on the title of Mona Hatoum's video *Measures of Distance* (1988), unleashes the power of humor and its relation to the uncanny by using irony and pastiche to undermine the saturation of documentary and its association with objectivity (Lionis 2016, 118). The film begins with a male narrator speaking in Egyptian dialect, suggesting the proximity of geography and the history of occupation (once Egyptian, then Israeli, now neither but under siege). His description of a regular day that starts with "the worst of all evils: boredom" is accompanied by a shot of women and children sitting on the ground. After perusing a book of photographs of the homeland, the condition of waiting necessitates a measuring game. Later, against a night shot, the narrator commences describing measurements: leading from shapes (a 360-degree circle) eventually to distances and dates, delineating what Lionis calls Palestinian boundaries, which correspond to stages in the process of establishing a state (96). Two figures walking backward—reverse motion a common motif in Alsharif's work—in a parklike setting (dissimilar to Gaza) emerge from the distance, each holding one end of a white sheet. They stop between two trees in the foreground. The voice continues as we see text imposed on the sheet, measuring the distances between meetings in the negotiations for a Palestinian state: from Rome to Geneva, Geneva to Madrid, Madrid to Oslo, Oslo to Sharm el-Sheikh, Sharm el-Sheikh to Gaza, Gaza to Jerusalem. After several repetitions of this last distance, the voice applies iconic years to the sheet, dates that correspond to the timeline Lionis referred to: 67, 48, 17, 48, 67, and then the digits just run up to 2009. Here the transactional power of humor and irony is literalized in an obsessive interest with numbers that correspond to Palestine—and Gaza—as an ever-diminishing space defying measurement.

The ending sequence emphasizes another aspect of the uncanny. It flows from a preceding sequence that graphically matches the graceful pulsations and dance of jellyfish forms against the vastness of either an ocean or an aquarium to the tentacles of white phosphorous bombs streaking through the night sky during Operation Cast Lead of 2009. In the sequence that stems from this, we see children running from the distance or background in extreme slow motion toward left of camera, seemingly with expressions of excitement. The image is blurry and dark, as if there might be a nighttime celebration, possibly a wedding. A woman follows them from the distance, but her slow-motion run is toward the right of camera. A second woman does the same. Like the previous figures, she too has an inscrutable expression, and as she nears, it appears in the blurred slow motion as if she

Figure 3.4 Jellyfish dance is reminiscent of white phosphorus bombs used in Israeli wars on Gaza from *We Began by Measuring Distance* (2009) by Basma Alsharif.

too is excited. As she passes, she looks at the camera, and her expression, between terror and agony, is incompatible with the preliminary expectation. Through the process of editing and our awareness of the alteration, it becomes clear the figures are running to escape something in confusion and terror. The scrutiny enabled by slow motion shows the proximity at one fraction of a second, in the expression of joy and terror. It is uncanny in that the expressions of these two emotions are visually familiar, which enables us to feel the image in all its perversity. But we are reminded of this video's beginning, which opened onto a clear, calm morning sky over Gaza coupled with the terrified cries of a child for their father, likely from the atrocities of 2009. In the transaction we immediately grasp not the reproduced and circulated image of trauma but its new context in this film, which necessitates a process of reading and analysis. In this way, the film allows us to apprehend the "meaning" of Gaza, through the repurposing of images and sounds of abject horror.

Alsharif's work also employs autoethnography, that is, the overlapping of history and memory in a film where memory and testimony are deployed as modes of salvage against the "receding horizon" of an uncertain authenticity (Russell 1999, 279). These films usually involve journeys, which are sometimes geographic but always temporal, marking the time between shooting (the profilmic moment) and editing, where much of the signification/production of meaning emerges. According to Russell, "Traveling becomes a form of temporal experience through which the film or video-maker confronts himself

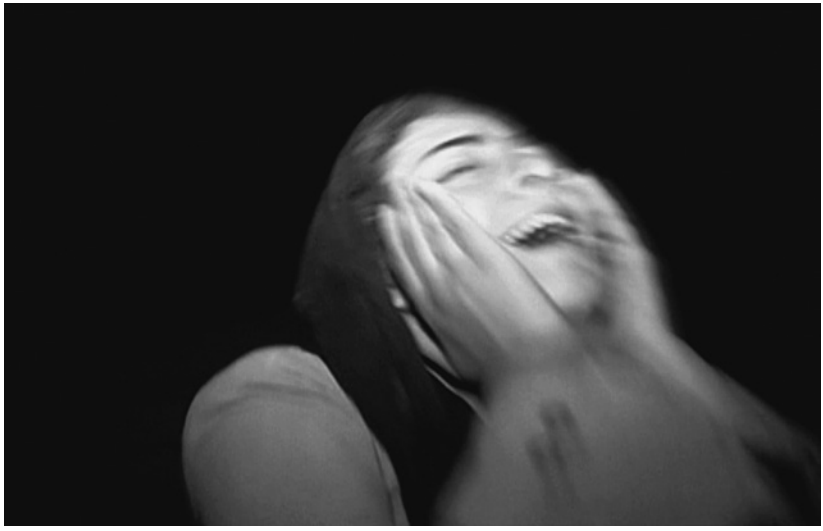

Figure 3.5 Expression of agony on woman's face during an IDF bombing of Gaza from *We Began by Measuring Distance* (2009) by Basma Alsharif.

or herself as tourist, ethnographer, exile, or immigrant" (279). Filmmakers use techniques and strategies that merge self-representation with cultural critique, suggesting a subjective form of ethnography that destabilizes the constraints of ethnicity. Alsharif's work puns on this diary form but at the same time is personal to her experience and thus a conscious deployment, however ironic, of self-representation.

Her *Deep Sleep* is a surrealist travel film that, according to its description on her Vimeo page, "takes us on a journey through the sound waves of Gaza to travel between different sights of modern ruin." Sound dominates the experience, with a hypnotic track accompanying Alsharif's entranced body as she moves through different spaces, across adjacent geographies and the bodies of water between them (from Greece to Malta to Gaza). While not a diary film, as an autoethnography it blurs the distinction between ethnographer and Other, quite ironically, by literally traveling, "becoming a stranger in a strange land." The split self (or the "I/i," as Trinh T. Minh-ha [1991] calls it, following Kristeva) is shown to be also split in time between the seeing body and the seen body. Sometimes we see a shot of her feet and sometimes her hand in the frame directing our gaze to a point in the distant frame. These geographic and spatial distances may evoke a distance in time "that separates different moments of the self" (Russell 1999, 280).

Figure 3.6 A hallucinatory simulation of a landscape in Gaza from *Deep Sleep* (2014) by Basma Alsharif.

Figure 3.7 A hand points to a distant castle in Malta from *Deep Sleep* (2014) by Basma Alsharif.

In an interview about *Deep Sleep*, Alsharif says she wanted to address the perspective of "placeless-ness" and "everywhere-ness," which she associates with being from the diaspora. This evolved into a method for exploring the human condition:

> I wanted Palestine to become everywhere, every place. To shed its identity as a kind of singular conflict and to explore it as a phenomenon of the human condition—the darker sides of humanity coupled with an impossible perseverance and steadfastness to hope beyond hope. I felt that this kind of representation would address the present, and in that way become somewhat removed from Palestine as an icon of struggle to one of being a kind of microcosm for humanity through which anyone could reflect on the present, and the future of anywhere and everywhere. (Schefer, n.d.)

Alsharif enjoins viewers to recognize a multiplicity of perspectives as a source of wealth in the haptic experiences she creates through processes like self-hypnosis. This element in *Deep Sleep* makes clear her distinction from the documentary project of revolutionary cinema. Aware of the distancing effect of seeing the body as a split subject, she describes it as a way to address "the end of civilization in Gaza: a place that is being wiped clean of its historical monuments," in contrast with other places such as Malta or Greece, where historical monuments venerate past civilizations, but in a way that obscures the current problems they face with refugee influxes, climate crisis, and economic austerity. Such a concern shows her interest not in documenting but in transmitting experiences that open the world for the spectator and connect the specificity of the Palestinian experience (and often the marginalization thereof) to larger contexts.

Conclusion

Watching *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* now is distinctly different from watching it in 1973. There is an uncanny effect of watching the film nearly fifty years later, seeing people who may no longer exist but whose gestures, body language, and resistant gaze haunt the screen. Despite the damaged film image and the imperfect soundtrack, it captures the "old" scene of occupation as an artifact and a reminder that there was a moment when people believed that images could change the world. Although there is simultaneously another, more painful reminder that the revolution was not victorious, such a reminder should not be the last word. The revolutionary cinema, preserved so well in the radical possibilities of the found footage

film, finds an echo in the post-Darwish projects of filmmakers like Alsharif, demonstrating at the very least that people have the power to create, document, and develop not only their own images but also cinematic language. *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza* did this decades earlier, offering the Other as an allegory for the Palestinian, "relocated in a history that is not vanishing but exceeds and transcends representation, resisting its processes of reification" (Russell 1999, 272).

Alsharif's work differs in that her cinematic language is not aspirational but self-reflexive, speaking from dispersion to the concept of "hollow time," theorized by Greg Burris as an element of Palestine time that cannot be colonized (2019, 85). It offers a futurism specific to Palestine as a response to erasure and brutality, which is connected to other literary and artistic genres. In this way her work travels from the spatiality (as in liminality) of which Rahman and Lionis speak—one that has its temporal coordinates—to a temporality of imagined vistas.

Although her distanced (observational) cinematic eye suggests a depersonalized subjectivity (split between the seer and the seen) that extends to the subjectivity of objects, Alsharif's films gesture toward something after the dissolution of identities and the loss of history. The focus on movement (backward and forward) and relocations through space ironizes the forward march of historical progress, invokes a future-oriented notion of time, and suggests the traveler who journeys in time and space through subtle interconnections between different histories of oppression, racism, and settler colonialism.[11] It is in these possibilities that we find the inscription of the time of the Other that disables the colonial gaze of the image archive.

Notes

1 From Viviane Saglier's respondent remarks to a panel at the Middle East Studies Association conference in 2020.

2 This was perhaps first manifest in the projects of the 1920s Soviet filmmakers who cut into film prints (foreign and Soviet-made) for editing exercises, the most famous of which resulted in Esther Shub's appropriated home movies of Czar Nicholas III that she repurposed into a pro-revolutionary film (Halter 2008).

3 See Doane 2007 for a theorization of this approach. Terms like *postmodernity* lack universal meanings but have largely been understood and discussed from Eurocentric and North American–centric perspectives.

4 See, for example, Yaqub's description of *Off Frame* (2018, 218–22).

5 Many of Basma Alsharif's films reference the history of Palestinian revolution and its cinema; see her vimeo page: https://vimeo.com/90114072.

6 The term *museal* is used here as an adjective that refers to the connections between museums, archives, and ethnographic documentation that fills these spaces.

7 The films are *Peggy and Fred in Hell: The Prologue* (1985) by Leslie Thornton, *A Movie* (1958) by Bruce Conner, *Atomic Café* (1982) by Jayne Loader and Kevin and Pierce Rafferty, *Tribulation 99* (1991) by Craig Baldwin, and *Handsworth Songs* (1968) by the Black Audio Film Collective (Russell 1999, 238–39).

8 This notion of time and space inhabiting each other in Palestinian and Palestine-solidarity film has been noted by others, including Terri Ginsberg (2016, 43) in her discussion of "contemporaneity."

9 All translations from Habashneh are my own in collaboration with researcher Fawwaz Salameh.

10 Rahman (2015, 22) notes that this discussion of dispersion circulates through Judith Butler and Edward Said, thus connecting them.

11 The Inappropriate Other (theorized by Trinh T. Minh-ha [1991] as the woman who is both insider and outsider in reference to postcolonial ethnography) is discussed by Catherine Russell (1999, 281) as time traveling through history and memory in experimental ethnographic films. This idea is further nuanced in Alsharif's work.

Kamran Rastegar

4

Rendering Gaza Visible

The Visual Economy of the Nakba in Palestinian Films of the Oslo Period

The Gaza International Airport

The runway of the Gaza International Airport, once a state-of-the-art facility, has long been abandoned as mounds of rubble. The terminal halls and control tower have been decimated by bombs and missiles, and the detritus picked clean by scavengers (Farrell and al-Mughrabi 2018). Opened in November 1998, the airport was fated to always be belated: by the time of its opening, attended by US president Bill Clinton and other international dignitaries, and built with funds donated by "the international community," the facade of the Oslo process, of which it was meant to be a glittering symbol, was already collapsing.[1] The airport seemed willfully designed to ignore a reality found less than a mile away in the narrow alleys of the Rafah refugee camp. For the families in that camp, as with the other refugees who make up a majority of the residents of Gaza, the airport may have represented a certain hope for the future, but it also appeared to occlude the persistent memories (and ongoing experiences) of a Palestinian Nakba. Palestinian

films of the Oslo period give voice to these and other tensions in how the Oslo process was to be understood. The current chapter explores the dualities that surround the role of Gaza within the "Oslo period" through an examination of Michel Khleifi's *The Tale of the Three Jewels* (1994) and Rashid Masharawi's *Haifa* (1996).[2] I end with a brief discussion of Elia Suleiman's short film *Cyber Palestine* (2000), which also focuses on Gaza and marks the end of a period of Palestinian cinema. These films center Gaza within Palestinian experience and resist the invisibility of both Gaza and the Nakba in the Oslo moment by insisting on a visualization of Gaza that refigures its place within the broader visual economy of Palestine.

What makes these films of particular interest is their setting in Gaza and their insistence on Gaza's centrality to Palestinian experience and identity precisely when it was subjected to fantastical proposals as a future "Dubai on the Mediterranean" (Friedman 2005). They shone a light on Gaza precisely when the discourse on Oslo attempted to shift attention away from the claims of Palestinian refugees (who constitute over two-thirds of the population of Gaza) by sidelining the Right of Return and repressing the call for a recognition of the Nakba. Today, it is fairly common to argue that the Oslo Accords were deeply flawed and largely served to offer international cover for Israel's continued policies of dispossession, settlement, and repression—all part of what is increasingly understood as an apartheid regime between "the river and the sea." But in the initial period after the announcement of the accords, even some Palestinians who rejected them expressed ambivalent hopes for certain positive outcomes from them. However, by 2000, the Second Intifada would upend many of the Oslo pretenses, a product of the false promises of Oslo and the failures of the politics it represented. As for the Gaza airport, it would cease operations shortly after the outbreak of the Intifada and a year later would be destroyed in Israeli air strikes. It now serves as little more than an artifact in Israel's unending campaign to systematically eliminate not only the civil infrastructure of Gaza but also any symbols for a future beyond siege and imprisonment. Like the Oslo films, the airport symbolizes the dualities of Oslo, an illusory and short-lived moment of purported "opportunity" twinned with the burden of its own impossibilities.

Nakba Memory during Oslo

While optimism around Oslo was perhaps highest just after the accords were signed, the films by Khleifi and Masharawi directly set out to challenge the positive narrative around the accords, in large part because they concern

the lives of refugees in Gaza—in other words, people for whom the lived outcomes of 1948, and the continuing repression they experience, constitute an ongoing Nakba. Suleiman's short, which was made just before the outbreak of the Second Intifada, offers a definitive rebuke to the two-state myth that was buoyed by the Oslo "peace process."

The Gaza setting is integral to these works. Specifically, Gaza serves as a metonym for what Gil Hochberg has described as "the visible invisibility of the Palestinian Nakba" (2015, 39). Building on Hochberg's reading of the Nakba as a "ghostly haunting that continues to taunt the Israeli visual field" (39), I will argue that Gaza, both as an actual location and as an idea, is a key site for indexing the dialectics of visibility and invisibility not just for the Israeli visual field, but also for that of Palestinian cultural producers. This visibility eventually is directed toward the "global" audience that serves as the idealized audience for most Palestinian films from the 1990s onward.[3] In my reading, just as the Nakba remains continuously present, even if also cordoned off in ways and subject to denial and belittlement, Gaza serves as a site marked by excesses of both visibility and invisibility—invisible until spectacular violence renders it all too visible. Following Patrick Wolfe's definition of settler colonialism, I define the Nakba as a structure rather than an event defined solely by the dispossession that took place in 1948 (2006, 388). Hochberg locates the paradigm of visible invisibility around the destroyed Palestinian village within Israel: "Absent in their presence, invisible in their visibility, and visible in their invisibility, these ruins continue to animate resistance" (2015, 55), and I propose to extend this reading to Gaza. This dialectic of visibility and invisibility frames my reading of the films by Masharawi, Khleifi, and Suleiman and links them to an emergent praxis of rendering the Nakba continuous, present, and *visible*, rather than an event from the distant past, relegated by the logic of traumatic memory as absent, unrepresentable, and *invisible*.

This tension between representation and erasure also follows what Anna Ball has termed "the absence/presence dialectic" (2014, 149). Ball argues that Palestine's "deeply traumatic history" results in "a dialectical interplay between visibility and invisibility, presence and absence" (136). Gaza is the test of this dialectic, in that it has often been presented to the outside world as a blank slate, a wasteland, a marginal coastline, even while journalists habitually note that it is the most densely populated territory of the world, or a militant urban jungle woven through by tunnels, or a space that can absorb a seemingly endless supply of bombs and other munitions. The simultaneous contradictions in Gaza's representations index a concern around the

place of Gaza in the broader challenges regarding the representability of the Nakba.

Hypervisibility, Invisibility, and Oslo in Palestinian Film History

The Gazan Oslo films are significant artifacts of the consolidation of a new era in the history of Palestinian cinema. Nadia Yaqub has proposed that the 1960s through 1980s were the heyday of a Palestinian Third Cinema, a period of filmmaking supported by Palestinian resistance organizations that ended as a result of a number of confluent factors, foremost among them the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the decimation of the Palestine Liberation Organization's (PLO's) cultural infrastructure (2018, 63). The next broad phase of Palestinian filmmaking, what Nurit Gertz and George Khleifi have termed the fourth period, is characterized by the emergence of auteurist filmmakers producing narrative films, most often with coproduction funding from Europe (2008, 30–33). Michel Khleifi and Rashid Masharawi, as well as Elia Suleiman, whose debut film *Chronicle of a Disappearance* was released in 1996, at the height of the Oslo period, are foremost among this group. They received warm receptions within the prestigious "blue-ribbon" film festival circuits of Europe and augured a move away from the revolutionary cinema of the PLO film units and other committed filmmakers of the generation who had come of age in the ashes of 1948. This change in direction was both generational and political in that the new filmmakers had no direct association with Palestinian liberation groups, unlike nearly all of those active in the 1960s through early 1980s. Moreover, due largely to material constraints, the earlier, militant cinema was almost entirely dedicated to working within a documentary space, even if many of these films were experimental and innovative. Only a small number of fictional works can be attributed to the earlier cinema (Yaqub 2018, 157–61). By comparison, this new generation of cineastes was shaped by, and conversant in, different global trends. Two of these three filmmakers, Khleifi and Suleiman, also benefited from Israeli, and later European, citizenship. Although originally a stateless refugee from Gaza, Masharawi emigrated to France in 2002, in the aftermath of Israeli incursions in the Occupied Territories that year, due to the threat that he would be deported from his home in Ramallah back to Gaza (Hudson 2017, 50).

The coincidence of Oslo and the consolidation of a new phase of Palestinian cinema is not entirely accidental. Unlike the prior generation of Palestinian filmmakers, who were from refugee communities outside of historical Pales-

tine, the new generation was shaped by the First Intifada (1987–93). This uprising took root among Palestinians living under Israeli rule, and the brutality of the Israeli crackdown afforded greater international sympathies for Palestinians. Young filmmakers turned to cinema to communicate to global audiences of this post–Cold War era, especially in the traditional metropolitan centers of global cultural capital. The somewhat unanticipated political reverberations of the Oslo Accords aligned these interests with a new disposition of increased visibility toward Palestinian political expression among international cultural institutions. Under the authorizing Oslo-generated discourse of "dialogue" and "peacemaking," European and North American film institutions, primary among them film festivals but also producers looking for coproductions, sought out Palestinian films to feature and filmmakers with whom to collaborate. Some promoted "collaboration" between Israeli and Palestinian film professionals, as Irit Neidhardt notes in her discussion of one such program: "MED-Media focused on support for co-operation between Palestinians and Israelis in the post-Oslo processes. Application for funds was possible, if Israelis and Palestinians submitted joint film/cinema projects" (2011, 4). Undoubtedly, the growth of Palestinian independent filmmaking—meaning a filmmaking independent from the PLO or other protostate entities—is at least in part due to the opportunities presented by international coproducers at this moment.

During this early period of the consolidation of an auteurist Palestinian cinema, Gaza played a unique role as a setting for narrative films. Gaza served as a symbolic, liminal space that is both *of* Palestine and an extremis metaphor *for* Palestine. With a population that is more than 70 percent refugees, Gaza is, on one hand, a space defined by the historical reverberations of Palestinian displacement, while on the other hand the foremost symbol of a continuing Palestinian Nakba. Like the Nakba, Gaza has proved elusive to sufficient figuration within cinematic representation. Of course, the Nakba has been a subject of Palestinian cinema from its beginning, specifically in the opening shots of Kassem Hawal's *Return to Haifa* (1982), which stages the evacuation of Haifa in the 1948 war, casting Palestinian refugees in Lebanon in its scenes of the mass flight of Palestinians from Haifa. Later, Yousry Nasrallah employed wide-angle crowd shots and close-ups of anguished faces in the 1948 scenes of his epic film *Gate of the Sun* (2004), while the subdued pathos of the 1948 scenes of Elia Suleiman's *The Time That Remains* (2009) seems almost an admonition of the former work. Suleiman's staging does not involve crowds or mass violence, but his vignettes of mostly individual experiences in Nazareth in 1948 accumulate in their understated treat-

ment of the process of ongoing dispossession that was inaugurated in that year.

Suleiman's fragmentary and unspectacular approach is a testament to the fraught nature of attempts to represent the Nakba cohesively or objectively. The Nakba remains in many ways invisible or unrepresentable, in particular when framed as an "event" centered on the dispossessions of 1948. The Oslo vision of a two-state solution did nothing to address this register of Palestinian experience and memory; in fact, it was designed to annihilate it. Oslo was designed for and predicated on Palestinian relinquishment of both an understanding of the Nakba as a structure and the memory of it as an event. As Edward Said has suggested, "Perhaps the greatest battle Palestinians have waged as a people has been over the right to a remembered presence and, with that presence, the right to possess and reclaim a collective historical reality, at least since the Zionist movement began its encroachments on the land" (2000, 184). The "right to a remembered presence" requires a right to self-representation not only in the political sense but also in the sense of retaining a right to produce cultural representations of Palestinian experiences. Reflecting on the role of Palestinian cinema to contribute to this battle, Said elsewhere writes that "it became obvious to me that the relationship of Palestinians to the visible and the visual was deeply problematic" and produces a Palestinian "desire to be visible" (2006, 3).

A similar tension exists between invisibility and a "desire to be visible" within the archive of representation of Gaza. The graphic journalist Joe Sacco speaks eloquently of the challenges of representing Gaza when he describes a massacre that took place in Khan Younis in 1956 — "the greatest massacre of Palestinians on Palestinian soil" — as having been discarded "in the pile of obscurity" (2009, ix). In response to this oblivion, his *Footnotes in Gaza*, an epic work of graphic narrative journalism, animates the archives that attest to this forgotten massacre (and another around the same time in Rafah) and produces a record — however mediated — that preserves the event within a visual vocabulary. So, while Palestine's politics of representation have always been subject to contestation and denial by Israel and its supporters, Gaza has long been at the extreme end of what has remained unrepresented, even in the Arab world.

The archive of Palestinian cinema also speaks to Gaza's relatively liminal place in what we might term the predominant *Palestinian* imaginary. In the earlier record of Palestinian resistance organizations that necessarily focused more on Jordan, Lebanon, and the West Bank as their primary theaters of operation and imagination, Gaza is mostly absent. Only one film of the body

of works produced by committed Palestinian filmmakers adopted Gaza as its topic: the short film *Scenes from the Occupation in Gaza*, which Samirah Alkassim discusses in chapter 3 of the present volume. Put otherwise, given the size of its population, Gaza is disproportionately underrepresented as a site of production or representation of Palestinian cultural productions (including films) over the course of its post-1948 history. The reasons for this are several, perhaps most obviously the territorial divide and geographic location of Gaza. As a result, even to those Palestinians outside its borders, Gaza's visual outlines have generally remained indistinct.

At the same time, considering its size, arguably Gaza has been overrepresented within a global mediascape, especially since the Second Intifada and during Israeli military campaigns that have punctuated the state of siege and blockade around the territory for nearly twenty years. In this period, just as the Nakba has constellated and grown more widely recognized globally, Gaza has also gained a certain "visibility." Hochberg frames the visibility and invisibility of Gaza in relation to the spectacle of Israeli violence:

> Gaza has long become a popular news item. But only during wartime, following this or that "operation." In between "operations" and during so-called ceasefires, Gaza disappears from our TV screens and newspaper charts. From time to time we hear about "a humanitarian crisis," which is always already on the verge of taking place in Gaza, or about another failed attempt to break the Israeli sea blockage. But without great numbers of dead or images of massive injuries and destruction, the chances of Gaza making the news are slim. The reality of everyday occupation—the underlining reality that marks the periods in between the various military "operations"—remains for the most part invisible as it escapes the threshold of spectacular violence. (2015, 243)

The siege of Gaza, emerging first from the Israeli "disengagement" with Gaza in 2005, and then going into full force in 2007, has produced bifurcated and paradoxical outcomes. Set behind a military blockade, Gaza is now widely understood as a "prison." Gaza is both invisible—as the interior of a prison may be to those outside it—and yet subject to intensive surveillance and monitoring. The bursts of illumination from behind the siege walls come during the periods of "war" when Israeli military operations in Gaza (which are continuous) take on a more spectacular nature (as during the military-named Operation Cast Lead in 2009, Operation Protective Edge in 2014, and Operation Guardian of the Walls in 2021). These moments attract intensive interest in Gaza but often through a very limited visual

repertoire of air strikes, casualties, rubble, and so on. Gaza also appears during moments of mediated solidarity or activism, both by international campaigners (e.g., the Gaza flotillas in 2009 and 2010) and by Palestinian protesters (e.g., the Great March of Return in 2018–19, discussed by Shaira Vadasaria in chapter 7), which punctures the invisibility of Gaza but again with fairly limited imagery. Anandi Ramamurthy argues that despite overwhelmingly uneven dynamics in access to and support from international media, "images circulated by Palestinians and their supporters [after the 2014 Israeli attack on Gaza] did intervene to (a) challenge and expose Israeli barbarity through the production, exposure and circulation of images of extreme suffering and (b) through the space of social media intervened to widen the visual discourse surrounding Gaza"(2016, 32). However, this visibility remains conditioned on the broader context driven by Israeli military escalations—Gaza remains "seen" only as a site in which the debate may be reduced to which (and not even whether) Israeli strikes are legitimate acts of self-defense. Yoav Galai reports on an Israeli "militarized visual economy" that has formed the Israeli visual archive on Gaza, at least since 2009: "During the . . . military operations in Gaza in 2009, 2012 and 2014, the Israeli media constantly referred to the 'victory image' as a strategic goal. Numerous op-eds and on-air pundits explained that what was needed was a 'victory image.' For example, journalist Ronit Zach (2014) wrote that 'for a month I've been hearing endless blabber from the television studios about the wished for "victory image"'" (2019, 305).

What has prevailed in this period (and is a direct legacy of the Oslo process) is a dialectic of repression and resistance as an exercise of necropower in which "sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not" (Mbembe 2003, 27). Put otherwise, Gaza is invisible unless it is the site of mass military escalation by Israel when the narrowly over-visible spectacle of death, destruction, and injury offers a productive testament to Israel's command of necropower. The use of mass-scale violence, and the image economy that represents this violence, is not incidental. As Laleh Khalili has suggested, "Civilians are not 'collateral' or accidental casualties of war between combatants, but the very object of a settler colonial counterinsurgency. The ultimate desire of such asymmetrical warfare is to transform the intransigent population into a malleable mass, a docile subject, and a yielding terrain of domination" (2014). Even politically "sympathetic" attempts to visualize the scale of destruction by Israel during its escalations often remain limited in their ability to step outside of this visual economy. As Samirah Alkassim notes in her review of Blumenthal

and Cohen's documentary *Killing Gaza*, "The cinematography captures the level of destruction—miles of desolated scorched landscape where once there were buildings and homes, under a beautiful sky, fringed by a captivating Mediterranean coast," and in doing so the film is fated to "reproduce the problematic tendencies of ethnographic documentary" (2019, 376, 381). Such is the power of Israel in its exercise of necropower, whereby the supremacy of destructive asymmetrical warfare is matched in the cultural sphere by a spectacularization of destruction and death in which Gaza serves merely as a tableau for exemplifying this power.

Oslo Films and Everyday Visibility

Viewed within today's normative visual economy in which Gaza serves either as invisible or as narrowly hypervisible, *The Tale of the Three Jewels* and *Haifa* both offer a mode of representation of Gaza that accords it the status of being *simply* visible. *The Tale of the Three Jewels*, one of the first feature narrative films shot in Gaza, was directed by Michel Khleifi, who is originally from Nazareth and has been a resident of Belgium for most of his adult life (Greenberg 1994, 20). The film was coproduced with Belgian and other European funds, and the executive producer was the British-Palestinian cultural producer Omar al-Qattan. *Haifa*, shot a year later in 1995, was directed by Rashid Masharawi, a Gazan refugee from al-Shati camp whose family was originally from Jaffa. Masharawi's film was a coproduction between Palestine, Germany, and the Netherlands and was coproduced by the Armenian-Egyptian producer Nora Armani (Gregorian 2020). Both films represent very well the coproduction model that has resulted in a globalized Arab cinema (as a cultural condition resulting from the twin processes of the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the universalization of neoliberal economics). As the German film producer Irit Neidhardt reported in 2011, "Due to very high production costs of cinema movies, and a lack of funding in the region of origin, most of the financing for films from the Middle East is provided by European public funds" (2011, 1). Despite generic similarities, the films also reflect the differences between the life experiences of their two directors. Khleifi, born a Palestinian citizen of Israel, was celebrated for his 1987 feature *Wedding in Galilee* and has directed features and documentaries that often combine Western European film aesthetics and Palestinian mythopoetics. Masharawi, by comparison, is an autodidact filmmaker (Rastegar 2006). His earlier films such as *Passport* (1987) and *Long Days*

in Gaza (1991) "established his recurring themes: life in refugee camps, occupation, dispossession and exile" (Trbic 2020, 62).

Thematically the films overlap a great deal, even as they treat their shared themes differently. Both films center on characters whose identity and future are tied to working through Nakba memory and resist the occlusion of the Nakba by the Oslo Accords through a stubborn desire to render Gaza, as a metonym for the Nakba, visible. In both films, a Gaza family struggles to sustain its social cohesion under the strains of Israeli occupation. *The Tale of the Three Jewels* centers on a prepubescent refugee boy, Yusef, and his friendship with a mysterious girl, Aida, who is from a Domari, or "Dom," community.[4] Woven into this story are those of Yusef's friendship with a boy from a wealthier family, Salah, and of Yusef's family members. His brother is a guerrilla fighter on the run from the Israeli military, while his father has been in prison for some time and is about to be released. His mother and sister, Suad, are the only forces for stability in his life. Here, the patriarchal nuclear family is already deeply strained, but the women of the household try to keep Yusef on track as a student, even as he devotes himself more to his passion for catching exotic birds, which he occasionally sells to supplement the family's income. The trope of a failing patriarchal family that lies at the heart of both films resonates with what Amal Amireh describes as a "crisis of male virility" that is connected to a "marker of masculinity in Palestinian culture: the ability to provide," that is threatened "as a result of their refugee experience" (2003, 751–52).

Khleifi imagines a redemption of this "crisis" by displacing virility into the character of Yusef, despite his status as a child. Early in the film Yusef crosses paths with the charismatic Aida, whom he befriends and eventually decides to marry when he grows up. Aida's grandmother is from Jaffa, and the family has an heirloom, a necklace that is missing three jewels. The grandmother has told Aida that whoever finds the missing jewels will marry Aida. Yusef asks where the jewels are, and Aida tells him, "In South America." Yusef becomes preoccupied with finding a way to leave Gaza and travel to South America to recover the missing jewels and marry Aida. His friend Salah, whose father exports oranges from Gaza, offers to hide Yusef in a crate of oranges on the day they are to be shipped abroad. However, a curfew delays the shipping of the fruit, and Yusef is left in the crate overnight. Meanwhile, Aida is told that the jewels were not lost in South America but are in Jaffa, and she escapes her home to stop Yusef. She meets Salah in the orchard where the crates have been left. In the morning an Israeli patrol en-

counters the children just as Yusef sees one of his birds. He runs to recapture the bird, and an Israeli soldier shoots him at close range. His mother and sister arrive and find him, but he awakens and miraculously has no injury. In the final scene, the necklace has recovered its lost jewels, and Aida puts it on, telling Yusef that he was the one to find the lost jewels.

In *The Tale of the Three Jewels*, the determination and imagination of a boy represents a challenging generational shift away from the norms of his father's generation, a generation in which a certain patriarchal structure is collapsing from its own failures. *The Tale of the Three Jewels* implies that an acquiescence to the prior hierarchies, which have delivered the Oslo Accords, is no longer vital, but the film cannot seem to make a decisive comment on the vitality of the imaginative aspirations of the younger generation—it may also be presumed to be facing death. In Rashid Masharawi's *Haifa*, a similar generational crisis is more explicitly linked to Oslo, and where *Tale* ends on uncertainty, *Haifa* makes a bolder claim for the need to give visibility to the Nakba.

As Gertz has suggested, in *Haifa*, "the Oslo accords are presented as a surrender of the broad boundaries of the dream of return" (2004, 31). The film concerns the story of the family of Abu Said, a kind man whose vocation as a cotton candy vendor belies his earlier profession as a policeman. His son, Said, is in an Israeli prison, and his imminent release has catalyzed his mother to begin seeking a wife for him. Siad, a younger teenage son, is following in the footsteps of his older brother.[5] He has begun provoking the Israeli forces with other boys and sees his father's quiescence and political optimism for the Oslo Accords, which are just being finalized, as a sign of weakness. Abu Said's daughter, Sabah, pursues her dreams by painting. Despite these differences, at the beginning of the film Abu Said's family is shown as an exemplary and resilient patriarchal refugee family. However, by the end of the film a number of events — key among them the paralysis of Abu Said in an accident—the family is all but falling apart: Said has been released from prison, but he shuns his mother's plans for him to immediately visit his family-arranged fiancée, and Sabah has disappeared. The mother, Oum Said, is left alone in the courtyard of their home, crying.

Both films highlight a childlike or liminal consciousness through one or more characters who are only tangentially part of the social fabric of their communities. This childlike consciousness allows for a narrative coming-of-age framing in which a (near) adolescent's youth allows him (both characters are boys) a certain remove from the realities that constrain his older siblings and parents. Siad and Yusef each appears reluctant to accept a more socially

normative role in the family, and each has a particular distance, even hostility, toward his faltering father (who, incidentally, is played in both films by Ahmad Abu Salʿum). As a result of his romantic feeling for Aida, Yusef pursues plans that adults would view as fantastic, impractical, and unreasonable. In this sense, both characters follow a common Palestinian trope in which a younger generation rejects the logic that constrains and defines an older one—a trope perhaps best developed in the short stories of Ghassan Kanafani but that is also found in recent films such as Annemarie Jacir's *When I Saw You* (2012).

Both films depict Gaza through a neorealist aesthetic, using authentic sets (in the case of *Tale*, on location in Gaza), naturalistic lighting, and minimal extradiegetic music. Camera movement is limited, and most shots are static. In Khleifi's film, two dream sequences are subtly demarcated with soft focus and somewhat more fluid camerawork. However, both films are defined by an aesthetic of realism that at times even approximates techniques of conventional documentary—naturalistic settings, the emphasis on diegetic sound, the use of natural lighting, the employment of nonprofessional actors and extras. In their use of realism, the films render Gaza as a site of quotidian experience and in doing so radically challenge normative public discourse on the territory since at least 2008–9. If Gaza is usually burdened by its occlusion from the register of representable spaces, both Khleifi and Masharawi approach Gaza as eminently visualizable. In cinema, realism is an aesthetic that makes the ideological claim that the social fabric is always subject to the unproblematic mediation of the film camera. Thus, by visualizing Gaza in this way, the ideological presumptions that are inherent in realism take on further political resonance in challenging the invisibility of Gaza in dominant media such as broadcast news.

Memory, Nakba, and Oslo Allegories

Both *The Tale of Three Jewels* and *Haifa* are structured around two interwoven story lines—one of the children and another featuring an "outsider" figure who also does not conform to the conventional sociality in the camp. In *The Tale of the Three Jewels*, this character is Abu Iman, a blind man who lives alone, awaiting in vain any correspondence from his sons who have emigrated. He is a spent and extraneous figure in the social world of the refugee camp, who cannot work or otherwise contribute in any other manner to society. In *Haifa*, the analogous character, Nabil, lives in a dilapidated bus and appears to live off the generosity of the merchants and others in his

community. Nabil, who is called "Haifa" (and who gives the film its name), represents a dysfunction or blockage; he is symptomatic of a disorder born from what is irresolvable about the Nakba as a result of its invisibility. There is an implied comparison made between Nabil/Haifa—the outsider, truth teller, past-obsessed refugee—and Abu Said and his typical refugee family. A certain naivete or innocence or removal from sociality affords Abu Iman and Nabil the ability to offer a distanced analysis beyond the crush of harsh realities within which most characters live. These characters, which accord in some ways with the archetype of the "village idiot," play a specific role in each film, socially excluded from normative life but offering uniquely wise or useful insights in moments of crisis.

As liminal figures on the edge of rationality, these "wise fools" present a stubborn form of resistance to the Oslo vision that has no room for the forms of experience and knowledge they embody. Masharawi himself says the "film was related to the Peace Process and myself as a refugee from Jaffa. . . . After this Peace Process agreement, it was the first time I felt I lost Jaffa" (Armaly 2002). The expression of such a sentiment, stated here in deeply personal terms, was antagonistic to the dominant cultural discourse surrounding Oslo at this time. Abu Iman's blindness allows him a form of (in)sight into the crises of Yusef's family, and he gently advises the boy on how to live in ways that are at odds with his family's priorities. In their reliance on these characters, both films challenge the "rationality" of the normative adult world within the camps. Siad's father has placed his hopes in the structure of a political party (presumably Fatah) and anticipates that the peace process will offer him social mobility, while Yusef's father and brother have been all but destroyed by their commitment to the resistance. As alternatives to these forms of adult allegiances, Nabil and Abu Said, though they refuse rationality, have a more profound understanding of the unbearable contingencies of life in Gaza than these men do. Their liminal rationality renders visible the ongoing Nakba.

Nabil is an avatar for the stubborn and unsettled memory of the refugee, caught in the purgatory of a continuing Nakba. He calls, "Yaffa Hayfa ʿAkka!" as he meanders along the dusty byways of the camp. His damaged psyche, trapped in the routines of a time that ended before his birth, compels him to repeat day after day the call of what may be his idealized self, most likely as a taxi driver calling out a coastal route of cities that trace the contours of a lost Palestine. Given that he is too young to be reflecting on a life before 1948 (Mohammad Bakri, who performs the character, was born in 1953), Nabil's signature call represents a form of intergenerational

transmission—his pathological repetition of the names of the three cities seems an echo of the despair of the loss of Palestine as his parents' generation had known it. Nabil is a spectral presence, acknowledged by all but perhaps not entirely "real." The title of the film bespeaks a certain impossibility: Where is Haifa to those who are imprisoned in Gaza? The title also may be an ironic reworking of the title of Ghassan Kanafani's novella *Returning to Haifa* (1969), that is, Haifa without "return"—the de facto status of refugees under the Oslo Accords.

The Tale of Three Jewels presents an allegory for the losses of the Nakba—symbolized through the three lost jewels—as a burden for later generations to recompense. The Dom identity of Aida, while only alluded to once or twice, appears to mark her as different from Yusef in significant ways. Her multigenerational family and community appear less fractured than Yusef's. The juxtaposition of her family with Yusef's idealizes the Dom for their resilience and communal fortitude despite their history as victims of social marginalization and stigmatization. *The Tale of the Three Jewels* posits this resilience as worthy of emulation by Palestinian refugees and offers it, by gesturing to the traumatic history of Dom dispersal, as a model of addressing the traumas of the Nakba.

The structure of a plot framed around the pursuit of a marriage—here, Yusef's desire to marry Aida—may be read allegorically as an aspirational resolution to the losses of the Nakba. Yusef acts courageously, with the assistance of Salah and Aida, to put in place a plan to escape Gaza and to complete the quest that will allow for the resolution of the narrative. However, the film's doubled ending is ambiguous. In the first ending, Yusef is shot and ostensibly killed by an Israeli soldier. May Telmissany narrates this ending as follows: "Just as he finds the three jewels, Youssef is shot by an Israeli soldier. The jewels then transform into three drops of blood in his hand, and he dies as he finally controls time, space, and flesh" (2010, 79). In this reading, Yusef's death is transformative and provides him a means to gain "control" over all that the occupation denies him.

In a second iteration of the scene, Yusef revives and is found to already possess the three jewels, which were in Gaza all along. Aida then wears the necklace, symbolically marrying Yusef, to whom she attributes the finding of the lost jewels. Against this "happy" ending, the film has detailed the collapse of Yusef's family: his father has returned from prison but is in a nearly catatonic state, and his brother is badly injured and lives day by day, hunted by the Israelis. Khleifi addresses this duality in the ending by explaining, "This is the tale. The logic of it is based on the idea of being between life

Figure 4.1 Yusef is shot by Israeli soldiers near the end of *The Tale of the Three Jewels* (1994).

Figure 4.2 Yusef revives after being shot in a second ending to *The Tale of the Three Jewels* (1994).

and death. Yousef is brought to the brink of death and then returns to life. It is an initiation into life, a journey toward the meaning of life" (Khleifi and Alexander 1996, 32). I read the ending within the Palestinian topos of endings without resolution. Here, Khleifi terms the ending "a journey towards" or an "initiation into" rather than an arrival at the meaning of life. In the context of the Oslo period's prerogatives, this refusal to enact a resolution to the story serves as a stubborn refusal to embrace the "hopes" that Oslo was ostensibly to serve. Producer Omar al-Qattan notes that *The Tale of the Three Jewels* received a tepid response at Cannes in 1995 and was passed over by other film festivals that year, suggesting that the predominant narrative of Oslo—that of "hope" and "collaboration"— was at odds with the film's bracing view of Oslo's promises and claims (Al-Qattan 2006, 124).

Richard Neupert argues that the conventional ending of what he terms "closed text" narrative film (by which he means normative, popular narrative cinema) is the "happy ending" or at the very least a "logical, direct and efficient conclusion to its narrative" (1995, 40). James MacDowell notes that "happy endings are commonly treated as synonymous with closure, and final couples are commonly regarded as synonymous with happy endings" (2013, 57). "Final couple" endings are most often heteronormative. Palestinian films, on the other hand, cast the idea of a "logical, direct, and efficient conclusion" in doubt, by closing unhappily with death or miscarriage, or perhaps even more frequently with a doubled or ambiguous ending in which death and birth, or death and marriage, are simultaneous or overlaid. For example, Elia Suleiman's *The Time That Remains* ends with the death of his mother and with his protagonist's recognition of his own mortality, but the final scene celebrates the continued vitality of Palestinian youth. Rashid Masharawi's film *Curfew* (1994) contains a similarly ambiguous (if decidedly darker) ending, with a young man being arrested by the Israeli military while, at the exact same time, a neighbor gives birth. The celebration of the latter is tempered by the former. The new child is to be named after a martyred son from the same family—in birth, death is ever present. This Janus-faced ending, where hope shines alongside mourning, is one variety of the Nakba narrative of dispossession.

The critique of Oslo culminates in the last sequence of *Haifa*, which begins with people spontaneously pouring into the streets in response to the announcement of the Oslo Accords. However, this news arrives simultaneously with the news of the death of Nabil's aunt. Thus, as the public begins to celebrate the peace accords, Nabil sets out at the front of a small funeral procession for his only family member, his only link to Palestine

Figure 4.3 The funeral procession for Nabil's aunt in *Haifa* (1996).

before the Nakba. The funeral procession encounters the march and interrupts it. Nabil, leading the mourners, meets the other primary characters of the film, Abu Said and his son Siad. Abu Said gestures to his son, and they leave the demonstration and join the funeral. Nabil himself falls behind the mourners and then stands looking at both groups, as if at a crossroads, uncertain of which path to follow.

It is in this final scene of *Haifa* that the Nakba's continuation is most acutely felt. Nabil had only shortly before learned that his cousin, to whom he imagined himself to be engaged, has married someone in Canada. This news represents the escape of his cousin from a refugee fate. But it also disrupts the continuities of Nabil's imagination that he, too, may find a redemptive ending in love, throwing him into despair. Instead of a conventional wedding ending, we are confronted with the removal of a wedding from narrative feasibility. Now he, too, joins the ranks of men whose social status is stained by the mark of a patriarchal failure, or as a symbol for the continuation of a "masculine crisis." The twin tragedies of his failure to marry and the death of his aunt constitute a bitter end to the fantasy that he may eventually resurrect the patriarchal social order and establish his social "virility." Whereas earlier his madness seemed to be a strategy of resilience to cope with his condition, one that others seem almost to admire, these losses come as too great of a blow, and his veneer shatters. The Nakba's

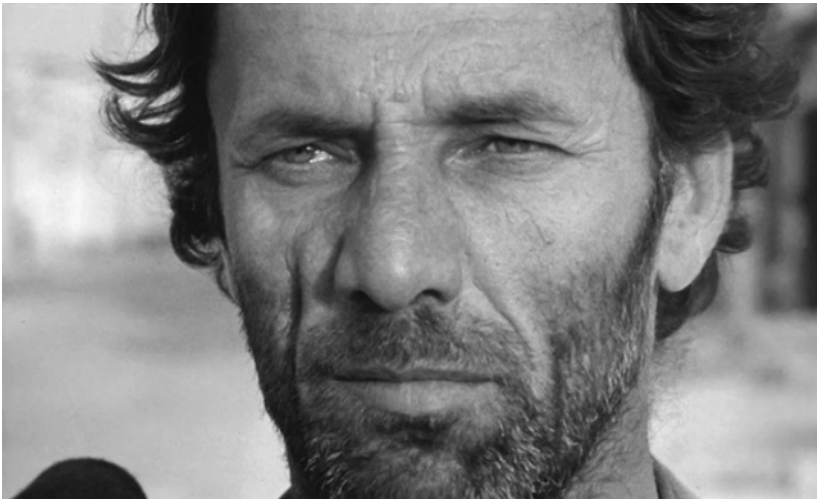

Figure 4.4 Nabil at a crossroads, unsure of which path to follow, at the end of *Haifa* (1996).

realties come to be felt in the accumulation of lost possibilities for one's life as measured in terms of love and family.

These Gaza films of the Oslo period are examples par excellence of this Palestinian predicament with endings. *Haifa*'s conclusion overlays a funeral with the ostensible celebration of the Oslo Accords, rendering the celebration dubious and ill-timed. The death of Nabil's aunt is a moment of the eruption of the Nakba into focus and serves as a reminder of the continuity of the Nakba along with the "hopes" that Oslo had ignited even as it scuttled any just resolution to the plight of the refugees. The celebration becomes impossible precisely because the Nakba has not been addressed. In *The Tale of the Three Jewels*, a similar ambiguity pervades the ending. The simultaneous death/rebirth of Yusef provokes a similar confusion in how the future may be imagined. While the film does not directly reference the Oslo Accords, the ambivalence of the ending speaks directly to the contradictory ways that historical moment was understood by Palestinians, in particular refugees. *Haifa* adopts a more bitter and pessimistic tone, rooted more closely in the refugee view in that moment. *Tale of Three Jewels* takes a more metaphysical approach, ending inconclusively on the simultaneity of life and death as markers for an unformed Palestinian future. Both films, however, cast a shadow on the attempts by various interests—among them a large part of the Palestinian leadership, international organizations, European and US

governments, and of course Israeli institutions and the state—to give ascendancy to a narrative of "hope."

Cyber Palestine and the End of Oslo Cinema

Elia Suleiman's short film *Cyber Palestine* presents a somewhat different approach to the consideration of Gaza as a metonym for the Nakba. Self-consciously allegorical and mythical, *Cyber Palestine* imagines Joseph and Mary as millennial-era Gaza refugees seeking a route toward Bethlehem or Palestine. As Joseph sits behind a computer and executes searches for "Cyber Palestine" on the internet (he finds that the website for Palestine is "under construction"), a pregnant Mary reads the Bible but then flips channels on a TV. In between fashion shows, talk shows, and music videos, a brief clip appears of Bill Clinton speaking at the White House ceremony announcing the Oslo Accords, saying, "What we are witnessing today is not yet peace." Joseph's cell phone begins to ring, and a close-up of the phone screen reveals that it is "Gabriel" calling. The two rise and look out the window from which a ray of light shines on them. In a title card God instructs them to go to Bethlehem to give birth, and so they pack for the journey. A photo of Joseph staged as a Palestinian militant fighter and holding a machine gun begins a montage of images from the dispossession of 1948, set to elegiac music (Arvo Pärt's "Silouan's Song"). In this scene, the legacies of 1948 interrupt the language of the film and reverberate in relation to the framing of Oslo within a montage of banal, clichéd, and meaningless television clips. Later, Joseph and Mary ride a motorcycle along the Gaza coastline (passing the Shaykh 'Ajlin Mosque that was destroyed by Israeli bombing in 2014). They pass through a refugee camp, and a POV camera captures its cinder-block homes while "Silouan's Song" returns on the soundtrack, linking the present refugee experience and the events of 1948. In this, *Cyber Palestine* renders the Nakba as an ongoing structure and codes it visually through both archival photography of 1948 and contemporary documentary footage of refugee camps. The film ends with the absenting of Joseph (it is unclear whether he is killed or detained after fighting Israeli guards at the checkpoint to leave Gaza), and Mary, now with child, rides off into the Gaza landscape on the motorcycle alone, propelled by driving electronic music ("Spybreak!" by Propellerheads). The ending is ironic—although Mary and unborn child riding away accords with a certain conventional visual vocabulary of freedom, they are still in Gaza and do not fulfill the divine command that they return "home" to Bethlehem.

Figure 4.5 A pregnant Mary speeds away on a motorcycle at the end of *Cyber Palestine* (2000).

Suleiman's *Cyber Palestine* also ends inconclusively. While the final shot of Mary speeding away on a motorcycle is rendered thrillingly through the language of the action film, we not only are acutely aware of the fact that given her location in Gaza she cannot go far but also are left uncertain of the fate of Joseph, the nominal "father" figure in place of God's supreme patriarchy. If Joseph is imprisoned or dead, then even God must bend to the power of the Israeli state. In this way, *Cyber Palestine* also concerns itself with a crisis born of the failure of fathers and imagines new forms of kinship and family in its wake. However, with a longer perspective, now the tensions that mark the endings of all three of these films come to be prescient of the fundamental betrayal that Oslo represented to the hopes of the great majority of Palestinians.

Conclusion

In their films, Michel Khleifi and Rashid Masharawi intuited that a project for a Palestinian future that does not seriously contend with the Nakba is doomed to failure. Each of these films is a further entry in the development

of a poiesis of dispossession for Palestinian cinema, one that requires aesthetic formulations that are rooted in the question of how to represent what is unrepresentable about the Nakba, in particular from its limit site in Gaza. These "Oslo films," coming soon after the 1993 Oslo agreements, capture tensions both within Palestinian cinema production and within Palestinian memory politics. On one hand, they are early examples of the evolving political economy of Palestinian cinema, which moved away from a cinema of militancy and institutionalized political solidarity toward an auteur model of filmmaking, propelled by the increased "coproduction" funding opportunities that arose with the increasingly neoliberal models for cultural production that came to be universalized in the 1980s and 1990s. This coproduction model accommodated the Oslo cultural environment by incentivizing the circulation of Palestinian cultural productions in a way that had been less broadly acceptable within high cultural cinema venues previously. However, both Khleifi and Masharawi, to different degrees, co-opt the coproduction model and its marriage to a "hopeful" Oslo cultural discourse by revisiting the problematics of staging Nakba memory, and by doing so in Gaza. Some years later, Suleiman visualizes Gaza in a more mythopoetic register, using a radical revision of the biblical story of Mary to again imagine Gaza at the center of Palestinian experience. Nonetheless, in all three of these films, Gaza serves paradoxically not only as a canvas of the limit of Palestinian experience but also as an exemplary form of Palestinian experience. All three films capture and embody these tensions and stage endings that refuse to reproduce the discourse of "hope" that was ascendant at the time. This refusal may well have set the films at odds with the dominant international currents of their time, but in retrospect they remain valuable artifacts that through visualizing Gaza return the Nakba to the center of Palestinian experience.

Notes

1 I visited the airport—we were only able to approach the outer gates—when I was a study-abroad student at Birzeit University in the summer of 1999. The university had organized a trip to Gaza in which we were ferried between various offices to meet representatives of the Palestinian Authority and various nongovernmental organizations, nearly all a result of the infrastructure that resulted from Oslo, with "returnee" PLO members now administering the impoverished area. Looking back at my experience on that trip, I am struck by

how our short visit to Gaza encapsulated the key energies and dynamics in the "peace process" and the curious interregnum that the Oslo Accords represented within the broader sweep of modern Palestinian history.

2 I will be referring to the six or so years between the announcement of the Oslo Accords and the outbreak of the Second Intifada as the "Oslo period." I have chosen not to include Masharawi's *Curfew* in this discussion, for while it debuted at Cannes in 1994, just months after the announcement of the Oslo Accords, it was shot earlier and in many ways better reflects the political setting of the last stages of the First Intifada. Moreover, *Curfew*, though set in Gaza, was shot largely in Jenin and Nazareth, although it includes panoramic shots of Gaza City (Gertz and Khleifi 2008, 104). *Haifa* was shot in Jericho rather than in Gaza (Armaly 2002).

3 I acknowledge that this framing is problematic in excluding Gazans from the category of Palestinian cultural producers and as an audience for these films. Similarly, Gaza cannot be considered invisible for its residents. Nonetheless we may find a value in reflecting on the consciousness of Gazans about the relative visibility and invisibility of Gaza for various constituencies outside of the territory—Israeli Jews, various Palestinian communities, or the "international" community. It is beyond the scope of this chapter, but one need only look to the spectacular nature of the Great March of Return to discern the recognition by Gazans themselves of the power of contesting a visual economy that relegates Gaza to invisibility or to a narrow overvisibility (when subject to massive Israeli military attacks).

4 As Arpan Roy notes, "'Dom' is an ethnonym used to describe the confederation of related Romani tribes scattered across the Middle East, who in Israel/Palestine are concentrated in Gaza and in the greater Jerusalem area" (2020, 501).

5 The transliteration of Arabic names follows the romanization of the names as they appear in each film's credits. The name of Siad would be more commonly transliterated as Ziyad.

Yaron Shemer

5

So Close, So Far

Gaza in Israeli Cinema

For decades, and clearly with the emergence of what Ella Shohat (2010) referred to as "the Palestinian Wave" in Israeli cinema of the 1980 and 1990s, films have offered a scathing critique of Israel's occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Most filmmakers engaged in this cycle of political films have resided in Gush Dan, with Tel Aviv as its demographic and cultural epicenter. Although the area surrounding the Gaza Strip, known in Hebrew as ʿOtef ʿAza, is about an hour away from Tel Aviv, it has often been considered by Israel's media and cultural center as a (non)place "at the end of the world."[1] This study of Israeli films on Gaza situates its investigation precisely in this otherwise marginalized border area.[2] More specifically, this chapter seeks to identify the unique thematics and modes of expression Israeli filmmakers who reside in ʿOtef ʿAza/the Western Negev employ in their cinematic explorations of the communities — people and spaces — that bear the most direct consequences of the Gazan-Israeli warfare.

Until the early 1990s, the vast majority of the Jewish population of ʿOtef ʿAza was of North African origin. Today, despite its overall sparse population density, the area as a whole is a mosaic of people of different origins, including Mizrahi/Arab-Jews, Ethiopian Jews, Jews from the former Soviet republics, and Palestinians. ʿOtef ʿAza includes development towns, kibbutzim, moshavim (settlements that often have some type of agricultural cooperative), and Bedouin nomad communities. At the heart of ʿOtef ʿAza/the Western Negev and one mile east of the northern tip of the Gaza Strip is the town of Sderot, with nearly thirty thousand residents. On the outskirts of Sderot is the School of Audio and Visual Arts at Sapir Academic College, which was founded by filmmaker and scholar Avner Faingulernt.[3] Sderot features centrally in the films that were made by Sapir students, graduates, and faculty and which are the subject of this chapter.

It is precisely these conditions that trigger the research questions: How can we situate the positions and subjectivities of those filmmakers who reside in ʿOtef ʿAza and have become directly impacted by the military-political situation across both sides of the border (e.g., being subjected to occasional rocket attacks and forced to spend time in shelters)? Likewise, what role do these filmmakers take as they live amid communities in Israel's periphery known for their hawkish views toward Arabs in general and Gazans in particular? Finally, in exploring the various documentaries, feature films, and shorts in this chapter, can we discern a unique cinematic grammar that emerges from the particular realities the filmmakers encounter in this border zone? In assessing these questions, one must be cognizant of the structural imbalance between the filmmakers (nearly all of them are Israeli Jews) and their communities in ʿOtef ʿAza, on the one hand, and the Gazan people and communities, on the other. Even when this chapter addresses situations in which the "two sides" collaborate in shared spaces, these engagements are always already marked, conditioned, compromised, and marred by the gaping imbalances in access, freedom, mobility, and citizenship status.

Subjectivities and Cinematic Language: Young Cinema from ʿOtef ʿAza

Cinema South Festival in Sderot is sponsored by Sapir Academic College and was envisioned by Faingulernt and others as an alternative to the offerings of the cultural center of Tel Aviv. In addition to the screenings of local productions, the festival showcases international films pertaining to

the socioeconomic and racial/ethnic dilemmas that resonate with those of ʿOtef ʿAza. After Cameroonian filmmaker Osvalde Lewat was invited to screen her works in the festival in 2009, she decided to return to the area to make a documentary about Sapir. She wanted to explore the film program's unique agenda and location, its students' backgrounds and films, and the debates within and outside of class about politics, moral dilemmas, and activism among its students and teachers. We are told in Lewat's film *Sderot, Last Exit* (2012) that one student served in Operation Cast Lead (the winter 2008–9 war on Gaza), while another, a Palestinian student originally from Gaza, lost his grandmother in Israeli bombing during this war. In a heated class discussion in the film, Dr. Erez Pery introduces his students to Giorgio Agamben's (1998) concept of bare life in relation to the Palestinians when he suggests that Israel is the sovereign that has the power to dictate who can live and who should perish.

Not surprisingly, a cluster of films from students at Sapir examine the predicament of residents from ʿOtef ʿAza in light of the suffering of Palestinians across the Gaza border and thus engage in the question of interconnected destinies and equivalency (clearly, not parity) between Gazans and Israelis. The narrative film *18 Kilometers* (Avi Levi, 2009) is based loosely on stories the filmmaker heard and on people he met while living in Sderot (Yudilovich 2009). Levi interweaves the stories into a human web connecting the people behind them. In one, Hassan, who is from Gaza, becomes an Israeli collaborator in order to afford treatment in Israel for his daughter's cancer. Hassan then relocates to Sderot to protect himself and his family. Hassan leaves his sister Anan, whose husband is a high commander in Hamas, behind in Gaza. In a mosaic of characters (some of which will be discussed later in this chapter) from both sides of the border, stories of despair, love, and perseverance are echoed by Israelis and Gazans. The film's aesthetic choices enhance the theme of cultural or language commonalities and a shared fate (e.g., both Gazan and Israeli characters featured here are casualties of "enemy" shelling at the film's end). By using sound overlap when intercutting between Gaza and ʿOtef ʿAza, *18 Kilometers* renders a shared ambience. This is most noticeable with the *adhan* (call to prayer) and the radio programs—airwaves that defy arbitrary border lines. Once, when Anan is talking over the phone with Nadra—her sister-in-law in Sderot—she notices the launching of a rocket targeting Israeli territory and, in a mix of exhilaration and fear, the two alternate in the countdown from eighteen (the duration of the rocket's course in the air is no longer than eighteen seconds), from the firing of the Qassam rocket to its explosion close to Nadra and Hassan's house.

Figure 5.1 *Hula and Natan* (2010). The execution of the eviction order in Hula and Natan's car shop. Courtesy of the Sapir Academic College and Robby Elmaliah.

The documentary *Hula and Natan* (Robby Elmaliah, 2010) follows the eponymous characters of the film over a one-year period that is bracketed by the time markers of Independence Days of May 2008 and May 2009. Hula and Natan are two downtrodden brothers who live on the outskirts of Sderot in a dilapidated caravan on the premises of their car shop. Cats, dogs, a mule, and a donkey roam around, and Hula knows all of them by name and takes good care of them. The shop has been operating without permits, and the film's second part focuses on the brothers' frustration and their reactions to an eviction order. Natan's wife and Hula's former wife do not allow them back into their houses. Indeed, eviction becomes a motif and a metonym in *Hula and Natan*. The film begins with a single mother who shares her anxiety on the radio over an eviction order. The film's repeated references to Gaza and its people establish a figurative homology between these stories of eviction and the (much more calamitous) destruction of Gaza and displacement of its people.

In this tragicomic tale, after discussing his injury from a Qassam rocket some time ago, Hula jokes, "I think all the scrap metal (from the car junkyard) I used to sell them [the Gazans], they are now sending [firing] it back to me." Over TV images of Israeli airplanes on the way to drop bombs on

Gaza and of their targets going up in smoke in the airplanes' crosshairs, Natan says, "We will crush them [*nelekh itam kasaḥ*]." Hula asks: "Them?" to which Natan replies, "the Land Authorities," and in the same breath he continues: "I feel sorry for the people of Gaza." In another scene Hula shares his reflections with his brother, saying that actually the land of Sderot is the Arabs' and "the whole State of Israel is an Arab territory." Natan then begins to imagine a dialogue he would have with Ismail Haniyeh (the political leader of Hamas) after inviting him to Sderot and settling everything with him. Gaza would boom with tourists, he speculates, and Hula concludes, "Gaza is better than Tel Aviv."

Although the film is replete with references to Gaza and the winter 2008–9 war on Gaza, only toward the end of this documentary does the film provide a view of Gaza not mediated through TV images. Like many others during that war, Hula and Natan climb a hill overlooking Gaza. But against the cheering and applause from the Israelis who come to participate in this nationalistic war spectacle, Hula reflects that, instead of attacking, Israeli forces should have offered humanitarian aid to Gazans, and as he leaves this war theater, he hurls the comment "disgusting" (*go'al nefesh*) at the crowd of people on the hill.

Like other films explored in this chapter, *Hula and Natan* employs the media frenzy and trite commentary by political and military pundits as a backdrop against which the suffering of individuals in their daily lives is accentuated. Put differently, this film reveals the gap between the formal and sensational media and the organic and immediate realities concerning the people of the area—both Israelis and Gazans. In a hilarious scene, Hula ambles into the frame in the middle of a live broadcast by Israel's Channel 2 (the leading channel at that time). The reporter asserts it is a broadcasting station in Sderot, thus making Hula and Natan seem like strangers in their own town. Hula retorts as he is about to retreat, "They shouldn't have entered there," an accusation of the Israeli military and, implicitly, the media.

The camera and editing participate in creating the disconnect between the remote war (mediated, distanced, and synthesized) and the realities of residents like Hula and Natan. For the most part, the camera following the two brothers is organic and dynamic as it moves at eye level. The frame at the film's main locale—the car shop—is crowded, mostly due to the clutter of scrap metal and auto parts. But interspersed in the film are images of airplanes as seen from the ground. Unlike the rest of the film, these offer mostly barren frames—against the solid blue sky there is only the linear and quiet movement of the distant airplanes.

Play Me Allegro (Alon Alsheich and Eran Yehezkel, 2007) brings to the fore the moral and political dilemmas of living only a few miles away from the Gaza Strip, where Palestinians are under constant threat of Israeli attacks.[4] This documentary features Yulia, a single mother and Russian immigrant living in Kibbutz Nir Am in ʿOtef ʿAza. Looking toward Gaza three miles away, she confesses, "I'm ashamed . . . of being part of the Chosen People; a people chosen to murder." Later, Yulia organizes a dialogue with Palestinians in "The Hill for Peace," where activists like her send messages of peace and compassion to Gazan children across the border over a Palestinian radio station.

In the short fiction films *Baʿabus* (Kaid Abu Latif, 2008) and *Salem, David* (Robby Elmaliah and Danny Geva, 2008), the contending subjectivities and positions that Israeli Jewish and Palestinian students assert and defend in Sapir become intrinsic to the films' structuring and aesthetic devices. Put differently, to an extent, the working relations between Israeli and Palestinian film students at Sapir are replicated thematically in the films they make. In his film, Abu Latif plays the role of an assistant director to a Palestinian director who makes a film about young freedom fighters from the Bedouin town of Rahat and an Israeli director who attempts to make a film about children in the Maghazi (Mouasi) refugee camp in Gaza (both films fail badly!). Somewhat similarly, in the comedy *Salem, David* filmmakers Elmaliah and Geva play both a pair of Israelis and a pair of Gazan men who are planning a retaliatory attack against Israel. Cross-casting (extradiegetic) and role switching (diegetic) in films on Israeli-Palestinian relations have received significant academic attention.[5] Passing and the verisimilitude of character interchangeability between Israeli Jews and Palestinians extend in these and other films to space. In these films both Rahat and ʿOtef ʿAza in general stand for Gaza when the setting calls for it. One is reminded of the observation expressed by Faingulernt (who supervised these student films) that for many, before the removal of Israeli settlements in Gaza in 2005, ʿOtef ʿAza and Gaza constituted one contiguous cultural-geographic space separate from Israel.

The peripatetic diary *Blonde* (Sharon Shelly and Oshrat Stern, 2017) offers an unnerving explorative conjunction of space, trauma, and war.[6] Shelly's persona states in the film that she wants to document the various bomb shelters in ʿOtef ʿAza during the 2008–9 war. The film resorts to an extreme form of a single and intimate point of view with Shelly as the subject in front of and behind the lens. Shelly often turns her camera upside down or sideways to create immediate, physical, and highly textured spaces in close-

Figure 5.2 *Blonde* (2017). "A camera is a very ethical thing"—the protecting womb of the bomb shelter. Courtesy of the Sapir Academic College and Sharon Shelly and Oshrat Stern.

ups. She shares her sensation of the concrete she lies on inside the shelter as hot or cold, and she sexualizes these spaces (e.g., when she enters a round shelter she reflects, "[This shelter] is very inviting to stay inside it. Sort of like a vagina [*kus*]"). She is embedded in these spaces, and, in turn, these shelters embody for her a space of protection and fecund solitude. The film appropriates an Israeli masculine public icon—the shelter as a metonym for firmness—into the domain of the feminine, intimate, and fragile. It gradually becomes apparent that in her "constant going back to the place of trauma," the filming of the shelters is meant for Shelly as a therapeutic undertaking, possibly to deal with her previous wars or other horrifying experiences from the past. The shelters she visits are thus substituting for other protective spaces and conditions that she desires. Toward the film's end, Shelly ambles into the Park of Good Wishes. Ultimately, here it is not only the shelter that safeguards her but the camera itself that turns into a protective device: "The camera is a lot of fun. Like a mother. Like a father. Like a [male] lover. With the camera, you can be sure/safe [*betuḥa*] that it won't attack you and won't rape you. . . . A camera is a very ethical thing."

One may dismiss these personal musings (not the experiences Shelly might have had in the past) and highly sexualized language and visual innuendos as "first world" problems, spoils, and privileges in the face of death and massive destruction across the border. The intimate and personal tone of the film should not be mistaken for the depoliticization of the realties con-

cerning Israel and Gaza, however. Some of Shelly's most personal revelations are often abruptly disrupted by switching to the pressing political realities of this border/war zone; likewise, the political conditions provide her the fodder to delve into the private. She resists the appropriation of the female body to the nation. Shelters and borders are at times masculine, solid, and definite, and at other times they are feminized, sensitive, and accepting. This becomes most patent when Shelly is shot from inside a round, tunnel-like shelter; appearing and disappearing against the circular bright light outside the edge of the tunnel, Shelly reflects as she peeks inside, "Will I be entitled [*ezkeh*] to be part of the ethos? The male ethos of the shelters? The male ethos of Zionism?" Then, smiling flirtatiously as she lies against the shelter's concrete, Shelly concludes, "Maybe this way [possibly by dying in a shelter] I'll get into your ethos. Hopefully the ethos doesn't get into me."

The homology Shelly renders between her vulnerability and the collective Palestinian/Gazan pain and life under threat is imbricated in her notion that the camera she is facing is "a very ethical thing." The film provides only one clear look at Gaza—from atop a shelter near the border as Shelly lies supine and reflects: "From here, Gaza looks very exposed/vulnerable [*ḥasufa*], the ruins of Gaza, of this Western Negev. I wanted to return to these fields . . . what a caressing sun. It is so beautiful here. So horrible." In these reflections, the film connects between Shelly's place and Gaza, and yet it sets this whole region apart from the rest of the country. This gulf between the here and there is broached by Shelly when she reveals that her husband and three daughters are spending the war in Tel Aviv, where "people don't lie down on the ground in a concrete shelter in the middle of the day . . . we have sheltered ourselves to death. The government has sheltered us to death."[7]

The text of a solemn and sensual poem written by Shelly is interspersed throughout *Blonde*. One stanza reads:

> I could be your field
> and you'll open furrows in me
> and sow and reap and irrigate as you wish
> however you please
> I'll whisper to you
> don't stop
> there's no border ahead

The repeated reference to borders, both personal-psychological and material, and the fluidity between the personal and the political spur us to read "no border ahead" not only as an erotic call for the lover but also as a po-

litical fantasy whereby Gaza and ʿOtef ʿAza form an undivided space with the fields and flowers for which the filmmaker pines.

The dilemma of home, belonging, and borders comes into sharp focus in films about the so-called Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005.[8] In their work on the place/Place in Jewish and Zionist thought, Zeli Gurevitch and Gideon Aran assert that the entire settler project following the 1967 war shook the Israeli sense of interiority—the ability to delineate the contours, borders, and limits of the political body, namely, the state.[9] How should one conceptualize, then, the forced evacuation or return of these Gaza Strip Jewish settlers back into Israel proper, and how does one tell a story of displacement where, within the broader context, these same people are part of a colonial project that involves the uprooting and displacement of the indigenous Palestinian population?

In 2005, Sapir pitched this theme of Israel's disengagement from Gaza to its students, resulting in a series of films about the disengagement experience. Both *In the Freimans' Kitchen* (Hadar Bashan, 2007) and *We Were Like Dreamers* (Yehudit Damari, 2007) portray heart-wrenching tales of uprooting. Although these are both documentaries made by film students residing in former Gaza settlements and following the disengagement over a two-year period, the films differ greatly in their cinematic language. Damari documents the minute details of her family's experience in the period leading up to the evacuation. The positioning of the camera and its movements accentuate the upheaval in the settlement of Gan-Or as its residents are ordered to evacuate. The bond to the place is most patent with the citron grove the father grew and that he has to abandon now. Bashan follows her elderly neighbors Yaʿacov and Miriam in their debates and preparations for the looming eviction from their home in the settlement of Neve Dkalim. Unlike Damari's camera, hers is static and contemplative, with the kitchen as nearly the only space portrayed in this film. With no voice-over or questions from the filmmaker, the drama unfolds from within the conversations this loving couple has.[10] Most strikingly, what should have been the film's climax—the actual eviction and the sporadic confrontations with the security forces in Neve Dkalim—is absent. Instead, the camera lingers on the empty kitchen as a metonym for the lost home. Soon, Israeli bulldozers will level this house. Bulldozers, abandoned and razed houses, uprooted trees, eviction, and displacement are all part of Palestinian suffering and the grammar of dispossession. In both *In the Freimans' Kitchen* and *We Were Like Dreamers*, the interjection of those iconic Palestinian elements into the reality of Israeli settlers on the eve of their eviction from Gaza can hardly

create equivalency between the two parties, yet, most likely unintentionally, it opens a space for viewers to reexamine national and personal aphorisms about home and belonging.

Not surprisingly, the two films rarely address local Gazans, and in the few cases where the Palestinian presence is broached, it is often in the context of terrorism. Put differently, the filmmakers' rendering of the settlers' embeddedness/displacement is empathic vis-à-vis the settlers' relationships to their homes. However, embeddedness in this context cannot be complete or organic if it is devoid of the Gazans who have been inhabiting this space—both the 1948 refugees and the families who have resided there for many generations. In this sense, Shelly's *Blonde* is indeed phantasmatic in broaching the notion that Gaza and ʿOtef ʿAza form an undivided space; fields and flowers for which the filmmaker pines, but not the Gazan people, populate this fantasy. Ultimately, then, in *Blonde* and the two documentaries about disengagement, the elision of the Palestinian Gazans harkens back to the early Zionist dictum "a land without [a] people for a people without a land."[11]

Coexistence and Rupture: Avner Faingulernt and Macabit Abramson's *Men on the Edge: Fishermen's Diary* and *War Matador*

"Between Gaza and Ashkelon, in a closed military zone, there existed a rare coexistence between Palestinians from Gaza and Jewish settlers from Nisanit (in the Gaza Strip). The rules of the game are different from anywhere else in Israel. The Palestinians were the bosses—they owned the boats and the fish; the Jews were the hired workers and the security guards at sea." These are the opening titles of Avner Faingulernt and Macabit Abramson's *Men on the Edge: Fishermen's Diary* (2005), filmed from spring 1999 to summer 2003. The film focuses on the Gazan brothers Issa and Suhell and two Israelis. The men of the Gazan Saʿdalla family cross into Israel regularly to fish in Israeli territorial waters. Moti Tanaʿami is a former Israeli security guard and now works as a fixer for the Palestinians—he escorts them from the Gazan-Israeli barrier to the Israeli Shikma Beach and coordinates with the Israeli Coast Guard fishing schedules.[12] (Without an Israeli companion, Gazan fishermen could not enter the sea north of the Gaza shores.) It was Issa who found Moti after he had left his wife and children and who offered him a job with the Saʿdallas. Eli Betito is an Israeli fisherman who works and lives with the Saʿdallas at the shores of Shikma during fishing seasons. Over the course of the film, the main subjects share with each other private

matters concerning children, marriage, divorce, and financial hardships. Politics is never broached directly but hovers over their concerns about the prospects of these people's work and coexistence.

Whereas the word *coexistence* often connotes a peaceful and tranquil cohabitation of two or more groups, *coexistence* in both the film and the filmmakers' comments about it refers more literally to a variety of interpersonal relationships and connections between the Gazan fishermen and their Jewish-Israeli counterparts, which range from cooperation and playful interactions to resentment, jealousy, betrayal, and competition. It is to be understood, then, as a destined codependence of living and working side by side. Likewise, in addressing collaboration between the Gazan and Israeli characters in this film, clearly the "two sides" do not have equal choice in entering this engagement. The conditions of exchange, collaboration, and mutual access addressed in the film are always determined by the occupying power, and the two groups are never on an equal footing.

In her book *In Spite of Partition*, Gil Hochberg (2007) critiques the "separatist imagination"; for her, the cultural commonalities and entangled destinies of Palestinians and Israelis render the notion of two partitioned peoples untenable. Similarly, the Gazan-Israeli codependency in this film undermines the notion of two discrete groups with vying, zero-sum national agendas. To wit, although the ties between Palestinians and Israelis in *Men on Edge* are not born out of a political agenda or even motivated by human-ethical convictions, practicality and pragmatic strategies spur the "two sides" to fish together and collaborate. The film's two Israelis attempt to distance themselves from all things Arab—people, culture, and language (although Moti and Eli know Arabic, all conversations between the Gazans and the Israelis are in Hebrew), and although Moti states once, "We are one family," more common are pronouncements like Eli's "We don't want them [the Palestinians and the Saʿdallas] at all. May God take them all at once." Eli also flaunts his ability to exploit the Saʿdallas; whenever he is in need of any material goods—food, carts, knives—he can get them for free from the Saʿdallas. But the camera counteracts these vitriolic, and at times plainly racist, anti-Arab/Palestinian statements with its portrayal of people's actions, comportment, and actual preferences. Ironically, the only audiocassette Moti seems to listen to is of Arab popular music (Avner Faingulernt, interview, February 29, 2020); when he listens to the Israeli radio, he is dismayed that he cannot relate to it. Likewise, both Moti and Eli are clearly most comfortable and relaxed when they eat, joke, and share private stories with Issa and Suhell.

Figure 5.3 *Men on the Edge* (2005). Israeli and Gazan fishermen at sea. Courtesy of Avner Faingulernt and Macabit Abramson.

Eli learns from Suhell the art of fishing, and when he feels confident enough as a fisherman, he leaves the hut in Shikma and gathers some Israelis from Ashkelon to compete with his former employers—the Saʿdallas—over the fish at sea. However, Eli's undertaking turns into a farcical failure when the Israeli crew proves inept at this work. In the fishing hut in Shikma, Moti and the Saʿdallas watch TV reports of violent confrontations between the Ashkelonian fishing crew and the Gazans. What follows is a period when, even though it is a high fishing season, both the Gazan fishermen and the Israeli fishermen from Ashkelon hold off, the Gazans because they fear the Israelis and the latter for their fishing incompetence.

Eli eventually returns to work with the Saʿdallas. Yet again, during the time of closure in the West Bank and Gaza after the outbreak of the Al-Aqsa uprising of 2000, Eli wants to seize this opportunity to work without the Gazans. Based on past experiences, Moti dismisses him: "We can't work as hard as they do." The film concludes with the abandoned fishing shore of Shikma, where coworking relations between Gazans and Israelis are impossible due to new restrictions on travel between the Gaza Strip and Israel.

Figure 5.4 *War Matador* (2011). The war on Gaza as a spectacle. Courtesy of Avner Faingulernt and Macabit Abramson.

Men on the Edge challenges some Israeli stereotypes of Palestinians/Arabs. Moreover, some of those demeaning characterizations such as cunningness, cowardice, sluggishness, incompetence, and betrayal seem more suitable to the Israelis of the film than to their Gazan counterparts. Arguably, though, despite the strong diegetic and extradiegetic evidence for the friendship and trust Faingulernt and Abramson developed with the Gazan fishermen and their families, Eli and Moti ultimately emerge as the more rounded characters precisely because of their flaws. This brings to the fore dilemmas about the structural limits in the representation of the Other in terms of both the production context and film reception. Specifically, viewers can only speculate as to how the political structures within which the Gazan fishermen work and live affect their actions in front of the camera, the extent to which they need to police their speech in the presence of Jewish Israelis, and the unspoken terms of the filmmakers' access into the lives of the Palestinian characters that resulted in their portrayal as plainly hospitable and magnanimous. These power dynamics as manifested in speech acts also involve the sovereign Israeli subjects of the film; Eli and Moti are the more rounded characters mostly because they can state candidly their opinions, even racist views, knowing that there are no detrimental consequences to expressing them.

War Matador (2011) is set in ʿOtef ʿAza during the 2008–9 winter war on Gaza and in a corrida (bullfight). Whereas *Men on the Edge* is, overall, a tale of Israeli-Gazan connections, interpersonal exchanges, and coexis-

tence over a period of four years, *War Matador*, which took only twenty days to shoot, is about hostility, destruction, base jingoism, xenophobia, and military and personal aggression.[13] Through intercutting between the bullfighting and Israeli onlookers watching the bombing of Gaza from the hills of ʿOtef ʿAza, the corrida arena becomes a metaphor for the spectacle of an unfolding war and dehumanization of the other that make violence possible as in the following exchange:

> VISITOR They [the Gazans] don't value human life.
> FAINGULERNT Do we?
> VISITOR Certainly. Look what we're doing for one captive/prisoner of war. . . .[14]
> FAINGULERNT We kill 850 people.
> VISITOR Yes (*raising his voice and stretching his hand as if commanding his followers*), we should kill, we should have killed 20,000. Eight hundred fifty is not enough.

Yoav, a local security officer, gloats as he follows the air bombardment of Gaza: "Look how beautiful, you see? That's phosphorus. It causes horrible burns." Anticipating the fall of additional bombs, he then directs Faingulernt where to aim his camera. Likewise, an owner of a local eatery states proudly, "War is good for the Jewish people . . . because the world has to understand that we can kill, too. You have to use force. Yes, wipe them out. Humiliate them until they beg for a cease-fire, and while they are begging, intensify the firepower . . . then crush them even more. And finally, when they're totally humiliated, negotiate."

The issue at hand in addressing these and other exchanges is not whether they are representative. It is doubtful that most Israelis would welcome these extreme statements; *War Matador* includes several characters who question the morality in Israel's war on Gaza. But, to return to this chapter's pivotal inquiry, one ought to reflect on the sensibilities of filmmakers who have chosen to live, raise families, make films, and teach in an area known for its right-wing strongholds. More specifically, what modes of representation and what cinematic grammar can filmmakers such as Avner Faingulernt, a progressive and pro-peace filmmaker and an academic whose works offer a damming critique of Israel's sociopolitical policies, develop and employ to depict the social and military-political realities in this border/war zone they call home?

The reality of coexistence in *Men on the Edge* (ending in 2003) and its rupture in *War Matador* (winter of 2008–9) are not simply a matter of new

military-political developments but are intrinsic to the films' aesthetics. The contemplative qualities, the patient pace, and the unhurried storytelling of *Men on the Edge* are dictated by the daily lives of the film's subjects. This film's *longue durée*, where the filmmakers follow their characters for years and, thereby, gain their trust, is accentuated by the open spaces—sea and dunes—in which people's lives take place.

Yet, one should not mistake this reflective filming style for detachment or a lack of political commitment. Faingulernt's two documentaries interweave the personal and the political of both the films' characters and the people behind the camera. Ultimately, *War Matador* is a palimpsest of a personal moment of truth and wreckage for Faingulernt. The painful personal pathos is exacerbated by the exhilaration in the Israeli communities in ʿOtef ʿAza where Faingulernt has lived. After filming *War Matador*, Faingulernt could not bear the images he captured with his camera ("I hated it") and waited for an entire year before editing the materials he had shot (interview, February 29, 2020).

Faingulernt's camera participates in the turmoil it captures during the 2008–9 war. The measured, at times minimal, camerawork of *Men on the Edge* gives way here to erratic, even convulsive, movements with off-balance shots as the camera often operates diagonally. In *Men on the Edge*, Faingulernt sought to develop a sense of naturalism, of a stable image and soundtrack, and of an organic (i.e., healthy) distance between the lens and the subjects. It is the embeddedness of the camera in *Men on the Edge* that contributes to the organic sense of the film; over the four-year period in which the film was shot, at times the filmmakers lived with their characters.

Faingulernt usually prefers the Canon XL1 camera and its lenses, but for *War Matador* he chose to work with the Sony Z7. For Faingulernt, the Sony camera's lens and shape create a visual field undergirded by immediacy and transparency that, in *War Matador*, results in a near collapse of the distance between the filming I/eye and the filmed subject. Whereas with the design of the Canon, the videographer does not face his or her subject head-on, with the Sony camera he used, the encounter with the subject is utterly frontal. In our interview, Faingulernt couched this difference between the two approaches to filming in Lacanian terms—the camera in *War Matador* embodies the pathological condition of psychosis—the erasure of difference between subject and object or the collapse of the symbolic. Likewise, the Sony camera allows for quick in-and-out zooming and features automatic zoom, but Faingulernt opted for manual focus and iris so that the deep focus that characterizes his other works gives way in *War Matador* to a chaotic

blur and washed-out ("burnt") images. In *Men on the Edge* the camera is situated together with the characters and moves when they move; this often requires a wide lens and a relatively deep depth of field. Conversely, in *War Matador* Gaza is shot from a distance, which necessitates the use of a long lens (zooming in) and a narrow depth of field and results in blurry images. It is ultimately the nearsightedness of the lens in *War Matador* that is a commentary on the Israeli political myopia and the people's war rallying cry.

In contrast to the embeddedness of the fishermen in time and place in *Men on the Edge* and the film's organic use of diegetic sound, *War Matador*, with its infernal qualities (smoke, fire, cries, violence, and blaring sirens), accentuates the fleeting nature of what is unfolding in front of the camera (and yet, one is left to wonder about the lasting devastating effects for Gazans). As the Israeli visitors view Gaza from Givʿat Ha-Sus (lit. the Horse Hill), they applaud the performance of Israeli airplanes (and of clowns performing there), buses load and unload people who participate in this war tourism, and aircraft evaporate on the horizon as soon as they drop the bombs on Gaza. Any spectacle ipso facto pertains to voyeurism. In *War Matador*, this unreturned gaze, objectification, and the single point of view stand in stark contrast to the proximity, the exchange, and the various perspectives *Men on the Edge* offers.

Furthermore, to create the homology between the bullfighting and the spectacle of the war on Gaza as seen from the hills surrounding it, the corrida arena in *War Matador* is shot in precisely the same visual style as the rest of the film (burned images, erratic camera movements, images in and out of focus, etc.). The rupture rendered in this film is enhanced by the disjointing of sound and image and is most evident in the corrida scenes. The intercutting to the bullfight scene elicits a sense of eeriness that partially results from this asynchronous audiovisual space—against the images of blood oozing from the bulls, the soundtrack includes nondiegetic sounds, including special effects of a knife sharpening, high-pitched metallic tones, and somber bass chords.

Ultimately, both *Men on the Edge* and *War Matador* are invested in issues pertaining to masculinity and male bondage, whose treatment in these films adds another perspective to this chapter's themes of power asymmetry, war, coexistence, and belonging regarding both Gazans and Israelis. *Men on the Edge* does not show even one woman, with the film's only female presence being the occasional soft and reflective voice-over of codirector Abramson. Gazan fishermen Issa and Suhell divulge intimate details of their marital lives. Issa, who has been married for twenty-three years, is the only adult

Figures 5.5 and 5.6 *Men on the Edge* (2005). Gazan fisherman Suhell Saʿdalla (*top*). Masculinity and male intimacy (*bottom*). Courtesy of Avner Faingulernt and Macabit Abramson.

in his family who does not have children. Issa and his (unnamed) wife tried various fertility treatments in Jordan, Egypt, and Israel, but to no avail. They delight in each other, and Issa states unequivocally that he has never contemplated marrying a second wife. Suhell, on the other hand, was forced into an arranged marriage and implies that he has never really loved his spouse.

Men on the Edge is replete with jovial references to sex and virility. In the film's first few minutes Suhell employs "big balls" as a synonym for courage and Issa informs the other men about a new medicine to treat hemorrhoids that would "make your boss want to screw you" (to which Moti replies that his boss—ʿIssa—screws him anyway, hemorrhoid medicine or not). In one scene, the members of the Saʿdalla family and Eli are having tea together. Issa is on the phone telling someone "Really [*walla*], I love [Eli] like my brother" as he kisses the Israeli fisherman on the cheek and then embraces his knees. He then adds, "Nobody goes down like Eli," and the Israeli fisherman happily accepts this distinction. These scenes exemplify a pattern of conversations and conduct that, at least for Western audiences, smacks of a homoerotic play but, within the societal context of the film, poses no threat to masculinity.

Sperm bank surfaces several times in *Men on the Edge*. In the downtime when the Gazan fishermen are waiting for permission to return to the sea until tensions with the Israeli fishermen subside, Moti asks how they pass this hiatus and what they have been doing. Issa replies with a Hebrew slang phrase "[*ʿosim*] *bayad*" that means "doing nothing and killing time" but also "masturbating." Moti banters, "Let's then open a sperm bank starting today. Everyone here masturbates. We'll bring a large can." (Issa: "and sell it.") "Right. We'll mix mine, yours, all together." Issa, who details his unsuccessful treatment to beget, concludes, "But ours is stronger than yours."

Manhood is radically different in *War Matador*, where masculinity is one-dimensional, dull, unyielding, and coercive and is tied closely to destruction (bombs penetrate the dwellings in Gaza), male chauvinism, and xenophobia. In *Men on the Edge*, the display of masculinity is often motivated by inverse national power relations where the Israeli Jew is the feminized one in these all-male interactions. More important, the men's hugging, wrestling, and touching; their perseverance at sea; and, specifically, the Gazan fishermen's welcoming, cooking, working, and providing for their families and the two Israelis suggest a multivalent, complex, and provisional masculinity that defies rigid heteronormativity, gender relations, and masculinity. It is not surprising, then, that codirectors Abramson and Faingulernt initially had

chosen "Male Womb" (Reḥem Zikhri) as the film's title. For Faingulernt, the sea, which features as a character in *Men on the Edge*, is also a metonym for femininity that is healing, bonding, and enveloping of all things that fierce masculinity threatens to destroy. Thus, the political rupture and Israeli hostility as captured in *War Matador*, namely, coexistence as an impossibility, correspond with the collapse of accommodating and inclusive sexuality and gender roles and, regarding the filmmakers, with the dislodging of one cinematic grammar in favor of a new aesthetics. Clear gender boundaries and markings in *War Matador* now coincide with the border's impervious demarcation of us versus them.

Conclusion

The films discussed here offer a multifaceted portrayal of the people and the place known as ʿOtef ʿAza and, at times, the Gaza Strip. In my conversations with Faingulernt (and in numerous other interviews he has given), he emphasized not only the uniqueness of ʿOtef ʿAza and his deep connection to it but also his distaste for Tel Aviv and, specifically, the Tel Avivian film culture with its smug, cold, and alienated/alienating positions (e.g., interview, February 29, 2020). In works from Israel's film center and unlike the films discussed here, the basis for any Israeli-Gazan contact is the humanitarian discursive paradigm in which Israel has the (medical) know-how and the will to help innocent Gazans.[15] The distancing emphasis on moral exceptionalism and technological/medical superiority in this kind of cinema perpetuates rather than attenuates power relations between the occupying forces and the occupied people. What facilitates the unique positions and subjectivities in films from ʿOtef ʿAza is the embeddedness of people—the film subjects and filmmakers—in the place. These works opt for filming at eye level, both literally and figuratively, and they are often the result of an extended time the filmmakers spent with their subjects. Put differently, in some of these works, it is the films' diegetic and nondiegetic *longue durée* and the connection of the filmmakers to this place—ʿOtef ʿAza/the Western Negev—that facilitate the trusting relations between the people in front of the camera and behind it.

Media, and specifically TV coverage—cold, remote, exploitative, and sensational—are often present in the films about Gaza and ʿOtef ʿAza. In counterdistinction to most of the films discussed here, TV reportage within the films' diegesis offers static relations to interviewees (e.g., in terms of

camera angles and distance), and the media coverage of Gazans' suffering is xenophobic and resorts to euphemisms and sterile language.

I have focused thus far on what is ontologically presented and heard in these films, but what is absent also deserves attention. One narrative device that appears in numerous Israeli films about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the summoning of the Holocaust, oftentimes either to exonerate the Israeli soldier (e.g., the allusion to "never again" as a hermeneutic device to explain the soldiers' brutality against Palestinians or even to proffer that the Israelis/Jews are the actual victims), to suggest in some fashion a homology between the atrocities in Europe in World War II and those committed against the Palestinians (the victim who turns perpetrator), or to broach the ethical dilemma head-on by asking: "How can we, Jews, who experienced the horrors of the Holocaust, commit crimes against the Palestinians" (a statement that, ultimately, intimates Jewish moral superiority)?[16] Some of the films discussed here reference the Holocaust, but in none does the Holocaust turn into a pivotal theme or constitute a motivating force in the story. One biographical explanation for this discrepancy between mainstream Israeli cinema and the films made by those who reside in ʿOtef ʿAza is that the whole area of the Western Negev has traditionally had large populations of immigrants from Africa and Asia for whom the Holocaust is not part of family history. But the main reason for the relative lack of references to the Holocaust is the immediacy and embeddedness of these works. The films engage not in Jewish suffering and a colossal trauma of a different time and place but in local and extant sociocultural and political dilemmas.

Returning to *18 Kilometers*, the film gets its title from the tale of one of the main characters, Boaz, a security officer who works and lives in Sderot. His father, an employee at the Public Work Department, was killed in a car accident outside Sderot, next to a signpost he had erected. Boaz persists in trying to correct the erroneous distance shown on this signpost, which lists the distance between Sderot and Gaza as nineteen rather than eighteen kilometers. A sinecure in this department who worked with Boaz's father dismisses Boaz's efforts: "What difference does it make, a kilometer here, a kilometer there?" With neither the number 18 nor the number 19 on the signpost for most of the film, the repeated images of the arrow pointing to Gaza transform the arrow from a semiotic sign to a metaphor blurring distance and proximity. Indeed, the only text on the DVD cover other than the film's title is "so close, but yet so far." Is it Gaza that is so close and so far away from Sderot, or is it actually Sderot/ʿOtef ʿAza and Gaza that together

are so close and so far from Israel's center? Circling back, then, to the tenor of several films discussed here, "so close, but yet so far" might ultimately intimate the idea entertained by several local filmmakers of a contiguous area consisting of ʿOtef ʿAza and Gaza that stands as a social and/or geographic entity, at times with, and at times without, its Palestinian inhabitants, but certainly in counterdistinction to the rest of Israel.

Notes

1 Literally, ʿOtef ʿAza translates as the area "wrapping Gaza." ʿOtef ʿAza epitomizes Israel's socioeconomic periphery, and its residents are deemed second-class citizens. From the standpoint of Israel's periphery, the appellation *tzfoni* (northern) in reference to Tel Aviv's wealthy neighborhoods suggests snobbism, hipsterism, complacency, and detached neoliberalism and progressivism. For the media treatment of Israel's periphery, see Avraham (1993) 2000. For the cinematic portrayal of Israel's center from the standpoint of the periphery and vice versa, see Shemer 2013.

2 I use *border* in this chapter in deference to the way most Israelis (filmmakers included) do. Given the history of Palestine, many understandably object to the address of this boundary demarcation as a border.

3 The motivation for Avner Faingulernt's founding the School of Audio and Visual Arts at Sapir was precisely to "unearth the greatest treasure Israel possesses"—the mosaic of people in ʿOtef ʿAza/the Western Negev and their organic connection to the place. His design was to offer an alternative to the hegemonic Israeli culture in this geographic and sociocultural periphery (interview, February 29, 2020).

4 Alsheich and Yehezkel's film is also known as *The Chicken or the Egg*.

5 For discussions of Israeli/Palestinian passing and cast, see Bardenstein 2005; Shohat 2010, 237–73.

6 After its premiere in Festival Darom in Sderot, the film was shortened and has the new title *Bomb Shelter Named Passion*.

7 This resonates with a sense shared by many that ʿOtef ʿAza has been cynically exploited by the Israeli government for political gains. See, for example, Faingulernt 2012.

8 The Israeli disengagement from Gaza involved the unilateral dismantling in August 2005 of all Israeli settlements in the Gaza Strip and the evacuation of the Israeli military bases and approximately eight thousand troops.

9 "The Six-Day War severed the automatic conflation of the Land of Israel with the State of Israel" (Gurevitch and Aran 1991, 36).

10 The use of a static camera and the absence of leading questions in this film are partly due to circumstances—during the evacuation, the filmmaker was not allowed to enter the settlement and she left fixed cameras in the Freimans' kitchen (Faingulernt, personal communication, August 15, 2020).

11 It is beyond the scope of this chapter to engage thoroughly with the origins of the slogan and whether it ever came into widespread use among Zionists in the first few decades of the twentieth century.

12 Shikma Beach is also known as Erez Beach or Dugit Beach. Until the Israeli disengagement from Gaza in 2005, it was inside an enclosed military area saddling Gaza and Israel; with the withdrawal from Gaza, the area came under Palestinian rule.

13 The principal shooting took place in January 2009. The Independence Day celebration scene at the film's conclusion was shot in May of that year.

14 This is likely a reference to Israel's retaliation for Hamas's abduction of Israeli corporal Gilad Shalit in 2006.

15 See, for example, *Muhi: Generally Temporary* (Rina Castelnuovo and Tamir Elterman, 2017). This is one of only a handful of Israeli films about Gaza/'Otef 'Aza that were made by filmmakers who do not reside in this area. In contrast to the meager treatment of this region in mainstream Israeli cinema, a significant number of Israeli documentaries and narrative films have been made about the West Bank.

16 For a discussion of the Israeli perpetrator-victim dilemma, see Morag 2013, 131–53.

Nayrouz Abu Hatoum and
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6

Attending to the Fugitive

Resistance Videos from Gaza

"We all have our aboveground life and our below ground one," wrote one interlocutor, a caterer in Gaza. He then shared images of himself conducting some sort of military training. The images were of young men wearing fatigues as they lay on a sandy ground; with rifles aimed and faces painted, they blended in with the greenery around them. The images were of a temporary type, on a social media platform that allows you one look. "Al-hayah bidha tistamir" (Life insists on continuing), he then wrote, as the images faded away. How do we read this glimpse, and more broadly the visuals of contemporary militant resistance, whose perspectives have been drowned out, submerged by spectacles of humanitarian catastrophe and "war on terror" violence?

In this chapter, we read such visuals from the Gaza Strip within a broader history of a Palestinian tradition of visual resistance. These visuals appear and disappear in an often controlled fashion. We refer to the strategies of

choosing when to be visible and when to remain in opacity as operating through visual politics (Hochberg 2015). We specifically center our analysis on two visual materials released by the Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades (or Qassam), the military wing of Hamas. Qassam videos are widely circulated in the media or social media and can be searched for by using Arabic, Hebrew, or English keywords. They are broadcast by leading Arabic-language media outlets such as Al Jazeera, Al Mayadeen, RT Arabic, and local media. They are also accessible on YouTube and can be found embedded in Arabic, Hebrew (Israeli), and English online news websites.

We read these videos on their own terms: as resistance films that are produced and circulated according to a particular logic that we seek to analyze. We ask: How do these visuals, and others in violent colonial contexts, negotiate visibility versus opacity? We attempt to understand this logic from its "submerged perspective" (Gómez-Barris 2017), which we extend to include a subterranean perspective. Submerged and subterranean perspectives, on the one hand, mean submerged/subterranean in the literal sense—whether under the sea or in the subterranean of the land, where Qassam fighters claim opacity in collusion with the earth against the colonial surveilling of Gaza; they also mean submerged/subterranean in an analytical sense: one that rejects colonial logics and epistemologies and instead strives to generate new modes of connectivity with the outside world.[1] Part of the colonial logic and epistemologies that have discursively contained Gaza are those of "terrorism" and "humanitarianism," and we argue that the visual politics of the Qassam videos reject both of these frames.

Submerged and subterranean perspectives can be murky and are often criminalized, and thus fugitive, making this risky business, as is the case with Qassam, which has been declared a terrorist organization by the United States.[2] Our analysis is based in anti-colonial and abolitionist politics.[3] It rejects the authority of colonial states to designate who is marked as "terrorist" and who is not. In addition, we are not interested in questions of the efficiency of this form of resistance or the implications of the militarization of Palestinian struggle on the question of Palestine or the regional politics. Instead, we consider the subterranean and the submerged not only as our site of research interest but as an epistemological terrain that mediates and dictates the relationship between politics above ground (or water) and below. While much of the resistance operates in opacity (Glissant 1997), we take the breaks in this opacity—whether as an intentional strategy by Qassam or by the silencing by the Israeli state—as our points of entry for analysis

of how visual politics mobilize fugitive forms, which signal to the surfacing potential of resistance that escapes the grip of colonial surveillance and confinement. Thus, our task is to attend to the fugitive.

A Break in Visual Containment

On November 19, 2012, six days into one of the Israeli wars on Gaza, Israeli television news ("Channel 2 News") broadcast live what seemed like an unexpected encounter initiated by the channel's journalist.[4] It was during the evening news, which is peak ratings time, when the Israeli host reported to the viewers that the Gaza-based Al-Aqsa TV station was broadcasting its (Israeli) show live to Palestinian viewers with simultaneous translation into Arabic.[5] The Israeli host then asked his studio technicians to stream the Al-Aqsa channel on the studio's screens. As viewers of this unfolding event, we see a round table in the Israeli TV studio with the show's host and six correspondents and political analysts. Behind them are two screens projecting Al-Aqsa TV live, which is streaming Israeli TV live. There is less than a second delay in this circus of screen projections. We watch a screen within a screen within a screen. What unfolds is an endless trajectory of screens mirroring the event, and we hear voices echoing voices and translations over other translations. The Al-Aqsa TV screen, viewed through the Israeli TV, streams the roundtable with a subtitle of breaking news in Arabic: "A pregnant woman was injured by the Zionist shelling in Shaʿaf area east of Gaza City." The communication lasts a little over two minutes: first the Israeli host announces the communication with Al-Aqsa TV as an "experiment." Then he speaks directly to the Al-Aqsa TV program. After the Israeli host and the Palestinian translator confirm that they can indeed hear each other, the Palestinian translator tells the host in clear Hebrew that he used to watch him when he was incarcerated in an Israeli prison. The translator then asks if the news of a cease-fire was true. Fifty-five seconds into the communication, Al-Aqsa TV changes its footage and streams Qassam's military videos with messages in Hebrew and Arabic addressing Israelis, which are visible on the screens behind the Israeli host. In response, the Israeli TV studio camera zooms in on the face of the host, who seems slightly bewildered by the Al-Aqsa visuals. The Israeli host proclaims to his new Palestinian audience that there is no scenario in which Hamas would be victorious; the Palestinian translator—speaking through the mirroring of screens—uses this audiovisual moment to send a message in Hebrew and Arabic to counter the Israeli narrative of the attack on Gaza, proclaiming

to his new Israeli audience that Gaza has "a strong front." He continues by saying that the Israeli Iron Dome has proved to have failures, but he is abruptly cut off and the communication ends.

It is not clear what the Israeli host wanted to achieve. From our position as viewers, we were confronted with a scene of an audiovisual loop and screens within other screens, and if one did not know the context or languages and the setting of this encounter, the resistance to colonial visual confrontation would have easily been missed. We argue that in this encounter, Palestinians did not simply wish to be heard or seen by Israelis, nor did the interaction illustrate the work of "having a voice" that breaks Israeli conceptions about Palestinians in Gaza as terrorists or victims. Instead, this form of communication directs our analysis to the working of a submerged perspective. The knowledge that the Palestinian interpreter obtained during his incarceration, and which he made clear by signaling to his time in prison, is used to reverse the working of an intrusion that was initiated by the Israeli television and therefore to generate a counterdiscourse to that of victimhood or terrorism. It also reveals Hamas's ability to break through the visual and sound barrier of Israeli propaganda to its own audiences by countering the host's statement, which likely was intended to reassure Israeli audiences that the Israeli military was in control, through an assertion of strength and commitment to resistance. In other words, this scene reveals an unintended "break" that enabled a submerged perspective to emerge. It also is an example of the visual politics that determines decisions on visibility versus opacity and informs our reading of the two Qassam videos that we analyze in this chapter.

Ecologies of Resistance

Ethnographic attention to Gaza reveals resistance as part of its ecology—the people and the place. In Gaza, resistance is widely viewed as justified and necessary for life to continue because, generally speaking, Gazans understand themselves as victims of a brutal occupation and the settler colonial project rather than as humanitarian cases (or crises). They also reject the terrorism discourse. Close attention to the language used by the resistance fighters reveals that human/nonhuman relations sustain their resistance, that the resistance is in collusion with the earth itself, that humans and earth are contingent on each other. In the cases we analyze, that collusion is with the clay layer of the earth that has enabled the tunnels of Gaza, and with the sea, which provided the resistance with munitions that had been lying for over 100 years in two sunken British colonial warships.

While the resistance we speak about is no monolith (all of the Palestinian political groups have military wings), we focus on Qassam because it is the largest and most powerful segment of the resistance in Gaza (and in all of Palestine). While the Qassam Brigades are the military wing of Hamas, we are also careful to not conflate the two. An inherent tension between Hamas's political pragmatism and Qassam's resistance logics has been noted by several political analysts, and the two entities in fact have separate outlets (and aesthetics) for the videos they produce. Importantly, we are not interested in promoting the politics of either Hamas or Qassam. Indeed, in recent years more evidence has emerged of their authoritarian rule, their violence against people in Gaza, and their corruption. Moreover, their politics are not explicitly (or even implicitly) anti-capitalist, as they have inherited and expanded on the neoliberal structures left by the Palestinian Authority in the wake of Oslo.[6] While this troubles the framing of their resistance as anti-colonial, there remains something fugitive in their mode of operation. In other words, when it comes to Hamas and Qassam, there is still resistance that might be considered anti-colonial within a particular visual politics that we attend to here.[7]

Palestinians have always engaged in forms of resistance that are not militarized or engineered by Hamas. Scenes from the weekly popular and nonviolent grassroots-organized Great March of Return, for example, have been widely circulated in social and mainstream media, and they are invaluable material for analysis.[8] These marches offer different forms of submerged perspectives that inform different resistance strategies. Although these marches were aboveground resistance, they too were in collusion with the earth and its atmosphere. For instance, the wind coming from the west helped marchers produce a wall of smoke from burning tires in order to block the view of Israeli snipers to the east, thus offering protection to the protesters. While the Great March of Return were an intentional spectacle created to foster visibility, and while they meant to direct the world's attention toward Palestinian "rights," the Qassam videos here, we argue, operated outside of the frame of "rights" as they were not made to appeal to the human rights community. We argue that their creators have rejected the forms of visibility called for in the regime of human rights and instead operated under a different politics—one of temporary (or momentary) opacity and a different calculus of visibility.

By now there is a growing corpus of work on another submerged perspective: the resistance films of the Palestine Liberation Organization in the 1960s and 1970s, which gave a platform for Palestinians to self-narrate and

represent their story of displacement and dispossession but also fostered a space for national resistance and imagination for a future return.[9] In these works that are in part educational and in part nostalgic, one cannot deny there is a certain romance within scholarship about this era of resistance that has been in part enabled, we argue, by temporal distancing, since viewers are analyzing these images after many decades of historical and political transformations. Anti-colonial resistance in colonial contexts is almost always labeled as terrorism, a label that taints anything and everything close to it. However, temporal distancing has offered a safer space from which to analyze resistance and the media it produces. Even our analysis has by now a certain amount of temporal distancing; the first video is from 2014, and while the second is more recent, it appeared in a "safer" context. However, Qassam is still criminalized as a terrorist organization at war with Israel, so it utilizes its own forms of temporal distancing as a strategy of information control, especially in the context of heavy Israeli surveillance. For example, sometimes Qassam releases videos right after the event has taken place. Often these videos function as a visual proof that the event occurred as it is captured by Qassam cameras while the Israeli army attempts to hide it, such as the video of the Nahal Oz tunnel operation discussed later. Sometimes Qassam waits to release its videos, as in the underwater video discussed in this chapter. The distance at stake is between the time of operation or event and the time of publication of these events.[10]

How, then, are we to talk about contemporary resistance in light of these risks? This question concerns not just Qassam; every single Palestinian group or faction has been added to the US Department of State's (n.d.) list of terrorist organizations with the exception of Fateh.[11] And while we are committed to the abolition of colonial structures such as the US Department of State and its terrorist designations, we are also aware of the risks, particularly as very early career scholars of Palestinian background living in the very states that make these designations.[12] However, we are also keenly aware of the paucity of analyses on Qassam's media productions.[13] As such, we are simply scratching the surface in the hope of opening a conversation that looks critically and analytically at these submerged perspectives.

The Settler Colonial Making of "the Gaza Strip"

We start from the premise that Israel is a settler colonial project that uses multiple prongs of erasing, displacing, and dispossessing Palestinians from the land. Scholars past and present have been writing about the Israeli re-

gime through the framework of settler colonialism (Abu-Lughod 2020; Barakat 2018; Salamanca et al. 2012; Sayegh 1965; Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016)—in other words, as a regime that seeks to eliminate the population and appropriate the land for the exclusive use by the Zionist state project. "The Gaza Strip" is one of the pieces of historic Palestine that has become an exceptionally inhumane space as a result of settler colonial policies. As a territorial entity, it was only born after 1948, after more than 200,000 Palestinians from the surrounding region were forced off their lands and squeezed into refugee camps in the newly designated strip of land. Before 1948, however, Gaza extended to a much broader region, which included the Naqab and North Sinai, to which the refugees are prohibited from returning by the State of Israel. For a while (1967–2005), in part through its Nahal settlement program, Israel tried to maintain settlements within the Gaza Strip. However, after Israel's "disengagement" and the uprooting of the settlements in 2005, it turned to tactics of containment (Fields 2020; Salamanca 2011; Tawil-Souri and Matar 2016). Here we attend to the resistance to these forms of containment.

Ethnographic attention to Palestinian voices alerts us to their perspective of the Gaza Strip as a site of failed settlement and a site of resistance that fundamentally rejects the settler colonial project. As a result of this resistance, "the Gaza Strip" can be thought of as what Nour Joudah (2020) describes as a settler colony without the settlers: "Gaza is confined but not defined by settler presence." While Joudah looks to urban encroachment in the face of confinement as a form of agency and resistance, we turn our focus to the perspective of the Qassam Brigades, who view the "disengagement" or the removal of settlements in 2005 as a direct result of local resistance. From this perspective, we aim to discern the politics of the visuals they circulate and the tactics they choose in doing so.

Working outside the humanitarian and terrorist discourse could be read as operating through visual sovereignty (Rickard 2011), a sovereignty that rejects acknowledgment or recognition from the colonizing state or the international humanitarian regime. In other words, visual sovereignty operates through a rejection of the colonial or imperial regimes of visual intelligibility. To unpack the grammar of Qassam videos demands from us a deeper look into the history of Palestinian resistance and a rigorous investigation into the role of Palestinian indigenous epistemology about the land and sea.

In the following, we present and analyze two of the Qassam videos. The first is from a 2014 tunnel operation against a military outpost called Nahal Oz, just across the boundaries of the Gaza Strip during the 2014 war on Gaza.

Figure 6.1 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Nahal Oz operation, premiered July 28, 2014. Image shows Palestinian fighters emerging from a tunnel.

The second is underwater footage of Qassam divers retrieving old munitions from a British warship that sank in 1917. The footage was released in September 2020 but was shot at an undisclosed earlier date.

Scene One: Qassam's Nahal Oz Operation

The Nahal Oz operation was carried out and filmed by Qassam, and the scenes we describe here are from Qassam posted video on YouTube via the Russia Today (RT) news agency on July 28, 2014.[14] The first scene is of the inside of the tunnel: all we see is earth and a person ahead crawling through an uneven narrow passage toward the light. We see the passing of a rifle from the person who holds the camera to the person ahead as dust falls the entire time. Then the camera veers and points back into the bowels of the passage, simultaneously showing the crevices and uneven rock formations. One can see a square concrete-like opening that suggests other pathways underground. As the camera focuses below, we hear noise, metal scraping the earth, jarring the soil, and the person who is ahead receiving long-range rifles from the person who is simultaneously recording while also passing equipment.

An olive-colored fabric is draped over the tunnel opening, but it is unclear whether it is used to carry the weapons or perhaps to camouflage or blind the "eye" of the tunnel. There is a pause as the first figure stands upright, holding a rifle, in full daylight. The scene cuts ahead and leaps to a

Figure 6.2 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Nahal Oz operation, premiered July 28, 2014. Image shows Palestinian fighters crossing a field toward the Israeli military installation Nahal Oz.

view where we do not see the first person, yet we hear and see the hands of the person who has been filming, who has now reached the surface. The video cuts again, and the angle and focus become jumpy as, over sounds of feet thudding on the soil, the person filming, whose shadow we can see, runs over a low hill toward his first comrade up ahead and a distant structure, some form of a fence that marks where they might be heading.

Heavy breathing and the sound of footsteps on soil accompany the scene while the two people run toward the Israeli military post where a few Qassam fighters have been waiting for them. Their faces are blurred, likely to prevent their identification, and long bleeps are used to mask their voices, but we see them sitting against the concrete wall of the military base. Viewers next see the metal gate that leads inside the Israeli military compound. Soldiers roam inside the compound, each identified by a red circle superimposed onto the footage. An Israeli soldier seems caught off guard, and it is not clear if he fires at them. We then see several guns from the Qassam fighters, who are shooting into the compound. Their voices are bleeped out, as are all their faces. There seem to be at least two Qassam cameras recording, though all the images are clearly from the view of the fighters on whom they are mounted. For example, we see the first Qassam shooting followed by a temporal loop-back where a panoramic scene of the first event is captured by a secondary camera recording the same shooting incident. Multiple

Figure 6.3 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Nahal Oz operation, premiered July 28, 2014. Image shows the Israeli military installation Nahal Oz.

Qassam fighters shoot at one Israeli; that same scene loops twice—focusing on the shooting and beating of a soldier. On the third loop, time slows as the violence is paused. We hear multiple shots, and the Israeli soldier's screams. The scene slows even more, pausing at the moment when the handle of the rifle is brought down to strike the soldier, who is lying on the ground. The video returns to normal speed as the Qassam fighters leave the scene while actively shooting and carrying rifles that they have taken from the Israeli soldiers. Then there is a cut to the tunnel, where a rifle is dropped into the earth; the individuals climb one by one into the tunnel and then pull the cloth over its opening. We then see only the crevices and walls of the tunnel, signaling both the tightness of the space and the immediate protection it provides from possible exposure.

The attack was reported in the Israeli media after the release of the video by Hamas/Qassam immediately after the attack.[15] This was twenty days into the devastating bombardment of the Gaza Strip. The temporal distancing was kept to a minimum, presumably to ensure the attack was made visible on Qassam's terms—immediately and slowed down at just the right intervals to highlight its victories in shooting and beating Israeli soldiers and capturing their weapons. Circulating visuals of the *ease* of the attack—which occurred in broad daylight with no trees or structures for cover and which had been preceded by an earlier reconnaissance mission to scope out the site of the

attack, also in broad daylight—was a humiliation to the Israeli military and a failure of their security apparatus. After all, the 2014 war on Gaza was driven by the "tunnel threat," which apparently was not being thwarted. In fact, Qassam showed that it had subverted the colonial surveillance gaze. In Arabic, the name for the opening of the tunnel is the eye, which can hold a double meaning, first as the organ that sees, that is, the opening through which Qassam fighters can see and record their view looking out from the tunnel and plan their next steps accordingly. Through gazing out from the tunnel into the landscape, these fighters were confronting the visuality of the colonial surveilling gaze (Mirzoeff 2011), not simply seeking to be seen or recognized but to oscillate between opacity and visibility on their own terms. Second, the eye is a mechanism that can close and prevent others from seeing. When an eye is covered, the vision is blocked not only for those inside the tunnel but also for the Israeli surveilling gaze enabled through cameras on posts or drones. This double meaning is what allowed Qassam fighters to operate and oscillate between visibility and opacity, and to turn the surveilling eye back on the Israeli army, ultimately subverting the Israel visual regime of surveillance.

One year after the operation, an in-depth Al Jazeera special was aired in which the fighters told their own stories, offering us hints on their "submerged perspective." There were other fighters inside the tunnel who waited for seventeen days for the orders from above to act. But, after becoming physically fatigued from waiting in the tunnel for so long, they had to be replaced with a new team. These new fighters spent one day surveying the landscape from the "eye" while using the blinds to open and cover it. They also testified that the green light to carry out the operation was given by the leadership, which could verify the right timing to act. In the report, one fighter stated that carrying out the operation within a very short time frame enabled them to slip past the drones' surveilling gaze. He also emphasized how important it was for the fighters who had the cameras to run back to the tunnel to pass it to others inside so that the footage would not be destroyed or lost, as they knew that the Israeli military would be sending additional troops. The Al Jazeera special also revealed more about the underground infrastructure that supported this and other operations with complexes of tunnels with multiple branches, special rooms for resting and relaxation, and a confident group of fighters who were empowered to speak for themselves while maintaining their anonymity by masking their faces. In the Al Jazeera special we see curated messaging in which Qassam took visual sovereignty

over when, where, and how the images would be deployed to more public audiences. For example, the journalist was blindfolded by Qassam until he arrived at the location and all the men were masked. In other words, Qassam's visual politics includes a clear commitment to its right to opacity in the face of the surveilling colonizing apparatus. This was not visual messaging as humanitarian subjects transparent to the colonial gaze, and it rejected the framing of the war on terror. Instead, the messaging of this submerged perspective that determined when, where, and how to emerge—in terms of both language and visuals—is one of an anti-colonial resistance struggle.

The Archive of the Land

One way to read this submerged perspective is to attend to how it is informed by the archive of the land. Nahal Oz is well known to those within the Gaza Strip. This was not the earliest attack on Nahal Oz, which was the first of Israel's military outposts, founded in 1951 by the Nahal infantry brigade. A few years later it was expanded to include a kibbutz. A few years after that, on April 29, 1956, its "security coordinator" on patrol was ambushed and killed by Palestinians from the newly established Gaza Strip. Nahal Oz was one of several barriers meant to keep the people of Gaza from leaving the strip and returning to their lands; it was established with the explicit name of "Nahal members vs. Gaza."[16] It is also part of the Nahal settlement projects, which included the Gush Katif settlement block in Gaza that was dismantled with the disengagement in 2005. In 2008, Nahal Oz was attacked again, twice. How, then, should we understand the 2014 tunnel operation from the "submerged perspective" of a population that is largely composed of refugees from the lands surrounding the Gaza Strip, including the Hanajrah Bedouin, whose lands appear to be where Nahal Oz sits today? How does intergenerational knowledge preserve and pass down the stories of the resistance against the Nahal, which was set up as an entity opposed to Gaza? It is also evident from the Al Jazeera (2015) report about the operation that Qassam fighters knew about the history of the Israeli military post at Nahal Oz. If Palestinians in Gaza view the resistance against the settlements that were later dismantled in 2005 as anti-colonial resistance, then these attacks on Nahal Oz signify a complete rejection of their enclosure within the Gaza Strip. Just as the Nahal settlements spanned land inside and outside the Gaza Strip, so, too, have the targets of anti-colonial resistance.

Scene Two: "Seeking the Path" Scenes from the Sea

The sea was hiding a treasure that nobody expected was the description circulating on social media and mainstream Arabic media of a shocking discovery: the diving unit of Qassam, known as the frogs, had found the remains of two British warships in the depths of Gaza's sea (Al Jazeera 2020). The ships contained old missiles, which the Qassam divers recovered and repurposed. On September 13, 2020, Al Jazeera featured an in-depth documentary investigation of the discovery, which includes interviews with Qassam and Hamas members who walk the viewer through the story of the discovery. The documentary features talking head interviews with historians and politicians, a leading journalist who guides us through the story, and underwater footage of Qassam divers.

It is not clear exactly when the events depicted in the Qassam footage of the divers exploring the ship and retrieving missiles took place. The Israeli interviewees claim they knew the ship was there but could not reach it. The Qassam interviewees explain that they immediately formed a special unit to investigate what was found in the ships and to intensify the search in the sea. The divers found hidden missiles inside the two ships, which are located eight hundred meters below the surface. Because of the number of missiles and their weight, it took a long time to recover them from the sea. In the video we see the frog unit diving into the depths. We see four or five divers extracting steel missiles from the body of the ships, using hammers and then pulling the missiles out with ropes with the help of small boats. The ships belong to the British navy and were sunk in front of Gaza's shores in 1917, during World War I. Although the missiles were hidden under the sea for more than a century, Qassam found them stored in insular units in one of the ships and was able to retrieve and reuse them.

The gap between the finding and recovering of the components of the warships and the publication of the news about them remains unknown, as does the time elapsed between the munitions' retrieval and the reappropriation of their steel for missiles. The temporal distancing by Qassam is employed to offer a vague timing of the use of the material recovered from the sea. This is especially remarkable given the military restrictions on and surveillance of Palestinians accessing the sea; they are restricted to less than ten nautical miles from the shore.[17] The temporal distancing serves to prevent the Israelis from knowing exactly when and where this discovery happened. In the documentary, an Israeli expert claims that Israel knew about the existence of the warships but for security reasons decided not to

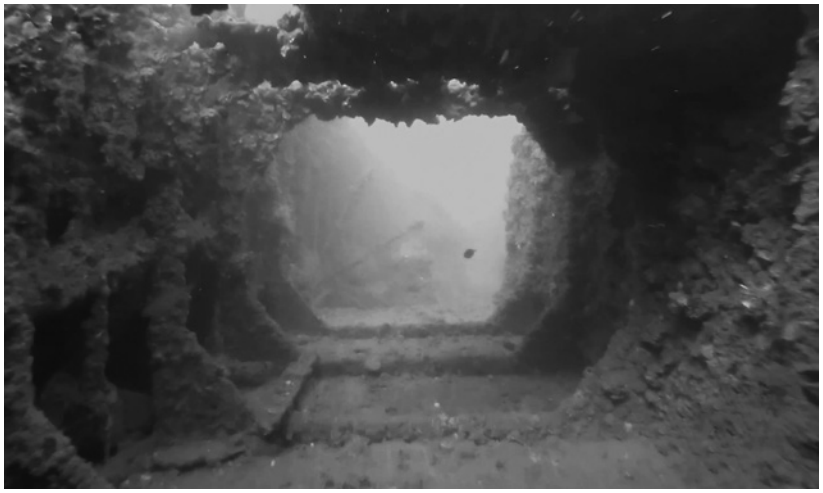

Figure 6.4 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Al Jazeera program *What Is Hidden Is Greater*, premiered September 13, 2020. Image shows the inside of a sunken British warship off the coast of Gaza.

Figure 6.5 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Al Jazeera program *What Is Hidden Is Greater*, premiered September 13, 2020. Image shows a Palestinian diver inspecting a sunken British warship off the coast of Gaza.

Figure 6.6 Screenshot of YouTube video of the Al Jazeera program *What Is Hidden Is Greater*, premiered September 13, 2020. Image shows a schematic of the sinking of British warships off the coast of Gaza in 1917.

risk their marine team in an excavation. It is worth remembering that the Israeli military occupied the Gaza Strip directly from 1967 until 2005, but during this time it did not recover anything from the ships. In the video, another Israeli expert laments that Hamas was the first to explore and excavate the ships.

The footage demonstrates professionalization of the resistance through underwater training and the purchase of diving gear and cameras; however, these tools rely on knowledge already held through intimate spatial relationships with the underwater terrain. This knowledge extends beyond a liminal moment, signaling to information passed on through generations of swimmers and divers through an information chain that is rendered absent from the spectacle of the moment, where the emphasis is on the technological tools.[18] While the underwater cameras and filming techniques are employed to document and create evidence of their capacity to discover, retrieve, and reappropriate, this footage also revives a history of competing forces for the colonization of Palestine during World War I. After two failed attempts to take Gaza, a third battle led to the British rule of Palestine shortly after the warships sank. This points to a deep history of resistance in Gaza and suggests there is a continuation of the struggle against colonization that ruptures, albeit sometimes on a small scale, the colonial narrative while simultaneously rejecting the humanitarian and terrorism frameworks. It speaks

to the struggle of decolonization that is fueled by local inherited knowledge about the sea and the land—and that which is submerged within them.

Fugitive Visual Resistance

Gaza has long been subject to a settler colonial policy of containment—not only militarily but also visually—and these policies have long been met with resistance by Palestinians. Nadia Yaqub (2018) argues that early representations produced by international relief agencies (such as the United Nations Relief and Works Agency) of Palestinian refugee in the Gaza Strip following the 1948 displacement and dispossession attempted to trap Palestinians into the humanitarian gaze that robbed them of their political agency and of ownership over their narratives and visual representation, which Palestinians continuously work to dismantle. After the 1967 Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, as described by Yaqub, Palestinians operated against this humanitarian gaze through producing their own perspectives within their work with the relief agencies. They represented their reality with their own voice and offered what as we contend here is a "submerged perspective" that challenged the colonial interpellation of their lives as on the verge of catastrophe or violence.

This humanitarian gaze has persisted, and not by accident. In the wake of the devastating bombing of Gaza during a 2008–9 campaign known as Operation Cast Lead, which resulted in the massacre of nearly fifteen hundred Palestinians, Ilana Feldman warned of the dangers of the ongoing severing of the humanitarian crises from the political conditions that created them. She quotes Israeli historian Avi Shlaim, who stated that Israel's goal for the 2009 war on Gaza was "to ensure that the Palestinians in Gaza are seen by the world simply as a humanitarian problem and thus to derail their struggle for independence and statehood" (I. Feldman 2009, 22). Instead of addressing or challenging the long-term military violence that the Israeli state inflicted on Palestinians in Gaza, the humanitarianization of Palestinians by the international community has meant that Palestinians are seen as always on the verge of humanitarian catastrophe in part because they are incapable of governing or providing for themselves; as a result, they are always in need of "developing" or "saving." Such humanitarianization functions as a mode of further racialization of Palestinians in Gaza and, in turn, mirrors the Israeli mode of racializing Palestinians as "terrorists" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2016).[19]

Sara Roy (2012) details the longer historical context of shifting paradigms that have shaped narratives and visual representations—the first

being the denial of territorial contiguity to Palestinians whose land has long been limited by the international community to "the West Bank" and "the Gaza Strip"—two artificial territorial entities taken as the starting point for most analyses. The second is the entrenchment and irreversibility of the occupation, which took a sinister turn in Gaza as a result of Israel's "disengagement" in 2005. This enabled Israel to falsely claim that Palestinians have sovereignty over the Gaza Strip, even though it has turned the territory into an open-air prison with heavily militarized borders, controlling all movement by land, air, and sea. Since the "disengagement," the word *occupation* has essentially disappeared from descriptions of Israel's policies. Instead, the rhetoric has transformed to one of "security" as a result of this "disengagement," which is the third paradigm shift. The fourth paradigm shift is the move from "occupation" to the control of "borders" and "from a political and legal issue with international legitimacy into a simple border dispute where the rules of war, not of occupation, apply" (S. Roy 2012, 77). As a result, the war discourse turns the Palestinian resistance into enemy combatants and even terrorists, and the humanitarian responsibility for the residents of Gaza moves from being Israel's concern to being a burden of the international community (the fifth paradigm shift). This humanitarian gaze is also evident in the United Nations' report declaring Gaza to be unlivable by 2020, with little to no mention of the occupation or the brutal siege leading to these living conditions.

As in Yaqub's reading of early Palestinian visual self-representations outside of these dominant discourses, we also analyze contemporary self-representations of a small but significant sliver of Palestinian society, the Qassam videos. Ours is an attempt to understand their "submerged perspectives" through the visual politics of the films. While many scholars have taken the post-2005 Gaza Strip to be a site of containment, and while it is true that many Palestinians describe the Gaza Strip as a prison, they also see their resistance as an integral part of the reason for Israel's disengagement.[20] The "submerged perspective" on this history maintains that Qassam "liberated" the Gaza Strip from direct Israeli occupation, and it aims to liberate the rest of Palestine.[21]

The *Nahal Oz Operation* and *Seeking the Path* videos, when read through a historical perspective, tell us something about the land, memory, and Palestinian intimate, intergenerational knowledge. Attending to how these videos are produced and circulated, we claim that Qassam practices "temporal distancing" between the time of the operations and the time of announcing them as a means to claim visual sovereignty over when they will

remain in opacity and when they will expose themselves. This also tells us something about the visual politics of the videos, which seek to reappropriate their visibility and set it outside of humanitarian or terrorist framing while maintaining a certain level of opacity—both literally and metaphorically. In fact, like the hall of mirrors in the exchange between Al-Aqsa TV and Israeli Channel 2 TV described at the beginning of this chapter, these resistance videos are ways of demonstrating the limits of the surveillance state's ability to control the visibility of the submerged and subterranean. As such, the videos demonstrate their anti-colonial framework, their direct collusion with the earth and sea that "provide" for their resistance—the clay layer conducive for tunnels, the sea that holds the missiles from prior colonial invasions. This collusion occurs through close relations with the earth and the sedimenting of intergenerational and intimate knowledge. Swimming, digging, and attention to the literal and metaphoric archive of the land, in addition to military training and technology, enable them to create a bulwark of resistance against Israel's settler colonial violence.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we analyzed the visual materials of Qassam through three rubrics of analysis: an anti-colonial framework, submerged and subterranean epistemologies, and the subversion of visual politics. Our positionality as insiders/outsiders is a result of our having grown up in different geographies in Palestine and outside of Palestine, but it is also a product of the colonial carceral border regime imposed by the Israeli state in the Occupied Territories. We read these visuals from this insider/outsider perspective as Palestinians; however, we share a political commitment to the liberation of Palestine and the abolition of the Zionist project. This regime intensified our geographic distancing from the Gaza Strip. Israeli restrictions and the criminalization of entering or leaving the Gaza Strip forced us to foster a different relationship to the place, one that demands creativity, imagination, and, most important, close attention to what Palestinians in Gaza are communicating through their ordinary lives and their daily resistance. We say this while being fully aware of the slippage in romanticizing Palestinians' experience in Gaza as one that falls into a binarism of resistance/resilience or subjection to state violence/victimhood. Our relationship to these Qassam-produced visuals is informed by reading into the contexts through which they are produced and circulated; it is not informed by a commitment to their particular politics. Qassam visuals represent one voice and narrative from Gaza among other narratives and

ideologies on resistance against the Israeli military regime of colonial and carceral apparatuses. This form of militant resistance falls under a larger and longer-term history of militant resistance in Palestine or by Palestinians in exile, a form that has not received adequate attention or analysis.

We can see evidence of Hamas's moves toward increasing institutionalization in the increasing professionalization of Qassam's visuals. What might have begun as rough videos capturing moments of resistance, such as the shaky real-time footage of the Nahal Oz tunnel operation, have since turned into increasingly polished productions, such as the collaboration with Al Jazeera–produced segments on the missiles found underwater. As another example, more often we see Abu ʿUbaydah, the masked spokesperson of Qassam, speaking in front of several microphones, staged as if in a large press conference. The camerawork, the editing, and the graphics have become quite polished. It is imagery meant to be seen, imagery that displays increasing military professionalization, sophistication, and capabilities. And yet, what remains consistent in these and other Qassam and Hamas videos is a political commitment to consistently expose the limits in Israeli military power as well as Qassam's growing power of resistance. Is this a visual sign of a move away from the fugitive or at least a transformation of the forms of opacity in their visual politics?

Notes

1 Like Gómez-Barris, we are uncovering "what is submerged within local geographies that have been traversed by colonialism and extractive capitalism to show the ongoing force of the colonial encounter." Submerged perspectives allow us to see local knowledge that resides within what power has constituted as extractive zones, which "contain within them the submerged perspectives that challenge obliteration" (2017, 11–12).

2 Fugitivity as a theoretical concept and as a method has largely emerged from Black scholarship. Tina Campt explains her use of fugitivity in *Listening to Images* as "not an act of flight or escape or a strategy of resistance" but rather "a practice of refusing the terms of negation and dispossession" (2017, 96). Framing Palestinian practices and knowledge in this notion of fugitivity is to highlight the refusal to accept their practice as criminal because their containment in the Gaza Strip in the first place is criminal. But it is also to bring into relief the new possibilities and the placemaking enabled by the fugitive acts of resistance.

3 We are inspired by the call for a fugitive anthropology, which is an anthropology that "moves forward with an understanding that the path to reach spaces unknown is necessarily unpredictable" (Berry et al. 2017).

4 Channel 2 is a commercial channel authorized by the Israeli state, but it is not the official Israeli state television.

5 Al-Aqsa TV is the official Hamas television station. Nayrouz saw this event live when it happened in 2012. In this chapter, we are referring to the recording available online on YouTube.

6 For the Palestinian Authority, see El Kurd 2020; Haddad 2016; Khalidi and Samour 2011; Rabie 2021; Tartir and Seidel 2019. For Hamas, see Baconi 2018; Gunning 2007; Hroub 2000; Sen 2020.

7 While Hamas has faced accusations of corruption and repressive measures, it continues to maintain its legitimacy through its ongoing armed resistance, unlike the Palestinian Authority, which serves mostly to police and repress Palestinian resistance in the West Bank.

8 While marches of return were a grassroot initiative, they were facilitated by Hamas, which is the local permit-issuing, infrastructure-supporting government.

9 See, for example, the work of Nadia Yaqub, Mohanad Yaqubi, Annemarie Jacir, and Emily Jacir.

10 All of the Qassam videos are available in Arabic on its website (https://www.alqassam.ps).

11 It is worth noting that the US State Department does not differentiate between Hamas and Al-Qassam, whereas it has listed the military wing of Fateh, but not Fateh itself.

12 Hadeel is a Palestinian from Gaza who grew up in the United States. She has many relatives of all political leanings living in both the urban centers and the refugee camps of the Gaza Strip. Gaza is the site of her ethnographic research, but her access has become increasingly limited in recent years, and her kinship and friendship relations there are now maintained through online communications. Nayrouz is Palestinian from Nazareth and belongs to a generation of Palestinians, born in the early eighties, who cannot access or visit the Gaza Strip due to Israel's increasing restrictions on movement into and out of the strip. Her only relation to Gaza is through distant communication with people living there or through images circulated and disseminated by Palestinians through online platforms or social or mainstream media.

13 While there is almost no critical and engaging scholarship with the Qassam resistance videos, Hamas media and film productions have caught some scholarly attention (see Abdelal 2016; Saglier 2019).

14 Qassam videos tend to be deleted from YouTube or other social media websites, but they always reappear in different searches, particularly if searched for in Arabic. In addition, they are archived on the Qassam website.

15 See, for example, Harel and Levinson 2014; *Israel Hayom* 2018.

16 See the archived website of the Nahal Oz project: https://web.archive.org/web/20130722205752/http://eng.negev-net.org.il/HTMLs/article.aspx?C2004=12747.

17 For more, see Gisha, n.d.

18 While we are not aware of any scholarly research on the use of cameras in diving and fishing in Gaza, such documentation can be found on Mohammed Asad's public TikTok account @mohammedasad590.

19 For example, in April 2018, Israeli defense minister Avigdor Liberman stated in an Israeli radio broadcast that "there are no innocent people in the Gaza Strip" (New Arab 2018).

20 Most scholarly inquiries tend to focus on Israeli practices of domination. The most common metaphor used by Gazans themselves is that of an open-air prison, while scholars have described it as a Bantustan (Locke and Stewart 1985), a cage (Kempf 2006), a laboratory and showcase for new Israeli military technology (Li 2006), and so on.

21 See also, for example, an announcement (in Arabic) on the Qassam Brigades website citing an Israeli source who also said the same thing (Ezzedeen Al-Qassam Brigades 2005).

Shaira Vadasaria

7

Sensory Politics of Return

Hearing Gaza under Siege

It is not death, and it is not suicide, it is Gaza's way of announcing she is worthy of life. —**Mahmoud Darwish**, *Journal of Ordinary Grief*

The photograph in figure 7.1 tells a story about the people of Gaza and their commitment to life. Visually, we see contemporary Palestine, and more specifically Gaza, in flames. Scorched earth. Thick black smoke blocks the visual field from the Israeli occupation forces. A woman's body in motion. Bodies in protest. The embodied petitioning for claims to an otherwise world. A collective march for *return*. For those of us outside Gaza, the image might represent a space we cannot fully know. The difficulty in comprehending Gaza's struggle for freedom on its own terms has often been obfuscated by two overlapping discourses: the symmetrical "war" or "conflict" narrative between Israel and Hamas and a visual economy of humanitarianism that represents Gazans as only subjects of death, dying, and aid. These discourses blur Gazan's anti-colonial claims to freedom by flattening the settler colo-

Figure 7.1 Still from the YouTube video "Refeed + LIVE: 'Great March of Return' Resumes at the Gaza-Israeli Border" (2018).

nial context that foregrounds the siege on Gaza. While the humanitarian narrative leaves room to represent the right of Gazans to life, it often reduces them to a set of "outlandish statistics" (Tawil-Souri and Matar 2016, 3). These discourses also mediate what can be known about the scale and forms of settler colonial violence and racial terror that mark the conditions of Gaza today and what Gazans' refusal of that violence looks and feels like. The Great March of Return of 2018–19 demanded a different discourse. This popular protest offered another horizon of possibility, one that spoke through a language of the senses. Taking to *al-silik*, a liminal zone surrounding the Gaza Strip that is militarily policed by Israel, protesters registered their political claim to return to their land in historic Palestine through their bodies and, by extension, created a sensorium that invited its witnesses, including distant spectators, to also interpret this event through their bodies.[1]

Local journalists described the activities taking place at al-silik in ways that brought spectators into its sensorial life: Fire was prepared. Protesters danced Dabke and painted murals. The sound of folk songs trespassed al-silik, echoing return across the fence (Ayman 2018). A wedding party was celebrated just a few hundred meters away from Israeli snipers (Al-Naji, n.d.). Paramedics and medical students organized. Women gathered in a circle to read together. The Gazan body was transformed into a battleground.

Taboon (traditional flatbread) was shared among the protesters. The scent of *mutubbal* (roasted eggplant) and *shakshuka* (slow-cooked tomatoes with poached eggs) mixed with burning tires and tear gas seasoned the atmosphere with a haunting sensorial reminder of Palestinian return (Ayman 2018). This claim to life—"not death nor suicide," as Darwish ([1973] 2010) proclaimed—was celebrated through a land-based sovereignty movement by an Indigenous people staking their claim to humanity. Understanding Gaza's call for return in both the broader struggle for freedom in Palestine and the specific condition of Gaza today requires careful attention. It is both an ethical imperative and an epistemic challenge created by the very siege on Gaza which prohibits those on the outside from knowing Gaza with closer proximity. This chapter wrestles with how the invocation of the senses—as a conduit of political protest and as an embodied epistemic tool—might mediate a different way of understanding what the call to freedom meant during the Great March of Return. Turning to the sonic field, I consider how we might attend to an ethics of listening to the sound of return as echoed across al-silik during Gaza's Great March of Return, as a site of refusal that obscures the very boundaries between life and death.

The concept of refusal, as introduced in Black and Indigenous scholarship, refers to a move away from the politics of recognition and recourse to justice within existing systems of colonial domination. For the Mohawks of Kahnawá:ke, refusal is a rejection of settler recognition and the mechanisms that legitimize the ethics and practices of settler state building. Audra Simpson (2014) describes it as a political alternative to minority rights and recognition and to mechanisms that further legitimize the ethics and practices of settler state building. For Saidiya Hartman (2019), refusal is "a mode of black thought and practice that registers the ontological wounds of black being in the world," an ethical disruption that provides an "entry point to another horizon of possibility." Refusal is not simply about nonparticipation. It is about refusing the terms of reference set forth by the settler sovereignty. It is a rejection of the frameworks of recognition and the binary discourse that delimits the very category of the human.

As scholars of decolonial thought have argued, the body lends cues as a mode of *knowing* from that which is experienced (Fanon 1968; Mignolo 2009). Unlike Western knowledge structures that privilege the mind in binary opposition to the body, scholars of decolonial thought have also argued that the body and its registers (the senses, affect, intuition, dreams, desires, etc.) contribute to our understanding of the world. In settler colonial contexts like Palestine, the "sense-experience" gives evidence to the colonial

wound. It indexes where and how racial terror makes itself known, exposing the inhumanity of colonial violence. As Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian powerfully explains, Israel deliberately uses sensory stimuli to terrorize and claim sovereignty over Palestine, extending its occupation onto Palestinian bodies. Israel controls "what kind of language, music, smells, marches, colours, cultures and scenes are promoted and inscribed over the spaces, lives and bodies of the colonized" (2017, 1279). Shalhoub-Kevorkian compels us to ask how the senses matter in understanding settler colonialism, a process of dispossession rooted deeply in physicality. While these examples demonstrate how colonial violence is inscribed through sensorial registers, the senses also play an important role in how anti-colonial consciousness is recalled. As Diana Allan's work on the Nakba archive and sensory experience explains, Palestinian refugee memories of expulsion also come to translate through the body and its sensory perception. Distinguishing between epistemological and ontological forms of knowing, Allan explains, "A language of the body shapes intellection and expression, underscoring how social and material worlds are sensed, and how sense matters for communicating experience" (2018b, 66). She helps us think about the body not only as a "biopolitical subject" but also as a historical locus of knowledge. Determined by what Frantz Fanon referred to as the sociogenic history of one's body, the sense experience is mediated through and translated upon a "body-politics of knowledge (Fanon 1968; Mignolo 2009, 175). The body affords a critical site and interpretive tool that helps those of us not from Gaza understand the march outside the discourses of war and humanitarianism.[2]

Like other sensory registers, sound is not a self-evident subject but rather always interpreted. Sound is political. According to Ian Baucom, "Hearing is not only an acoustic experience; it is the expression of desire" (2001, 22). Sound immerses its subject through acoustic vibration. It is, as Tina Campt rightly points out, an embodied process that registers across the senses. Her own work on archival practices and on "listening to images" helps us think about how sound is not only heard but also seen, felt, and touched and, indeed, is a "haptic form of sensory contact" (2017, 9). In Palestine, sound is directly related to violence and resistance. The use of sonic violence is as old as the Israeli state. During the Nakba, Zionist militia played "horror sounds — shrieking and moaning, the wail of sirens, and the clang of fire-alarm bells" — as they drove through Palestinian towns and villages marked for expulsion (Pappé 2006a, 321). In 2005, Israel used a new acoustic weapon to control any turbulence from Palestinian and Israeli protests

arising from the demographic transfer of Israelis from Jericho. Referred to as "The Scream," this weapon sends out sound waves that produce dizziness and nausea, leaving a resounding ringing in the ear after the weapon stops (Goodman 2010, 21). In Gaza, Israel uses sound bombs as a weapon. As a long-range acoustic device, they can and indeed do shatter windows and other infrastructure. At the level of the body, they send shock waves through the body, causing ear pain, hypertension, nosebleeds, and sustained anxiety (Goodman 2010, xiii). It is not uncommon for the Israeli air force to use sonic bombs or drones in Gaza at night to disrupt sleep. Defending the use of this weapon, former prime minister Ehud Olmert proclaimed that "thousands of residents in southern Israel live in fear and discomfort, so I gave instructions that nobody will sleep at night in the meantime in Gaza" (B'Tselem 2016). During the Great March of Return, the United Nations Human Rights Council (2019b) documented similar instances of sonic warfare and other methods of injury and killing, all of which were deemed disproportionate to the Gazans' methods of protest such as the use of incendiary kites and balloons, stone throwing, and cutting the separation fence. In all these cases sonic weapons are used to intentionally target the internal stimuli of the body and cause trauma without leaving any physical scars.

My focus is not simply on what Israeli violence sounds like or how Israel used sound as a weapon during the march but rather on exploring how attention to sound gives distant spectators access to an embodied understanding of the march and the call for return that structured it. My analysis is based on documentary live footage of varying lengths (the longest video is more than ninety minutes) from the march and posted on YouTube, which I downloaded and played only in audio form. By paying attention to the sonic rather than the visual field, I was forced to attend to other registers: pitch, vibration, overlapping sounds, the ebb and flow of a collective voice, muffled voices, speech, inanimate objects, and subtle sounds (e.g., the crackling of fire) and obtrusive sounds (e.g., ambulance sirens). I attended to this soundscape not as background to images but as a sensorial foreground to the march. I also worked with testimony from local TV and international press, human rights organizations, and documentary film. This allowed me to pay closer attention to what was communicated across the fence and interpreted through testimony at the level of sound (embodiment) and speech (enunciation).

The Great March of Return in Context

Between March 30, 2018, and December 27, 2019, tens of thousands of Gazans assembled weekly, claiming their right to return to the homes from which they were expelled during the Nakba. This mass popular uprising was deliberately staged at what Gazans refer to as al-silik, that is, the space that separates the more than 70 percent of residents of the Gaza Strip who are refugees from their former homes. Al-silik is both a material and a symbolic representation of the Nakba in that it operates as a barrier to refugee return, while cutting Gazans off from the rest of the world.[3] As Jehad Abu Salim explains, the common saying "min al-silik ila al-silik" (from fence to the fence) captures Gaza's status as "fenced in; territorially sealed by dead-ends around the land, sea and air" (2016, 84). Al-silik, which Israelis refer to as the "buffer zone," reduces the 365-square-kilometer area of the Gaza Strip by 51 kilometers, taking up close to 20 percent of its total land area and 30 percent of its agricultural land (Abu Sitta 2016, 107). The violence of this space speaks for itself: a sophisticated and highly militarized barrier accessorized by electric fences, surveillance technologies, concrete walls, made-to-kill artillery, and military sensors (Tawil-Souri and Matar 2016, 5). It is a space designed to maim and kill as the Israeli occupation forces desire, including through the intentional use of herbicide on Gazan agricultural land. During the march this space of death, where life literally cannot grow, was transformed into something else. For more than a year and a half, Gazans met weekly in this killing zone to enact their right to life while knowing very well that doing so could result in their death. This interstitial space came to be transformed into a "tent city," with five major areas stretching from northern Gaza to the south. Protesters gathered around the fence, creating a kind of fortress. The tents were deliberately marked by the names of the towns and villages from which Gazan refugees were expelled during the Nakba, signaling the significance of the concept of return to the event, and thereby the unsettled nature of Israel's claims to their lands (Salem 2018).

The mass popular protest commenced on Land Day (March 30), an anniversary that Palestinians have commemorated since 1976, when six Palestinians were killed during protests against the expropriation of land from Palestinians in the Galilee. Their names were Raja Abu Rayya, Khidr Khalayleh, Khadija Shawahna, Khayr Yassin, Muhsin Taha, and Ra'fat Zuheiri (Bashir, n.d.). The choice of this date highlights three points: first, that refugee claims to return remain tied to land; second, that despite the

different citizenship regimes that separate Palestinians living in Israel from those in Gaza, protesters understood the right to return as a concept uniting all Palestinians; and, third, that Palestinian resistance is not a recent phenomenon but rather is embedded in decades of organized political work.

For Palestinians practicing a politics of refusal, the Right of Return remains a locus for imagining and at times even inhabiting decolonial modes of being. The Great March of Return represents a historical moment within a longer history of resistance. Writing against the exceptionalism of this protest, Jehad Abu Salim, one of the organizers, explains, "The Gaza Strip is, after all, the birthplace of the First Intifada and it also set the stage for the popular mobilization of the Second Intifada before the uprising took an armed turn" (2018, 91). A series of social, economic, and political conditions and events taking place across Palestine/Israel and Gaza more specifically helps to explain the timing of this particular uprising, which began first and foremost as a stance against the siege. While the siege on Gaza is often likened to the world's largest open-air prison, movement restrictions in Gaza took effect long before the imposition of a siege. The Nakba effectively severed its residents' personal and business connections to the north, south, and east. Bedouin lost access to their grazing land across the armistice line (Filiu 2014, 73–80). Refugees lost everything, including access to their agricultural lands, which for many were visible across the border. Between five and ten thousand farmers and Bedouin attempted to cross the border during the early 1950s, and every year approximately five hundred were murdered by the Israeli military or settlers (S. Roy 1995, 69). In 1979, when the Sinai Peninsula was returned to Egypt as part of the Camp David Accords, Gazans lost access to fishing waters off the Sinai coast and easy access to Egypt when a buffer zone between the new border with Egypt was created. At this time, Israeli settlement activity increased dramatically, as did the Israeli military presence in the strip. During the First Intifada, travel into Israel was significantly curtailed, and an onerous permit system was instituted that only intensified during the Oslo period. Restrictions on mobility are also enforced through the no-go buffer zones that have expanded dramatically since 1979. A second buffer zone dividing the Gaza Strip from Israel was built in 1994 as part of the Oslo Accords and has also been expanded (Filiu 2014). In the early 1990s, Israel imposed a travel permit requirement on Palestinians moving between Gaza and the West Bank. Following the start of the Second Intifada, it further restricted movement through the Erez and Rafah crossings (United Nations Human Rights Council 2019b, 38). These restrictions and the sanctions imposed on Gaza since 2007 have

strangled the Gazan economy. Other factors also inspired the protesters: the seventieth anniversary of the Nakba, the US embassy's move to Jerusalem in 2018, and the risk of the collapse of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). As Rania Baker (2019) explains, for many of the protesters the March of Return may have had less to do with imaginaries of returning to a "pristine past in which people controlled their means of production and fed off their own fields, unburdened by Zionist lordship and away from dependence on UNRWA coupons." Instead, it was rooted in a desire for self-governance and a "return to a form of living in which they do not owe their education or the food on their table to a wealthier creditor or some charitable institution" (Baker 2019).

The march was activated by social media posts such as this one by Ahmad Abu Rtema, a Palestinian poet and journalist: "What if 200,000 Palestinian refugees from the Gaza Strip decided at the same time to march in a peaceful way towards the insulation fence and cut this insulation fence and say, we want to go back to our lands, we want life and nothing more than life" (Al-Haq 2019). The call was answered by tens of thousands of Gazans who met at al-silik every Friday. Protesters deployed creative devices that played with the sensorial field, including megaphones, radios, incendiary kites, balloons that delivered testimonial counterleaflets, and burning tires (Husain and Dhillon 2019). These devices challenged Israel's control of the visual and sonic field at al-silik.[4] The Israeli army met the mass weekly protests with lethal force, resulting in the killing of more than 214 Gazans and the injury of upward of 36,100, over 8,000 of whom were severely wounded by live ammunition (United Nations Office of Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs 2020). At stake in the march was life itself. Proximity to the fence meant a direct confrontation with death or injury, and yet many Gazans took this risk, in part in response to the sheer unlivability of the Gaza Strip.[5] As Abu Rtema emphasized, "We are dying in this tiny besieged place, so why not bolt before the knife reaches our throats? Since they are plotting to kick us south [to Egypt] after slaughtering us wholesale, why don't we pre-empt them and begin to run north?" (quoted in Abu Salim 2018, 93). While there may not be one single factor that gave rise to the Great March of Return, it was a collective and embodied call that sent a message to Israel and the international community that the people of Gaza were putting their bodies on the line for freedom.

Listening to Gaza: Listening from the Body

In live audio footage recorded at the march on October 26, 2018, and uploaded on YouTube, we can hear a cacophony of sounds and muffled voices. The voices grow louder and then fade into the background. Panic fills the soundscape. The voice of a local protester and reporter then announces the following: "To this moment, two martyrs, the number of martyrs. One from the family of Tayyim, Abu Tayyim. And Also, the martyr Ahmad . . . Khayr . . . Abu Ghazi . . . in these moments is being brought to the mortuary and the number is suspected to increase, due to the increasing suppression from the occupation, which continues to target civilians, and repress, yes, repress, in a monstrous and continuous manner, suppress civilians, unarmed, in crimes that still continue" (transcribed from Refeed + Live 2018). The names of the dead are enunciated across another set of sounds: a low buzz of ambulance sirens plays in the distance. The firing of tear gas canisters. Snipers. Bullets being dispersed into a crowd. A crowd in commotion. Static from a cell phone. The calm voices of people readjusting the mic and camera. The sirens get louder. The song "I Am the Son of Jerusalem" plays in the background. The news report continues: "This day, we witness the people/pains of our nation." Another voice: "Are you scared, man? Don't be. You are coming to death. Whoever is scared, go home." The speaker announces, "Young man, twenty-two years old. . . . Now we are taking him to Gaza Hospital." Urgency and care travel through the ambulance sirens; a warning of imminent violence travels through news reports and the sounds of tear gas canisters and bullets being released. Describing the march on May 14, 2019, a doctor from Al Shifa Hospital explained in a UN report, "For a civilian population anywhere in the world [the number of patients was] overwhelming. . . . [F]rom about 2 p.m. there was a *solid wall of noise from the sounds of the ambulances* arriving, unloading patients, each of those was carrying five or six patients, the triage areas outside [the] emergency department set up was full. . . . Every square inch of the hospital was absolutely full of patients" (United Nations Human Rights Council 2019b, 134; emphasis added). The march carried with it an acoustics of collective care as well as one of settler colonial terror in the form of high and low frequencies of gunfire and drones.

Within this imbrication of life and death in the soundscape of the march, listeners might hear the cacophony of the sound of return as the sound of refusal. While this mediated experience cannot replicate the feeling of actually being at al-silik, listening to the vibrations and the cacophony of sound

enacted through the march creates a sensation in the body in ways that images, in their overabundance, do not. My bodily response to the sounds of the march and my interpretation of it are of course mediated through both my lived experiences in Palestine, which stretched across several years, and my intellectual understanding of a much longer history of Palestinian refusal. The former and latter were often intertwined for me, instructing my body in a visceral way how to hear the struggle for life and land through an embodied ethics of critical listening. I wish to highlight here that my relationship to sensorial expression is neither apolitical nor outside of an epistemic frame. Other experiences and ideological frames can produce drastically different responses to the sensorium of the march. Take, for instance, the following statement that comes from Yael Raz Lachyani, an Israeli resident of the kibbutz Nahal Oz on the other side of al-silik:

> No one wants to live in a war zone and we are living in a war zone. And we can smell the smoke and we can see the smoke and we can hear the drones and we can hear the protest. And I think protest is a good thing. But I think at the moment the protest is covering some terrorist activities and this is something I cannot accept. I don't want to accept. . . . Guessing that they are not coming to play soccer with my kids. This is my worst nightmare. Because why are they trying to cross the fence. It's not for food, it's not for walk, it's not for having some kind of a normal activity. Because if this is their wishes, there are other ways to do that in spite of cutting the fence. This is my nightmare. I cannot describe in a word what will happen because that will bring my nightmare into a clear picture which I don't want to imagine. (United Nations Human Rights Council 2019a)

This passage describes a shared sensorial landscape from a parallel world. In the video we see and hear footage of the march. Again, we hear ambulance sirens weave through an assembly of collective and muffled voices, snipers, and the crackling of fire made by incendiary kites on the other side of al-silik. We see black smoke rising up toward the sky. This was not *senseless* violence, as many mainstream international news outlets described it. This was very much a battle waged upon the senses. On top of this imagery and sound, Lachyani explains that the sensory experience of the "war" is a shared one: "We can smell the smoke and we can see the smoke and we can hear the drones and we can hear the protest." Listeners are probed to think about this sensory experience almost as though it is a shared intimacy with violence evenly distributed across the land, impacting all those in close proximity to it. Eclipsing the question of how such violence is differently distributed and

whose bodies are most vulnerable to death and injury, she draws attention to how the sensory experience travels across the fence, alluding to its porous nature. After all, smoke and sound can travel in ways that the body cannot. Yet, this sensorial violence does not attack all bodies in the same way. Not only is vulnerability to loss, injury, and death unequally shared, but they are also interpreted differently. Elsewhere in the video Lachyani expresses a liberal humanitarian view of Gazans, arguing that the status quo is untenable and that "hope" as an antidote to "terror" must be developed in the form of better economic or educational opportunities. What, then, can be smelled, seen, or heard within this state of liberal humanitarian settler consciousness? The very line of reasoning in Lachyani's comments exposes how the sensory experience might be understood as an ontological encounter. What muffles the capacity to hear Gazans' claim through these sensory stimuli is what the idea of return means within the Israeli settler imaginary, a lurking ghost that keeps alive a reconfiguration of Palestinian sovereignty and, consequently, the racial anxieties of an incomplete settler colonial project. Within a liberal settler sensibility the only reasonable protest is the one that reduces the Gazan subject to a humanitarian subject, foreign to, rather than indigenous to, the land. "Because why are they trying to cross the fence. It's not for food, it's not for walk, it's not for having some kind of a normal activity," she says. The very question reflects the incommensurability behind liberal settler humanitarian reason and anti-colonial consciousness. Within this discursive frame, an enunciation of return and the refusal it contains cannot be heard. To the settler ear such as the one cited here, the sound of return remains inaudible.

A video from May 4, 2018, records a direct confrontation between Gazan protesters and the Israeli army at the fence (AlrayArabic 2018). The hum of a hovering drone suggests the constant proximity of potential death. Adopting a humanitarian perspective that is reminiscent of Lachyani's and speaking in Arabic through a megaphone, an Israeli soldier says: "Anyone of you who is injured or dies, Hamas has no interest in him, they do not care. Hamas sent you here to be the first in the face of the cannon [scapegoats]. . . . You are still a young boy, go study, work, have fun in your life." One protester replies, "Abu Mazen is talking," drawing attention to the shared language of the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli occupation forces. Another Gazan protester replies, "Bring the drones down, you bastard. Bring the drones down, you bastard." Later the soldier drops any pretense of concern and, using the megaphone to dominate the sonic field, says, "As you can see, we are on land, in air, and in water, surrounding you, but there is no point in

shooting you." Above the continual buzz of the drones, a protester replies, "Allahu Akbar [God is great]." Direct encounters such as this one between the people of Gaza and the Israel occupation forces expose the complicity of the colonial and humanitarian perspective and the dissonance between colonial and anti-colonial reason. Immersing oneself in the soundscape of this encounter (at the level of both sound and speech) exposes the meeting point of colonial and anti-colonial violence in chaos and dis-order.

In listening attentively to this soundscape, I hear Gaza's March of Return as the Manichaean world in disorder: a cacophony of refusal that exposes the incommensurability of liberal humanitarianism and anti-colonial consciousness. The chaos of sounds produced between the army and protesters reveals the sheer madness of this bifurcated colonial world. What becomes audible in the simultaneous and overlapping soundscape of Israeli drones, firing bullets, ambulances, music, and chants is the demand for a world *otherwise*. Refusal in this context is expressed through embodied connection to the land, a scream not only of pain and fear but also of collective care and togetherness. What might be heard in this refusal is an opting out of the very terms determining life and death set forth in the colonial order and the choosing of a different vision entirely.

In an April 3, 2018, *New York Times* article entitled "Gaza Screams for Life," Rawan Yaghi, a writer based in Gaza, describes the sounds of clapping and the chanting of lyrics, "I will return to my country. To the green land, I will return." The chants are met with other sounds, the firing of bullets and tear gas canisters. One of the protesters says to Yaghi, "It's not a march to return to our land at this very moment. It's a way for us to speak and to raise our voices." Another protester explains, "We have nothing to lose, so we come here to scream our lungs out." The border transforms into a sonic platform. The desire for return projects over and across the fence. These particles of sound disrupt claims to settler sovereignty over land. These screams and voices extend beyond Gaza, making audible a demand to inhabitable modes of being. Treating the body as a critical epistemic site and interpretive tool allows us to listen to this call not only as a scream of a people being maimed and killed but as an enunciation toward life.

As the examples highlighted here illustrate, protesters spoke the language of refusal with both their voices and their bodies. Putting their bodies in direct confrontation with death, protesters refused to be kept hostage any longer. As Haneen Abu Jamee'a explains in her testimonial account in Olly Lambert's film *One Day in Gaza* (2019), "We became friends with fear. Not to make a mockery of our lives, but to show we are stronger than the

snipers. That's the message we wanted to send. We're not just throwing our lives away." Listening carefully to the sensory politics of return from the Great March of Return brings our attention to the ways that colonial power is both inscribed and contested, but also asserts itself into the ethical field of listening. The problem here lies not just in situated knowledge but in the terms of reference on which modern colonial foundations of knowledge are understood. The dissonance lies in the interpretive grids of intelligibility on which a "geography of reason" comes to be known. As the example from Nahal Oz made clear, just a few kilometers away, the Great March of Return could be legible only as a humanitarian call, not a call toward self-governance, sovereignty, freedom, or decoloniality. What can be known and interpreted from Gaza's call for return requires an ethical sensibility not present in liberal reason. These forms of petition reflect what Achille Mbembe's (2016) refers to as a "politics of viscerality," whereby the colonized subject finds recourse to grief, pain, anger, suffering through knowledge claims emerging from the "frustrated body" or the "wounded body." Such gestures often come at the limit point of recourse to justice because there are no more ways to be heard. In fact, the very terrain on which such speech can be heard is also often foreclosed. The body that cannot breathe—the body that becomes suffocated, afflicted by the madness of colonialism, finds a way to speak back in and through the body, petitioning for another kind of world (Mbembe 2016). The Great March of Return exemplified a refusal to speak only in the language of international rights. Instead, its power rested within sensory chaos, embodied petitioning, and the use of the land. In this land-based movement, these particles of sound and sensory life made audible one of the few forms of recourse to freedom in Gaza: refusal. Approaching Palestinian claims to return as a mode of refusal is an invitation to listen to Gaza on different terms and from its multiple registers. Calling attention to the senses and invoking an embodied claim to return as a claim to life, the Great March of Return was an ethical disruption to settler state sovereignty. It directed attention to a different way of thinking about the dichotomy between life and death in Gaza.

Refusal, as enunciated through the march, became the language of a people in such close proximity to premature death that they could not but repeatedly chant, with the full force of life, a call toward freedom.[6]

Notes

I thank Lara Khaldi, Laura Menchaca Ruiz, Rahaf Salahat, and Sherene Razack for their insights and feedback as this chapter took shape.

1 Scholars of race, coloniality, and empire have long documented how intersecting constituents of colonial power, including race, gender, and sexuality, come to be inscribed onto the body of the colonized as a method of state-building practice. The body is where colonial power is enunciated and contested. One cannot think about colonial modernity and its formations of empire outside of inscriptions and contestations of power upon the body where sensory politics play a pivotal role.

2 I came to think about the march through the senses in an attempt to bridge the kinds of methodological distance constitutive of the siege on Gaza. I also came to this piece of work curious about what methods bring us closer to thinking with Gaza and thinking Gaza with the world. As a non-Palestinian scholar, I turn to sensory politics aware of the limits of what an ally can know of a people and political struggle. The very desire of an outsider to "know" Gaza runs the risk of reproducing consumptive and extractive colonial approaches to knowledge production whereby writing *about* rather than *with* becomes itself an act of conquest. This risk is even more dangerous when writing about a place one has never visited, as is the case with Gaza for me, although I have had the privilege to spend several years living, teaching, and conducting research in Palestine. In struggling to write about a place where my body has never been (Gaza), the gaps within my own archive start to appear. I come to this inquiry as a South Asian Muslim diasporic subject whose homelands have stretched across the Indian and Atlantic Oceans, between four continents and locales: Gujarat, Uganda and Tanzania, England, Turtle Island/Canada. I write from a social history punctuated by settler status in both Turtle Island and Uganda and having inherited an intergenerational history of expulsion from the latter. Having only sensory experiences as a way to recall and remember what was the last homeland my paternal family knew, the body—my body—has often guided me in staying connected to my ancestors and remains an instrument of knowledge. I offer this brief and insufficient note to explain how thinking with Gaza has been for me an invitation for how we understand places that our bodies have not gone or cannot go.

3 I thank Hadeel Assali for drawing my attention to the distinction between the language of border versus wire or fence. The term *border* is problematic because Israel has no official, internationally recognized borders. Moreover, it implies an agreement concerning the location of the dividing line between two countries. No such agreement exists between Israel and the Palestinians.

4 One such counterleaflet contains the message, "You, Zionist, you do not belong here, don't listen to your leader and commanders, leave our land." See Husain and Dhillon 2019.

5 This condition of "unlivability" was foreseen by the UN in the years leading up to 2020 (United Nations Country Team in the Occupied Palestinian Territory 2017). On this issue, also see Abu-Sittah et al. 2020.

6 My invocation of the phrase *premature death* is inspired by Ruth Wilson Gilmore's (2006, 28) definition of racism as "state-sanctioned and/or extra-legal production and exploitation of group-differentiated vulnerabilities to premature death, in distinct yet densely interconnected political geographies."

Rebecca L. Stein

8

How to Unsee Gaza

Israeli Media, State Violence, Palestinian Testimony

On January 16, 2009, Israeli tanks shelled the Gaza home of Dr. Ezzedin Abu al-Aish. Three of his young daughters and a niece were killed instantly, and one daughter was severely wounded. Risking injury from ongoing Israeli army fire, the family walked nearly a quarter mile carrying their dead and wounded until they found transport to the closest hospital. The Israeli army defended its actions, citing provocation from sniper fire on the roof of the residence. Dr. Abu al-Aish and neighborhood residents disputed this claim.

This attack occurred in the midst of the 2008–9 Israeli war on the Gaza Strip, code-named by Israel Operation Cast Lead, the first of four Israeli military assaults on Gaza during the course of the first two decades of the twenty-first century, attacks that have become so regularized as to acquire the military euphemism "mowing the lawn" (Taylor 2021). Within this wartime context, which resulted in the death of thousands of Palestinian civilians by Israeli military fire, the shelling of Abu al-Aish's home was but one lethal incident of many. Yet what distinguished the event was how it was

portrayed in the Israeli mainstream media and consumed by Jewish Israeli publics. The incident was captured live on Israeli television by means of a telephone call from Dr. Abu al-Aish to a Jewish Israeli television anchorman in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. The anchorman broadcast Abu al-Aish's anguished cries on the evening news, enabling thousands of Israelis at home, in front of their televisions, to witness the doctor's lament in real time. Many more would screen the footage on YouTube, where it quickly went viral, or read accounts of it on the Israeli blogosphere. In the words of one Israeli journalist: "All of Israel heard that frantic call" (*Ynet News* 2009).

This chapter studies the way the traditional Israeli news media reported the Gaza war of 2008–9 to their Jewish Israeli target audience. In these years, the social media ecosystem was still in its infancy in both Israel and Palestine, particularly so within Gaza, where Israel maintained strict control of both electricity and broadband as a tool of political domination (Tawil-Souri 2012). Within Israel, television and newspaper reporting remained the Israeli media gold standard, and it was through these channels that most Israeli consumers received their news about the ongoing military operation.[1] My analysis pays particular attention to what the traditional Israeli media withheld from Jewish Israeli consuming publics during the course of the war—namely, a consistent depiction of the extent of Israeli-inflicted violence on Gazan people and infrastructure—and what it offered to Israeli media consumers as a wartime alternative. At the heart of this chapter is the lethal incident described earlier and the querying of its anomalous status as a Palestinian testimonial at a moment when Palestinian eyewitness accounts were largely absent from public Israeli view in media sources. I ask: How does one make sense of this scene of Palestinian trauma and the enormous attention it garnered among Israelis in the context of a national media that worked to systematically occlude the view of Israeli state violence and its Palestinian victims? In my conclusion, I suggest ways in which this incident would anticipate the relationship between Israeli state violence and Palestinian visibility in the age of the smartphone witness.[2]

Controlling the Coverage

On December 27, 2008, Israel launched a series of air strikes against targets in the Gaza Strip with the stated aim of ending rocket attacks by Hamas and affiliated armed groups from Gaza into Israeli territory. Some fourteen hundred Palestinians were killed during the course of Israel's land and air

campaign, with civilians accounting for the majority of the dead and injured and with massive damage wrought to the Gazan infrastructure, including the razing of large swaths of populated territory (Amnesty International 2009). Israel's actions were roundly criticized by the United Nations and international human rights organizations, which accused the Israeli military of failing to abide by principles of proportionality and distinction. In the face of such critique, Israel insisted that international law had been upheld and argued that the incursion be understood as both an act of self-defense and an instance of the West's justifiable war against Islamic extremism and terror (Blondheim and Shifman 2009).

From the outset, the Israeli state labored to control Israeli and international media coverage of the operation in an effort that some state ministries deemed as vital to Israel's political future as the military operation itself. This calculation was, in large measure, a response to Israel's failed military campaign in Lebanon in the summer of 2006, a campaign that generated vociferous international condemnation for its indiscriminate and disproportionate killing of Lebanese civilians. The internal Israeli investigation that followed was also pointed in its criticism, castigating the Israeli army for a failed and bungled military effort and contending that lack of media coordination and preparedness had been among the war's chief secondary failures. Indeed, some critics credited Hizbullah with decisive victory on the media stage—in part, due to superior usage of cyberspace to deliver its political message to international audiences—while the Israeli military was faulted with an erroneous focus on traditional modes of information dissemination and psychological warfare (e.g., dropping leaflets, jamming broadcasts) (Caldwell, Murphy, and Menning 2009). For their part, Israeli soldiers on the battlefield were accused of compromising national security by means of casual cell phone usage, which was thought to contribute to successful Hizbullah intelligence gathering. Many of Israel's internal critics would argue that the national media had collaborated in the military failure through public criticism of Israeli military strategy, thought to harm army morale, and by means of lax coverage that publicized sensitive information about military coordinates and strategies, some of which was broadcast to viewers in real time (Schiff 2009). That Israeli left-wing critics and nongovernmental organizations found these critiques lacking in factual basis did little to temper public Israeli rage against a media that had, in their estimation, fostered this defeat. As a corrective, Israel established the National Information Directorate to "synchronize the content and tone of Israel's message" (Rettig Gur 2008).

The machinery of media synchronization was already in place when Israel launched its Gaza offensive. The central tool in the state's arsenal was a ban against both foreign and Israeli journalists physically entering the Gaza Strip through the Israel/Gaza crossing, a ban that remained in place for the first twelve days of the operation despite an Israeli Supreme Court ruling against it, and that Israel deemed essential to protect soldier and information security.[3] Those journalists who chose to violate it, Israelis among them, faced both severe penalties and public derision; the Israeli Government Press Office argued that "any journalist who enters Gaza becomes a fig leaf and front for the Hamas" (Bronner 2009).[4] Yet state efforts to "control the message" also took more proactive forms, particularly in the domain of social media.[5] During the first few days of the incursion, the Israeli military inaugurated its own YouTube channel, which showcased drone footage of the Israeli attacks filmed from the vantage of the bombardier—footage that functioned to sterilize and justify the air campaign through a video-game-cum-war-logic that rendered all persons and buildings seen from above as prototargets.[6] The station boasted more than four thousand subscribers two days after its launch. By war's end, some of the videos would be viewed more than two million times, their popularity unflagging in the face of questions raised by Israeli human rights organizations about the military's targeting justifications (Shachtman 2009). Simultaneously, Israeli officials began delivering private briefings to international bloggers and launching personal video blogs, even as private pro-Israeli organizations organized undercover internet volunteers to disseminate the state's message online through the informal language of the "talkback" (Kuntsman and Stein 2010, 2015). When employed alongside the ban on foreign reporting, these and other social media efforts were remarkably successful. Or so they initially appeared. In the first ten days of the offensive, the state claimed a decisive victory on the public relations front, arguing that the international media had indeed followed the state's cue, where wartime information was concerned, by focusing their narrative on Israel's military objectives and the suffering of its southern citizens in the face of incoming Hamas rocket fire rather than on the Palestinian toll.

Israeli support for the war effort was overwhelmingly high, polling at 90 percent at some moments. What resulted in the national media, when coupled with a state eager to remake its public image in the aftermath of Lebanon 2006, was unabashed enthusiasm for the military operation (Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009). On the television evening news, the military narrative would dominate, as left-wing Israeli

critics noted, focusing national eyes on the Israeli human and political costs of the war and drumming up national support for its continuation. "We get a unified chorus throughout the television studios," wrote Israeli journalist Gideon Levy (2009), "calling on Israel to keep pounding and expanding and obliterating, waxing enthusiastically over every bombardment and gaping in admiration over every shelling, a war that is never enough." As Levy noted, the media was highly selective when it came to the interviews it aired and the expert opinions it marshaled: "Only generals and military analysts are invited to the television studios, the same people who sat in the same studios during the last war, . . . because they possess the only wisdom and insight there is." "Israeli media," one commentator mulled, "or military mouthpiece?" (Abed Alhaleem 2009).

Equally crucial, as part of the media effort to support the war, was the very selective and partial coverage of events on the Gazan battlefield (*Jerusalem Post* 2008).[7] Tallies of Palestinian civilian deaths and hardships were infrequent, as were discussions of Israeli culpability for them. Following the Israeli military shelling of a Gaza school on January 9, for example, Israeli daily newspapers featured fallen Israeli soldiers on their front pages. A headline describing Israeli airstrikes that killed at least 225 Palestinians read: "Shock Therapy: The Surprise Was Perfect." Such cases were the rule, not the exception, within an Israeli media that acted as "cheerleaders," one Israeli commentator lamented, for the military operation (HaCohen 2008). When images of Palestinian suffering did appear before the Israeli lens, they were mitigated by discussion of military justifications for the operation and by framing victims as Hamas supporters, thereby rendering them legitimate targets in Israeli eyes. By contrast, Jewish Israeli pain and suffering in southern Israel was covered heavily—enabled by the presence of an Israeli press center in the southern town of Sderot, adjacent to the Gaza Strip, to showcase devastation to the Israeli physical and human infrastructure—while voices and tallies of Jewish Israeli dissent and protest against state policies were grossly underplayed, this in the context of a left rendered extremely marginal due to the perceived need to stand behind the state's "defensive" war (Abed Alhaleem 2009). At issue was not merely a generalized failure within the national media to attend to Palestinian suffering but a propensity to invert the story of the incursion. What resulted was a narrative that posited Israeli citizens as the war's ultimate victims, and Hamas as chief aggressor. Indeed, Hamas was frequently blamed for Palestinian civilian causalities, charged with using its own people as human shields (Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009).

Few Israeli journalists working in the realm of the traditional media raised questions about the necessity of the incursion or its potential human cost. Expressions of criticism were relegated to back pages or marginal left-wing blogs (Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009; Ophir 2009). For Israeli journalists, the cost of departing from the national consensus was relatively high (Levy 2009). Some television anchors who used airtime to inquire about numbers of Palestinian dead and wounded, for example, or to comment on the humanitarian emergency, which the Israel foreign ministry vociferously denied, became targets of national hate campaigns that decried their "anti-Zionist sympathies" (Orgad 2009).

International media coverage of the incursion was also severely impacted by the state-imposed ban, with journalists unable to reach the Gazan battlefield and therefore to testify to the state of the Palestinian disaster. But the restriction's secondary effects often undercut the state's aims in ironic ways. As a result of the ban, journalists increasingly called upon local Palestinian and Arab sources in Gaza, contacted by phone or via digital technologies, to provide the eyewitness accounts that they could not otherwise secure. The constraints on traditional media coverage that the ban produced also propelled new media to occupy the vacuum. As a result, the voices of citizen journalists and bloggers were given greater prominence. In the Twittersphere, which helped to fill the gap left by the traditional media, the hashtag #gaza ranked among the world's top ten throughout the war, with six new posts on the topic per minute, with Al Jazeera's Twitter feed playing a central place in the discussion. While most Israelis had access to these alternative sources through either the new or traditional media, they tended to regard them with considerable suspicion.

War at a Distance

One visual vantage reigned supreme in Israeli reporting of the wartime moment: incursion from a distance (Blondheim and Shifman 2009). In some sense, this stance was the product of actual conditions on the ground, given that the state media ban prevented Israeli and international journalists from entering the Gaza Strip, forcing their coverage of the war to retreat to Gaza's territorial seams. Famously, many photojournalists and television crews clustered in the hills of the southern Israeli city of Sderot, neighboring the Gaza Strip, to take advantage of their observation points on the neighboring air campaign (Lagerquist 2009). The images they produced would predominate to tell the visual story of the war to both Israeli and international audiences.

Such was the case on the front page of the popular Hebrew-language daily newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* on the incursion's second day (December 28, 2008). The nearly full-page photograph showed smoke rising from a distant Gazan bomb site. "Fire and ruin and shock and destruction," read its caption. The accompanying article, it should be stressed, told another story, as its headline made clear: "Half a Million Israelis under Fire." War at a distance was a convenient means of dispensing with the Palestinian human toll of the Israeli bombardment—a means of highlighting the Israeli victim "under fire" and removing all traces of Palestinian death and injury from the visual field. There was, it need hardly be remarked, considerable comfort in this media stance. War at a distance conveniently removed the Israeli spectator from the scene of violence, thus making culpability more difficult to envision. More proximate images, littered with destroyed infrastructure and wounded civilians, would have made it more difficult for the media to bolster state claims about a justifiable war.

Israeli viewers did have some access to international media sources on the Gaza war and, therein, alternative visual archives of the Israeli bombardment. Indeed, clips from these sources, scenes of Gazan devastation, were regularly screened on the Israeli evening news, providing glimpses of infrastructural devastation and Palestinian injury that were largely occluded from the mainstream national coverage. But such coverage was usually offered to viewers as self-evident instances of anti-Israeli bias rather than credible examples of alternative wartime reporting, marshaled as a national lesson in "how not to see the war." While the veracity of such images was rarely called into question, television anchors and state officials took aim at their presumed ideological valence, arguing that they be read as weaponized images that were being deployed to damage the Jewish state. Such was the sentiment from a senior official in the Israeli Foreign Ministry, interviewed in the Israeli press about the international media's alternative view of the Gazan battlefield: "The pictures are not good. We're finding the problem that whenever a [foreign] television station puts on an Israeli spokesperson, they put alongside him in split-screen pictures of carnage in Gaza" (Rettig Gur 2008). Here, the state spokesperson blames the images themselves for the damning international media coverage of the war. The problem at hand, in this rendering, is chiefly the symbolic violence inflicted on Israeli's international reputation by a damning visual field, and the sheer volume of the images in question. Here, the term *carnage* is accompanied by neither military rationale nor apology. There is a sense in which the visual field of Israeli violence signifies chiefly as a composite crime against

the Israeli state itself, as a blight on its public relations (*hasbara*) record. Interestingly, the official raises no questions about the veracity of the images in question, although such debates would proliferate in the pro-Israeli blogosphere (Kuntsman and Stein 2015).

The Israeli left took explicit aim at media bias and manufactured invisibilities. Two narratives predominated. First and foremost was the claim that accurate wartime data on Palestinian fatalities and causalities were simply not available to the Israeli public: that Israelis were being systematically denied access to the violent effects of the incursion on Gaza's Palestinian population. Some argued that while "the internet is full of alternative news, and emails with descriptions of the horrors in Gaza are distributed regularly," it is "not clear how many [Israelis] are exposed to this kind of information (Ophir 2009). Others argued that the problem lay in successful state duping of the public: they were simply unaware that facts had been concealed from view. Some of these critics focused on the direct media pipeline from military spokesperson to Israeli public, without adequate attribution or critical distance. Most of the Israeli population, they argued, was simply unaware.[8]

The invisibility of Gazan Palestinians within the traditional Israeli media of this period was matched, and arguably surpassed, by their inaudibility. In some sense, the lack of Palestinian voices could be explained by the terms of the press ban: journalists could not reach them, and thus their voices could not be heard. Yet, tellingly, there is little evidence in the traditional Israeli media of attempts by journalists to solicit Palestinian eyewitnesses by phone or via digital technologies. "Ghetto-under-siege Gaza remains almost silent and partly invisible to [Israelis]," wrote one left-wing critic. "We hardly hear or see in mainstream media, testimonies from the ground" (Loshitzky 2009). The press ban seems to have tempered journalists' investment in spanning this physical distance by other means.

One could argue that the press ban functioned as a mere alibi for an Israeli ideology that had long been dominant where Gaza, and indeed Palestinian society more generally, was concerned. Indeed, for most Jewish Israelis, during times of peace and more so during times of war, Palestinians were simply not perceived as credible witnesses. How could a population so committed to Israel's destruction, the argument went, faithfully portray the scene of violence? Within this logic, parroted and concretized by Israeli media coverage, the Palestinian population under siege was not capable of bearing witness to its own victimhood. Their testimonials were simply impossible and, so went the narrative, ontologically so.

The Case of the "Good Doctor"

But there were exceptions: instances where Palestinian testimonial, at the scene of Israeli state violence, came into view within mainstream media coverage. Even spectacularly so. The most prominent case was that of Dr. Abu al-Aish, with whom this chapter began. A Palestinian doctor with over twenty years of experience in Israeli hospitals, Dr. Abu al-Aish had played a highly unusual role within the mainstream Israeli media landscape of this moment, for he had been frequently called on to provide firsthand updates on the Gazan experience to Israeli television via his cell phone. In the midst of overwhelming Israeli support for the incursion, particularly in the early days of the ground operation, Abu al-Aish's Hebrew-language reports provided glimpses of Palestinian hardship and devastation that most Israeli news outlets chose to ignore.

It was with cognizance of the power of the media platform that Abu al-Aish called Israel's Channel 10 newsroom in the immediate aftermath of the shelling of his home. His call was intercepted by anchorman Shlomi Eldar and broadcast live on the 5:00 p.m. evening news.[9] The voice viewers heard was that of Abu al-Aish, who spoke—sometimes screaming, sometimes weeping—in both Hebrew and Arabic, his volume and cadence undulating with grief, as he bore real-time witness to the aftermath of the bombing. Yet the image they saw was that of Eldar sitting in the television studio, manifestly distraught as he heard the call, holding up his cell phone from which the call was projected on speaker setting. One international newspaper captured the scene in this way:

> "Oh God, oh my God, my daughters have been killed. They've killed my children. . . . Could somebody please come to us?" Sitting at his news desk for one of Israel's main evening news broadcasts, Eldar held his phone up. For three minutes and 26 seconds, Aboul Aish's wailing was broadcast across the country. Eldar welled up. He put his head down. He looked at the camera. He looked at his phone. He made pleas for help for the family, but the doctor kept crying, his voice scratchy, like sand on paper, until Eldar took out his earpiece and walked off the set to try to arrange for help. The newscaster's bewildered face seemed to capture a bit of pause in a nation that has largely supported its military campaign and prefers not to question its course. (Fleishman and Sobelman 2009)

Israelis were captivated by this media incident—regardless, it seemed, of their political orientation or opinion about the ongoing incursion. Both the

televised event itself and the story of the doctor's family were the subject of numerous articles in the Israeli print and online media and on television and radio programs. Nor did coverage stop there. In the aftermath of the broadcast, Israeli television cameras were waiting for the doctor at the Israeli border with Gaza where, in an event unprecedented during the course of the incursion, the army granted him transport to an Israeli hospital with his dead and wounded children. The cameras followed him, weeping, into the hospital, documenting his vigil at his injured daughter's bedside and his embrace by grieving Israeli colleagues. They televised his impassioned news conference on the hospital grounds and the subsequent outburst of an angry "soldier's mother" (as she identified herself), enraged that Palestinian suffering be granted airtime.[10] They covered the lengthy military inquiry that followed—an inquiry that culminated in a claim of military responsibility for the shelling, dispelling earlier army conjectures that Hamas gunmen might have been at fault (Harel 2009). And they gave considerable airtime to the story of the anchorman Shlomi Eldar—himself in/famous for his frank coverage of the Israeli military occupation—debating and more often decrying his loyalty to Israel in this time of perceived security crisis.[11] As one Israeli journalist noted, "The [television] station was flooded with critical feedback from viewers accusing the station of harming Israel's image abroad and the war effort" (Izikovich 2009).

How, given the Israeli media's nearly consensual refusal to entertain Palestinian suffering, did this story garner both widespread visibility and public displays of empathy within diverse Israeli contexts in the very midst of the incursion itself? The Israeli media resolved this seeming contradiction by taking refuge in Abu al-Aish's biography—more pointedly, in a highly selective version of his life story. Journalists focused on his years of service in Israeli hospitals and collaboration with Israeli colleagues, his dedication to the study of Hebrew, his pursuit of advanced education abroad, and his commitment to peacemaking with Israelis.[12] While these linkages to Israeli institutions were perpetually referenced in Israeli sources, the doctor's multiple affiliations with Palestinian communities and institutions tended to be downplayed or ignored. For Jewish Israelis critical of the incursion—a population small in number, as I have noted—Abu al-Aish's story served as an exemplar, an incident that typified Israel's indiscriminate assault on Palestinian civilians. Yet far greater numbers of Israelis embraced this story precisely for its failure to exemplify. In the context of an uncivilized and fundamentalist Gaza, or so popular Israeli discourse would construe it, the doctor was deemed a clear exception—not merely for his education and ties

to Israel but for his ability to forgive an otherwise humane army for its error (as indeed he did, at least publicly) (Harel 2009). The story of Abu al-Aish as "exceptional individual" worked to forestall larger political questions about Israeli-inflicted death and suffering in Gaza. The story also functioned as a humanitarian alibi, as evidence of Israeli care for Palestinian life in the face of fierce and frequent international accusations to the contrary.

What of the incident's status as a scene of televised violence? It could be argued that the voice rather than the image of Abu al-Aish bypassed the desensitized Israeli eye by presenting evidence of Israeli state violence in a sensorial register—namely, sound—that was not yet under ideological control. However, when one shifts attention to the visual field, another reading becomes evident. What was chiefly visible to viewers on the evening news of January 16, 2009, was anchorman Shlomi Eldar in the television studio with his cell phone raised (see figure 8.1). Yes, this image shared space on a split screen with a still photograph of Gaza City seen from an aerial distance. Yet Eldar occupied the symbolic center of the visual field, looking alternately at the television lens and his cell phone, sitting in obvious discomfort and distress. "I will not hang up on him," he told his viewers in Hebrew, in a declarative and somewhat defensive statement that breaks from common television scripts, as does the form and duration of the call itself. He tries to intervene in the disaster as it is unfolding, calling for ambulances, asking for the doctor's coordinates in the Gaza Strip, and then, in the aftermath of the call, returning to his dressing room to plead with the military to grant the family safe passage to an Israeli hospital. This image of mediated testimonial turned on a set of substitutions. With Eldar at the screen's center, Palestinian personal trauma was replaced by Israeli grief, even as the political terms of the war were replaced by the scene of depoliticized trauma.

It was claimed that "all of Israel heard this frantic call." Other Israeli commentators argued that it was "the most difficult image of the war," for which the incursion would be most remembered within Israeli collective memory (Izikovich 2009). In the words of a former Israeli parliamentarian, the image had the power to "brand itself on our consciousness and souls" (Sarid 2009). To what, precisely, were multitudes of Israeli viewers drawn when they saw this clip on the evening news? Perhaps primarily to images of Israeli distress, empathy, and rescue efforts—images that, it should be stressed, occupied the visual although not the audial field. In the context of the Palestinian as both an incredible but also a structurally impossible witness, Eldar takes on the mantle of testimonial: not as supplement but as substitute. As such, the scene rehearses in microcosm the larger substi-

Figure 8.1 A split screen with a still photograph of the city of Gaza next to news anchor Shlomi Eldar on the phone with Dr. Ezzedin Abu al-Aish. Source: Channel 10, Israel, January 16, 2009.

tution fantasy on which the Israeli state launched the incursion, and from whose vantage the mainstream media reported it: that of the Israeli as its primary victim.

The ideological structure of inverted empathy, in which Eldar supplanted Abu al-Aish, has had a considerable history in the Israeli context. It bears a strong family resemblance to an iconic wartime paradigm originating in the aftermath of the 1967 war and recurring in the aftermath of Israel's 1982 Lebanon war—a paradigm so widely recognizable as to have acquired a colloquial shorthand: "shooting and crying" (Hochberg 2013, 2015). The term describes the dilemma of the soul-searching Israeli soldier, the humane and moral fighter with (in Israeli parlance) "a beautiful soul" who reflects ambivalently on the horrors of the war in which he has participated. Perhaps most crucially, it is a paradigm in which the humane narrator is positioned as the locus of the listener's empathetic gaze. By means of cleansing narration, the perpetrator becomes both the narrative's sympathetic protagonist and its victim. This case study suggests the need to modify the "shooting and crying" paradigm with an additional gerund: *seeing*. Selective vision—whether in the pages of the media or on the battlefield—was an equally crucial tool for cleansing the collective consciousness and, therein, refashioning perpetrator as victim (Hochberg 2015).[13]

Perhaps ironically, given the history sketched here, Abu al-Aish would become a highly visible international figure in the months and years that

followed, becoming a coveted speaker about issues of peace and coexistence to worldwide crowds numbering in the thousands (Shalev 2016). As a measure of his global prominence, his story was referenced in Barack Obama's famous 2011 Middle East speech as an illustration of the ability of Israel and Palestine to overcome mutual enmity: "We see it in the actions of a Palestinian who lost three daughters to Israeli shells in Gaza. 'I have the right to feel angry,' he said [Obama quoting Abu al-Aish]. 'So many people were expecting me to hate. My answer to them is I shall not hate. Let us hope,' he said, 'for tomorrow'" (*Jerusalem Post* 2011). One could argue that, on the global stage, Abu al-Aish became the Palestinian witness par excellence.

The Age of the Smartphone Witness

Media infrastructures in Israel and Palestine would change dramatically over the course of the next few years, altering the tenor of the wartime media landscapes that unfolded during subsequent Israeli military assaults on Gaza. During the 2008–9 and 2012 aerial bombardments, most Palestinians in Gaza lacked widespread access to mobile digital technologies and reliable internet connectivity, a condition rooted in extreme economic deprivation and Israeli restrictions on electricity and broadband. Coupled with the Israeli state-imposed blockade on the entry of journalists into the Gaza Strip, as described here, and the growing military presence on social media, Israel effectively maintained control of the wartime visual message.

But not so in subsequent military campaigns. By 2014 and more so by 2021, during additional Israeli assaults, social media literacy and tools had become widespread within the Gaza population, and the global social media field of the wartime periods would be saturated with the images and footage they had produced, scenes of Gaza infrastructural devastation and death, shot from mobile devices and often uploaded in the very midst of an attack.

For many Israelis, such shifts in the media ecosystem created a profound sense of political crisis. In 2021, Israeli television commentators and military analysts warned live audiences about the torrent of "bad images" coming out of Gaza during the Israeli assault, shot on the smartphones of Gazans under fire. As in 2008–9, Israeli military spokespersons would frame the images of devastated Gazan infrastructures and injured children that were appearing on the mobile screens of populations across the globe as a mere public relations management problem. They lamented that, despite a growing army of pro-Israeli influencers on social media, the military was failing to produce a counter–"victory photo" that might mitigate the damaging images

produced by their foes (Caspit 2021). "In the battle of photos of pathos," a commentator would write in the mainstream Israeli press, "we don't stand a chance" (Klughaft 2021). Television anchors argued that Israel risked losing both this media battle and the larger global struggle for hearts and minds.

Again, as in 2008–9, Israeli mainstream media and public opinion cheered on the operation, as left-wing Israeli journalists noted:

> You look at Israeli media and you look at Israeli public opinion and the Israeli discourse, and you hear only one voice, a voice of cheering to the fighting, of asking for more, of asking for more blood, of supporting the [Israeli military] in an unconditioned way, no criticism and, above all, no real information, because the Israeli average viewer, TV viewer, didn't see [anything] of Gaza. You see here and there those towers falling down—it's very photogenic—but nothing about the sacrifice, nothing about the agony, nothing about the families, nothing about the suffering, the children, everything. Israelis don't see it, which helps them to feel so good about themselves and to feel so just about themselves. (*Democracy Now!* 2021)

The resonances from 2008–9 were numerous. Images of daily Palestinian suffering were rarely seen on Israeli national television over the course of the 2021 Gaza operation. Gaza was seen chiefly from the air, with broadcasters favoring images of residential towers collapsing under the weight of the Israeli bombardment, spectacular Iron Dome interceptions in the night sky, or incoming rockets fired toward Israel.

Concluding this chapter in 2021 is a sober illustration of the recalcitrance of hegemonic Israeli ways of seeing and unseeing Israeli state violence and its Palestinian victims. It is a reminder that even in the age of the Palestinian smartphone witness, even at moments when images and footage of military assaults are viral on global networks, reaching audiences across the world on mobile screens, the Israeli media could readily banish Palestinians voices and experiences from the hegemonic frame. Such vanishing acts were deemed urgent practices of preservation. The labor of media unseeing was no less than a national imperative. In the eyes of the state, and the national media, the very future of Israel was at stake.

Notes

This chapter builds on an earlier published work: Rebecca L. Stein, "Impossible Witness: Israeli Visuality, Palestinian Testimony and the Gaza War," *Journal for Cultural Research* 16 (2/3): 35–53.

1 For a review of Israeli and Palestinian media, including demographics of consumption by source, see Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009.

2 For additional discussion of these themes, see Stein 2021.

3 For discussion of the Supreme Court ruling, see Orgad 2009, 253.

4 They also point to the difficulties that journalists faced when they endeavored to part ways from this narrative (Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009).

5 For more discussion, see Kuntsman and Stein 2015.

6 On the history of this aerial vantage, see Kaplan 2018.

7 On widespread public support for the incursion, also see S. Cohen 2009.

8 For discussion of how the military controlled the news for Israeli audiences during Operation Cast Lead, see the Israeli news blog *HaAyin HaShevi'it*, https://www.the7eye.org.il.

9 For a discussion of Eldar's coverage of Gaza, see HaCohen 2008.

10 She also questioned the doctor's claim that he harbored no weapons. This incident was widely covered in the Israeli media, with many critical of her outburst (D. Cohen 2009).

11 For example, Eldar voiced criticism, on the first day of the Israeli operation, of an Israeli airstrike on the police headquarters of Gaza City that resulted in the death of forty people. He was later criticized in the Israeli mainstream media (*Ma'ariv*) for this dissident opinion (Keshev: The Center for the Protection of Democracy in Israel 2009).

12 Abu al-Aish objected to this rendering by identifying himself as a Palestinian from Jabiliya refugee camp (as per the transcript from his press conference).

13 I explore this theme in greater detail in Stein 2021.

Hatim El-Hibri

9

The Elisions of Televised Solidarity in the 2014 Lebanese Broadcast for Gaza

On July 21, 2014, eight of the major Lebanese TV networks came together to produce a thirty-minute live broadcast as a show of solidarity with Palestine in general and Gaza in particular. "Palestine You Are Not Alone" was shared on all the networks simultaneously and featured segments prepared by each.[1] The significance of the broadcast was underscored by the show of national and professional unity that it was meant to demonstrate—that despite the factional nature of the domestic political order that underpins the Lebanese TV and media landscape, the suffering and struggle in Gaza brought the networks and their audiences together. This break from the ordinary news schedule to bear televisual witness models a kind of solidarity centered on the creation of and participation in TV spectatorship. Solidarity is understood here to emerge from the interconnected acts of making images of and viewing and attuning the self to the suffering of innocent Palestinians.

What are the limits of this conception of solidarity, and what aesthetic and affective forms does it take? To understand the stakes of the broadcast

requires a contextual understanding of how and where it opens up or closes down the possibilities of 2014. I argue that the broadcast embodies the contradictions that inhere in a national frame for solidarity, entangled with and delimited by Lebanese politics. This broadcast also demonstrates the degree to which, by 2014, images of Israeli destruction of Gaza had come to circulate quite widely in the global media landscape and marks the possible exhaustion of a politics of solidarity that presumes an informational or empathy gap to be filled by circulating images of self-evident truth value. The lived conditions of Gaza, while perhaps not always legible in detail, have long been shown to global audiences in high definition and real time.[2] These contradictions inform the broadcast's two foci—the centering of mothers and children as either witnesses to suffering or the ones suffering, and the evocation of memories of past political struggle in relation to place.

This frame's resolute focus on the pain of the dispossessed allows Lebanese broadcasters, audiences, and the state to imagine themselves into coherence. Doing so inadvertently screens out other possibilities for solidarity with Gaza. Palestinians in Lebanon (particularly those in the camps) are not rendered entirely invisible but, rather, are given airtime and humanized on terms that conveniently constrain their political significance. In the same moment that Palestinians' suffering in Gaza is rendered legible and acceptable due to the purity of their victimhood at Israeli hands, Palestinian suffering in Lebanon is refigured in two key ways—meaningful primarily within an unambivalently Palestinian nationalist frame, and not troubled by the deprivations whose more direct source is the Lebanese state. Fixing the question of Palestine in this manner absolves the Lebanese state and society of its own treatment of Palestinians since 1948.

National Frames, Transnational Limits

The 2014 broadcast is informed by a number of factors specific to Lebanon. The complex historical relationship of the Lebanese state to its largest permanently temporary noncitizen population is refracted through the fraught relationship of local, national, and Pan-Arab sympathies and structures. It is also more immediately imbricated with the tensions and exclusions that shape the Lebanese state, which are of course defined by their integration with regional and geopolitical adventurism. For example, one might consider the solidarities between Palestinians and Hizbullah. Since the 1980s, the political party and militia have maintained one of the closest ongoing relationships with the Palestinian struggle. Hizbullah and the Palestinian

cause have long had a relationship of solidarity on the ground with a real social and organizational base, but also one that reflects unevenness in resources and ability to define the nature of that relationship. At times, this unevenness has meant that Hizbullah has shaped or co-opted the symbolic and material conditions of that solidarity (Khalili 2006, 2007). Since the start of the Syrian uprising-turned civil war in 2011, this tension has been complicated by Hizbullah's pro-Assad stance.[3] The comparatively more recent arrival of displaced Syrians to Lebanon was met with a combination of activist initiatives, well-meaning activity by nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and the United Nations, but also a hardened anti-refugee nationalism and governmental regime, expressed in the form of openly hostile bigotry, violence, and discriminatory policies that exacerbated long-standing injustices.

The present focus on the kinds of spectatorial relations and affective forms taken by the 2014 live broadcast is not meant to suggest that the experiences and opinions of Palestinian audiences of the broadcast are of secondary importance, or that the larger question of how images of Palestine can enable a sense of connection for those in Lebanon is anything less than crucial.[4] Interrogating the broadcast itself is additive to those efforts and can help unpack how subtler political openings are flattened by the constraints of the Lebanese nationalist grammar in which it is expressed.[5] From at least the late 1960s to the early 1980s, Palestine solidarity had informed Left internationalism within Lebanon, often seen as part of a step beyond sectarian politics and attachments.[6] This was also roughly the era of Palestinian armed struggle and of Palestinian revolutionary cinema. As Nadia Yaqub (2018) demonstrates, Palestinian film of this sort was premised, like Third Cinema, on the idea of an interventionist creation of images from below by participants in a revolutionary event. Like other radical film practice of that era, this often involved a keen sense of the politics of the image and its relationship to the apparatus of the state, particularly television. The ideal was to inject dissenting voices that expressed and were derived from the lived experience of subaltern audiences, who would themselves decide and shape the mediated intervention. In the conjuncture that came after 2002 and the Second Intifada, there emerged within activist political film a move toward a realist mode intent on "proving" the displacement and suffering caused by the occupation, sometimes following what might be called a humanitarian impulse.[7] Of course, not all cinematic strategies that seek a better reality are as constrained by what currently exists.[8] Just as the present is marked by political limitations and shrunken political horizons, the place

of Palestine filmmaking has also morphed to find footing in the absence of a national film industry.[9]

While the coordination of the broadcast across multiple TV stations is central to its performance of solidarity, the meaning of the broadcast's medium would seem to put it at odds with this older understanding of the politics of the media landscape. However, it is also telling that there are no Palestinian TV networks based in Lebanon, despite the presence of sizable communities of Palestinians for most of the country's history, the important role of Palestinians in its intellectual life and journalism, and the long-standing social and economic ties that predated and transformed alongside the British and French mandates and its border regime. One of the major contradictions of the Lebanese media system is that although it is unique among Arab countries in that its television operates primarily on a private and for-profit basis, the size of the domestic market is so small that it requires most TV channels to rely on a system of patronage to stay afloat.[10] Relatively few turn a profit, and they typically rely on Pan-Arab markets and financing to do so. In addition, ever since the reassertion of state control over the airwaves in the 1990s, the granting of broadcast licenses has followed the logic of elite sectarian rule.

The 1990s also saw the rise of satellite distribution, and the presence of a large number of privately run channels within Lebanon made it so many were poised to partner with financing and political support from the Gulf states, adding another dimension to the local media equation.[11] This has resulted in TV channels defined by a heady mix of political partisanship and commercial pressure. To the degree that political parties are able to act as the sole representatives of an entire sect and can exert direct control over TV channels, TV news can come to sound directly sectarian even as it denounces sectarianism as such. Most of the channels involved with the broadcast have the backing of or a more or less direct affiliation with a political party, or the backing of a wealthy individual with political interests.[12] Some of these affiliations include Future TV with the eponymous Future Movement once led by the Hariri family, Orange TV with the Free Patriotic Movement led by Michel Aoun, Al Manar with Hizbullah, and NBN with Amal and Nabih Berri. Tele Liban, as the state broadcaster, is somewhat different, as is LBCI's historic affiliation with Maronite militias that has become more attenuated over time. Al Jadeed and MTV's commercial orientation have even led to an adversarial stance vis-à-vis the state on occasion. However, on a professional level, most members of the press work as colleagues, although of course somewhat segmented by the social forms that inhere to the local

and global industry. The ability to quickly organize a unity broadcast was possible in part because of existing infrastructural and professional mutuality. The divergence between professional closeness but discursive antagonism is a key component of the performative "we may differ but are united for Gaza."

National frames establish a grammar to speak in and come with just as many risks.[13] The aspiration for a future state premised on belonging and returning to the land is a clear unifying demand of many articulations of Palestinian nationalism. Like other foci of transnational solidarity, it is crucial to avoid blunting the edge of the political demand for liberation. At the same time, as feminist, queer, and class-based activism and analysis highlight, it is equally important to not subsume the internally contested nature of its historical and contemporary articulation.[14] The openings of transnational solidarity are productive precisely because of how they can offer opportunities to remake the terms of national liberation or self-determination without undermining its ultimate goal. This political horizon arguably becomes clearest when the question of solidarity is understood to be animated by decolonization—understood as a historical process, political practice, and intellectual endeavor.[15]

The post–Second Intifada period has been marked by the reimagining of transnational solidarity, taking a range of forms that have found the limitations of the NGO-ization of human rights work to be wanting. From the long history at the UN to the post-Oslo era, there emerged a significant gap between the promise of demonstrating the legitimacy and humanity of Palestinian claims and the political realities that resulted from those claims having been made in official forums. Yet some continue to demand and create images whose "immediacy" is meant to inspire or renew solidarity with those suffering and condemnation of those inflicting that suffering. The flaw of this strategy can be found in that while it senses the importance of media to the formation of public discourse, and of spectacle to contemporary politics, it also wants to imbue images with the capacity to act on political structures by acting directly on spectators.[16] The emergence of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement in 2005 is one alternative strategy to bring pressure on Israel through the mobilization of transnational solidarity.[17] The 2014 Gaza war was marked by the flowering of renewed Black-Palestinian solidarity, which in turn offered new possibilities and positionalities from which to understand and work to undo contemporary systems of domination.[18] As Noura Erakat (2020) shows, the articulations of the Ferguson-Gaza moment were not unprecedented, nor were the linkages forged there easily

made or maintained. Solidarity requires reciprocal and multidirectional care work, which requires self-reflexivity by all participants.[19]

The idea that a key problem is a lack of global sympathy for Palestinians in general and Gazans in particular is perhaps truer of mainstream political discourse in the United States than in Lebanon. The fixation on the lack of recognition in that important public arena, however, would seem to universalize in a way that misremembers other kinds of actually existing solidarity within the United States, but also obscures other histories, such as those of Irish, Japanese, South African, and Vietnamese solidarity. These histories inform the present moment in ways that are often underappreciated. In addition, the degree to which public reaction to "evenhanded" news coverage of 2014 was largely divided would suggest that, if anything, the problem is not primarily one of an incorrect moral relationship to these images or an insufficient quantity of attention paid to them. Al Jazeera, BBC, and CNN all devoted a great deal of airtime to the 2014 war, as did other transnational European news channels such as France 24. The significance of the specifically Lebanese broadcasters coming together should be understood in terms of their importance to regional and diasporic audiences.

There are two kinds of time to consider when thinking of live broadcasts —the moment of witnessing in relation to the recency of the event, and the viewing duration or screen time within the actual broadcast. Even though streaming live on Twitter or Facebook was not widely available in 2014, in-person on-the-ground footage and photography defined the visual culture of the event. #GazaUnderAttack and #IsraelUnderFire became two key hashtags in the conflict (which were reactivated in May 2021), and Israel's public diplomacy machine sought to manage the competing perspectives presented in these two streams.[20] The year 2014 was the first time the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) deployed their live combat camera project, contending with Palestinian mobilizations of the possibilities of networked photography. Israeli efforts to manage the war's optics suggest that, at least on social media, they believed the coverage to be unfavorable.[21]

The visual culture of the war was shaped by the political economy of the occupation, in which the regulation of mobility dovetails with and is stratified by citizenship and Israeli rule—broadcast time is materially shaped by what Tawil-Souri (2017) refers to as "checkpoint time." During Operation Cast Lead in 2009, the IDF sharply curtailed foreign correspondents' mobility as well, with the exception of some reporters embedded with its own military units. This policy was likely informed by the 2006 Israel-Hizbullah war (Bishara 2016a, 178) and resulted in Palestinian journalists and news

Figure 9.1 The main screen of the broadcast, opening with the presenter from Tele-Liban. Clockwise from the top, the rest are NBN, Al Jadeed, LBCI, MTV, OTV, Al Manar, and Future TV.

agencies on the ground inside Gaza making much of their material available for free.[22] While smartphones and social media may have rerouted attention and distributed the possibilities of image creation in 2014, the control of territory can sharply constrain media production.[23] Professional reporting from within Gaza was mostly done by local journalists in partnership with the global press. Access by those outside was greatly limited by the IDF on the basis that their safety could not be guaranteed within Gaza.[24]

Broadcasting Unity

The 2014 Gaza broadcast would have looked identical on all the channels involved (save for the main logo of the one the viewer tuned in to).[25] Its primary visual device was a series of frames within a frame—one channel at the center, rimmed by a series of smaller panels along the right and bottom sides showing the other channels not currently holding the mic. This tableau serves as a discursive center and transitional device for the broadcast, with most of the screen time consisting of segments produced by the individual channels that the broadcast cuts away to. The broadcast opens and closes on the recitation of poetry by Talal Salman, the editor of the Lebanese

newspaper *Assafir* and one of the main organizers of the broadcast. This plays over a photomontage of suffering, injury, blasts from Israeli bombs, flags, and defiant expressions. Following the introductory montage, each of the anchors addresses the viewer on behalf of their organization via a salutation directed to Palestine—not Palestinians in Lebanon, but Palestine itself and Gaza more specifically. While the thematic focus of each of the introductions varies, from drawing parallels between Israeli assaults on Beirut and Gaza to more romantic evocations of Palestine as "the beloved," they all do so by emphasizing affective bonds between the two nations. As is sometimes the case in editorial commentary in Arab journalism, some of the salutations work in poetic meter and metaphor. This opening tableau serves as the unifying intermezzo and transitional device between the individual channels' segments, which occupy the majority of the broadcast's run time. Each segment strikes a balance between presenting a unique focus and maintaining a cohesive feel to the broadcast. The broadcast closes with the poetry of Mahmoud Darwish.

Two key organizing tropes emerge in the individual segments—that of mothers and children suffering or bearing witness to suffering, and evocations of memories of nationalist struggle and solidarity that live in the contemporary moment. Both are inflected by the contradictions presented to the question of solidarity by a nationalist frame and the Lebanese political context. Elements of these two tropes are present in each of the segments to varying degrees. The segments in the first half of the broadcast (those of Future TV, OTV, MTV, and LBCI) are centered on the experiences of children and women (particularly in their capacity as mothers and widows) and take a human-interest angle. The second half (by Al Jadeed, Al Manar, TL, and NBN) explores different contextual dimensions of the 2014 war, such as the living memory of those forcibly displaced in 1948, of the transnational armed struggle of the 1970s and 1980s in Lebanon, and the tactical dimensions of Palestinian armed struggle since the First Intifada.

Many of the segments demonstrate an acute awareness of images of Gaza as they commonly circulate in global news media. In the LBCI segment, for instance, there is a replay of the now-iconic footage of the four young boys killed on the beach of Gaza City by Israeli naval shelling four days before the broadcast.[26] The TL segment also replays the footage of the killing of Muhammad al-Durrah in 2000 by Israeli sniper fire as his father attempted to shield him—footage of which circulated internationally at the time. In both of these examples, replaying footage is part of a direct and affectively charged appeal to the viewer. In the LBCI segment, it follows a series of chil-

dren saying they wish other children to be brave, and in the TL segment, it appears as part of the narratorial reflection on the history of resistance, one in which the hearts of the rest of the Arabs had "turned to stone." The suffering and death of these children are made to contrast with a callous viewership that neither empathizes nor politically aligns with a self-evident moral truth embodied in the image. This disappointment emerges from the gap between the promise of humanitarianism and its humanizations, and the political realities that give rise to the investment made in that framework.[27] Memories, experiences, and solidarities that do not fit this framework are effectively screened out, and the instabilities of the raw experience of the present tense restabilized.[28]

The LBCI segment—which includes interviews with Lebanese survivors of the 2006 war in the village of Marwahin in the south—demonstrates how this framework establishes a narrowed Lebanese-Palestinian solidarity, even within the already-narrow frame of the national. It presents commentary from young people on their experience of Israeli shelling, many of whom link their memories of 2006 to those of children in Gaza. Marwahin was the site of Israeli airstrikes on July 15, 2006, that killed twenty-three people, almost all of whom were women and children fleeing the IDF's announcement of imminent bombardment.[29] The voice-over informs the viewer that these survivors are all too familiar with the fear in the eyes of Gazan children, and what it means to run to shelters that cannot protect from the impending aerial onslaught. Firsthand experience with Israeli bombardment becomes the basis for the political bond, one that culminates in the reporter asking children and their mothers in Lebanon what they wish for the children of Gaza. Primarily, the wishes are for the children to not have such awful experiences, but to not give in to fear if they do.

Near the end of the clip, this presumed transcendence into common and shared resoluteness is reinforced in an interview with an older woman while she labors over recently picked tobacco leaves. As in many villages within sight of the border, tobacco farming is a staple of the economy, and one with a long history of women's involvement in labor organizing.[30] We are told of the profound losses of children and grandchildren that Umm Karim has suffered, just before she pronounces that she considers all children to be like her own. The segment visually links this familial proximity to a geographic one by cutting to a south-facing shot showing the border, and then the seashore beyond which lies Gaza, the two lands "beneath one sky." It brings narrative closure via close-ups on a graveyard and grave markers with the death dates in July 2006, before a close-up of Umm Karim's face.

Figure 9.2 "Under this one sky . . . ," muses the voice of the narrator, over a panoramic shot facing south from Lebanon, as though straining to see Gaza. LCBI segment.

Women do a great deal of emotional labor in this broadcast beyond being five of the eight presenters. Much of this labor is in specific roles as active mothers to future generations of Palestinian resistance and as givers of testimony regarding the injustices visited in both past and present. In the Future TV segment, this is underscored by interviews with people struggling to maintain a sense of normalcy around iftar, despite what the narrator describes as the impossibility of a "Ramadan atmosphere." The accompanying scene shows a large family eating on a blanket spread on the ground inside a school recently converted into a shelter.[31] Although this testimony is generally quite personal—recounting attempts to save children's lives, to re-create domestic normalcy, to care for the living, or to properly mourn the dead—much of it is delivered by these victims as a matter of fact. This dispassionate self-presentation is often found in those well aware of the demands made of the brutalized, who are then asked to publicly perform the rationality of their claims.[32] The viewer is left to wonder about the labor in "private" spheres, such as caring and cooking for the living, while also publicly mourning the dead.

The second key element in the broadcast is a reflection on the memory of past political solidarities and movements. This is enacted in interviews

Figure 9.3 Reporter Jad Ghosn gazes at an old Yasser Arafat poster. Visualization of an old photo with Kōzō Okamoto, recalling armed solidarity struggles of the 1970s. Al Jadeed segment.

with those who experienced that past, investigations uncovering that which is forgotten, or a restaging of that past via a montage of news footage. The Al Jadeed segment pursues a chapter in the international armed solidarity with Palestine that is largely absent in most contemporary mainstream imaginaries. It follows investigative reporter Jad Ghosn on a journey to find people who remember well-known figures from the 1970s, who may appear to many sensibilities in 2014 as distant as the posters of a young Yasser Arafat that appear on walls in the background in the opening of the segment.

As Ghosn explores a graveyard of Palestinian martyrs, the narration highlights how Palestine is a story not of one people but of many who came from far away. He then asks passersby if the names "Carlos" or "Kōzō Okamoto" ring a bell. He also asks about Rachel Corrie, but none of the first few people recognize the three names. He finds a man who recalls that "Carlos" once fought with the Popular Front for the Liberation of Palestine (PFLP) (the reference is to Ilich Ramírez Sánchez, a Venezuelan named Carlos by his Palestinian counterparts and later named "Carlos the Jackal"). One man remembers Kōzō as part of the Japanese Red Army contingent to the PFLP, and another speaks with admiration of Rachel Corrie, an activist who was killed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza in 2003. The segment ends by returning to the graveyard, with the reporter brushing debris off of the grave of Yasuyuki Yasuda, another member of the Japanese Red Army, and adorning it with a string of prayer beads capped with a wood carving in the shape of Palestine. While the man who recalled Kōzō mistakenly believed him to be

dead, the presence of Yasuda's grave stands as a kind of silent testament to a bygone era of armed solidarity. The unusual experience of reading a Japanese name transliterated and written in Arabic calligraphy underscores a nostalgia for strongly held political commitments across perceived cultural distance.

The segments by Al Manar and TL present a history in brief of Palestinian resistance. Al Manar focuses on the tactics of armed struggle since the First Intifada from the perspective of common people involved in mass civil disobedience and combat, presented as a technological progression from "stones to rockets." This theme is continued in the TL segment, which addresses major events and political leaders. The Al Manar segment is primarily a montage of archival and contemporary news footage from what appears to be both the First and Second Intifadas. Its music stands out from the more somber and wistful tone of those that precede it, switching to the synthesizer-driven orchestral bombast commonly found in Al Manar's video clips. Its narrator speaks approvingly of armed struggle in both the past and the present—opening on footage of an Israeli soldier striking an unarmed man, presumably a Palestinian, who responds by grabbing the soldier by the collar, and ending on a graphic of a map of rocket fire from Gaza to Tel Aviv and Haifa. The conclusion speaks in the language of the economy of national memory and martyrdom, in which the blood of children who have died in the conflict is not wasted as it lights the spark of resistance.

This theme is carried through into the TL segment, which highlights the relevance of the individual to the geopolitics of the resistance. It describes a transmutation of the language of resistance, which transforms words into stones that were thrown at the occupier. Interspersed with images of stone throwers is footage of Ariel Sharon's visit to the Temple Mount in 2000, as well as the famous footage of Muhammad al-Durrah being shot. The narration in this segment introduces a self-reflexivity to the broadcast and the form of witnessing that it encourages. This montage is overlaid with the voice of the narrator, who tells the viewer that even as all these injustices occurred, and even as the resistance gained in strength from the righteous truth on its side, and turned words to stones, and created weapons of the heart, the hearts of the rest of the Arabs turned to stone. The resentment and betrayal affectively activated here have the potential to overwhelm the speaking position of the broadcast itself, directing anger and outrage toward more local injustices. Seemingly in recognition of this potential resonance, the segment ends with the presenter stating that Palestinians will never trade their land, and those in the diaspora all have Gaza in their hearts and minds. Outrage becomes acceptable as long as it remains directed "correctly."

In the broadcast as a whole, victimhood is figured in terms of innocence and a prevailing injustice. The manner in which that victim status slides into either an outwardly directed heroism or an inwardly focused righteous stoicism necessitates a consideration of its melodramatic nature. As a representational mode, melodrama is both central to modern political discourse and potentially intertwined with realism.[33] The broadcast gives viewers firsthand accounts of dispossession, personal loss, destroyed homes and schools, and recollections of past political commitments whose political meaning is refracted through a moral claim and appeal to recognition. Consider the numerous accounts of those unjustly killed (or those who narrowly escaped death), augmented by the untimeliness of having simply been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and there being nowhere to flee in Gaza.[34] The viewer is brought into a relation of empathy with those recounting stories that are upsettingly familiar despite their immediate novelty. In MTV's segment, this aspect is even presented with a degree of self-reflexivity. As the viewer is shown scenes of injured children, hospitals, and funerary processions with all-too-small bodies at their center, the voice-over remarks that these children have been made to pay a price that would be unacceptable to any other people in the world, a world that remains unconscionably oblivious. This segment also dwells on the destruction of childhood homes and the memories that are destroyed along with them.

Mediated witnessing is itself held to be the desirable act of solidarity, or valuable to those watching who might recognize themselves in the people presented. The moment of empathetic attunement slips into one of mutual identification—particularly in those clips (such as in the interviews set in South Lebanon). The melodramatic resonance of these scenes depends on and is intertwined with the realist mode commonly found in journalism—elements such as witness testimony, factual voice-over narration, archival footage, and on-scene recording. As two key representational modes of modern political discourse that are frequently mutually constitutive, their presence in this broadcast is not inherently suspect. Much of what is given into evidence here depends on realist claims about events as they happened and the experiences of the people presented, which in turn signifies to a viewer in melodramatic demonstration. Child witnesses in wartime reporting often serve to render more complex political conditions in simplified terms—the sheer injustice of seeing injured, traumatized, and dead children refigures the onus placed on the viewer, amplifying the potential affective charge and felt solidarity while also reducing the scope and depth of critical engagement with the realities presented.[35] Rather than creating conditions for the po-

litical work of mourning or interrogating the specificities of solidarity, the mode of engagement closes down more nuanced mutualities of encounter.

It is not the melodramatic mode as such that is problematic here but, rather, how it can close down an understanding of political difference within mutuality. This enacts a limit on the grievances that Palestinians in Lebanon may have with the Lebanese state. It can also undercut the disconnect from or even antipathy toward nationalist invocations that many feel—Lebanese and Palestinian. In making suffering meaningful through a redemptive arc that passes through a nationalist exhortation and then through empathetic viewers, a great deal that might be problematic is naturalized—the requirement of innocence and victimhood for Palestinian political claims-making, the performative framework of the news camera and viewer, and the refiguring of solidarity and liberation as the completion of the mediated circulation of affecting images that will itself lead to some transformation of consciousness and therefore broader political change. This not only limits the possible forms that media activism and transnational solidarity might take but also assumes a problem that fits a ready-made answer—just capture the spectacular destruction of Palestinian lifeworlds on camera, and then the world will know the truth and things will get better.

Much of the effect of the occupation is the systematic dehumanization and devaluation of Palestinian life and belonging to the land. As Jasbir Puar (2017) argues, the violence of liberal conceptions of humanity, dramatically manifested in the "less than lethal" forms of securitization in Gaza, demonstrates how the very terms of humanization at work involve a normative conception of life in which certain populations are already produced as inhuman and debilitated. This racialized formation, never far from either implicit or explicit animalization, entered into a terrifying series of slippages in 2014, as was manifest in coverage of inhabitants of the Bisan Zoo in Gaza.[36] Appeals to humanitarianism and human rights frameworks operate on a terrain that is effective at gaining certain kinds of sympathy and solidarity even as it defines and constrains their political outcomes.[37] It should therefore be of no surprise that many see humanization and revelation of atrocious acts and systems as a principal aesthetic aim. This structure contributes to the impetus to circulate images that demonstrate the capacity to be physically and emotionally harmed.

The final segment of the broadcast was produced by NBN and is set in the Burj Al Barajnah camp in Beirut's southern suburbs. It focuses on the question of the lived memory of 1948 in the diaspora, which it explores via an interview with Umm Aziz, a venerable *hajjah* (an honorific earned by

completing pilgrimage to Mecca but often applied to signify respect) with memories of the land and livelihoods in Acre taken from her and her family when she was eighteen. The *hajjah* has two main functions—she cries for the country kept from her and her grandchildren, and she watches her TV set intently, following the news of Gaza (one of the few appearances of TV viewing within the broadcast). This lived memory is counterposed to the experience of the children who appear later in the segment, who say that although they have never visited Palestine, all their thoughts and aspirations are directed toward it and its liberation. The one moment in which Umm Aziz appears not miserable is when a group of boys say that it is their generation's responsibility to liberate Palestine, at which point we cut to the *hajjah* in her doorway blowing kisses to the camera. The concluding NBN segment effectively reintegrates the individual experiences and sentiments expressed in the broadcast within a safe nationalist frame.

Conclusion

In the era of ecological collapse, the beginning of the October 17, 2019, revolution (which featured renewed local debates about Palestine solidarity within revolutionary praxis), the COVID-19 pandemic, and the 2020 Beirut port explosion, it might seem ungenerous to focus on the limitations of an attempt to forge the "structures of intimacy" that might underpin solidarity from a previous conjuncture. It is because of these potentialities, and how necessary they are, that it becomes critical to make sense of the pitfalls of good intentions. This broadcast from Lebanon raises a bevy of interrelated issues and questions regarding transnational solidarity with Palestine, the complex forms that it takes and has taken in Lebanon, and the place of communicative practices and aesthetic form in shaping affinities that are felt as they are forged. Part of what is unique about the broadcast is the performance of unity, which was itself made possible by a historical moment when catastrophic suffering in Gaza made a version of televised solidarity possible and palatable to audiences and the political establishment alike. A critical perspective on these issues must interrogate the importance and limitations of national frameworks for politics, legal rights, and cultural memory. Such a perspective must also contend with the antinomies of lived experience in place and the exercise of territorial sovereignty in light of contemporary iterations of settler colonial dispossession within Palestine. It must also contend with the exclusions and contradictions of citizenship within Lebanon.

It might be that the 2014 war coincided with or even facilitated a turning point in global political sympathy for and solidarity with Palestine, in which the severity of Gaza's punishment precipitated the outcome of political work that came before it. It is also the case that in Lebanon, displays of national unity across sectarian and partisan lines are few and far between, even as the country officially remained at a state of war with Israel. While certain components of the broadcast work to center Palestinian voices and experiences, these are primarily presented within the prism of innocence, or from the perspective of those whose steadfastness is meant to inspire viewers to . . . stay tuned for more? Certain components of the broadcast speak of a kind of melancholic attachment to or nostalgia for strong political bonds and the cultural and political radicalism that they have occasioned in the past, a complex matter in the years after the Arab uprisings. The lineage of the politics of victimhood—stretching from the twentieth-century televisual reformulations to the era of social media platforms—can obscure other intimate bonds, mutual vulnerabilities, and political solidarities.[38]

Reactivating and learning from the memory of past solidarity in the present is an important aspect of imagining possible futures. Yet even this aspect of the broadcast is largely recuperated within a nationalist frame that veers quite close to a one-way solidarity with a suffering Other that precludes a radical and relational politics.[39] The realities of Palestinian viewers within Lebanon should complicate any methodological nationalism, as should the long history of solidarity that flows from Palestinian organizations to Lebanese (most recently, in the form of aid in the wake of the 2020 disaster at the Beirut port). The broadcast, as an event within the contested visual culture of the 2014 Gaza war, stands as a testament to the limitations of solidarity understood to be an attunement of viewers to images, even a live national broadcast that stands on its performance of unity within a divided political landscape.

Notes

1 In the order of appearance of the individual segments, these are Future TV, Orange TV (OTV), Murr TV (MTV), Lebanese Broadcasting Company International (LBCI), Al Jadeed, Al Manar, Tele Liban (TL), and National Broadcasting Network (NBN).

2 As the essays gathered in Tawil-Souri and Matar 2016 demonstrate, Gaza is many things, but invisible is not one of them.

3 For example, Allan (2016) shows how the March of Return protest on May 15, 2011, brought Palestinians together across class divisions, was well covered in the Lebanese media, but was also marked by ambivalence by many Palestinians because the spectacle of Nakba commemoration had been co-opted by political parties, including Hizbullah (Allan 2016, 304).

4 This question is productively explored in the work of Allan (2016); Aouragh (2011); and Farah (2015).

5 Referring to the Shatila camp, Allan finds a "surreptitious counterpolitics at work, one in which refugees challenge social, economic, and spatial exclusion not through traditional modes of Palestinian-based political organizing but through an ephemeral, interactive politics of everyday practice" (2018a, 94).

6 Bardawil (2020) argues that the Palestinian revolution had a lasting intellectual impact on the Left in Lebanon and its diaspora that perhaps surpassed the 1967 defeat, and that included bonds of solidarity with the Algerian, Chinese, Cuban, and Vietnamese revolutions, among others. Matar (2018) shows how PLO films of this period were an aesthetic forerunner to the Iranian Revolution and Hizbullah.

7 Ginsberg (2016) offers a useful examination of this trend in Palestine solidarity film and its limitations. For a critique of this humanitarian impulse, see Rangan 2017.

8 Burris (2019) mobilizes diverse theoretical sources, including the Black Radical Tradition, to argue that a film aesthetics that only catalogs the techniques and effects of domination can limit the political imaginary, especially with regard to the occupation and emergent solidarities that aim to move beyond it.

9 Saglier (2017) proposes understanding contemporary Palestinian cinema as a non/industry that navigates the category of world cinema, the pressures and rewards of international film festivals, and the difficulties of domestic exhibition to compensate for this economic absence.

10 See El-Richani 2016 for a nuanced account of the perpetual crisis of the Lebanese media system. See also Dajani 2019 and the essays gathered in Della Ratta, Sakr, and Skovgaard-Petersen 2015.

11 Kraidy (2010) dubs this the "Saudi-Lebanese" connection. The Pan-Arab TV industry is also thoroughly imbricated in capitalist media systems that extend beyond the region (Khalil and Zayani 2020).

12 Beirut is also home to other channels that are primarily transnational, such as Al Mayadeen. While all the channels involved in the broadcast also have transnational distribution (or are part of a family of transnational channels, such as the LBCI conglomeration), they also all have a local audience and attunement in mind.

13 Salih and Richter-Devroe (2018) offer a productive entry point into the debates around the question of Palestine and national frames. See also Malkki 1992; Rabinowitz 2000; and Stein and Swedenburg 2005. Edward Said's oeuvre remains indispensable to thinking about the possibilities and limitations of this frame.

14 As Atshan (2020) argues, the latter can slip into what he refers to as the "empire of critique," most often wielded against voices and subjects already at a structural disadvantage within these debates.

15 Schayegh and Di-Capua (2020) highlight how decolonization has been discussed in Middle East studies. On the question of transnational solidarity in historical perspective, some important contributions include Allen 2018; Chamberlin 2011; Khan 2018; Lockman 1996; Lubin 2014; and Matthews 2006. On decolonial solidarity in the contemporary moment, see Salih, Zambelli, and Welchman 2020. Al-Hardan (2016) articulates a decolonial approach to memory and postmemory.

16 This is not to say that all spectacular politics are inherently bad. As Kosmatopoulos (2019) shows, they can combine with transnational and class-based forms of solidarity.

17 For example, see Al-Azza 2013 or Allen 2018 on BDS as a political response to the shortcomings of certain modes of transnational solidarity. Qumsiyeh (2011) argues for understanding BDS as a civil society response that mobilizes a longer tradition of popular politics. As Maira (2018) shows, the transnational character of BDS is not separate from the regional ambitions of the United States.

18 See Fischbach 2018 and Lubin 2014 for a fuller contextualization of the role of 1967 and the Black Power movement, and Naber 2017 on 2014 more specifically.

19 Atshan and Moore (2014) offer a productive engagement with queer conceptions of reciprocity and care. As El Zein's (2016) analysis of the phenomenon of "blackwashing" demonstrates, not all articulations of Black-Palestinian solidarity escape the logics of racial capitalism.

20 See Aouragh's (2016) critique of the liberal imperialism found in public diplomacy more broadly. See Chaudhuri 2019; Pennington 2019; and Rodley 2016 on the politics of social media, and Sakr's (2015) visualization and theorization of the images that accrue to hashtags in events like this.

21 Stein (2017) contextualizes this in terms of a competition over networked photography, whereby the IDF found their response to be lacking despite their vastly superior resources.

22 For example, the Ramattan News Agency released a great deal of material under creative commons licensing, with the hope that this would facilitate broader awareness of the conditions on the ground (Ward 2009).

23 See Bishara's (2016a) elaboration of how press freedom depends on freedom of movement in this context, particularly the ability to obtain Government Press Office cards, even as Palestinians have also long worked in global news organizations.

24 See Bishara 2016a for a discussion of these limitations, including the general threat to journalists for simply living in Gaza at the time.

25 As the broadcast was aired on multiple TV networks, it also ended up archived on multiple YouTube channels. For example, the TL version (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=dyv_uoIrmDA, accessed February 4, 2022) is nearly identical to the one on LBCI, save for the logo identifying the specific outgoing broadcast uplink from which the video was captured.

26 The killing of Ismail Mohammed Bakr, Zakaria Ahed Bakr, Ahed Atef Bakr, and Mohammed Ramez Bakr on the afternoon of July 16 should not be confused with the earlier bombing of July 9 at Khan Yunis, which killed nine people and injured many more.

27 Lori Allen (2009) productively interrogates how this "politics of immediation" emerged during the Second Intifada and has only deepened since. For an examination of a similar dynamic in documentary film, see Rangan 2017.

28 Allan (2013) offers a careful ethnographic perspective on how 1948 and 1982, respectively, dovetail and often crowd out personal memories, particularly suffering framed in the present tense, indicating a source originating from more immediate circumstances.

29 See the report by Human Rights Watch (2007).

30 See Abisaab's (2010) account of the origins of this history in the French Mandate.

31 The New Gaza Prep Boys School was one of many that served as makeshift shelters, even as other schools were destroyed.

32 As Allen (2017) shows, the origins of the institutional demand to monitor Palestinian national sentiment as part of a process of legal recognition can be found in the League of Nations Investigative Commissions such as King-Crane. To extend this insight, this deeper history of rationalized presentation to a global or Western authority informs news and documentary genres.

33 See, for one example, Gledhill and Williams 2018. See also Beckett and Deuze 2016 on the long-standing and evolving place of "affective" news as a valuable, but also potentially problematic, dimension of journalistic practice.

34 The LBCI segment described here opens on shots of a young boy named Hassan, whose age, the narrator says, can be numerated in the time that has passed since the 2006 war, and the seconds that it took for his mother to run with him in her arms to save his life.

35 Child witnesses also populate reporting on the Syrian Civil War. Although the two contexts are obviously quite different, the analysis of Al-Ghazzi (2019) and that of Wedeen (2019) each problematize the function of these figures in the news reportage and public culture of the conflict.

36 See Allen Feldman 2010. Braverman's (2017) analysis extends Puar's productive formulation of a biopolitics of "will not let die" in Gaza, to what she refers to as a "zoometrics" of ranking life in animal-human relations. Braverman, analyzing many common discourses about Gaza, argues that "positioning Palestinians as relatively dehumanized vis-à-vis Israelis and positioning Palestinian children as relatively dehumanized vis-à-vis Israeli children are two different moves (children, both human and nonhuman, are typically considered more zoometrically worthy than adults and could even occupy their own intermediate category on the animal-human divide: closer to nature and thus more innocent, yet at the same time also more beastly and wild and thus dangerous)" (2017, 211).

37 Allen (2018) highlights the long history of this paradoxical quality of human rights and humanitarian political work.

38 As Chouliaraki (2020) argues, the discourse of victimhood originates in the "emotional capitalism" of the twentieth century and, in the contemporary moment, is marked by the relationship between live broadcasting and online platforms. This more recent form makes the performance of victimhood proliferate in ways that destabilize the moral-political valence of the claim.

39 Saleh (2018) warns of the creation of a solidarity marketplace, divided between providers and recipients of solidarity, and that imagines the proliferating causes that one might be in solidarity with to exist in separate worlds rather than the same world.

Shahd Abusalama

10

Seeing Palestine, Not Seeing Palestinians

Gaza in the British Pathé Lens

This chapter is a decolonial initiative that critically engages with the representation of the Palestine question in general and Gaza refugees in particular by British Pathé, which, as a leading media institution of the British Empire, was also a dedicated advocate of Zionist ambitions and Jewish settlement in Mandate Palestine. I interrogate Pathé's discursive strategies in representing the 1947–48 Nakba, the 1956–57 Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip, and Israel's subsequent occupation of Gaza beginning in 1967. Highlighting strategies of inclusion and exclusion, deconstructing a one-sided historical narrative written by the victor, and contextualizing that narrative in the suppressed past of the subaltern, I argue that British Pathé provided a consolidating, hegemonic discourse on Palestine-Israel that prevails to this day in mainstream political, media, and academic discourse.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, photography and the moving image became tools of European hegemony, imperialism, and colonialism (Adas 1989; Arnold 2005; Behdad and Gartlan 2013; Russell

1999; Said 1978). Orientalism, a discourse established through centuries of imaginative representations in literature, art, visual media, film, and travel writing, proclaimed "the technological and hence civilizational superiority of the West" (Arnold 2005, 91). Orientalism is thus a method of domination that constructs the colonial gaze: "The optical unconscious of early cinema is also the optical unconscious of colonialism, insofar as the gaze is a mechanism of dividing and conquering, of preserving and possessing" (Russell 1999, 86; see also Burney 2012; Fabian 1990). Essentially, the multifaceted Orientalist discourse differentiated between colonizers and colonized, "advanced" and "backward" races, to rationalize European exploitation of peoples around the world (Arnold 2005, 91; Said 1978).

In nineteenth-century Europe, indigenous Palestinians were portrayed somewhat differently than other colonized subjects: not only as primitive but also as rootless "wanderers" in the desert, which undermined their claims to their ancestral lands and facilitated their displacement and replacement with a new population supposedly "returning" to its historical land (Sanbar 2013). A dogmatic textual reading of the Bible led to a "Peaceful Crusade" of European travel to Palestine. "Countless expeditions" arrived in Palestine, including European consuls, missionaries, artists, archaeologists, and pioneer photographers who wished to use "the realism of photography" to memorialize biblical sites and prove the Bible's literal veracity amid a rising conflict between faith and science over Charles Darwin's theories (Sanbar 2013, 292). Although this did not (yet) include territorial domination, the crusade served as an "effective takeover of the Holy Land," producing a mass of literature on Palestine that outweighed that on any other non-European territory. Meanwhile, the Great Powers' "Eastern Question," supported by nongovernmental political, social, and religious movements and organizations, "often turned into aggressive demands for European occupation and rule of Palestine" (Scholch 1992, 40–44).

During this period, Palestine was also constructed as a "chosen land" for the Jewish people (Sanbar 2013). Religious associations and supremacist cultural and political attitudes toward Arabs visually represented Palestine as unchanged since Christ's day (Downing 1979) and requiring "redemption," through the "restoration of Jews" and the elimination of the indigenous Palestinians who were viewed as "a source of contamination" (Sanbar 2013, 293). Evangelical Christian Zionism thus lay the foundations for the Zionist Jewish state as later conceptualized by Theodor Herzl in his 1896 pamphlet *The Jewish State* (Herzl 1934; Sanbar 2013; Scholch 1992). These views accorded with those underpinning British colonial expansion across

the non-European world. More than a century later, the State of Israel and supporters of Zionism, Christian and Jewish, continue to claim the Bible as a "mandate" or real estate deed for the "Jewish people" (Sanbar 2013, 296; Segev 2000, 401), in ways that distract from the consequences of these views on Palestinian natives.

If "all rulers are the heirs of prior conquerors," as stated by Walter Benjamin ([1940] 2003, 391), Israel is an heir of the British Empire. Colonial history has until recent decades been written overwhelmingly from the victor's viewpoint, with little regard for a colonized subject's "permission to narrate" (Banko 219; Barakat 2017; Said 1984). Politicians and policy makers, knowledge producers and media platforms, participate to this day in the victor's "triumphal procession," both actively and by adhering to the victor's version of history, regardless of its implications for the colonized (Benjamin [1940] 2003, 391). The digitized archive of British Pathé, which continually championed British colonialism, offers an example of such top-down history.

Historical objects, however, can provide "a revolutionary chance in the fight for the oppressed past" and "blast a specific era out of the homogenous course of history" (Benjamin 2006, 396). The past can only speak through its archive, but remediation or "reconstruction work" adds new meaning through archival material's renewed circulation (Hall [1984] 2001). As Dagmar Brunow argues for Pathé's coverage of the Windrush migrants in Britain, a critical engagement with the archive can reclaim the legacy of Black immigrants and open new possibilities for shared understandings (2013, 3). A decolonial critique of British Pathé's discourse on Palestine not only deconstructs its one-sided historical narrative "based on referentiality, realism and facts that represses heterogeneity" (Smith 1999; Zimmermann 2008, 289) but also contextualizes it in the suppressed past of the dispossessed Palestinians. By highlighting the strategies of inclusion and exclusion of Gaza in the newsreels and by deconstructing a one-sided historical narrative from the victor's viewpoint, I argue that British Pathé provides an example of the consolidating hegemonic Orientalist discourse on Palestine-Israel that prevails to this day in mainstream political, media, and academic discourse.

British Pathé and Palestine

Soon after the advent of the moving image, films of Palestine were increasingly seen as a "big business," and Western media companies raced to send cameramen to bring home "real" films of life in the Holy Land (Downing

1979, 2). British Pathé was among the first in the race. In 1910, Frenchman Charles Pathé introduced the new medium of the newsreel to British audiences, establishing a regular weekly newsreel "which for the first time in the history of communication, delivered news coverage to a distribution network worldwide" (Szczetnikowicz 2006, 60). British Pathé and its rival British Movietone were the only reel companies to survive until the 1970s, when television spelled their demise (Ballantyne 1983, 8). Until then, Pathé "was at the forefront of cinematic journalism, blending information with entertainment to popular effect" (British Pathé, n.d.). Particularly after the advent of sound in the late 1920s, the company's short expository newsreels consisted of well-constructed and well-presented film, combining sound, dramatic music, and a "voice-of-god" narration in which a "typically male, authoritative, and didactic" speaker is heard but never seen, with supportive images (Nichols 2001, 105; Théberge 2005, 395). Newsreels became a prominent feature of the British cinema experience, and their impact on big screens during the first two decades of talking film should not be underestimated (Downing 1979). Their simple structure, together with their adherence to the government's line and prevailing cultural attitudes, condensed discourses and created generic, simplistic, and problematic racial and gendered stereotypes (Maitland 2015).

British Pathé frequently departed from daily life in Britain to bring its audiences images of faraway "exotic" lands and people. In so doing, Pathé's discourse functioned firmly under the auspices of the British Empire. As the documentary *Around the World: The Story of British Pathé* (MacLeod 2011) suggests, the anthropological value of its international filmmaking cannot be assessed without considering its ideological relationship to British imperial ambitions, and particularly the projected inferiority of "Others," often associated with British attitudes of racial superiority. A 1926 essay by the editor in chief of Pathé News, Emanuel Cohen, expressed this ideology unapologetically: "Pathé News is now world wide, its tentacles reaching into every nook and corner of the Earth — civilized and uncivilized — its thousands of lenses focused on every political development, witnessing the pageantry and the tragedy of every people; peering into the customs of every land; holding a mirror to every phase of human activity everywhere" (quoted in Maitland 2015, 574).

In reporting Jewish settlement in Mandate Palestine in the 1930s and 1940s, Pathé presented a "strong pro-Zionist stance," in accordance with its regard of "Palestine as the most logical solution for Jewish refugees" (Szczet-

nikowicz 2006, 152). Szczetnikowicz's research foregrounds the representations of Zionist settlers in Palestine, but to date no one has examined the marginalization of the Palestinians in Pathé newsreels. Pathé presented a one-sided representation of Palestine, a celebratory story of British-enabled Zionist achievements that repressed and misrepresented the anti-colonial struggle of the Palestinian people. The portrayal of the Palestinian Arabs in British and American newsreels and documentaries in the 1930s and 1940s, including by Pathé, "was diametrically opposed to the image presented of the Zionist Jew" (Downing 1979, 15). Therefore, "the very positive and extensive representation of Zionism and its objectives" was echoed in "the denigration of the native Palestinian," reproducing a racialized "stereotype of the Arab as a backward, hostile and barbaric peasant" (15). Western spectators consequently viewed Zionist settlers as deserving members of the Western civilization with whom Europeans could identify, and Palestinian natives as undeserving. Jews themselves had, of course, been subjugated to centuries of anti-Semitic tropes in the West, where they were portrayed as "somehow less human and counting for less than the White Man" (6). However, this changed beginning in the 1920s with leading Zionist organizations, such as the Jewish National Fund, appropriating documentary films to demonize the Palestinian natives and glorify European Zionist settlers, and to invite international sympathy, funds, and recruits for the Zionist project (Bar-Gal 2003, 72–73; Downing 1979; Ne'eman 1999, 102–4).

British Pathé's bias not only was a result of the imperialist "culture of the time" but also was part of an effort to cultivate public consensus toward British complicity in aiding the Zionist project at the expense of Palestine's indigenous population, whose mass dispossession and expulsion went largely unnoticed in 1948. Nevertheless, shifts in representation occurred in response to the specific political challenges that British imperialism confronted. In this chapter, I examine these shifts in Pathé newsreels, focusing on their representation of the Gaza Strip and unpacking how Orientalist ideology manifested in different historical moments (Bateman 2017; Machin 2018; Machin and Mayr 2012). I interrogate the discourse of Pathé reels, focusing on the Nakba of 1948, the Israeli occupation of the Gaza Strip during the Suez Crisis of October 1956 until early 1957; and Israel's subsequent occupation of Gaza in 1967. I discuss not only those reels that made it onto cinema screens but also those that were never screened and have only recently been made available through the British Pathé Unissued archive.

Pathé and the Nakba

Between 1947 and 1949, British Pathé produced 146 reels on Palestine. Much of this material was unissued or reported on diplomatic matters, but the large number indicates the seriousness of this catastrophic period. Pathé's reporting on Palestine and the Western media more generally exhibited a "deep chasm between the reality and the representation" (Nichols 1991; Pappé 2006a, 9). Predicated on an imperial campaign of misinformation over the previous decades that celebrated Zionism and denigrated Arabs, the media discourse rationalized the horrific outcome of the Palestinian Nakba.

In November 1947, the United Nations General Assembly voted to partition Palestine between a Jewish state for the minority settler population and a smaller Arab state for the indigenous Palestinian majority (Davis 1987, 22; Kasrils 2017). Partition paved the way for the implementation of a Zionist apartheid separating Jews from non-Jews (Davis 2003, 68–69). The UN partition and clashes between Zionists and local Palestinian militias provided "the perfect context and pretext" for the implementation of a carefully thought out "large-scale intimidation," code-named Plan D. This plan included Zionist militias "laying siege to and bombarding villages and population centers; setting fire to homes, properties, and goods; expelling residents; demolishing homes; and, finally, planting mines in the rubble to prevent the expelled inhabitants from returning" (Pappé 2006a, xii). This campaign accelerated after Britain's withdrawal on May 14, 1948.

By the end of 1949, Israel ruled more than 77 percent of Palestine (Davis 2003, 64). Two-thirds of Palestine's indigenous people were dispossessed and displaced, a process that continues today, making Palestinian refugees the most long-standing refugee population worldwide (Masalha 2012, 14). Far from being "a miracle," as Israel's first president, Chaim Weizmann, described the situation in early 1949, this "miraculous clearing of the land" was the result of deliberate ethnic cleansing (68–69; see also Flapan 1988, 84). Although it was witnessed by UN observers and international reporters, the 1947–49 ethnic cleansing of Palestine remains "systematically denied, not even recognized as historical fact, let alone acknowledged as a crime that needs to be confronted, politically as well as morally" (Pappé, 2006a, xiii). The rhetoric of the Pathé newsreels contributed to this denial.

In *The Arabs Declare Holy War* (1947), Pathé predicted a "transfer of power" in Palestine in its coverage of the UN vote, painting a picture of an internationally recognized resolution for two states in Palestine welcomed

Figure 10.1 Still showing British troops among a group with the Zionist flag celebrating the UN partition resolution from *The Arabs Declare Holy War* (1947). Image supplied by British Pathé.

by Jews but rejected by Arabs. This development was expressed in simple and exclusively Zionist terms. The commentator describes partition as an "uneasy compromise." Against an illustration of the plan, he says, "The Jewish state will include the ports of Haifa and Tel Aviv and the whole of the Negev Valley," and "The Arabs will occupy the fertile eastern part," concealing the fact that the lesser portion was given to the native majority, and portraying the Palestinians as ungrateful for receiving the "fertile eastern part" of their homeland. Jewish crowds are depicted celebrating the decision, while the narrator says, "First reaction from the Jews was one of joy; crowds gathered in the streets and greeted the birth of their state with traditional dances." From a low angle, the spectator looks up to Zionist Jews, who seem victorious and heroic. Zionists were joined by British troops as seen in figure 10.1, all under the future Israeli flag, reflecting the kinship between the soldiers of the British Empire and the European settlers of the Zionist

project, even at a time of significant tension between Britain and the Zionist movement.

Ignoring the violence committed against Palestinians that had already begun, the narrator states that "Arab opposition to the partition scheme has been violent." Against shots of Egyptian soldiers in uniform, the narrator claims that "the call for a holy war against the Jews went out from Cairo." The inaccurate framing of the Palestinian anti-colonial struggle and Arab support for it in exclusively religious terms ignores the realities of the settler-indigenous conflict, the involvement of Christians in the Palestinian national movement, and the harmonious relations between Palestinian Arabs and Jews before Zionism. Moreover, labeling the Arab opposition to the colonization of Palestine as "a holy war against the Jews" would seem particularly abhorrent to European audiences in the immediate wake of Nazism.

"As in India," the Pathé commentator continues, "transfer of power in Palestine will bring bloodshed." The analogy between Palestine and the 1947 partition of India and Pakistan overlooks a major distinction. While power was transferred to local leaders in India and Pakistan, in a process that was troubled by divisions born out of British colonialism and partition plans that accentuated religious difference, the ensuing bloodshed in Palestine was a result of the transfer of power from Britain to another colonial power. Pathé's framing of partition in both India and Palestine also absolved Britain of responsibility for bloodshed in both places, depicted as an unfortunate by-product of a religious divide rather than a legacy of British rule. Against a wide shot of Egyptian soldiers marching behind the Palestinian flag, the reel leaves spectators with the words: "For the Holy Land, the immediate future will not bring peace." Although it would be Zionist military forces who expelled hundreds of thousands of Palestinians from their homeland at gunpoint, the finger is pointed at the Arabs for the predicted violence. Pathé's coverage thus conceals how the UN partition was the "opportune moment" that Israel's first prime minister, David Ben Gurion, wished for in a 1937 letter for turning the long-standing Zionist vision of an exclusively Jewish Palestine into reality (Pappé 2006a, 23).

Pathé released *The Drama of Palestine* on January 12, 1948, the first newsreel after the Zionist campaign of ethnic cleansing had begun. A "well-orchestrated campaign of threats" involved special units of the Zionist militia, the Hagenah, entering "defenseless" Palestinian villages and warning locals against cooperating with the Arab Liberation Army (Pappé 2006a, 55). "Any resistance to such an incursion," Pappé writes, "usually ended with the Jewish troops firing at random and killing several villagers" (55).

Dayr Ayyub, a village of five hundred inhabitants near the city of Ramla, and Bayt ʿAffa, a village in the Gaza subdistrict, were the first two villages to fall victim to "this terrorist method" (56). Both villages resisted, and while Dayr Ayyub was completely destroyed and depopulated after repeated attacks by paramilitary Zionist groups in April 1948, Bayt ʿAffa first successfully repelled the raiders before meeting the same fate by the summer (Palestinian Centre for Human Rights 2008; Pappé 2006a, 55–56). More crimes were committed by the Hagenah's elite force, the Palmach, and the right-wing Revisionist Zionist groups, the Irgun and Stern Gang, against Arab neighborhoods of Haifa, Jaffa, and Jerusalem amid "a gradual but obvious British withdrawal from any responsibility for law and order" (Pappé 2006a, 60).

The very title of Pathé's coverage of these events reduces the Zionist campaign of dispossession, dispersion, and bloodshed to a "drama." Beginning with footage of destruction without explaining whose buildings or homes are being destroyed, the narrator says: "Against a background which daily gains resemblance to war-scarred Europe, Palestine now grips with almost unrestricted racial warfare." The question of who had the upper hand remained concealed, but after decades of propaganda produced by Pathé and other Western media outlets, the Western spectator was left with sympathy only for the Zionists. Against more shots of people among the rubble and British troops attempting to help, the commentator pins the blame on "the lawless element of Jew and Arab populations," bemoaning that they have "take[n] over from the servants of the policies of law and order"—again exonerating the British of any responsibility for the strife.

Over a group of Zionist fighters preparing armored cars, the commentary paints a picture of a war between two equal sides, consolidating a discourse that still characterizes news reporting today: "In the backstreets of Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, and Jaffa, the thugs of both sides build up armored cars for war against each other." This is followed by shots of people queuing for an ID check, as the commentary proceeds: "In between them, victims of the struggle, stand a great majority of simple people of both sides." Adhering to normative Orientalist tropes and decontextualizing the reality of Zionist settler colonialism, Pathé's *The Drama of Palestine* ultimately legitimates the injustice of Israel's foundation atop ethnically cleansed Palestine.

Less than a month later, a similarly constructed forty-six-second reel, *Palestine's Fleet Street Gutted*, covers more violence in Jerusalem. Unnamed "terrorists" had set fire to "the offices of the *Palestine Post*," killing one and injuring twenty, the narrator reports as images of the arson are screened. "Yet this is but a small incident in troubled Palestine," the commentator

Figure 10.2 Personalized shot of a British soldier being saluted by General Alan Cunningham before leaving Palestine, from *Palestine Defies Solution* (1948). Image supplied by British Pathé.

continues, announcing that daily reports of more killings arrive: "British, Arab, and Jewish lives are lost." The reel ends by reassuring audiences that "May the 15th is the date set for the end of the Mandate."

On May 27, 1948, another reel was released, entitled *Palestine Defies Solution*. It appears to be an excerpt from *Palestine Story*, a longer unissued newsreel covering the departure of the British high commissioner for Palestine and Israel's Proclamation of Independence. It begins with dramatic music as the voice-over declares, "The Palestine Mandate has ended; Britain is relieved of a burden." A British guard of honor presents arms at the Haifa quayside, as General Alan Gordon Cunningham salutes British troops "who showed exemplary patience for a thankless task," inviting the thanks of the audiences. A close-up of a British soldier presents the troops in a heroic light, harmoniously with previous representations of British military.

The reel evokes the familiar pro-Zionist stance of Pathé films of previous decades. Spectators see European-looking Jewish settlers joyfully dis-

Figure 10.3 David Ben Gurion reading Israel's Proclamation of Independence on May 15, 1948, from *Palestine Defies Solution*. Image supplied by British Pathé.

embarking from ships at Haifa port, as the narrator says, "With the end of the mandatory power, all legal bars to immigration are removed." With a familiar Christian Zionist ring, he continues, "The sea is now open to the seekers of the promised land." These "seekers" are depicted in personalized shots as they land "in a country already in the grip of a bitter racial strife." This framing evokes a continued danger facing early Israelis, inviting a sympathetic concern from British audiences whose affinity with European Zionists had already been consolidated.

The footage shifts to bombed-out buildings against mournful music yet provides no information as to what happened to the dwellers of what appear to be traditional Palestinian homes. The music is interrupted by the rejoicing of crowds in Tel Aviv welcoming Ben Gurion, who victoriously arrives "to read the proclamation of the new nation: The State of Israel." The "triumphal procession" is depicted in a pan shot following Ben Gurion as he salutes the crowds, reinforcing the image of the Zionists as heroic victors.

There follows footage of settlers digging trenches around a new colony, rifles slung on their backs: "Born in the throes of war, with undefined frontiers, facing Arab opposition, the new state precipitates a world problem." The image of the self-made heroic and modern Zionist is further reasserted by women working in a vegetable garden and a close-up of a pistol holstered around a woman's waist. The commentary proceeds: "The tillers of its fields go on, while the world's United Nations engage in futile talks," presenting Zionists as the protectors and cultivators of the promised land. The Palestinian peasantry had once been the tillers of Palestine's fields, but now, away from Pathé's cameras, they were being pushed into refugee camps.

The reel then shows a dead horse and a wrecked bus as the narrator asserts, "Tel Aviv comes under Egyptian aerial bombardment." Pathé uses this attack as an opportunity to reinforce an Orientalist juxtaposition between Arabs and Jews by claiming that Tel Aviv "feels like the type of civilization from which the Jews fled [Europe], and which the Arabs seek to keep from their shores." This falsely paints the conflict as a "clash of civilizations." It also erases the Arab modernity already present in Palestinian cities, especially Jaffa, adjacent to Tel Aviv, where ethnic cleansing was underway.

The reel ends with King Abdullah of Transjordan, Ibn Saud of Saudi Arabia, and King Farouk of Egypt talking and walking together toward the camera, the narrator proclaiming that they "unite the Arab world against the Jewish state," thus presenting Israel as the underdog opposing Arab hostility from all sides. In fact, "the neighboring Arab states sent a small army" once the British had departed, while the Zionists' ethnic cleansing of Palestine had already begun more than a month earlier and Arab forces could do nothing to prevent this campaign (Pappé 2006a, xvi).

In the newsreel *Britain Recognises Israel* (1949), Pathé references the specter of the Cold War and the West's desire to pull Israel into its own orbit. This was not arbitrary, but an expression of the proxy war enacted in the Middle East militarily and ideologically, with Palestine at its heart. The narrator says: "With the new state now acknowledged by the majority of the United Nations, Israel's first general elections became a matter of some importance. The voting would show whether this vital Middle Eastern area would swing left and therefore to Russia, or whether it would follow President Weizmann's decision to align itself with those in the Western world." Weizmann appears smiling alongside his wife, as the commentator applauds his alignment with Western ideology. Between the competing value systems, however, lay a dispossessed people, whose story remained untold.

After 1945, ideological and political domination over emerging formerly colonized states lay at the heart of Britain's vision for the "Third World" (Ramamurthy 2006, 45). Pathé sought to justify the colonial endeavor in the former colonies by constructing representations, as Ramamurthy argues, enacted through "modernization theory," which came to underpin neocolonial exploitation (45; see also Nkrumah 1965). In the 1950s, Pathé's films of African nations "show a shift from an Africa of wild animals and raw materials to an Africa with modernist-style buildings, developing cities and vast hydroelectric schemes" (Ramamurthy 2006, 45). These images influenced audiences' understanding of Britain's international role as one of benevolently enabling its former colonies to move toward self-rule.

This vision played out differently in colonized Palestine. While Palestinians were denied self-rule, Pathé consistently depicted Zionist Jews, enabled by the British, as the pioneers of modernism and innovation in newsreels produced during the Suez Crisis of 1956, which resulted in Israel's first occupation of Gaza.

Gaza in Pathé Newsreels

Gaza rarely featured in Pathé newsreels until the mid-1950s, primarily because Pathé's overwhelming focus was on the Zionist settler community, which was limited in the wider Gaza area before 1948.[1] The camera's preference for the settler society created by the Jewish immigrants led to the absence of Gaza from the screen. Travelers and writers have noted for centuries Gaza's prosperity, fertility, vegetation diversity, pleasant weather, and resource-rich nature (Filiu 2014, 19). Before 1948, the Gaza district was thirty-eight times its size today, the largest district of mandatory Palestine, encompassing around ninety villages and towns (Joudah 2020). With growing urban spaces, cultural centers, and thriving fish, agricultural, and tourism industries, Gaza had qualities that challenge Western associations of development and modernity in Palestine with Zionism. Recently recovered photographs from Kegham Gjeghalian, a Palestinian Armenian who opened his studio in Gaza in the 1940s, testify to the vibrant life enjoyed by Gaza residents that is marginalized by Pathé (Sheikh 2021).

Australian Surf Men—In Palestine, issued in 1942, focuses on some of the more than 100,000 Australian soldiers who were stationed in Palestine during World War II.[2] The reel shows soldiers surfing on Gaza's beach, the narration celebrating how "for one glorious day, they paused in the ugly

business of battle and turned Palestine's beach of Gaza into a second Bondi." Seemingly heroic Australian "fighting men" experience "pleasure from one day of homely relaxation," while Australian women nurses silently watch from a tent, as the commentator proclaims that they "are home again in imagination." Pathé constructs a narrative dominated by the celebration of war and masculinity performed in the practice of surfing, long part of white settler colonial culture in Australia (Nardini 2019; Osmond 2011), now transported to Palestine's shores.

No Gazan locals appear in this newsreel. However, they do appear in an unissued 1940 reel entitled *Australians in Palestine*.[3] Despite the reel's focus on Australian soldiers, and their interaction with then British foreign secretary Anthony Eden during his visit to Egypt, a substantial segment of the nine-minute reel depicts Palestinians in Gaza, including a spacious-looking Palestinian village with houses made of mud and straw. These images challenge the hostile Orientalist representation of Arab Palestinian society found in Pathé's other productions. The Australian soldiers buy oranges and interact with groups of Palestinians in a friendly manner. Three generations of Palestinian women enjoy the outdoor sun, wearing traditional jewelry and embroidered dresses. We also see elderly men sitting on the ground, and women balancing clay pots on their heads.

It is unclear why such pictures were never screened by Pathé, but the Great Revolt had ended only a year before; the footage of the relaxed and hospitable Gazans contrasts starkly with the image of Palestinians as violent and backward that had been presented by Pathé's reels until that point. After the 1939 white paper, which Britain issued to end the Palestinian Great Revolt and which imposed restrictions on Jewish immigration, the British government "was preparing audiences for a change in attitudes towards Jews as deserving 'settlers' who had to be protected from the Arab 'terrorists'" (Szczetnikowicz 2006, 155). In this context, these Palestinian scenes could indicate an anthropological interest on the part of the cameraman in the Palestinian way of life, but their exclusion from screening is harmonious with Pathé's prejudices and Britain's policies.

Gaza was transformed by the events of the Nakba. With the destruction of hundreds of villages and the depopulation of Palestinian cities, approximately 200,000 refugees (compared with Gaza's pre-1948 population of 80,000) were forced into the narrow stretch of land that came to be known as the Gaza Strip (Herman 2017, 14). In the absence of an Arab Palestinian state, the Gaza Strip came under Egyptian occupation. Gaza's indigenous economy collapsed as a result of the sudden influx of refugees and the

widespread Zionist domination of its agricultural land and ports (S. Roy 1988, 64).

Although Egypt contributed extensively to the relief of Gaza refugees in the immediate aftermath of the war, it soon imposed oppressive practices (Cheal 1988, 144–45). In the early 1950s, Egyptian policies focused on centralizing power in the military administation of the strip and high administrative positions in other areas, including legal systems, health, education, and commerce. Palestinian refugees and indigenous Gazans were marginalized in all public sectors and carefully monitored to restrict their political organizing (S. Roy 1988, 64).

The story of Gaza's refugees, who were forced to rely on humanitarian aid from the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for their survival, was ignored by Pathé. Meanwhile, it produced such celebratory reels as *Israel*, the first in color to depict "infant Israel." The state founded on Palestinian dispossession was depicted as "a young, vigorous nation," its dreams shaped by immigrants arriving in increasing numbers to what the narrator still deemed "the promised land," to "reclaim a neglected land." Zionism, as a form of settler colonialism, had sought the "elimination of the native" (Wolfe 2006); Pathé continued to assist this mission by airbrushing the native Palestinians from the glossy picture of life in Israel. For example, an Israeli unit led by Ariel Sharon launched an attack on the al-Burayj refugee camp in central Gaza that killed at least fifty Palestinians in August 1953, one massacre among many that went unreported by Pathé or any other British newsreel (Butler 2009, 99).

The latter half of the decade was marked by more violence. The Pathé archive contains twenty-four newsreels from 1955 to 1957 tagged "Gaza," most of which revolved around the tension between Israel and Egypt; only nine were screened in cinemas. *Egypt-Israel Border Clash*, screened in March 1955, makes a spectacle of Operation Black Arrow, which was ordered on February 28 in response to Egypt's alleged support for Palestinian resistance activity and which resulted in the killing of tens of Egyptian soldiers. Israeli historian Avi Shlaim attributes this "devastating raid," which occurred after four months of "comparative tranquility along the border," to the desire of Ben Gurion, recently emerged from retirement, to "dramatize his return to power," assuage the Israeli public's anti-Arab sentiments, and "cut . . . down to size" Egypt's Arab nationalist president, Gamal Abdel Nasser (Shlaim 2000, 124–25).

While Palestinians were otherwise marginalized, an image of Palestinian children is presented as the narrator describes "a group of Palestinian

refugees look[ing] at the burning remains of a UN store [of humanitarian supplies] set fire," portraying the incident as "collateral damage." The reel presents Israel's version of events, claiming that "Egyptians attacked one of their patrols" and "the fighting continued into Egyptian territories." The reel shows "a lorry riddled with bullet holes said to have been carrying some of the thirty-eight Egyptians killed" and ends with protests by both Israel and Egypt to the UN. The commentary preoccupies spectators with this diplomatic narrative, while the stateless Palestinians at the center of the "clash" are presented in a single scene of Palestinian children passively observing events.

However, Palestinian refugees in Gaza did not simply watch from the sidelines as Egypt and Israel squabbled. Post-Nakba Gaza was a site of great political dynamism despite Egyptian measures to restrict Gaza residents' political activities (Filiu 2014). The Communist Party and the Muslim Brotherhood, both underground political movements at the time, provided the wells of political activism inside the strip and were strongly supported by the refugees. The UN's failure to implement Resolution 194, which called for the return of the refugees to their homes, the humiliation of dependency on humanitarian aid and the vulnerability to Israeli violence inspired resistance. For example, when Nasser, wishing to avoid a potentially explosive situation in the Gaza Strip and war with Israel, considered a 1954 US-UNRWA plan to resettle the refugees in the Sinai Peninsula, refugee-led demonstrations and riots in the Gaza Strip targeted Egyptian government buildings for two days, forcing Nasser to discard the plan (Masalha 1996, 56).

Regional conflict soon put Gaza at the center of drastic events. The Suez Crisis was triggered by Egypt's nationalization of the Suez Canal in July 1956. Nasser's actions and increasing power concerned both Western neocolonial leaders and the Israeli government. To many in the Arab world, his leadership came to represent the cause of Arab emancipation from Western hegemony. His sponsorship of a resolution at the 1955 Bandung African-Asian Conference calling for the repatriation of Palestinian refugees was seen as a particular threat by Israel.

Gaza Clash (1956) revolves around UN secretary-general Dag Hammerskjöld's visit to the Gaza Strip and focuses on an Israeli settlement that had "suffered" an attack by fedayeen (resistance fighters), killing an Israeli sergeant. After depicting military funeral processions and an Israeli child, the reel concludes with the eagerness of the UN and "world opinion" for "an answer to the threat to the peace of the world"—implicating Egypt and Nasser's revolutionary leadership as "the threat." Once again, the story of Gaza's Palestinian residents, mostly refugees, goes untold and without

a human face. The focus on the funeral processions of the Israeli sergeant and the omission of the violence committed by the occupying power present Palestinian resistance as "irrational" acts of terror and Israelis as the victims who deserve viewers' sympathy.

Another short reel, *Selected Originals—Gaza Clash AKA Funeral of Israel Sergeant* (1956), shows Ben Gurion helping to erect "barbed wire on the Gaza Strip, part of his country's emergency frontier fortifications, as tension rises in the Middle East." Concluding on the Israeli premier's declaration that Israel "will not start a war"—a claim that was soon to be proved false—Pathé exonerates any future conflict involving Israel as an act of necessary self-defense.

In fact, Israel prepared for a "preventative" strike against Egypt in October 1956, providing a pretext for Britain and France to join forces in the name of protecting "Europe's future status" (Dietl 2008, 271). Rather than seeking a peaceful political settlement over the Suez Canal, as proposed by the United States, which was then coming to challenge the hegemony of the old European empires in the region, Britain and France opted for military intervention to overthrow the government of Nasser, whom they smeared as a "new Hitler" to justify their acts. Pathé provided its spin on these events in *Israel Invades Egypt—Britain Acts*. Presenting the British-led attack on Egypt as necessary to stop Nasser and maintain Israel's survival and Western domination over the canal, the reel stoked Cold War fears by warning that Egypt had "turned eastward"—that is, to the Soviets—"for her supplies of arms." Despite opposition to military action by the UN and the United States, British prime minister Eden rationalized his actions in a television and radio broadcast that was also screened by British Pathé in a reel titled, *Prime Minister's Broadcast on the Suez Canal* (1956). Portraying the overthrow of Nasser as essential for securing peace and preventing "a larger war" in the Middle East, Eden also stated candidly that the war was to be fought over what he considered to be British national interest: "Our survival as a nation depends on oil, and nearly three-quarters of our oil comes from their part of the world."

The First Israeli Occupation of Gaza, 1956–1957

The Suez Crisis was brought to an end in November 1956 by the Soviet Union's threat of intervention on Egypt's behalf. Nevertheless, Israel occupied Gaza until March 1957. Exposing their country's expansionist policies, future prime minister Golda Meir described the strip as "an integral part of

Figure 10.4 Israeli soldiers relaxing during the invasion of Gaza from *Israel Takes Gaza* (1956). Image supplied by British Pathé.

Israel," while future prime minister Menahem Begin stressed that Gaza was Israel's "by right" (Masalha 1996, 56).

While a total of five newsreels rationalizing European military intervention against Egypt and in support of Israel were screened in 1956, none of the films on the Israeli occupation of Gaza were screened. An unissued three-minute reel, *Israel Takes Gaza*, includes scenes of Israeli forces and "tanks and trucks on the move and bombing taking place," and medium to close-up footage showing well-armed Israeli soldiers sitting on top of tanks. The reels humanize the invaders, showing them relaxing, smoking, and laughing. Sandwiched between those scenes are long shots of Gaza's Palestinian residents, walking with their hands raised in what appears to be a detention camp.

Had these images been screened, they would have contrasted with what British audiences had previously been presented of Israelis—peaceful settlers whose advanced European society was threatened by Arab backwardness, or desperate refugees from Nazi oppression requiring a safe home in Palestine.

Figure 10.5 Palestinians under heavy Israeli military guard from *Israel Takes Gaza* (1956). Image supplied by British Pathé.

Pathé's projection of Israeli military prowess and the positive portrayal of Israeli soldiers reinforce an image of Israel's superior national identity and morality in conflict, emphasizing affinities between the macho military culture of a former colonial power, which once saw itself as a guardian of law and order around the world, and an emerging settler colonial force that had taken over the mantle of control of the region.

Pathé's coverage of the 1956–57 Israeli occupation of Gaza obscures the fact that the period was "characterized by widespread brutality" (Masalha 1996, 58) through its positive portrayal of Israeli soldiers, as is clearly seen in another reel, *Israeli Food Distribution to Gaza Population*, which shows Israeli soldiers providing rations to crowds of Palestinians. While the reel frames Israel as a moral state, the occupiers' provision of "aid" to a colonized population would have been a deeply humiliating experience for Gaza's residents.

Nearly a decade after the Nakba, Pathé finally acknowledged the presence of Palestinian refugees in Gaza in a forty-nine-second report enti-

tled *U.N.R.W.A. Aids Gaza Refugees*. In this newsreel, Pathé swings between representations of the Palestinians as passive victims and as threats. Against a wide shot of a crowded street and the Israeli flag waving atop an administrative building, the narrator says, "Life returns slowly to normal in Gaza under the Israeli occupation." Over footage of Palestinians interrogated by Israeli soldiers, the voice-over claims that "the inhabitants accept the situation philosophically." The reel documents Israeli soldiers carrying out a house-to-house search, checking identities as the narration notes "much underground Egyptian activity" and Israel's need "to guard against hostile infiltration."

The phrase "hostile infiltration," in addition to describing small-scale armed resistance, was also used to refer to unarmed refugees who crossed the Israeli-imposed fence in a bid to return to their lands, effectively incriminating refugees exercising their internationally recognized Right of Return. "As many as 5000" civilian Palestinian returnees were killed "by IDF [Israeli Defense Forces], police, and civilians along Israel's borders between 1949 and 1956" (Morris 1993, quoted in Masalha 1996, 55). This went unreported by Pathé, which systematically reproduced Zionist rationales while concealing Palestinians' perspective, leading to contradictory claims: the Gazans "accept the situation philosophically" but are also guilty of "hostile infiltration." Filiu notes: "Despite the scale of their tragedy, the Palestinians who became refugees in the Gaza Strip in 1948–49 were far from passive in accepting their fate . . . it was the hope to return to a land that was sometimes very close indeed that drove this community of undiscouraged exiles. Neither minefields nor violent repression halted that continual flow of infiltration into Israel" (2014, 94). In fact, Gaza constituted a nightmare to Israel during its first occupation (G. D. Cohen 2014, 186; Masalha 1996, 68). Michael Bar-Zohar, Ben Gurion's biographer, wrote of the leader's joy over the Israeli army's "spectacular victory" in Gaza and the Sinai. However, when Ben Gurion visited Gaza, "a new reality was revealed before his eyes, which shocked him deeply: the Palestinians did not flee from the IDF as they had in 1948" (quoted in Masalha 1996, 57).

This history contrasts starkly with Pathé's depoliticized spectacle, which portrayed refugees in accordance with the iconography of the "universal" refugee in postwar Western humanitarian discourse. The reel includes shots of refugee children queuing for "food supplies," provided by UNRWA, and the narrator emphasizes their plight, noting that "milk is a luxury to them, and who can blame them for a taste before getting home." Until 1967, most images of Palestinian refugees reflected "a naturalization of refugee his-

tory" (Abdallah 2009, 50). Early humanitarian films presented a rupture between the reality of the refugees and their previous lives, as if the exodus was the starting point of their history. This is integral to the depoliticization and "humanitarianization" of the Palestinian refugee, a by-product of UNRWA welfare programs that began in 1950 (Cohen 2014, 186; Waldman 2014, 638). The treatment of Palestinian refugees as a humanitarian rather than a political issue also illustrates the exceptionalism of the Palestinian refugee case in the evolving international human rights regime (Agamben 2003; Feldman 2007). Again, this did not go unchallenged by Palestinian refugees themselves: the UN's early accommodation with Israel provoked the resentment of Palestinian refugees, who in the 1950s and 1960s, called for the "burning of UNRWA ration cards," to challenge their classification as humanitarian victims that they saw as threatening to their political rights (Cohen 2014, 186).

In March 1957, under international pressure, Israel withdrew from Gaza. By then, the UN had stationed an emergency force on Egypt's Gaza frontier with Israel. A 1957 Pathé newsreel, *Ben Gurion Stands Firm*, praised Ben Gurion for Israel's withdrawal, overlooking his and other Israeli politicians' expansionist dreams. The reel also gives credence to the "right-wing" Israeli crowds protesting the end of the short-lived occupation, claiming that "they have little faith in the UN's ability to halt a new outbreak of the hit-and-run fighting which has kept Israel's frontier in a permanent state of siege ever since Israel was founded." Once more, the voices of Gaza's Palestinian refugees were unheard, and the siege imposed on the Palestinians in Gaza is evoked as an issue for which Israel deserved sympathy.

Postscript

Gaza remained under the Egyptian government's administration until the 1967 war. Israel's sweeping victory over Egypt, Jordan, and Syria, and its occupation of Arab territories including the Gaza Strip, dispelled the myth of Israel's vulnerability to its Arab neighbors. *Six-Day War Begins*, a Pathé-BBC coproduction, celebrated "the superiority of Israeli equipment, the high morale of her troops, and the brilliant generalship of Moshe Dayan" and attributed to Israel "one of the most spectacular military victories since the Second World War." Unmentioned was the fact that the occupation of Arab territories had led to a further refugee exodus, with some 300,000 Palestinians (of whom about 100,000 were uprooted for the second time) fleeing to neighboring countries (Oberschall 2007, 210).

The criminality of Israel's actions and the suffering of Palestinian refugees were almost totally obscured in the Pathé newsreels' narratives of the events of 1948, 1956–57, and 1967. This reveals an affinity between Pathé, the British imperial mission, and the Eurocentric and Orientalist Zionist narrative of progress through settler colonialism. Unlike Pathé's positive portrayal of the Zionist movement from the Mandate era, a discourse of negativity surrounded Palestinians, who were portrayed either as threats to Israel's security or as helpless victims, without consideration of the political nature of their cause.

In her analysis of Pathé's coverage of the Troubles in Northern Ireland between the late 1960s and 1990s, Sarah Maitland argues that the newsreel footage favored the Protestant minority over the Catholic majority and echoed prevailing prejudices of both the British government and Pathé journalists and audiences. Maitland asserts, however, that "we must not . . . reject out of hand" Pathé's admittedly biased "representations of the people and events," adding that "representations then, as now, are driven by a human need to understand." Rather, she recommends that we "read" them as "cultural translations," questioning "how their producers have understood the material they have recorded, describing and explaining through their own hermeneutics of interpretation ways of living that are 'foreign,' as much to themselves as to their spectators" (2015, 579–80). While the newsreels offer valuable images for self-conscious and self-reflexive soul-searching, reducing Pathé's regime of representation to mere misunderstanding overlooks the role of representations not only for understanding "Othered" people but also for maintaining and justifying their domination. Additionally, cultural (mis)translations and media (mis)representations have potentially catastrophic ramifications, and behind "representations," lived realities of settler colonial violence and discrimination exist. What is newsworthy and who gets the right to speak and to enjoy Western sympathy continue to shape Western news discourse, which publicly engages in reductive representations of the "conflict" in Palestine, habitually adopting and reproducing pro-Israel representations of the Palestinians (Philo and Berry 2004).

Pathé's ideologically charged propaganda tactics of inclusion and exclusion continued until its last years. In 1969, Pathé finally produced the first report that focused in its entirety on Palestinian refugees. Its very title, *Jordan Refugees*, avoided reference to Palestine due to its perceived political implications. While Israel is presented as a legitimate state, there is no mention of the national identity of the refugees the newsreel documents, reinforcing the Zionist denial of Palestinian identity and existence. But even

this depoliticized documentation of Palestinian refugees' plight was not released in cinemas. The reel starts in an abandoned and wrecked "ghost town just across the river from Israel." Asking, "Where have the people gone?" the commentator explains, "That's a sad story; a story of mud, misery, and malnutrition in a sprawling refugee camp." After scenes of scattered refugee tents, the commentator declares that "this report is not concerned with the reasons why the camp came into being, only that it exists." The "apolitical" nature of the reporting is explicitly asserted, yet like Pathé's earlier footage of Gaza that ignored the context of British and Israeli colonial violence against Palestinians and Egyptians, the deliberate choice to obscure the context ensures that neither Israel nor Britain is held to account. The report consists of various humanitarian-style shots of the Palestinian refugee camp in Jordan: mud, tents, and despair; Palestinian children queuing for tins of Sego, a US meal replacement drink; and international doctors coming from around the world to fight the spread of disease among refugees. Ending with a familiarly misleading analysis, Pathé rationalizes the "tragedy" as caused by religious and cultural differences, in which "each [side] considers its cause just." Such a statement places equal responsibility on oppressor and oppressed and reduces the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians by a settler colonial entity to a "misunderstanding."

The best British Pathé could do is adopt a stance of "balanced objectivity"; but taking such a position "in cases of injustice," according to Desmond Tutu, means choosing "the side of the oppressor." Pathé remained loyal to the oppressors and dehumanized the oppressed. Palestinian cinema, reemerging in the late 1960s, has challenged the established representations of Palestinian refugees (Yaqub 2018), and the Palestinians continue to struggle to reverse the legitimization that Zionist-oriented propaganda gives to their dispossession and the destruction of their society.

Notes

1 After long-seated frustration and fear of potential British and Zionist colonization of Arab Palestine, natives revolted across Palestine, triggered by a 1929 Zionist attempt to dominate the Buraq/Western Wall of Jerusalem. What became known as the Al-Buraq Revolt, or the Wailing Wall riots in English, left 133 Jews killed and at least 339 more injured. Zionist and British suppression, including the use of airpower on a number of villages, killed 116 Palestinians

and injured 232 others. The Palestinian Arab Executive deemed the violence "a direct product of the Zionist-British policy which aims at the extinction of the Arab nation in its natural home in order to replace it with a non-existent Jewish nation" (Anderson 2018, 173–74). During this mass resistance, natives succeeded in driving away a limited Zionist settler community from Gaza, and further efforts to implant settlements were halted. Nonetheless, Zionist individuals and organizations, such as the Jewish National Fund, bought 250 dunams of lands in the 1930s onto which Kfar Darom settlement was built in 1946. The settlement was later defeated in 1948 and deemed "one of the setbacks of Israel's War of Independence" (Lewin 2015, 16).

2 *Refugees Ship Aground—Palestine*, another unissued newsreel from 1947, depicts the Jewish refugee ship *Suzanne* arriving on the beach north of Gaza. Palestinian locals occasionally appear on the beach, only as ghosts looking from far away.

3 Gaza was a major battleground where Australian and New Zealander soldiers fought alongside the Palestinians who were enlisted into the British army in World War I (against the Turks) and World War II (against Nazi Germany). Although Gaza still hosts and cares for the graves of Australian soldiers (Anzacs), more than two thousand of whom died in the two world wars, the Palestinians and their connection to the Anzac soldiers of Australia are not recognized except in alternative publications (Karkar 2008). See Hutcheon 2008 for information on images of Anzac soldiers in Palestine.

Helga Tawil-Souri

Afterword

Gaza Screened

Gazans, the people, are in bondage. Gaza, the territory, is in captivity. Bodies, families, goods, resources, money, trade, development, infrastructure: all are held back. The few things that are allowed in and out of Gaza are *all* screened.

The word *screen* refers to an object and an action. In this volume, it evokes the mediated, visual, technological meaning of both the noun and the verb that refer to the surface on which a film is projected and the action of projection itself, respectively.

The screen—as an object—is a surface that simultaneously reveals and conceals and on which information is displayed and filtered. Screens come in different forms: large and small; fixed and mobile; made of liquid crystals, cathode ray tubes, fabric; animated by celluloid, electronic, and digital sources. The materiality of the screen is significant. Unlike a cave or bedroom wall on which shadows are projected, the screen belongs to a par-

ticular regime of visibility—shadow puppets on a wall are "live," formed by hands present in that time and place, requiring only shadow and light. The screen is dependent on and partially defined by assemblages of technologies such as a camera by which an image is captured, a film on which an image is etched, and a projector through which an image is contrived. The screen also has a spatial extension that both disconnects and extends space and time. Whatever is on the screen is already multiple steps removed from the original time and space of the action, place, or moment now projected—images that were filmed in an elsewhere and elsewhence. But the screen itself also defines (and sometimes severs) the physical space in which it is located, while it can also be the means to display images containing other spatial representations. Screens do a kind of brokering work: marking a moment and an encounter of intelligibility, when and where a viewer apprehends an image. The steps of mediation only get more complicated if we consider the different materiality of a film screen, a TV screen, a computer screen, or even a screenshot saved on our phones. Different kinds of screens have different aesthetic, epistemological, and ethical implications. Different screens translate into different points of view; different levels, scales, and forms of mediation; and different extensions of space and time.[1] The materiality, functionality, significance, and meaning are dependent, defined, and delimited by other assemblages: dedicated equipment, technologies, systems of transmission, political economies of production, trade, and dissemination. In other words, screens are nodes in complex networks and, in that sense, too, have spatial and temporal significances.

Screen as an action, a verb, makes evident the contradictions and excesses of screens. While screening, for the most part in this volume, is meant as the act of projection, showing, disseminating, watching of material to be consumed by (primarily) the sense of sight, the other definitions of screening are important to consider precisely because they highlight the multiple spatial work screening does. In one iteration, screening means concealing, hiding, or shielding behind a partition (and that partition—the noun *screen*—is a necessary component of the action), whether for protection or otherwise: flying embers or excessive heat is screened by a glass or metal panel placed in front of a fireplace; a dressing area in a bedroom or a store is separated by decorative panels; a phone is protected from scratches and cracks by a sticky film substance we nowadays attach to its surface. In a second iteration, screening is the act of detecting, checking, examining, usually before a passage of some kind, and thus stalling, delaying, sometimes outright blocking: sifting cooked berries through a sieve to separate out the seeds

and membranes to make jam; checking a passenger's paperwork before they board a flight; examining organic tissue to detect cancer.

The screen and screening evoke contradictory motions: contractions and expansions, concealments and expositions, extensions and blockages, preemption and precipitation. Across all definitions there is activity, motion, movement, even when the screen refers to keeping something still or hidden. *Screening Gaza* thinks through and challenges these movements and tension. What is allowed through, what makes it to the other side of the sieve, what escapes out? What is projected, broadcast, disseminated? In what ways are stories, messages, thoughts moved? What do we visualize of Gaza through screens? As such, these questions speak to screening as an action that exceeds space, transcends the limits of time, and occupies consciousness. At the same time, the contributors to this volume speak to the very limits of representation, whether these are Gaza-specific or about what (always?) remains unrepresentable about decades of dispossession and attempts by others to invisibilize that dispossession.

Much of the world is increasingly surrounded by and immersed in screens. Is there something nonetheless exceptional about Gaza? Is it that its entire existence is screened, in all senses of the word? As many chapters in this volume make evident, Gaza is a place many of us visit only through its mediation. What we see of Gaza we engage with on different kinds of screens—whether on Lebanese television as Hatim El-Hibri demonstrates, the "alternative" screens of Sderot film festivals as described in Yaron Shemer's chapter, or Israeli newspapers and Israel Defense Forces YouTube channels as Rebecca Stein describes. It follows that everything that makes it out of Gaza has to be screened—whether it is checked and vetted; has passed through a medium such as the air or a tunnel; or, as with many of the examples in this book, has been captured, recorded, framed, edited, coded, digitized, parsed, and then saved, etched, sent, transmitted, downloaded, translated, displayed, and so on. Ultimately, I am interested not in the question of losing fidelity, for that is inevitable in all forms of human communication, screened or otherwise—but in the question of movement, *precisely* because Gazans are in bondage, and Gaza is in captivity. Is screening what is between possibility and precarity, between entanglement and separation? What kind of mobility does screening engender?

To say that Gaza is screened is to consider that it is manufactured as a space to be hidden from view. Gaza is contained, made remote, hidden. Containment is a process in which boundaries are set, in which systems of political, economic, rhetorical, and social control are decided, made, erected,

negotiated, shifted. This is a dynamic process, and one that requires a great deal of spatial and visual work. It precipitates various kinds of actions, interactions, motions.

Consider the wall around Gaza: thick, ugly, almost impermeable and impenetrable. The border around Gaza is a visual apparatus in a number of ways. For example, "The barrier is demarcated by a five-hundred-meter buffer zone . . . by clearing all . . . obstructions interfering with sightlines" (Fields 2020, 58). All along its route, the barrier has technologically advanced observation posts that enable soldiers (on site and stationed remotely) to monitor a field of view six kilometers inside the Gaza perimeter (58). The reason to raze an orchard along the barrier is precisely so that one can *see*. The walls and fences themselves do not see, of course, but they make a particular regime of seeing possible. While they hide Palestinians from view, they are also the site from which Israel's active viewing of Gaza is made possible. They function as a double screen.

The screens around Gaza are not simply made of fences and concrete; they are equally an apparatus of military power and surveillance. Gaza is observed and surveilled through camera-equipped drones and satellite imagery. The walls and the drones "produce" their own images (I do not mean this anthropomorphically), projected on different screens. Screening both hides and makes visible. This kind of double logic defines the continued production of Gaza as an enclosed space. The Gaza Reconstruction Mechanism, for example, a system that allows construction materials to be transferred into the Gaza Strip, in place since 2014, creates a wide array of microdata coming from every corner of Gaza and enables a modulated response in real time, which has meant that "Gaza is arguably being turned into a smart city" (Sebregondi 2021, 200). The data are rendered into visual information on screens, providing high-definition and real-time images streamed to Israeli security forces. Most of us are not privy to these data, but they may well end up re-rendered for arms manufacturers' marketing campaigns on other continents.

The walls, fences, and towers around Gaza are, of course, the most visible forms of the wide array of measures through which Palestinians are screened: scanned, surveilled, identified, restricted. As such, they function like a screen, as a "protective" shield (from the perspective of the Israeli state). But it is equally a *projective* surface on which the Israeli imaginary is made visible—an imaginary dependent on the notion of screening out Palestinians. As Jenny Stümer argues, Israel is fortified by a dynamic of politically mobilized visibility and invisibility that works to protect a coherent, shel-

tered political imaginary. "Israel . . . is itself a screen onto which the fantasy of a white walled West can be projected and enlarged," a screen that "reveals contemporary affective investments in colonial domination" (2019, 313). The means by which Israel screens Gaza—through walls, surveillance, media propaganda, and otherwise—are part of its expansive colonial privileges, itself reliant on making the Palestinian invisible. As Patrick Wolfe would have it, "The role that colonialism has assigned to Indigenous people is to disappear" (2016, 2). Disappearing is not a final event, however; it is an action that requires ongoing production of disappearance and invisibilization.

Not even Gaza—despite being an open-air prison—is fully impermeable. Things, people, messages, information, images will eventually flow out, whether by accident or by design, or because the process by which Gaza is screened is never complete. Bits and pieces of Gaza escape confinement. What is produced, what is producible, what can be disseminated and consumed moves beyond the boundaries and screens erected around Gaza, even if largely in mediated, datafied, or transmogrified ways. Screening is a maneuver as much as it is an act of covering or disguise. And it is on the screen where the limits or excesses of containment, a form of maneuverability, become evident. Despite the frame's symbolic effort to contain a film, video, or photograph inside discernible boundaries, every such image is fraught with aspects of simultaneity, multiplicity, and materiality that signify its textual excess. Roland Barthes associated this visual excess with a "third meaning" that surpasses film's primary codes of information. According to Barthes, it is at the level of the third meaning that cinematic specificity is defined: it is at "that level alone, that the 'filmic' finally emerges. The filmic is that in the film which cannot be described, the representation which cannot be represented" (1977, 64). In other words, an excess is produced, because of the impossibility of the narrative's containment and because of the impossibility of the screen's containment. The Qassam videos that operate outside the frame of the human rights community and trespass into Israeli broadcasts are these kinds of excesses; they emerge from the other end of the sieve. They function in a different calculus of visibility and trouble the status quo, as Nayrouz Abou Hatoum and Hadeel Assali argue in their chapter. In other words, they screen: they exceed containment.

The tunnels that first emerged to mitigate Gazans' containment, the same tunnels in which the Qassam videos partly take place and from which Qassam fighters and filmmakers emerge, also burst out of containment like excess. Indeed, all the videos, films, images, visuals (and sounds and smells) that seep through the walls erected around Gaza are akin to those tunnels.

Gaza adapts to its isolation and containment; its residents recalibrate, regauge. They bore tunnels and interrupt Israeli broadcasts. Their sewage flows northward. Their kites are seen from Sderot, and the smell and smoke of their burning tires reach well beyond any screen. In much the same way that film and video cannot contain its signifying movements, Gaza's containment opens up to external elements. It cannot be entirely barricaded. As Shaira Vadasaria explains in her chapter, what becomes imperative, then, is to know the interpretive grids of knowledge that function to translate and make known that which is being communicated.

Screening is a geographic extension of the field of the visible and the representable. Projecting a photograph or an image, a film or a video is an action of movement, expansion, and openness, one that creates different spaces. As cinema scholars have long told us, cinematic presence is multiply located: simultaneously displacing itself in the "there" of the past and future yet orienting these displacements from the "here" where the spectating body is at present (Sobchack 1994, 108). Screening is itself a fundamental paradox of simultaneous motion and captivity: Palestinian screening takes the form of leaking out, moving, trespassing, or escaping (as in the subjective handheld aesthetics of Jabaly's *Ambulance* detailed by Viviane Saglier), countering the screening undertaken by those, such as the Israeli state, which takes the form of hiding, imprisoning, containing (whether hiding Palestinians on the other side of Sderot Hill or pixelating them through the "eyes" and arms of an aerial drone).

Screening also defines the space in which spectatorship is possible, as each screen requires an optimal distance from which to view it—an arm's length or a few meters. The proliferation of screens seems to produce a spectator who is in some ways imagined to be both placeless and mobile: floating, gliding, or suspended, partaking in a shrinking world by watching through a metaphoric window (the screen). The television screen is a source of images from elsewhere, and "does not exist solely on the immediate social scale of the place where it is viewed. The very simple fact that it is a medium of transmission, of communication across distance, means that televisual representation—often charged with an aura of temporal immediacy—is seen as linking disparate places" (McCarthy 2001, 14). Social media only further complicate this kind of presence-absence: digital technology asserts itself as removing the discrepancies of mediation where we can do things in real time, in teleconference, in live mode, which all claim to restore the properties of shared presence—and increasingly shared screens. At the same time as I watched the bombing and ensuing collapse of the al-Jalaa in-

ternational media building in Gaza City on May 15, 2021, in real time on my computer screen, I was on a WhatsApp video call with my friend Wael who could see the billowing smoke from less than a kilometer away. Meanwhile, hashtags were streaming live, and even in simultaneous and contradictory "framings," as #GazaUnderAttack and #IsraelUnderFire.

Of course, the materiality and modalities of photographic, cinematic, and electronic perception and representation are not abstractions. They are concretely situated and finite, often conventional and institutionalized. Alongside the everywhere and everywhen of current cinema, television, and social media, images touch down at identifiable moments and in particular places. These points become obvious and visible at the interface marked by screens. The screen is a material configuration of the relation between subjects and objects, its surface a site of mediation and projection, itself a space of crossovers.

Screening creates a kind of presence-absence. It creates continuity across and above borders and containments surrounding Gaza, even as it also regulates and organizes images at different levels. What screens and screening perhaps show us and make visible is that if Gaza has a future outside of containment, it is in the excesses of the screen.

Note

1 Consider, for example, Jacob Gaboury's (2015) argument that computer-generated images are always a mediation of mathematical computation and visual representation of digital information, what he calls a "secondary mediation."

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Samirah Alkassim is an assistant professor of film theory at George Mason University. She is coeditor of the series Palgrave Studies in Arab Cinema, and coauthor, with Nezar Andary, of *The Cinema of Muhammad Malas* (2018). Additional publications include contributions to the second edition of *The Historical Dictionary of Middle Eastern Cinema* (2020), and chapters in *Cinema of the Arab World: Contemporary Directions in Theory and Practice* (2020); *Refocus: The Films of Jocelyne Saab* (2021); and *Global Horror: Hybridity and Alterity in Transnational Horror Film* (2022), which she coedited with Ziad El-Bayoumi Foty.

Basma Alsharif explores cyclical political histories and conflicts. In films and installations that move backward and forward in history, between place and nonplace, she confronts the legacy of colonialism and the experience of displacement with satire, doubt, and hope. Her films include *Ouroboros* (2017), *Deep Sleep* (2014), *O Persecuted* (2014), *Home Movies Gaza* (2013), *Farther Than the Eye Can See* (2012), *The Story of Milk and Honey* (2011), *We Began by Measuring Distance* (2009), and *Everywhere Was the Same* (2007).

Hadeel Assali is an anthropologist, filmmaker, and former chemical engineer. She recently completed her PhD in anthropology at Columbia University, and her forthcoming manuscript examines the colonial legacies of the discipline of geology and how it has come up against local, intimate knowledge and relations with the land in southern Palestine. She has made several short films focused on Gaza and is currently working on her first feature-length documentary. She completed a postdoctoral fellowship at University of Pennsylvania and has returned to Columbia University as a postdoctoral fellow in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences, as well as at the Center for Science and Society.

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Arab and Tarzan Nasser, also known as Muhammed and Ahmed Abu Nasser, are directors, editors, and actors from the Gaza Strip and 2010 winners of the Best Artist of the Year award from the A. M. Qattan Foundation for their project *Gazawood*. Their films include *Condom Lead* (2013), which screened in competition at the Cannes Film Festival, and two feature films, *Dégradé* (2015) and *Gaza Mon Amour* (2020), which premiered at the Venice Film Festival.

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Viviane Saglier is a lecturer in the Department of Film Studies at the University of St Andrews. Her research is concerned with the politics of past and present film culture in Palestine and in the broader Arab region. Her first monograph analyzes the tensions between cinema, human rights discourses, and anti-colonial resistance in Palestine.

Abdelsalam Shehada is a film director, television journalist and cameraman, and former director of production for the news agency Ramattan News from Rafah, Palestine. His films include *To My Father* (2008), *Rainbow* (2004), *Debris* (2001), *The Cane* (2000), *The Shadow* (2000), *Close to Death* (1997), *Little Hands* (1996), and *Human Rights Are Women's Rights* (1995).

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Rebecca L. Stein is a professor of cultural anthropology at Duke University, the author of (most recently) *Screen Shots: State Violence on Camera in Israel and Palestine* (2021), and the coauthor, with Adi Kuntsman, of *Digital Militarism: Israel's Occupation in the Social Media Age* (2015).

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