CINEMATIC OCCUPATION: INTELLIGIBILITY, QUEERNESS, AND PALESTINE

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This dissertation brings a visual culture and queer studies approach to the study of

cinema's role in discourses of belonging in Israel and Occupied Palestine. I argue that cinema

and racialized discourses of gender, sexuality and ethno-nationalism play a key role in the denial

of Palestinian belonging. I begin by arguing that ongoing Palestinian dispossession remains

largely unrecognizable in the dominant North American and European imagination of Palestine

in part due to what became a *recognizable* and *inevitable* narrative of Palestine as a Jewish

national homeland. Revealing the extra-Zionist routes of early Jewish Agency propaganda films,

for example, I detach them from reigning progress narratives in Israeli transnational film studies,

and explore their implication in a broader visual culture that promoted exclusive Jewish national

belonging in Historic Palestine. Through an analysis of painting, landscape imagery, and

settlement architecture, including the early Wall and Tower design of the 1930s settlements and

their continued logic in the architectures of occupation today, I place cinema in this larger visual

and architectural context of what I call Cinematic Occupation, emphasizing its diverse

enlistments in occupation and in the denial of Palestinian belonging. I show how Israeli

nationalism reiterates an overly stable, demographically regulated, and militarized sense of

home, while a trope of unsettled homes in Palestinian cinema suggests the possibility of

persisting in an attachment to "Palestine" without stable foundations. Underscoring how

Palestinians have *maintained* a sense of belonging—to Palestine, to a broader Palestinian

collectivity—*without* recourse to dominant narratives of national identity, I argue for a model of solidarity that attends to constrained forms of belonging. In this way, I align my work with recent queer studies work on racialized forms of state, military, and administrative violence, including, but not limited to, those that have an obvious relation to issues of gender and sexual diversity. Ultimately, I argue that dominant Zionist and Israeli narratives about the illegitimacy of Palestinian belonging have benefited from the logic that cinema is a source of visual proof, and I explore alternative models in contemporary Palestinian cinematic practice for thinking about cinema's potential and limits.

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PREFACE

My parents, Steve and Catherine Jankovic, deserve the first acknowledgement for their encouragement, their intellectual curiosity and generosity, and the sacrifices they must have made—though have never held over me—to put me through college. I owe a certain "pesky" critical approach to academic, activist, and creative work to the fact of being the middle child between my incredibly smart and witty siblings, Steve and Lauren. For all the times Lauren came to my rescue in college because I, exasperated, desperately needed her help to finish an elaborate photography or video project, I wonder how I managed graduate school without her nearby. I owe so much of my everyday joy to my "other family"—my great love, the dependable Oliver Haimson, and the always-classy Joseph Hall.

Colleagues and friends in the English Department at the University of Pittsburgh created a challenging intellectual space that shaped the contours of my research, teaching, and critical sensibilities. I am especially grateful to my adviser and committee chair Neepa Majumdar, who helped me through many difficult decisions and a few uncomfortable situations with unfailing advice and constant encouragement. She has advocated for me, set the bar high, and then reminded me to celebrate my successes when they came along. Mark Lynn Anderson has always challenged me to take sides and flirt with failure, and has sometimes inspired me to wear one of my antique broaches to match his own. I also want to thank Troy Boone, who has been a reliable

1.0   INTRODUCTION

Unraveling the layers of meaning implied by *awdah*—the Arabic term for "return," as in the "right of return" historically denied to diasporic Palestinians—Edward Said invokes the lost Palestinian house when he writes: "all of us speak of *awdah*, 'return,' but do we mean that literally, or do we mean 'we must restore ourselves to ourselves'? The latter is the real point, I think, although I know many Palestinians who want their houses and their way of life back, exactly. But is there any place that fits us, together with our accumulated memories and experiences? Do we exist? What proof do we have?"[1] In this quote the house represents the concrete elements of Palestinian dispossession: the keys, photographs, and deeds still held onto from the many houses razed, abandoned, and stolen when armed Zionist groups forced over 700,000 Palestinians from their land in 1948. In Palestinian literature, poetry, and other kinds of artistic and cultural production, in addition to private, public, and political discourse, the house figures as both a symbol for a lost homeland and "way of life," as well as a concrete site of ongoing dispossession. Yet, Said draws our attention to his "real point" in invoking *awdah*—a question regarding less literal senses of collective Palestinian identity. He questions whether the notion of return is misplaced—or, rather, he wonders whether return is too closely tied to place, when there may not be "any place that fits [Palestinian]…accumulated memories and experiences."

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[1] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*. (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 33.

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From this questionable location for Palestinian identity, Said introduces a more clearly existential concern that for Palestinians is not a playfully philosophical one, but rather an inescapable historical echo—"Do we exist? What proof do we have?" The question *do we exist?* summons the infamous phrase associated with Zionism: "A place without a people for a people without a place." As the fourth prime minister of Israel, in 1969 Golda Meir infamously echoed this phrase again in another iteration—simply, "there were no such thing as Palestinians…they did not exist."[2] In yet another form, in the context of the post-1967 Palestinian national struggle, revolutionary filmmaker Mustafa Abu Ali titled his 1974 film depicting the lives and struggles of Palestinian refugees in Lebanon and Jordan *They Do Not Exist* (I return to this film in Chapter 4). Neither Abu Ali nor Said choose a simple counter-claim to this dominant frame of denying Palestinian existence. While Abu Ali's title over-identifies with Meir and hegemonic Zionism, Said dwells on it as a question. Varying degrees of reluctance to settle on an affirmative—*yes, we exist*—can be found throughout Palestinian literary, political and cultural history, emphasizing both a deep skepticism concerning representational routes to reparative history, as well as what seems a concern to find the "place that fits us" that would include a largely dispersed people.

This dissertation is particularly interested in investigating cinema's complex role in relation to the question of forms of Palestinian claims to selfhood, belonging, and historical memory. There are of course many differences in cinema's role in Palestinian history during diverse political moments, in varying cultural and geopolitical contexts, as well as in differing modes of address to various local and global audiences. In the post-Oslo context, for instance, a

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[2] *The Sunday Times* (London), June 15, 1969, 15. For a discussion of Meir's statement in relation to the formation of Palestinian identity, see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 147.

new influx of European funding supported and elicited particular forms of Palestinian expression over others, primarily those that supported the idea that some measure of peace had been achieved through the Oslo process. Furthermore, not all Palestinian cultural expression is as markedly self-questioning, and in such a post-modernist styled fashion, as Elia Suleiman's films, for instance. And yet, across cinematic genres and historical and political contexts, identity and cinema are continually posed as open questions in Palestinian cinema, and much like the questions asked by Said above, many Palestinian films suggest that cinema offers no simple or stable housing of Palestinian identity and history.

Insofar as national identity, or the broader sense of belonging implied by being "a people," tend to have strong ties to place—the homeland, the national landscape—"return" seems to offer a solution to the question of existence. Yet, Said emphasizes that *awdah* contains not just a response to a literal unsettling that has resulted from a loss of place, but an unsettling at the center of the definition of Palestinians as "a people." That Palestinian collective identity has survived in many ways what would otherwise seem to be a fatal existential crisis suggests that there are forms of belonging that circumvent stable foundations and internationally recognized nation-state status. Out of necessity, Palestinians have often risked making claims to belonging through alternative routes—without houses, without a nation, without the certainty to say *yes, we exist.* In making this point, I do not mean to under-emphasize the ongoing existence and importance of discourses of belonging that rely on autochthony and nationalism, which place high value on "the homeland" in defining true belonging. I aim, rather, to better understand how Palestinian visual culture in particular, has maintained a sense of belonging—to Palestine, to a broader Palestinian collectivity—without access or recourse to dominant narratives of identity. I think that narratives of Palestinian belonging in Palestinian cinema have something to teach us

about how belonging functions affectively and materially in relation to its most dominant and powerful structures like the nation and the family. There are many ways in which we can be made to feel the mark of not belonging—whether through restricted access to citizenship or through cultural discourses of racialization, sexism, and so on. Yet, there are also ways to still articulate and feel a sense of belonging—to some place or some group—even in those cases when it is denied or constrained.

And what of the question of proof? If the house serves to some extent as the proof of stable identity, literally grounded in place, then various kinds of un-housings bear a significant relation to both the question of identity and of proof. National identity, for instance, relies in many ways on state and institutional archives that collect, store, and disseminate what are often regarded as the officious evidence of dominant nationalist narratives. Given the massive amount of looting and dispossession of Palestinian private and public archives after 1948, and the continued restrictions on Palestinian life in Occupied Palestine and in the Diaspora, Palestinians have not always been able to point to recognizable and institutionally housed archives to confirm the legitimacy of their historical claims to existence. An Al Jazeera-produced documentary *The Great Book Robbery,* part of a larger project chronicling Palestinian "cultural destruction," focuses in particular on how massive collections of books, some rare, were claimed by the Israeli state and placed as uncollected, "abandoned" property in state public libraries after 1948, underscoring how a Palestinian archive is in many ways un-locatable or unclaimed. The project's website archives an ongoing list of the books using the Israeli National Library's own catalogue, amassing a counter-archive for the books. This is one example of how, in many different locations and languages, various collections, research centers, anthologies and online repositories

serve as fragments of a more de-centralized and diffuse claim to historical memory for Palestinians.

Said himself has suggested that cinema can serve in some sense as "the place that fits us" for Palestinians, yet Palestinian cinema itself has no officious and extensive physical archive to house the visual proof that cinema is seen to offer Palestinian collective memory, experience, and identity. Remarking specifically on the question of visibility, in the introduction to *Dreams of Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, Said writes, "it became obvious to me that the relationship of Palestinians to the visible and the visual was deeply problematic," and locates a "desire to be visible" in close relation to that same "early mobilizing phrase of Zionism" about an empty land.[3] Said argues that Palestinian cinema represents a "collective identity"—a "visual alternative, a visual articulation, a visible incarnation of Palestinian existence."[4] Yet in that same introduction, Said recalls an anecdote from his book *After the Last Sky,* regarding the photographs of Jean Mohr commissioned for a 1983 United Nations International Conference on the Question of Palestine. While many of the papers commissioned for the conference were excluded, Mohr's photographs were included but with truncated captions. Said explains: " So there was a picture, for example, of a family, but instead of there being a label describing the family, what year the picture was taken, or what the family was doing there, the only identification allowed was 'Gaza."[5] In this example, the problematic of visibility and visuality is demonstrated: the photographs were indeed exhibited, and yet the captions and the context of the conference provided a limited frame for the effects of that constrained "visibility."

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[3] Edward Said, preface to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid Dabashi, (London, New York: Verso, 2006), 2.
[4] Said, preface, 3.
[5] Said, preface*,* 3.

With cinema, Said seems more optimistic, perhaps appropriately for the introduction to the important collection and film festival that is *Dreams of a Nation*, and yet with this dissertation I want to return to Said's hesitation around the question of proof and of visibility. I will argue in this dissertation that dominant Zionist and Israeli narratives about the non-existence or illegitimacy of Palestinian belonging in Historic and Occupied Palestine have benefited from the logic that cinema constitutes a source of visual proof. The evidence for this argument alone should caution against any overly optimistic notions about cinema's potential to house Palestinian claims to existence and identity, and yet I also argue that this hesitance about cinema is a defining feature of Palestinian film practice itself. Following this questioning mode that declines to offer oppositional stances and counter-claims, this project must confront some rather taken-for-granted assumptions in film studies, particularly since a mode of critique following the logic of national representation has tended to dominate the study of cinema in the region, as I explain in Chapter 1.

The house returns at different moments in this dissertation, and in some ways the house frames this dissertation's conceptual approach precisely to serve as a reminder of the material conditions grounding any discussion of the possibilities afforded by the frames of analysis I turn to; primarily transnational film theory, visual culture studies, and queer theory. Besides serving as a symbol of lost homeland, of stolen family inheritance, of an unacknowledged dispossession and destruction, and of military penetration into the daily lives of Palestinians living in the Occupied Palestine, the house also offers through its concrete structure—as architecture—a way of looking at the world. The house is a powerful site for imagining boundaries between the personal and public, the national and the individual, and the formal organization of belonging as relying on stable foundations. For architecture theorist Beatriz Colomina, the "house is a device

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to see the world" and "a mechanism of viewing," much like the cinema.[6] This study looks at the

house as a site of looking out onto the world, but also the house itself as an image captured in

cinema, and by various forms of NGO, state, and military imaging. As the grounds for imagining

national and regional ties, collective identity, and familial belonging, the house can also be a

reminder of how discourses of identity and belonging often rely on a presumptive rigidity, which

other theorizations often come along to expose as ultimately unstable, contested and always

under construction, as it were. Yet, this can lead to what I think is an unproductive and

problematic dichotomy between perceived rigidity and flexibility.

As an example, the movement away from conceptualizing the nation in overly stable

terms, widely recognized through Benedict Anderson's notion of "imagined communities,"

marked new ways to think about nationalism and global and local forms of belonging. Yet today

the once-progressive-seeming figuration of "imagined communities" resonates to a troubling

degree with Newt Gingrich's decidedly conservative comment, which gave new public voice to a

rather taken for granted sentiment, that Palestinians are an "invented" people.[7] Concerned about

these movements from seemingly progressive theoretical framework to conservative uses, the

notion of "ways of seeing" in visual culture studies serves as a powerful explanatory framework

for this study's focus on visuality, and yet is tempered by a close relation to the concrete

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[6] Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 7.
[7] "Gingrich calls Palestinians an 'invented' people," *AlJazeera.com,* December 10, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/news/americas/2011/12/201112108493783540.html. See Benedict Anderson's discussion of nations as "imagined communities" in *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London: Verso, 1991). For a cinema-specific expansion of Anderson's ideas beyond the boundaries of the nation-state, see Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, eds. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 15-25.

structures where power takes on the form of brute force. The house as a literal space of not only a kind of grounds for identity but a site of destruction, loss and occupation—as a location of intersecting power relations—for me mitigates a tempting tendency in transformative-leaning theoretical models, which sometimes seek too quickly to name spaces of possibility and resistance. I am interested in the ever-shifting process of who and what is afforded the recognition necessary to "count," and where and how this takes place. This approach of concentrating on *what now is being made to seem impossible, unthinkable, or wholly negative* can still be said to have transformation as an ultimate goal, but works with a different strategy, one of a definite "taking of sides" but without the presumption of knowing in advance what the outcome of any particular strategy will be.

1.1   SHIFTING TERMS

Since I am interested in the question of why it has been so difficult to change the frame of reference around Palestinian dispossession, why it has largely remained unacknowledged or under-acknowledged even in the face of massive evidence, I want to address the question of what to call this "place" of which this project is concerned. At the time when I began this project, or even before then when I surprised myself by bringing an issue I was concerned about in a political and personal sense into my graduate work, using the slashed "Palestine/Israel" or "Israel/Palestine" seemed like a kind of intervention. Using the term "Israel/Palestine" seemed like a way to emphasize the reality of military occupation and of Israeli control over the region by to some degree thwarting its regime of segregation and separation. The phrase "Israel and the Palestinian Territories" for me was supporting a kind of normalization of the occupation without

naming it, and many still debated in the U.S. whether there was still an occupation, having believed in the myth of a transfer of authority to the Palestinians after Oslo. At this time, it was much less common that "military occupation" was recognized as a descriptive and not just evaluative naming in US mainstream and even so-called progressive and alternative politics, not to mention in academic spaces. Using that slash seemed to me then a productive and critical way to draw immediate visual attention (in writing) to an under-acknowledged interdependence of Israeli and Palestinian society in the region, to insist on this mutuality as a method of approaching regional politics and not to let Israel-focused studies (including film) go about as if there was not an ongoing occupation, a siege in Gaza, an Apartheid infrastructure holding the occupation in place, and an unjust situation for Palestinians and other minorities in Israeli society. There were and still are ways that working on "Israeli film" can obscure these relations by, wittingly or not, relying on an internationally recognized status of statehood. A study with a Palestinian focus, on the other hand, even when one may prefer to leave the question of Israeli society aside for a moment, is often unable to contextualize its inquiry and research, nor to answer to questions about legitimacy. Is there a Palestinian cinema? Are there queer Palestinian organizations? Are you talking about "real" Palestinians or Palestinians with Israeli, U.S., European, etc. citizenship?—these are examples of the many familiar questions that emphasize that "Palestinian" does not carry the same kind of authoritative and settled (i.e. taken for granted) sense that "Israeli" does. "Israel" is recognizable for many, particularly in North America and Europe, and does not cause an immediate sense of questioning—of what configuration of the region and its peoples do you speak? Israel/Palestine or Palestine/Israel seemed like a way to quickly undermine a certain casual use of "Israel" in the academic, activist, and everyday contexts that I moved through.

Today that slashed use no longer feels like an intervention. In fact, it even seems anachronistic, as "Israel-Palestine" did and still does in some contexts. Only a few years ago, to write "Palestine/Israel" was to refuse to allow "Israel" to stand on its own, which would deny its reliance on an occupation of Palestinian society and the dispossession of Palestinian homes on the land that in part came to be called "Israel." Today, "Palestine/Israel" seems like another lie, since it suggests that writing "Palestine" somehow erases the hard facts of occupation, of the siege and blockade of Gaza, of the total destruction of many Palestinian villages in 1948. There isn't simply a "Palestine" with some kind of equal standing, no matter how constrained, to place aside Israel. And, to address the hybrid meaning suggested by "Palestine/Israel," there is currently no just collaboration or co-existence that would warrant the naming of the region and retain both terms. To pretend that naming it such is somehow a reach toward some horizon of peace would be, I think, to fall into a neo-liberal trap (like post-feminist and post-racial discourse), that also seeks to "post-" an acknowledgment of power relations still very much at work.

In this project, I use "Historic and Occupied Palestine" to attempt to name the historical, material, and affective realities of the geo-political configuration, material place, and shifting idea invoked by "Palestine." In this use, "Historic Palestine" refers primarily to the pre-1948 idea and place of Palestine, while "Occupied Palestine" refers quite broadly to the region covered by the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the Israeli state. This is neither meant to be fully descriptive, nor is it meant to be prescriptive. In other words, Occupied Palestine is meant to acknowledge the changing reality of occupation and dispossession, which may cross official and de-facto borders. I try to reserve use of "Israel" to refer to state discourse and to the nation-state; yet for me this term ought not to be allowed to simply refer to a specific geographic location,

since I believe that use performs a mundane yet brutal kind of violence by all it takes for granted in that naming. "Palestinian society," as I use it here, refers to a broad, diasporic community, and I am careful to distinguish between discussing the dominant discourses of Jewish-Israeli belonging versus a term like "Israeli society," which could be seen to refer to the many citizens *and* non-citizens (so both Jewish and non-Jewish citizens and non-citizens, non-citizen migrant workers, as well as Arab Jews, Bedouins, Arab-Palestinians, and others) understood to be a part of "Israeli society" through a neo-liberal multicultural frame. The very definition of the state as a *Jewish* democratic nation makes unwelcome the presence of those who supposedly make Israel "multicultural."

My rather loose use of identifying terminology in part is a response to the ways in which a precise classification of Palestinians according to location, citizenship status, permit status and ability to travel within and outside the region, diasporic location, multi-racial/ethnic or national identification, and so on, can often serve a discourse that seeks to fragment Palestinian society and deny coalitional possibilities and claims of belonging. The popular use of the term "Arab Israeli" for Palestinians with Israeli citizenship within dominant Israeli discourse is one example of this evacuating of Palestinian identity seen in part as a way to encourage assimilation into "Israeli" society through breaking ties with Palestinian culture and history. While acknowledging the differences in Palestinian experiences and status can be important, especially within Palestinian social movement work toward ending occupation, it also can run the risk in some contexts of supporting further dispossession of Palestinian collective identity.[8]

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[8] I have had my own experience of a Jewish-Israeli scholar after a public talk seeking to "correct" my use of "Palestinian" as a term for filmmakers and cultural artifacts self-identified and widely recognized as Palestinian, since for this scholar the "proper" term would be "Arab Israeli." "You have to be careful with these terms," he cautioned. In part, my resistance to clear-

It took some time for me to recognize that my aim in the work I was doing in relation to Historic and Occupied Palestine was primarily in response to what I argue is a problem of Palestinian unrecognizability, which is in part a kind of unquestioning non-recognition of Palestinians as a people whose lives matter, especially in North American academia, foreign policy, and dominant public discourse. The project became more clearly oriented toward Palestine, and Palestine as a particular kind of orientation. At the same time, I have come to see the "ground" I can affect some change in largely as the fields of study in which I can claim some stake in contributing to as a North American scholar; namely, transnational film studies, visual culture studies, and queer studies. It's not my place to suggest I can claim other ground, and yet I have come to see my approach less as an intervention (i.e. a disciplinary intervention) than as interference. I think "intervention" risks overstating my power as a critic, and, perhaps more importantly, it sounds too much like "*military* intervention" or "*humanitarian* intervention," neither of which has done much good for Palestinians. In a 1982 essay by Edward Said on the politics of interpretation, he argues that ought to we "work against the doctrine of non-interference among fields."[9] Interference is necessary, he argues, since one function of disciplinary techniques is "to protect the coherence, the territorial integrity, the social identity of the field, its adherents and its institutional presence."[10] I like "interference" better than "intervention" because its messier, more trouble-making, less sure of itself, and because those are things I want to mess with. At stake in the type of interference Said calls for is "the recovery

cut definitions has to do with a refusal to follow that caution by responding to the sort of questions asked too frequently of Palestinians.
[9] Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (Seattle: Bay Press, 1983), 136.
[10] Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," 141.

of a history hitherto either misrepresented or rendered invisible."[11] As the choice of

"misrepresented" and "rendered invisible" already imply, Said argues that the "visual faculty" as

he says, is the best tool for accomplishing this "great unsettlement in ways of seeing and

doing."[12] Likewise, in the introduction to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, a

discipline-cohering book of sorts for Palestinian film studies, Said argues that Palestinian cinema

represents a "collective identity"—a "visual alternative, a visual articulation, a visible

incarnation of Palestinian existence."[13] It is on this point, again, that I depart from Said. I argue

that across cinematic genres and historical and political contexts, identity and cinema are

continually posed as open questions in Palestinian cinematic practice, emphasizing both a

skepticism in visual routes toward repairing historical traumas, as well as a hesitance toward

defining in any strict terms what it means to be Palestinian.

In Chapter 1, "National Intelligibility and Queerness," I map out a conceptual framework

for exploring the twentieth-century creation of a Jewish national homeland discourse, which I

argue went hand-in-hand with the projection of illegitimacy onto Palestine's non-Jewish

inhabitants. I show how dominant conventions in Palestinian and Israeli film studies, such as

claims about national cinematic origins, archives, and representation, offer limited contexts for

understanding the historical and cultural relevance of film practice and film analysis with regard

to the problem of recognition and to a trend I trace through contemporary Palestinian cinema—

ranging from the short rather obscure documentary by Abdelsalam Shehadeh's, *Rainbow* (2004)

to the 2005 Oscar-nominated *Paradise Now* by Hani Abu-Asad—which explicitly and implicitly

questions what cinema and nationalism offer toward political and social change. Through queer

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[11] Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," 158.
[12] Edward Said, "Opponents, Audiences, Constituencies, and Community," 158.
[13] Edward Said, preface to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid Dabashi
(London, New York: Verso, 2006), 3.

Palestinian activism and approaches to queer Israeli cinema, I explain the conceptual and political relevance of queer theory's intersectional approach to gender, racialization, and sexuality for thinking about processes of recognition and national intelligibility.

Interfering with Israeli film studies' tendency to historicize early Zionist films as "pre-state" Israeli cinema, which implies the state had already established a sense of inevitability, in Chapter 2, "Zionist 'Palestine Films' and the Making of a Jewish National Home," I emphasize Zionist cinema's fragmentation through examination of its history of collaborating with British Empire colonial and US Protestant Holy Land discourse, its role in funding settlement and state-building, Zionist institutional disagreements over its ability to serve as a historical record of Jewish national homemaking, and its role in promoting the Sabra (the masculine figure of the New Muscle Jew and his pioneering effort) as a nationalist symbol. By examining contradictory discourses of visibility and disorientation evident in, for example, a visual confusion described by early Jewish immigrant artists and a critique of propaganda films by Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky, I reveal how processes of transformation and contradiction played key roles in the formation of dominant Zionist configurations of Jewish belonging in Palestine. Furthermore, I suggest how the notion that the Palestinian landscape and Jewish identity had been "laid waste" during the Diaspora relied on racialized discourses of gender and sexuality that are not fully explained by the often-repeated analysis of Zionism as a masculinist and homophobic national project.

Chapter 3, "Cinematic Occupation," expands on the idea from Chapter 1 that cinema ought to be considered one of the tools of Zionist nation-building used to orientate Jewish nationalism in Palestine in particular ways by exploring cinematic aspects of the visual and spatial logics of occupation. I explore the dispersal of cinema and cinematic technology across

media and fields of visuality, from the various uses of cinematic and proto-cinematic technology in settlement and occupation architecture to examples of Palestinian and Israeli photography, film, and painting. I argue that two dominant tropes of the visual and spatial logics of the ongoing history of Israeli occupation, the wall and the tower, show formations of dominant national intelligibility at work, both through consolidations of visual dominance such as hilltop settlements, and through forms of concealment such as the Separation Barrier. I further explore cinema and queerness in relation to the context of occupation through reference to Gaza filmmakers, Israeli military use of cinema industry professionals for urban warfare training, and the contemporary context informing debates over "pinkwashing," the Israeli Foreign Ministry's use of LGBT rights in a broad campaign that includes cinema.

Chapter 4, "Palestinian Cinema and Queer Alliance," explores the trope of residing in seemingly unlivable spaces, arguing that this theme in Palestinian film practice posits alternative modes of belonging and non-national forms of coalition that are also present in queer Palestinian activism. Through close analysis of how "home," and by extension national home and belonging, is construed in queer ways in Palestinian films, I suggest alternative frameworks for studying Palestinian cinema. I analyze how "home"—through reference to occupied houses, houses under curfew, houses in ruins, and a stolen family house in Palestinian films like Annemarie Jacir's 2008 *Salt of This Sea,* Alia Arasoughly's short *Clothesline* (2006)*,* and Soverio Costanzo's feature *Private* (2004)—takes on meanings distinct from dominant senses of home as secure, as delimiting a private/public boundary, and as an instantiation of national space. I show how Israeli national discourse reiterates an overtly stable, demographically regulated, and even militarized sense of home, while, in contrast, Palestinian cinema's unsettled homes suggest the possibility of persisting in an attachment to "Palestine" without stable foundations. While queerness is largely

used against Palestinian society in various forms of Israeli pinkwashing, I turn to queer diaspora studies, queer of color critique, queer Palestinian activism, and what I consider queer critical strategies in Palestinian cinema in order to further explore new coalitional possibilities and new approaches to aligning with Palestine.

This is something I continually re-learn through my work with alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, a leading queer Palestinian activist organization based in Occupied Palestine. I have been able to support alQaws' mission by using a skill I learned as a graduate student, grant and report writing, and it's been my job to listen to and help articulate to foundations the strategies and projects developed by the group's Palestinian activists. Given that queer Palestinian activist work engages, participates in, and overlaps with the fields of study I mentioned, I incorporate the discourses, strategies, protests, and insights from that work, including work related to the Palestinian-led global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement, throughout the dissertation.

2.0   CHAPTER ONE: NATIONAL INTELLIGIBILITY AND QUEERNESS IN

HISTORIC AND OCCUPIED PALESTINE

2.1   "UNRECOGNIZED" PALESTINE: FRAMES OF REFERENCE FOR

PALESTINIAN AND ISRAELI CINEMA STUDIES

When former CIA analyst Kathleen Christison remarks at the beginning of *Perceptions of*

Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy (1999) that "the idea that an event as

significant as the displacement of over seven hundred thousand people from homes and native

land could have become an 'unrecognizable episode'… would seem preposterous," she sets an

incredulous tone for a history that probes United States policy decisions and popular perception

of the fate of Zionism and Palestinians in Historic and Occupied Palestine.[1] Adopting the term

"unrecognizable episode" from Middle East scholar Malcolm Kerr, Christison characterizes the

"frame of reference" that "defines and sets boundaries around Palestinian-Israeli issues" and that

in United States politics has virtually ignored the dispossession and self-determination of

Palestinians since the "Palestine question" was first posed to U.S. leaders.[2] If Palestinian

dispossession and Palestinian liberation struggles have remained unrecognizable, it is in large

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[1] Kathleen Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine: Their Influence on U.S. Middle East Policy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 3.
[2] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine,* 8. Also see Malcolm H. Kerr. *America's Middle East Policy: Kissinger, Carter and the Future* IPS Papers 14 (E) (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1980).

part due to what became and has largely remained an especially *recognizable* narrative of

Palestine as a Jewish national homeland, which has dominated the cultural imagination of

Palestine in much of Europe and North America.

This dissertation explores the role of cinema and queerness in forming the terms of this

"frame of reference." Inspired by ethnographer Rebecca Stein's notion of "national

intelligibility," my inquiry into the formation of terms of recognizability in this context is highly

attuned to what she refers to in terms of constant renegotiation, historical contingency, and

performativity. For Stein, national intelligibility is:

> a concept that designates that which is recognizable according to the dominant national
> script. It identifies what we might call a national protocol of recognition, one that
> effectively regulates modes of perception, that which can be perceived, and how
> perceived things are to be understood or categorized within its terms. This discourse is
> also an engine of subject formation, one that sorts intelligible subjects from unintelligible
> ones within the broader field of the perceptible. At issue, then, is a complex interrelation
> of perception, recognition, and subjectivity, an interrelation that itself is subject to
> constant if irregular, change. National intelligibility is a historically contingent discourse
> that can shift dramatically during periods of profound transition or upheaval within the
> nation-state, on its borders, and within adjacent territories. I contend that it is also a
> performative discourse that is sustained through iterative practices and can thus be
> contested and altered through such practices. That is to say, its norms of recognition are
> never secure. The lexicon of intelligibility is always being produced and, as such, can be
> revised.[3]

While locating cinema as a central term for this study's exploration of the continued frame of

unrecognizability surrounding issues of Palestinian dispossession and Palestinian belonging, this

project's critical cinema, media and visual culture studies frame is not limited to audio-visuality,

or to vision, as primary sites of interpretation and analysis. Likewise, the queer critical frame I

invoke is neither limited to a particular notion of gender or sexual definition, nor to gender and

sexuality as exclusive categories of analysis. I understand both cinema studies and queer studies

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[3] Rebecca Stein, *Itineraries in Conflict: Israelis, Palestinians, and the Political Lives of Tourism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2008), 2-3.

as transdisciplinary and cross-methodological fields of study attendant to what Stein refers to as "modes of perception," and at the intersection of this study's approach to cinema and queerness is a concern for "the complex interrelation of perception, recognition, and subjectivity, an interrelation that itself is subject to constant if irregular, change." For my purposes, national intelligibility is not simply shorthand for the frames suggested by "national ways of seeing" or "national imaginaries," since it encompasses the ways in which particular subjects, modes of sociality and forms of belonging are rendered thinkable and knowable within certain terms of the nation, and not simply the ways in which individuals imagine the nation and their place in relation to it. In other words, I am interested in how Jewish nationalism achieved intelligibility with the help of cinema, and to what extent and in what ways the ongoing establishment of Jewish national belonging has gone hand-in-hand with the projection of unintelligibility onto Palestinian nationalism and other forms of Palestinian belonging and community.

Cinema and queerness also have important historical links to a dominant Zionist discourse of national intelligibility. Indeed, cinema and Zionism are thought to have been born at nearly the same time. Israeli film scholar Raz Yosef notes that at the Third Zionist Congress in 1899, a Zionist from Warsaw named Noyfield called for the Zionist leadership to take advantage of audio and visual technologies to improve Zionist propaganda.[4] This dual origin story continues to fascinate Israeli film scholars, as evidenced by the 2011 *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*, in which editors Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg reiterate the story in contemporary Jewish-Zionist politically affirming terms: "the creation and dissemination of Zionism, the new ideology which in the late 1880s advocated the idea of the return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland in the Land of Israel, coincided with the evolution and consolidation of cinema

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[4] Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 21.

as a medium and art, both in Europe and in North America."[5] Furthermore, they credit film with

the ability to "convey the creative momentum of the new nation" and even "the inchoate Israeli

culture."[6] In the spirit of this stitching together of origin stories, one could easily add new

discourses of sexuality. At the 1898 Zionist Congress, one year prior to Noyfield's statement on

visual media, sexologist and Zionist leader Max Nordau insisted that Jewish national

homemaking required a New Muscle Jewry, implying that a reinvention of gender and sexual

norms, based on dominant contemporary European models, was necessary for the creation of a

Jewish state. Sexology, then, a new science of human sexuality, had profound influence on turn

of the century Palestine primarily through its influence on Zionism's racialized prototypes. This

ideal type of the New Muscle Jew was seen as a necessary step toward Jewry's perceived

entrance to civilization and modernity, confirmed through colonization and the establishment of

a nation. Just as Noyfield proclaimed the importance of the new visual technologies, Max

Nordau expounded on the need for a Muscle Jewry, a properly racialized and gendered national

subject on whose intelligibility the new images of nationalism could hinge. After providing a

somewhat "pre-cinematic" context for cinema and cinema studies' roles in this history, I will

return to the question of how and in what way queerness became key to this frame of reference

and an important critical framework for this project.

    An investigation of cinema's role in the history of a particular frame of reference

necessarily requires looking at the dominant fields of perception and knowledge that cinema was

produced through, and that it in turn contributed to and transformed in important ways.

Certainly, before the first wave of Zionist settlers began to arrive in Palestine in the late

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[5] Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg, *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion* (Austin: The University of Texas Press, 2011), xi.
[6] Talmon and Peleg, *Israeli Cinema,* xi.

nineteenth century, particular notions of the landscape, history and people of Palestine were already well established. Early colonial discourse, for example, shaped the image of Palestine before the "new" cinematic technologies and before the first waves of Jewish immigrants. As Christison points out early on in her study, "the frame of reference within which Palestinian-Israeli issues have been perceived in the late twentieth century began forming…not when Israel was created in 1948 or even when Zionism became a force in Palestine fifty years earlier but in the mid-nineteenth century."[7] Whether Holy Land, Promised Land, or Orient, former Palestine was caught up in a discursive imaginary owing largely to print technology and the subsequent widespread distribution of the Bible. The phrase "Holy Land" in particular, Yehoshua Ben-Arieh argues, "spread steadily during the nineteenth century," and gradually formed the idea of Palestine as a particular place; it "served to demarcate a particular geographical entity, despite the fact that in many periods of history the land had no distinctive political status."[8] As various editions of the Bible proliferated, so did curiosity about the palpable facts and historical nuances of the Bible's textual geography.

But Palestine took on a more markedly scientific, historical, ethnographic, and geographical substance in the popular imaginary via Holy Land travelers who would produce a vast archive of maps, atlases and illustrated books, including editions of the Bible "containing drawings of not only events and landmarks but also landscapes, maps, ethnic types and architectural designs."[9] Fully invested in an ancient biblical understanding of Palestine, these diverse images were also products of more recent European nation-state ideology and imperialist

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[7] Christison, Perceptions of Palestine, 17.
[8] Yehoshua Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images of the Holy Land" in *The Land That Became Israel: Studies in Historical Geography*, ed. Ruth Kark (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990), 38.
[9] Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images," 39.

discursive formation. Palestine's landscape became, as Kathleen Stewart Howe describes in

relation to British Royal Engineer Photographic Surveys from the 1860s, "an intensely surveyed

and mapped geography of religious possession and imperial strategy."[10] Under the auspices of

the Palestine Exploration Fund, established in 1865, military officials worked alongside

clergyman to produce cartographical and topographical surveys for the British Empire.[11] Ben-

Arieh suggests how Holy Land discourse, particularly through literature, came to render the

present state of Palestine in colonial terms and expressed

> an outlook that stressed the state of the land at the time of the writing: backward,
> undeveloped, devastated, desolate and sparsely populated—all this in contrast to its
> glorious past, and to the West-European countries from whence came most of those who
> visited Palestine and wrote about it.[12]

Palestine emerged as a discursive terrain largely through what Edward Said describes as

the productive force of Orientalism, a system of classification and discursive production

embedded in a Western understanding of East/West differences.

Lester I. Vogel further characterizes the particular frames of reference for American

tourists, missionaries, diplomats, biblical scholars and settler-colonialists who visited Palestine,

showing that American Holy Land discourse was similarly "past-oriented, even to the extent that

conjectures about the land's future were made within the framework of the land's past."[13] Bound

in particular ways to the Biblical textual geography, new travel writing and mapping of Palestine

was produced largely through notions of a sacred history. These existent, widespread, and

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[10] Kathleen Stewart Howe, "Mapping a Sacred Geography: Photographic Surveys by the Royal Engineers in the Holy Land, 1864-68," in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination*, eds. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 228.
[11] Etan Bar-Yosef, *The Holy Land in English Culture 1799-1917: Palestine and the Question of Orientalism*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press/Oxford University Press, 2005), 3.
[12] Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images," 45.
[13] Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 220.

popular discourses suggest that certain norms of recognition and particular fields of perception were in place before the explosion of photographic and cinematic visual imagery of Palestine around the turn of the century, placing limits on how these images would be produced and perceived.

The popularity of travel books in North America in the nineteenth century reveals something of how the idea of Palestine took shape through popular secular and religious imaginaries. For example, missionary William M. Thomson's *The Land and the Book: or, Biblical Illustrations Drawn from the Manners and Customs, the Scenes and Scenery, of the Holy Land* (1880-1886) sold more than two hundred thousand copies, Mark Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* sold sixty-seven thousand copies in 1870 only a year after it was published, and US Southern Methodist James Wideman's *Earthly Footsteps of the Man in Galilee* (1893) sold over a million copies.[14] As Christison explains, Twain's derogatory and Orientalist descriptions of the land and people of Palestine still serve as fodder for American Zionists and for Israeli government officials and others who wish to provide a historical basis for the claim that "Palestine was a desolate land until settled and cultivated by Jewish pioneers."[15] The claim that Palestine was deserted and uncultivated obscures how this notion of "emptiness" was meticulously produced and reiterated, justifying what seemed a historical teleology for the Jewish "pioneers" who "discovered" it that way. Travel writing like Twain's that included stops variously in "Palestine," "the Holy Land," and "the Levant" proliferated in the popular genre of the travel book, as well as in periodicals and on lecture circuits in the U.S. Those popular "non-fiction" texts and guidebooks in turn lent a certain credibility and matter-of-factness to

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[14] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine,* 17. Also see Burke O. Long, *Imagining the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2003), 39, 53.
[15] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 16.

descriptions of the Middle East found in fictional stories with Middle Eastern settings, the wildly popular *A Thousand and One Arabian Nights*, for example.[16] Ben Arieh even suggests "almost all educated Europeans read the tales [of Arabian Nights] in their youth and remembered them vividly," noting that European travelers carried those images with them to the Holy Land.

Problems emerged, as Vogel describes, when tourists, biblical scholars, pilgrims, and others had to reconcile the then-familiar biblical descriptions of "a land of milk and honey" with what they perceived in Palestine with their own eyes. In Vogel's analysis, preconceived notions of the Holy Land, firmly couched in biblical and past-oriented terms, created an expectation for Americans that, upon seeing Palestine in person for the first time, was not easily reconciled with that real landscape and those real inhabitants: "The American image of the Holy Land was remote; it was romantic; it was easily put at odds with the physical reality that actually presented itself."[17]

Twain himself acknowledged and satirized the extent to which the experience of Holy Land travelers was shaped by travelogues and landscape tradition in painting. Unimpressed by Gennesaret and Mount Hermon, Twain declares:

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[16] See also Moshe Davis' take on the image/reality split and on mark Twain's Holy Land descriptions in *America and the Holy Land: With Eyes Toward Zion IV* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995), 20-21.

[17] Vogel 220. For more on the American image of the Holy Land see John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1996), Moshe Davis, *America and the Holy Land: With Eyes Toward Zion IV* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995), Burke O. Long, *Imaging the Holy Land: Maps, Models, and Fantasy Travels* (Bloomington, Indiana: Indiana University Press, 2002) and Hilton Obenzinger, *American Palestine: Melville, Twain, and the Holy Land Mania* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999.

I am sure, from the tenor of books I have read, that many who have visited this land in years gone by, were Presbyterians, and came seeking evidences in support of their particular creed …Honest as these men's intentions may have been, they were full of partialities and prejudices, they entered the country *with their verdicts already prepared*.[18]

Twain's observations extended to his fellow travelers as well, who he determined were influenced by books such as Thomson's *The Land and the Book*: "our pilgrims have brought *their* verdicts with them…I can almost tell, in set phrase, what they will say when they see Tabor, Nazareth, Jericho, and Jerusalem—*because I have the books they will 'smooch' their ideas from*."[19] Whether his fellow travelers experienced it or not, in *The Innocents Abroad* Twain repeatedly emphasizes disappointment in the landscape of Palestine, particularly in relation to its popular representations.

This contradictory vision—what Vogel compares to a stereoscopic image that fails to produce a coherent and three-dimensional image—prompted many to seek out explanations for the land's current state, rather than to question the legitimacy of the dominant narratives.[20] This seemingly inexplicable contradiction between the Holy Land described in the Bible and the region as described by travel writers, what Vogel refers to as the "image/reality" dichotomy, was not unique to literary texts. As Ben-Arieh describes, the theory that the land had suffered a terrible neglect began to take hold, compelling geographers, archaeologists and other specialists to pursue scientific research and to provide rationalizations for the apparent incongruities. The

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[18] Mark Twain, *The Innocents Abroad; or, The New Pilgrim's Progress* (Hartford, Connecticut: American Publishing Co., 1869; reprint, New York: New American Library, 1966), 243. Emphasis added.

[19] Twain, The Innocents Abroad, 243.

[20] For an examination of actual stereoscopic imagery of the Holy Land, see Burke O. Long, "Parlor Tours of the Holy Land: Fantasy and Ideology in Stereographic Photos of Palestine," in *"A Land Flowing With Milk and Honey": Visions of Israel from Biblical to Modern Times* eds. Leonard J. Greenspoon and Ronald A Simkins (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 2001), 201-218.

widely accepted story of what had happened to Palestine in the last 2,000 years went, Ben-Arieh

suggests, like this:

> the drastically different social conditions and agricultural methods that had become
> prevalent provided sufficient insight into the land's decline. The forests that had once
> covered the hillsides had been destroyed, as had the terraces that formerly preserved the
> soil and allowed for its cultivation. This neglect was compounded by fundamental
> changes in population and culture. Advocates of this latter theory (which has been
> accepted up to the present) concluded that there was no contradiction between the biblical
> rendition of the land's natural geographical conditions, and the reality that had been
> disclosed in the nineteenth century.[21]

Of course, biblical reasons for the land "laid waste" could be found as well.[22] Generating a vast

Holy Land discourse, literary, scientific, religious, and touristic experts reiterated the notion of

Palestine as a barren, unfertile, and illegitimately populated landscape until it took on a self-

evident character. In the 1905 travelogue *The Cruise of the Eight Hundred To and Through*

Palestine: Glimpses of the Bible Lands, which purports to chronicle the journey of eight hundred

North American Sunday-school workers to Jerusalem, locations are described in close proximity

to Biblical descriptions, and while the landscape described occasionally contradicts the Biblical

excerpt, the explanation seems always to lie in the landscape. Take this swiftly explained

example: "Here Jesus sat in a boat and taught the people on the shore. We were shown in the

distance the ruins of Capernaum, where once crowds thronged and synagogues, castles, temples

and theaters stood, but now there are mud huts and reedy swamps. A curse indeed rests upon the

land."[23] The author at one point confirms the commonplace image/reality split cited by Vogel

and associates it, like Twain, with a sense of disappointment: "When I returned from my tour I

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[21] Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images," 39.

[22] For just such a biblical explanation, W.J.T. Mitchell cites Ezekiel 6:6 in "Holy Landscape:
Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000).

[23] Louis Klopsch, Proprietor, The Christian Herald, *The Cruise of the Eight Hundred To and
Through Palestine: Glimpses of the Bible Lands* (New York City: The Christian Herald Press,
1905), 113.

was continually asked if I was disappointed…and I came to the conclusion that it was a rule for people coming back to say that they were disappointed—'disillusioned' is the word."[24]

Recognizing the negative, perhaps *disillusioning*, effects of these seemingly intransigent frames of reference, Vogel proposes that our contemporary task is to strip away the "myths" produced by this discursive terrain, which continues to be reiterated and reasserted, in order to properly see the reality that has been covered over. According to Vogel's model, only a careful process of uncovering, revealing, recovering, and replacing, would finally constitute a just approach to a now dispossessed and nearly destroyed Arab Palestinian society. Though recovering neglected histories and images of Palestine to challenge official stories is a necessary and ongoing project that should not be dismissed, Vogel's conceptualization of an image/reality binary ultimately fails to fully explain how "the reality that had been disclosed in the nineteenth century" was itself shaped, reworked, and transformed to fit the "image" and "myth" of Holy Land, promised Jewish homeland, and the future "Jewish and democratic" nation-state.[25] I want to suggest that a history and a landscape so heavily shaped by images and myths (and are there histories and landscapes that are not?) necessitates a more complex understanding of how ways of seeing always shape real conditions, and how there is no longer, if there ever was, a way to distinguish image from reality in Historic or contemporary Occupied Palestine.

Furthermore, it is not that nearly 2,000 years of Arab history in Palestine is entirely absent from the popular visual and discursive archive of the nineteenth century. Rather, that Arab and Bedouin presence was subject to (which is to say constructed by) a vast Orientalist discourse, a proliferation of texts and illustrations that, in the case of Palestine, largely depicted

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[24] Klopsch, *The Cruise,* 135.
[25] "Jewish and democratic" refers to the contemporary way Israel is frequently referred to in European and North American foreign policy and mainstream media.

the inhabitants as quaint historical and anachronistic remnants—as backward, uncivilized and

untrustworthy figures, Twain's "abject beggars by nature, instinct, and education" and "vermin-

tortured vagabonds"—figures who lacked a legitimate place in the region's history or landscape

and had little worthwhile to say for themselves.[26] Though the infamous phrase associated with

Zionism of "a land without a people for a people without a land" did not appear until somewhat

later, Christison emphasizes that

> the notion that there were no Arab inhabitants in the Holy Land or that they were alien
> interlopers became a part of the popular imagination in the West, at least among the
> informed public and the religiously aware, well before the first Zionist settlers ever
> conceived of migrating to Palestine in the 1880s.[27]

Of course, in the U.S., the image of a barren land awaiting redemption and conquest

would reflect a familiar structure of erasure in popular imagination around the "discovery" of the

Americas and Native American populations.[28]

In various and often contradictory ways, the twentieth-century creation of a Jewish

national homeland discourse went hand-in-hand with the projection of illegitimacy and

unrecognizability onto non-Jewish inhabitants in the region. After the establishment of Israel

and the almost complete destruction and displacement of Palestinian society in 1948, cinema—

its technologies, its visual and spatial logics, its narratives and histories—continued to play an

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[26] Twain, *Innocents Abroad*, 234.

[27] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 22.

[28] Furthermore, the idea of the Promised Land had already been mapped onto North American conquest in other ways; Moshe Davis notes how "such concepts as Zion and Jerusalem became synoptic metaphors for the New World" and "at least fifteen places in the United States are called Zion in almost as many states," Ben-Arieh cites English painter John MacGregor who painted his Bedouin "captors as American Indians" and Claude Renier Condor who likened Muslim natives of the area of Palestine to "American Indians and the Australian Aborigines, and he added that, like those two savage groups, the native in Palestine should also be wiped out to make room for a more progressive and superior race." Moshe Davis, *America and the Holy Land: With Eyes Toward Zion IV* (Westport, Connecticut: Praeger, 1995), 7; and Ben-Arieh, "Perceptions and Images," 20.

important role in this de-legitimizing function. Yet, due to certain conventions dominant in several decades of Israeli film studies, this point is difficult to make from within a project easily recognized as located within film studies and focused on cinema in the region.

Amy Kronish and Costel Safirman's concluding comment on Israeli cinema and its themes in *Israeli Film: A Reference Guide* provides a quick gloss of a widely accepted and repeated narrative about Israeli cinema:

> In its short history, Israeli cinema has moved from crude films, almost primitive in style, some propagandistic and some melodramatic, to a more developed and sophisticated cinematic style that includes depth of character and complexity of plot. Thematically, Israeli cinema has moved from an emphasis on the community to an understanding of the individual, from the sacrifices of the pioneering period to the materialism and personal egotism of the contemporary period, from stereotypic heroic images to more complex and problematic images of the Israeli in a continually changing society, from one-dimensional portrayals of Arab characters to a reaching out for an understanding of one's Arab neighbors.[29]

Avowedly Zionist Israeli film scholar Ilan Avisar similarly sums up this progress narrative when he wrote in 2005 that "after completing a full circle from initial nationalistic propaganda to apocalyptic visions of national disintegration, Israeli cinema appears now at a fresh beginning."[30] Ella Shohat, in her influential *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation,* refers to an "overall historical evolution of the films themselves, moving from a somewhat idealizing nation-building 'mythic' cinema into a more diversified 'normal' kind of industry," which she attributes in part to the desire of Israeli film critics and filmmakers to situate themselves in relation to "countries with long-developed infrastructures, such as France or the United States," rather than to Third World film discourse. While Shohat's work provides an intensively critical account of East/West dynamics in Israeli cinema, it still relies on the notion of

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[29] Amy Kronish and Costel Safirman, *Israeli Film: A Reference Guide* (Westport, CT: Praeger, 2003), 21.
[30] Ilan Avisar, "The National and the Popular in Israeli Cinema," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.1 (2005), 143.

a rather coherent "broad movement of Israeli cinema" that begins with early Zionist films, the

"first Jewish film pioneer," and "through to the emergence of a truly national cinema after the

inauguration of the Jewish state in 1948."[31] While Shohat is more critical regarding the racialized

politics of Israeli cinema's historical arc, editors Talmon and Peleg of the more recent collection

with the title *Israeli Cinema* provide their own version of what a 'normal' kind of industry

should look like for Israeli cinema:

> the growing centrifugal pressures of subcultures, which no longer conform to a dominant
> Hebrew unifying culture core, and the ever-growing quest for new leadership and
> 'normalcy' that will finally end the pressures of war, terror, occupation, victimization,
> and other moral issues that keep haunting Israeli society and culture.[32]

The desire for normalcy, they argue, "was shattered in the early 2000s by the second Palestinian

uprising and wave of terror known as the Al-Aqsa Intifada," thus situating Palestinian resistance

to occupation, and even Palestinian society more broadly, as an interruption and "haunting"

presence stalling Israeli society and Israeli cinema's narrative arc toward "normalcy."[33]

Besides this often-repeated broad narrative arc describing Israeli cinema's progress,

several other dominant understandings of cinema's place in relationship to culture and politics

have often contributed to making and re-making Palestinian dispossession as "unrecognizable."

Pre-occupations in Palestinian and Israeli cinema studies adhere in many ways to national

frames, even while acknowledging transnational and diasporic influences, investments, and

exchanges, and how they privilege cinematic practice that backgrounds political conflict. And

yet, even the introduction of transnational film studies frameworks, which was meant to allow

for new approaches and new geographic areas and exchanges, has tended to only reinforce the

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[31] Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 1.
[32] Talmon and Peleg, *Israeli Cinema,* xvii
[33] Talmon and Peleg, *Israeli Cinema,* xvii.

progress narrative of Israeli cinema, which dominates that field, and, as I will show, which is adopted to evaluate Palestinian film history in at least one large scale study of Palestinian cinema by Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi.

The introduction of the term "transnational" has marked an attempt to expand film studies' focus into areas and relations that a national frame neglected, such as exilic and transnational formations like Palestinian cinema. In the first issue of the journal *Transnational Cinemas*, Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim identify three main approaches to theorizing "the question of "transnational" in film studies: the first employs a national/transnational binary whereby the transnational complicates the understanding of "cinema's relationship to the cultural and economic formations that are rarely contained within national boundaries;" the second focuses on a regional approach that locates film cultures in "shared cultural heritage and/or geo-political boundary"; and the third approach encompasses film practice defined as diasporic, exilic and postcolonial.[34] Higbee and Lim critique each of these approaches for how the term "transnational cinema" tends to be taken as a given: "the danger here is that the national simply becomes displaced or negated in such analysis, as if it ceases to exist, when in fact the national continues to exert the force of its presence even within transnational film-making practices."[35] The criticisms of transnational as a critical frame explicated by Higbee and Lim share some resemblance to Michael Walsh's critique of the popularity of 'national imaginary' as a critical method over a decade earlier, in 1996. While noting critical differences between the kinds of work produced in relation to the nation, nation-state, and/or national imaginary, Walsh remarks that "analysis of the nation has appealed to writers who are concerned with issues of race, class,

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[34] Will Higbee and Song Hwee Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema: Towards a Critical Transnationalism in Film Studies," *Transnational* 1:1 (2010): 9.
[35] Higbee and Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema," 10.

gender and multiculturalism, as a way of bringing to bear many of the ideas of contemporary

film theory while endeavoring to be historically engaged in a more immediate and fine-grained

way."[36] While Walsh identifies the national turn with film studies' role as a kind of political

intervention in tandem with cultural studies, postcolonial theory, feminist theory, and critical

race studies, Higbee and Lim suggest that cinema is the motivating factor in transnational

studies, whereby questions of production, exhibition, distribution, and audience take a more

prominent, if taken for granted, role in prompting particular kinds of critiques over others. While

Walsh's critique marked a desire to further understand how ideology and identification

motivated certain kinds of national cinema critiques, whereby cinema took a kind of second

priority, cinema appears more dominant as the primary term in Higbee and Lim's critique. In the

case of studies of Palestinian and Israeli cinema, or films and moving images typically subsumed

under either of those categories, it is unclear whether the terms national and transnational have

circulated to produce the effects explored by Higbee and Lim. Focusing too much on the nation

obscures the exchanges and overlaps between Israeli and Palestinian productions, and those

productions that do not neatly fit into either, while focusing too much on transnational modes of

funding and production tend to obscure the role of the nation-state, and the power of the concept

of the nation. The transnational, furthermore, as Higbee and Lim point out, "risks celebrating the

supranational flow or transnational exchange of peoples, images and cultures at the expense of

the specific cultural, historical or ideological context in which these exchanges take place."[37]

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[36] Michael Walsh, "National Cinema, National Imaginary," *Film History* 8:1 (1996): 6. Also see Andrew Higson, "The Limiting Imagination of National Cinema," in *Transnational Cinema: The Film Reader*, eds. Elizabeth Ezra and Terry Rowden (London and New York: Routledge, 2006): 15-25.
[37] Higbee and Lim, "Concepts of Transnational Cinema," 11-12.

I prioritize an immanent critique rather than a new totalizing approach, especially since the nation-state status of Israel seems to continue to provide a kind of common sense foundation for organizing the study of "Israeli cinema." While intersections of cinema, Palestine, and Israel appear in other disciplinary formations, such as in regional media studies, literary studies, and popular culture studies, research done under the signs of "Israeli cinema studies" and/or "Palestinian cinema studies" are likely the most easily legible. This is particularly true given that "Israeli cinema" and "Palestinian cinema" circulate, as mutually exclusive though not without a certain amount of variation (for example, "Israeli cinema" is sometimes used in tandem with the category "Jewish cinema," and "Palestinian cinema" occasionally appears as "Arab cinema"), in mainstream popular discourse and cultural venues in film festivals and award cycles, marking exhibition formats like DVD, and as categories for organizing films in databases, including the online Internet Movie Database.

There are several conventions in national film studies that appear most clearly related to the establishment of national intelligibility and legitimacy through cinema; namely, claims pertaining to *cinematic origins* ("first" films, filmmakers, studios, and theaters), to the existence of *historical cinematic archives* (or lack thereof), and to *national cinematic representational space* (whereby, for example, Israeli or Palestinian films from a certain time period would be read as a reflection of the state of Israeli or Palestinian nationalism at the time). These conventions not only show how national cinema studies frameworks are especially unfitting in the context of occupation and statelessness, but also how cinema is looked to as a way to legitimize certain narratives of national belonging and deny others. The near lack of a body of "Palestinian films" from the early twentieth century can serve as proof of the lack of pre-Zionist

or pre-British Mandate Palestinian livelihood, whereas the embrace of early Zionist films as part of "Israeli cinema" lends credibility to dominant Zionist records of history.

Studies of Palestinian and Israeli cinema tend to make often-contradictory historical claims about first films and the implications of a larger narrative of aesthetic and formal progress. In *Dreams of a Nation,* Hamid Dabashi writes "the first Palestinian film to have ever been made was a short documentary by Ibrahim Hasan Serhan, which recorded the visit of King Abd al-Aziz bin Abd al-Rahman bin Faysal al-Saud to Palestine" and the film is dated 1935 in the filmography. Amy Kronish, in her study of Israeli cinema, cites several "firsts"—the first films shot in Palestine by the Lumiére brothers, the first film depicting "Jewish views of the Holy Land" by a British Jew, the "first local Zionist filmmaker, Ya'ackov Ben Dov (1882-1968)," the first sound feature film (*This is the Land* in 1935), and so on. In a section titled "The first films of Palestine" in the reference text *World Cinema: Israel,* Kronish notes that all of the early films shot in then Palestine were produced by foreigners (and mainly to appeal to Jewish or Christian audiences), and that "an *indigenous* film industry, however, had yet to begin."[38] A subtle, violent erasure is instantiated in Kronish's use of the term "indigenous" as she proceeds to chronicle a history of Jewish-Israeli cinema that begins with "pioneer" Zionist films made primarily by European Jews with Jewish Agency funding. A conflicting vision of early and "indigenous" films in Palestine is offered in Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi's *Palestinian Cinema*, which acknowledges the early film practices of Arab-Palestinians as well as European and Arab Jewish immigrants.[39] A short film by Ibrahim Hassan Sirhan documenting Prince Saud's journey to Jerusalem and Jaffa in 1935 "constitutes the starting point of Palestinian

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[38] Amy W. Kronish, *World Cinema: Israel* (Madison: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1996), 5. Emphasis added.
[39] Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory (*Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008).

cinema," while the period from 1935-1948 only yields textual evidence (newspaper reports, production company documents) on Palestinian cinema, including Sirhan's Studio Palestine and the Arab Film Company. Between 1948 and 1967, Gertz and Khleifi report, "almost no Palestinian films were produced."[40] These periods reflect "the various struggle of the national Palestinian struggle," reiterating the national frame for their study, though not intending to set out "clear-cut boundaries."[41]

The turn of the century Lumiére and Edison Holy Land films generate quite different interpretations in these competing film histories. While Tryster's *Israel Before Israel: Silent Cinema in the Holy Land* marks the importance of those films in terms of the early interest in Holy Land imagery by Jewish and non-Jewish filmmakers and audiences, in the 1970s the Palestinian film scholar Sufyan Ramahi saw these same films as evidence of pre-Zionist indigenous Arabic cultural livelihood in Palestine. Furthermore, while Gertz and Khleifi construct a counter-narrative of "first" films by Arab Palestinian filmmakers, if only as a reparative historical strategy, Ramahi emphasizes the lack of a definitive filmic archive and explains why there are indeed fewer Palestinian films than Zionist films. Cited and translated in Guy Hennebelle's "The National Question in Palestinian Cinema: How to Get Down to Business," Ramahi argues that it is not that Palestinians were uninterested in the cinematic medium, nor does the lack of a film archive simply suggest that Arab Palestinians were not invested in Palestine as a national home, but rather

> in that period they were living under occupation, first by the Turks, then by the British, and they did not have the resources to invest in cinematic production. The potential of film for this population had not yet become appreciated in a deeper sense; nonetheless,

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[40] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 11.
[41] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 11.

during the 1930's, Palestinian theaters seem to have sprung up in reaction to the propaganda and the atmosphere of rivalry created by the Zionists.[42]

In other words, Ramahi points out that cinema was simply not at that time a priority for Palestinians, even while Zionists were producing a large body of films that generated funding for increasing Jewish settlement. Nevertheless, the survival of a relatively large number of cinematic documentations of early Jewish national work in Palestine serves in some contexts as visible, hence irrefutable, proof of the illegitimacy of Palestinian claims to the land.

In this way, beyond its inability to explain the relation between reality and image, the approach suggested by Vogel's image/reality dichotomy also unwittingly follows the logic of those who cynically ask for evidentiary—usually indexical and visual—proof of Palestinian dispossession and former Palestinian livelihood, disregarding the ways in which those images, even when presented, often do little to counter what has long been understood and taken for granted. For Vogel, presenting counter-images of real Palestinian dispossession ought to unmask false narratives of the founding of the Israeli state. Frequently, though, even the invitation to present such images is meant only to point to the *absence* of a historical record or the impossibility for a coherent, linear, and recognized counter-narrative. Take, for example, the commentary in a Chicago *Jewish Star* editorial after the opening of a prominent US Palestinian film festival:

> In her opening remarks at the first Festival, organizer Qato spoke about the "vibrant place" which once was Palestine –before the British Mandate, "with cities, and villages, hamlets and Bedouin tents teeming with life –where people of all religions and cultures lived together in relative peace." Assuming, for the sake of argument, that such a fantasy was once an historical reality, where does one find the filmic rendering of that "vibrant place", that idea which is called "Palestine"?[43]

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[42] Cited in Guy Hennebelle, "The National Question in Palestinian Cinema," *Cineaste* 10/1 (1979/80): 32.
[43] "Pushing Victimization: The Chicago Palestine Film Festival Fails Its Mission and Its Viewers," *Chicago Jewish Star* June 11, 2004.

Underscoring how cinema and national film festivals can become sites of contestation over historical truth and national legitimacy, particularly in relation to Israel/Palestine, the editorialist seeks to enhance his own credibility through reference to an absent Palestinian film archive. Christison offers further explanation as to why there exists so much "proof" of the Jewish settlement of Palestine and little documentation of Arab Palestinian life. Given that much of the archive that constitutes "Israel before Israel" (the title of Hillel Tryster's often-cited book-length study of pre-state Zionist filmmaking) was produced for propaganda purposes, it is no surprise for Christison that there was no equal effort to produce "Palestinian" films in that same period. Since the Arabs inhabiting Palestine "felt no need in this early period to give expression to their attachment to the land," and since they largely did not yet realize that the Jewish settlers aimed to create a state on that same land, there was little concentrated effort to produce a counter-cinema or a counter-propaganda effort to promote Arab nationalism in Palestine.[44] While the Palestinians "perceived no need to organize, propagandize, or publicize in order to advance their goal of continuing to live and form a nation in Palestine," the Zionists' organizational efforts had resulted, by the First Zionist Congress of 1897, in "117 local Zionist groups…throughout the world," 900 a year later, and a large body of Zionist writings that "defined a conscious and highly articulated sense of place, specifically because [they] longed for a land they did not possess."[45] Invocations of a readily available archive of "pre-state Israeli" films explicitly or implicitly tend to obscure the complex historical context of propaganda and settlement, whereby the Zionist project went to great lengths to establish the Jewish nationalism that was coming to dominate the Palestinian landscape. Wolfgang Ernst and Harun Farocki

[44] Christison, Perceptions of Palestine, 22. Also see Heiko Haumann, ed. *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality* (New York: Karger, 1997).
[45] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 22.

underscore the stakes of mobilizing image archives in this way, arguing "instead of just collecting passively and subsequently storing these holdings, archives actively define what is to be known, remembered, and *archivable* at all."[46]

Established conventions of "first films" and cinematic origins further organize and frame the stories the archives are compelled to tell about cinema and history. The 1962 compilation film *The True Story of Palestine,* for example, takes advantage of the Zionist propaganda film archive, specifically the Carmel Films archive of footage shot by Nathan Axlerod, and presents them as neutral transparent historical documents of the "true story" of pioneering Jews reclaiming an unpopulated wasteland and related themes. This existence of a body of so-called "pre-state" film footage, including many preserved and digitized through the free online Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive, projects a kind of inevitability onto Israeli statehood (and specifically Jewish-Israeli nationalism) and Palestinian dispossession, since those films mark the success of settler-colonial Zionism, the failure of alternative Zionist visions (since there were competing and conflicting Zionist agendas in the early part of the twentieth century) and the ongoing obstacles to alternative modes for Jewish and Arab sociality in Palestine. Israeli film scholarship that takes advantage of narrow notions of the purviews of national cinema studies tend to reach back to primarily Jewish-produced films as "pre-state" thematic, formal and institutional predecessors for "post-state" cinema. In a variety of ways, then, cinema, and the kind of history it seems capable of telling and producing, becomes a source of confirmation of the legitimate founding of a Jewish national homeland in Palestine, while denying legitimacy to Arab Palestinian claims to the land. A short article in an Israeli English-language arts and culture

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[46] Harun Farocki and Wolfgang Ernst, "Towards an Archive for Visual Concepts," ed. Thomas Elsaesser, *Harun Farocki: Working the Sight-lines* (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 261.

magazine explained the contemporary Israeli cinema industry in similar terms, as being

"connected to the national need for recognition. After all, the way [Israeli cinema is] perceived

by the world is almost an Israeli obsession. The State of Israel is in a constant condition of

insecurity."[47]

The construction and interpretation of national cinematic representational space in this

context has taken on a particular urgency at different times in relation to the ongoing struggle for

Palestinian political recognition. Palestinian film studies, though a smaller and more fragmented

body of work by comparison, has in part worked to correct a cinematic history of Palestine

dominated by Zionist narratives by carving out space for Palestinian cinema and its relation to

Palestinian nationalism and subjectivity. Edward Said, for example, suggests that each

Palestinian film composes a piece of an archive of a lost homeland, which collects the experience

of a now dispersed people across a diasporic geography. "One of the efforts of these films," he

argues, "is to recollect and gather together what has been lost since 1948, often in the most

simple terms of everyday life."[48] Like the lost homeland itself, the Palestinian film archive is in

many ways unrealized in conventional terms, since there is no institutionally housed repository

for collecting and preserving Palestinian film and video work. Hamid Dabashi, while remarking

that Palestinian cinema gained a kind of international popularity "at a moment when the nation

that is producing it is itself negated and denied," suggests the need for Palestinian cinema to find

"a way out of the *cul-de-sac* of representing the unrepresentable," in this way setting up

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[47] OS, "Bear Hug: Israel's Recent Cinematic Success Doesn't Tell the Entire Story," *18* 2
(2010): 49.
[48] Edward Said, preface to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Dabashi, Hamid,
(London, New York: Verso, 2006), 3.

representation as a reparative task. [49] While sometimes performing this kind of reparative

historical work, Palestinian cinema studies has also largely emphasized that Palestinian films

cannot be reduced to a rubric of representation or visibility. The "cul-de-sac" Dabashi describes,

in other words, may be worth dwelling on for its critical implications, particularly the potential to

challenge what might be considered the usual routes of national representability and

intelligibility in Israeli national cinema studies.

Critical inquiry into cinema's role in constructing certain notions of national legitimacy

has its own history within Israeli film scholarship, primarily through examining cinema in terms

of representational politics. As already noted, Shohat was "to offer a coherent theoretical and

critical account, within an East/West and Third World/First World perspective, of the

development of Israeli cinema" and thus situates her work in terms of anti-colonialism. [50]

Shohat's discussion of Israeli cinema productively exposes the limitations of categories that

typically seem to maintain a cinema's national status, in this case emphasizing the conditions of

visibility and representation for Israel's "others." She discusses not only how Orientalist

discourse produces Israel as Western and thus "rational, developed, superior, and human" while

constructing the East—the other—as "aberrant, underdeveloped, and inferior—in this case as it

affects Palestinians and Oriental Jews," but also draws attention to forms of non-representation,

in which the other is not simply cast in negative terms, but denied representational space. [51] Thus

she refers to the "structuring absence" of Oriental Jews in some films as well as the way that any

notion of Jewish liberation in Palestine depends on the prior destruction and continued negation

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[49] Hamid Dabashi, introduction to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema* ed. Hamid
Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006), 9 and 48.
[50] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 1.
[51] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 2.

of Palestinian national existence.[52] In other words, the seeming lack of a body of films that would challenge the dominant model of a Jewish-Israeli cinema as the only legitimate national cinema in the region tends to be registered in the films themselves through other kinds of absences and silences. Similarly, Nurith Gertz argues that early Zionist and Holocaust cinema attempts, and yet ultimately fails, to silence Israel's oppressed ethnic others by presenting a homogenous version of Israeli visual history.[53] She describes how these films typically include "a soundtrack that expresses an official ideology and a picture that contradicts it," thus necessitating a "subversive" reading that attends to the way that the 'visible' is repressed or rendered seemingly irrelevant or illegible.[54] Exploring not only what a film shows or says, but what it neglects to show, and, perhaps more to the point, what it renders seemingly unthinkable or irrelevant, has shaped certain forms of film interpretation and analysis in political terms.

However, Israeli cinema studies in particular privileges a certain narrative of cinematic progress, one in which politics enters primarily in terms of demonstrating the diversity and internal heterogeneity of Israeli society, and which dismisses as anachronistic and politically backwards cinema that explicitly supports Palestinian resistance, or which foregrounds the occupation. A similar narrative frames Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi's *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory*, adopting a model of cinematic progress from Israeli film studies and applying it to Palestinian film history and suggesting it as the preferred mandate for future Palestinian cinematic practice. In the introduction to *Palestinian Cinema,* Gertz and Khleifi chart what they characterize as Palestinian cinema's movement through periods of expressing national unity and opening up toward more heterogeneity and internal diversity. The

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[52] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 6.
[53] Nurith Gertz, "The Early Israeli Cinema as Silencer of Memory," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.1 (2005), 67-80.
[54] Gertz, "The Early Israeli Cinema," 69.

1960's and 70's documentaries produced in exile by Palestinian political organizations achieve

"for the first time, a cinematic representation of the Palestinian traumatic history" whereby

trauma "functioned as a unifying adhesive that enabled cinema to overcome controversies and

differences."[55] Focusing on the films of Michel Khleifi in particular, the Palestinian cinema of

1980's is described by Gertz and Khleifi as "portraying an image of a utopian past and at the

same time contradicting it," since the films "both construct the nation's unity and deconstruct

it."[56] Moving into and beyond the 1990s, marked by crises including the First Intifada, the Gulf

War, and the Second Intifada, they argue, "Palestinian cinema was recruited in favor of the

national struggle that called for unity."[57] Compelled by this call to unity and homogeneity, Gertz

and Khleifi describe, "as the threat to Palestinian existence and land increased, this cinema

reaffirmed anything that might reiterate and stabilize them."[58]

By the end of the introduction, which frames a more extensive look at specific Palestinian

films, directors, themes, and political contexts, it is clear that Khleifi and Gertz privilege and

prefer a "heterogeneous and open nature" that they describe Palestinian cinema as attempting to

achieve since the 1980s. They prefer this approach to the tendency of the films produced during

political struggles in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1990s, described in terms of their "tendency…to

freeze time and preserve a united, militant, homogeneous nationality."[59] The "New Palestinian

Cinema," most notably that of Elia Suleiman, they argue "has endeavored to establish a stable

and durable narrative," despite what they describe as its ambivalence and postmodern formal

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[55] Gertz, Nurith, and George Khleifi. *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory.*
Bloomington: Indiana U.P., 2008, 4.
[56] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 5.
[57] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 5.
[58] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 6.
[59] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 7.

techniques of non-linear narrative and unstable identity.[60] Although they cite Suleiman in an interview stating that he is "trying to create an image that transcends the ideological definition of what it means to be a Palestinian," they argue that his films are ultimately meant "to reunite the fractured space and to rejoin the divided identity."[61]

This is not necessarily a contradictory or simplified interpretation of Suleiman's films, and yet it seems that Gertz and Khleifi are more concerned about fitting several decades of Palestinian cinema into a particular narrative of a tension between unity and heterogeneity, one which implicitly declares that there is no place for a militant cinema. At the end of their study, they leave the reader with examples of recent Palestinian films that serve as "testimony for Palestinian cinema to cross over the barriers that fixated it within a historical and geographical trauma….within unity that can only tell a single story with two protagonists, us and them."[62] One of the films they mention is *Arna's Children*, directed by Juliano Mer-Khamis, who was murdered in 2011 outside the Jenin Theater by unconfirmed masked men. One year after his death, Middle East historian Mark LeVine referred to Mer-Khamis as a "cultural terrorist" whose artistic work and Jewish and Arab Palestinian identity "were radical challenges to both national identities, bringing violent reactions from those whose power and prerogatives he so directly challenged."[63] While Gertz and Khleifi praise Mer-Khamis for complicating an us/them framework and including Jewish Israelis in his films and his work with the theater, they would likely not want to associate this tendency with such a loaded term as "terrorist," particularly given that they privilege "a new tendency to focus on conflicts and tensions within Palestinian

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[60] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 197.
[61] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 172.
[62] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 199.
[63] Mark LeVine, "A year after Juliano Mer-Khamis' murder, it's time to board the freedom bus," *Al Jazeera,* April 4, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.aljazeera.com/indepth/opinion/2012/04/20124483146411159.html.

society, leaving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in the background."[64] This echoes sentiments

from Israeli Cinema studies closely in its call to leave the conflict behind and to focus on

heterogeneity, leaving little room in either field to explore whether some Palestinian and/or

Israeli filmmakers today take a more militant approach to cinema. Furthermore, I argue that this

particular notion of cinematic progress ignores other affinities between more recent films by

Palestinians and the earlier film practice of the 1960s and 1970s, especially what I characterize

as a repeated skepticism about cinema's role in either the narrow national unity or the

progressive heterogeneity that Gertz and Khleifi apply to Palestinian cinema in general.

Khleifi and Gertz' framework cannot fully explain why many Palestinian films explicitly

raise doubts about representability and recognition, which often emerge in the form of questions

about the role of film production as a cultural and political practice. In *Rainbow* (2004) by

Abdelsalam Shehadeh, a film about the filmmaker Raed Mattas, shown searching through the

rubble of his destroyed home after an Israeli strike that killed his wife and child. The film poses

the somewhat obvious question—"what can the cinema do in this situation?" to which the

filmmaker somberly responds that he had always dreamed of the camera, but "not filming

death." Shehadeh's film suggests, in other words, that Palestinian cinema often faces the strained

conditions of its existence, particularly in instances where filming seems both important, even

necessary, and at the same time irrelevant. Dabashi describes this trend in Palestinian

documentary as "traumatic realism," which is "not a plain act of certificating a past history."[65] In

Azza el Hassan's *Kings & Extras: Digging for a Palestinian Archive* (2004), the director stops a

woman on the street to ask her what she thinks of the filmmaker's quest to find the nearly-

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[64] Gertz and Khleifi, *Palestinian Cinema,* 197.
[65] Hamid Dabashi, introduction to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid
Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006)*,* 11.

mythical lost Palestinian Liberation Organization film archive, and the woman responds by asking "what good cinema can do" for Palestinians—calling into question the whole point of el Hassan's film. Films such as el Hassan's suggest a methodology comprised in part of a willingness to question their own legitimacy and purpose, as well as their tenuous and contingent relationships to Palestine. What does it mean to make films *for* people who might largely question the very practice of making films at all? What does it mean to make a film for an absent audience, an audience who neither could, nor would, be particularly interested in watching them? These questions point to a much broader question: why, how, and in what forms does cinema become a locus of nationalist struggle and protest in the global cinema context? Arguing that the preference for films that background struggle and conflict has made some Israeli and Palestinian film scholarship unable to allow for a consideration of a cinema critical of its own potential, I also want to suggest that scholars of Palestinian cinematic practice ought to remain open to understanding filmmaking that refuses to appease concerns about the appropriate political response to continued occupation.

2.2   "BUT WHY THE CINEMA?"

Echoing the concern raised by the woman on the street in *Kings and Extras*—"what can cinema do?" or, more directly, "why cinema?"—I have so far not addressed why cinema is an important frame through which to analyze or intervene in the ongoing reiteration of Palestinian dispossession as an "unrecognizable episode." In 2005 essay titled aptly enough "Is There a Palestinian Cinema?," Livia Alexander questioned whether or not there is a proper object of Palestinian film studies—"Palestinian dispersal and the absence of a nation-state to support film

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production raise an important question: Is it possible to speak of a 'Palestinian' cinema at all?"—while at the same time stating "cultural expressions of nationalism remain central to many Palestinian films."[66] This continued relevance of the nation in relation to an anti-colonialist Palestinian struggle is placed, for Alexander, in relation to "transnational and global influences."[67]

Yet, again, while Livia Alexander and others ask whether or not it even makes sense to talk about a Palestinian cinema, Israeli cinema studies has often unquestioningly relied on a settled nation-state status. Why is there not a similar question regarding "Israeli cinema"? particularly given the prominence of transnational cinema studies analytical frames, the potentially constraining effects of an Israeli Cinema Law that puts limits on what counts and gets funded as Israeli, the myriad forces affecting what counts as an Israeli film in Israel and abroad, the historical frame that construes all early Zionist filmmaking as "pre-state Israeli cinema," and the predominance of co-production funding models? While I think the questions—is there a Palestinian cinema? Is there an Israeli cinema?—are worth asking, I also believe Palestinian cinematic practice suggests that a more compelling question, one that wonders not *whether* a Palestinian cinema exists, but *why* Palestinians make cinema in the name of Palestine and *what* cinema can do in the context of the Palestinian struggles for sovereignty, social justice, and the right of return. Sobhi Al-Zobaidi's 2001 film *Looking Awry* explores these questions with self-referential irreverence. The film opens with images of Al-Zobaidi's wedding day in September 2000 in the West Bank city of Ramallah. This scene of dancing and celebration is interrupted by the voice of David, an American, who remarks that he "didn't know there were black

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[66] Livia Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema? The National and Transnational in Palestinian Film Production," in *Palestine/Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture,* ed. Rebecca Stein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 150.

[67] Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema?," 151.

Palestinians," referring to Al-Zobaidi's wife. Al-Zobaidi is then shown sitting at a cafe with David and an American woman who are apparently funding his new film (which we realize must be *this* film) focused on Jerusalem.

The Americans urge Al-Zobaidi to produce a positive film that will emphasize the inclusiveness of Jerusalem for all people, wondering specifically if Al-Zobaidi can find a vantage point from which to capture a mosque, synagogue, and church in the same film frame. When the film crew finally does get the shot, it is the menorah on top of Ariel Sharon's home that deceptively serves as the synagogue. The remainder of *Looking Awry* follows Al-Zobaidi as he attempts to make this film and runs into various problems shooting and editing, including the death of a crew member (revealed through martyr photos pasted on walls in the city). In one scene, the sights of Al-Zobaidi's camera, panning up the Holy Sepulchre Church, correspond to the sights an Israeli rifle shooting Palestinian children through a sudden jump cut. In a subsequent scene in the editing room, the editor justifies the inclusion of such a shot in the film, arguing for its documentary value. Al-Zobaidi calls the Americans, however, who want to see a film on Jerusalem without soldiers, without settlers, and without politics. Realizing the impossibility of *that* film, *Looking Awry* ends with Al-Zobaidi phoning the Americans to tell them that he doesn't wish to finish their film (saying it would be fiction, not the documentary they asked for) and that he wishes he could have made his "own film." This seems to reflect in some ways Al-Zobaidi's own difficulties funding *Looking Awry,* which was initially proposed under another title and later found funding through the Bethlehem 2000 Project.[68]

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[68] Sobhi Zobeidi, "Proposal #4: *About Jerusalem,"* from *Nawaya: A Project Proposal for Producing Four Palestinian Short Fiction Films Between 20-25 min,* dated January 1998-1999, Ramallah, Palestine: Cinema Production Center in cooperation with Tayf Film Productions. "Palestinian National Cinema" box at the Lew and Edie Wasserman Library collection, Jerusalem Cinematheque.

While *Looking Awry* then appears to be Al-Zobaidi's "own film," this final scene

distances even this project, pointing to the difficulty of making a film either of one's own, or for

a particular ideological purpose like the American-funded one. Al-Zobaidi's apparent choice not

to make either film—neither the one he wants, nor the American Jerusalem film—suggests that

he refuses or resists participation in a visual schema that makes easy distinctions between the

visible and invisible. Rather, Al-Zobaidi's film emphasizes the likely unintelligibility of certain

images even while he includes them in his film. The film never *simply reveals* anything, and

always takes a stance somewhat distant from or skeptical of the images in the film. Thus the

inclusion of the shot of Israeli soldiers shooting Palestinian children in *Looking Awry* is

questioned for inclusion in the film-within-the-film regarding its political purpose and its

capacity to successfully document the violence of the conflict.

In this way, it is not as if Al-Zobaidi's film asks us to look beyond ideological images in

order to reveal the truth, since his film does not purport to offer reality either. Even aesthetically

beautiful shots are called into question—at one point in the film Al-Zobaidi's wife directs the

filmmaker's attention to a group of religious women walking through an alley in the old city,

saying it would be a nice shot for his film. Al-Zobaidi, the character, disagrees (though of course

the shot appears in *Looking Awry*). Yet another shot comes under similar inspection through the

audio of a conversation between the filmmaker and his wife: a Jewish man and a Palestinian man

meet in an alley to discuss arranged sex and who will fuck whom. Al-Zobaidi chimes in, "the

Arab will fuck the Jew," though this scene is also determined inappropriate for the film that the

Americans want.

Looking Awry seems to answer the question of why Al-Zobaidi does not, and cannot,

simply make the film he might prefer to make about Israeli military control of Jerusalem

because, presumably, it cannot be seen. Thus Al-Zobaidi continually returns to questions about the limits of the seen and visible, and even the audible, as the film both enacts and refuses an attempt to revise frames of reference and fields of perception through which a Palestinian film might be seen. Not only do Palestinian films like Al-Zobaidi's often index the conflicted contexts of their production, distribution and exhibition, they also suggest that Palestinian identity and subjectivity is formed through what would appear to be insurmountable obstacles and constraints. This explains, I argue, the wry humor, self-reflexivity, and irreverence marking the style and affective register of much of Palestinian cinema.

Al-Zobaidi's film underscores that Palestinian cinema ought to be understood not only through reference to unrecognizability—to the ways Palestinian narratives have been constrained, censored, restricted and denied. Palestinian expression ought rather to be understood to become possible precisely through reference to inexpressibility, since, as Said suggests, the Palestinian story is precisely the denial of a Palestinian story, and consequently its "characteristic mode" is non-narrative prose marked by formal instabilities. In other words, the seeming inadmissibility of Palestinian narratives is deployed as a form of creative intervention, which cannot be fully explained as irony or subversive refusal. Palestinian expressions, as Said suggests, are composed of failed attempts that do not simply deny the structures that would determine them as failures, because to dismiss those forces would ignore the contradictions and paradoxes that structure Palestinian life in concretely material ways.

The cinema of Elia Suleiman, for example, lingers on these contradictions through seemingly disconnected, fragmented or inexplicably prolonged vignettes that suggest the repetition of failed attempts at Palestinian expression and intelligibility. In several of Elia Suleiman's films, the director plays himself as the main character, a Palestinian filmmaker who

does not or cannot speak, suggesting self-reflexively and somewhat paradoxically that the

Palestinian film does not simply give voice to Palestinian nationalism. In *Chronicle of a*

Disappearance (1996), for example, the director is asked to speak at a cultural event but each

time he approaches the microphone he is interrupted before he even speaks by sound system

feedback, ringing cellphones in the audience, and so on. The repetition of the theme of

voicelessness not only points to the widespread non-recognition of Palestinian narratives, but

also suggests that the Palestinian film does not and cannot simply give voice to the Palestinian

cause or the Palestinian filmmaker. And yet, the disconnected vignette-style present in

Suleiman's feature films suggest an importance to the proliferation of attempts at making

meaning or interrupting the everyday modes of sociality under occupation. Hamid Dabashi

describes Suleiman's style in a way that suggests it can be understood through a kind of queer

aesthetic: "It is defiantly sarcastic, creatively derisive, joyously flamboyant. It is mannered,

stylized, graceful....His is a frivolity with a tad of arrogance, a smidgen of condescension, a flair,

a pride, a pleasure in posing…"[69] The kind of repetition of failure in Suleiman's films is not

limited to a kind of Palestinian self-critique, however, since the failure may sometimes belong to

the viewer who cannot read the un-translated Arabic text that sometimes scrolls across the

screen, explaining some of the "derisive" qualities and "condescension" that Dabashi

characterizes. In a different way, Hamid Naficy interprets a Palestinian cinematic refusal to

communicate in relation to oppressive conditions of occupation:

> the injunction may be instituted by the state prohibiting its citizens from communicating
> with one another either internally or from exile. Exiles from repressive societies have
> learned to get around the censorship and surveillance of their native or host governments

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[69] Dabashi, Hamid, "In Praise of Frivolity: On the Cinema of Elia Suleiman," in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006), 143.

by developing private encryption procedures for communicating with each other and with their compatriots elsewhere.[70]

In other words, the perception of failed or restrained communication is also a familiar condition of life under occupation and diasporic life.

The question "but why the cinema?" suggests the importance of immanent critique in the intersection of cinema and politics, not to mention the particular necessity for Palestinian filmmakers to make reference to the conditions, like occupation and diaspora, through which Palestinian stories become recognizable or are contained somewhat outside realms of political possibility. The French-Palestinian character Suha in Hany Abu-Assad's 2005 film *Paradise Now* asks this very question, "but why the cinema?" at one point in that film as well. The debate around *Paradise Now*'s Oscar nomination for Best Foreign Language Film offers an opportunity consider the larger place of Palestinian cinema in relation to how cinema becomes enlisted by national and transnational discourses in various ways. Some US film reviews suggested the film dangerously held the potential to render Palestinian suicide attacks sympathetic or to humanize "terrorists," although the real threat was probably that that the film might cause some to question the emphasis on an invigorated "we are all Israelis now" discourse after 9/11.[71] Scholars like Ella Shohat and Robert Stam imply that the public designation of *Paradise Now* as a Palestinian film, which occurred when actor Will Smith announced the nomination for a film from "the Palestinian Territories," inaugurates or legitimizes Palestinian nationalism to some extent. For

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[70] Hamid Naficy, "Palestinian Exilic Cinema and Film Letters," in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006), 96.

[71] See, for instance, "Humanizing Terrorism," *The Jerusalem Post,* January 17, 2006, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/Editorials/Article.aspx?id=10443. For a critique of the controversy over "humanization" of "the terrorist" in *Paradise Now,* which she argues reveals the deep commitment to the de-humanization of the terrorist, see Nouri Gana, "*Paradise Now* and the Collapse of Spectacle," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa, and the Middle East* 28.1 (2008): 20-37.

Shohat and Stam, the scene of spectatorship in the theater screening a Palestinian film produces a kind of "provisional 'nation'" through "the cinema's institutional ritual of gathering a community—spectators who share a region, language, and culture—[which] homologizes, in a sense, the symbolic gathering of the nation."[72] Shohat and Stam imply that the multiple sights and sites of Palestinian nationhood in the film's narrative, locations, mise-en-scene, exhibition and distribution have the potential to constitute a sense of Palestinian national collectivity in terms that challenge what is widely understood as its illegitimacy (in its proximity to terrorism, *the* subject of the film for many viewers and critics) or unrecognizability (as it gets lost in the Zionist narrative of Israel and a Jewish homeland).

While *Paradise Now* retains its status as a Palestinian film made by a Palestinian filmmaker, it has rarely been screened in the Occupied Palestinian Territories or in Israel. The lack of a strong local audience for Palestinian cinema emerges as a topic of discussion between protagonist Said and Suha, a French-Palestinian woman who tries to convince Said to pursue non-violent resistance. While Suha tries to engage Said in seemingly flirtatious small talk, the violent reality of Israeli occupation inevitably spoils the moment:

> Suha: "Do you go to the movies?"
> Said: "No, there's no cinema in Nablus anyway."
> Suha: "I know. Have you ever been to a cinema before?"
> Said: "Yes, once. Ten years ago when we burned down the Rovoly Cinema."
> Suha: "You did that?"
> Said: "Not alone. There were lots of us."
> Suha: "Why? What did the cinema do to you?"
> Said: "Not the cinema. Israel. When Israel decided not to employ any workers from the West Bank we demonstrated. Then we ended up in the cinema and set it on fire."
> Suha: "But why the cinema?"

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[72] Ella Shohat and Robert Stam, "From the Imperial Family to the Transnational Imaginary: Media Spectatorship in the Age of Globalization," *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary,* eds. Rob Wilson and Wimal Dissanayake (Durham: Duke University Press, 1996), 155.

Said: "Why us?"[73]

Beyond serving as a somewhat straightforward commentary on the reality of the movie-going

context in Palestine, the conversation between Said and Suha also functions as meta-commentary

on *Paradise Now,* hinting that the film itself won't have a large Palestinian audience. Put

another way, this conversation seems intended for the spectator who, like Suha, takes movie

going somewhat for granted and associates film spectatorship primarily with leisure—hence its

ability to engender intimacy. Said's response acts as a kind of corrective, then, of the assumption

that cinema can be a space of escape or distraction from occupation.

Arguably, the film also makes reference to the early Palestinian cinema of resistance,

particularly in a scene where Said is filmed reading a last will and testament, which we

understand as a martyr video intended to circulate in the local area. In other words, within the

rather mainstream narrative style of *Paradise Now* appears reference to the possibility of a

cinematic practice more directly connected to armed resistance against occupation. But although

the film cites this militant use of video technology, *Paradise Now* does not employ a

revolutionary or verité style itself, and thus distinguishes its own style, and perhaps by extension

intent, from that of the gritty video testimonial of the militant martyr video. At the same time,

the film does include a jarring scene in which Said speaks directly to the camera, likely

surprising some viewers with his confident commitment to the plan to blow himself up. This

scene serves as a different kind of martyr video, one that breaks the narrative wall and is less

easily locatable within the stereotypical scene of the militant martyr video.

In addition to the meta-commentary on cinematic style and its relation to politics and

resistance, *Paradise Now*'s intervention into conversations about the struggle for Palestinian

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[73] *Paradise Now,* DVD, directed by Hany Abu-Assad (2005; USA: Warner Independent
Pictures). The dialogue is spoken in Arabic, included above are the English subtitles.

rights and the role of cinema appears through a kind of tension produced between the temptation and denial of a heterosexual romance. The romantic potential between Suha and Said is portrayed almost exclusively through its repeated interruption by the reality of the occupation. Palestinian life in the territories is depicted in the film largely through reference to the kind of stalled or broken temporality described by (Edward) Said, which diverts from (hetero)normative time and forecloses the possibility for a classical Hollywood-style heterosexual romance that the film seems unable to sustain. *Paradise Now* implies that normative romantic tropes are not as readily available for Palestinian stories. Yet, by continually holding those tropes at bay, *Paradise Now* undermines cinematic narrative expectation, leaving a seemingly inevitable heteronormative romance partial and purposefully, pointedly unfulfilled. It is not that the film forecloses heteronormative romance only to reaffirm heteronormativity as natural and ideal for a liberated Palestinian society, rather; I argue that the film invokes a kind of queer temporality, one which indexes a normative narrative timeline only to interrupt it, as a strategy for political intervention. Marking the contradiction of the situation of Palestinian cinema, the film invokes a radically different use of cinema—the martyr video—to mark its political and ethical imperative, yet within the frame of a film that is otherwise legible through the tropes of international art-house cinema.

Emphasizing the film's questioning of cinema's actual and potential role in the context of occupation, Said refuses to adequately respond to Suha's question about why he and others burned the theaters, denying the action had anything to do with cinema. She presses the issue: "But why the cinema?" Said responds "Why us?" again re-directing the conversation toward the issue of Palestinian oppression and away from a statement about cinema per se. Said seems uninterested in claiming any importance for cinema, either as a tool or casualty of resistance.

And yet, since this conversation takes place within a Palestinian film, it begs the question of what director Abu-Assad might be suggesting about his own cinematic practice in relation to the Palestinian struggle against occupation and dispossession. Is Abu-Assad acknowledging the potential irrelevance of his own film in relation to other forms of resistance to Israeli occupation and siege? Or, is he indexing the varied possibilities of a new context for a resistant Palestinian cinematic practice? The film at least raises the question of "why the cinema?" as an artistic or political form, and it remains an open question. Likewise, Al-Zobaidi's *Looking Awry* asks the viewer to consider not only why the filmmaker cannot make either the film he wants to make, nor the one the producers request, but also why it wouldn't be seen within a broader context of the unrecognizability of Palestinian narratives. Put another way, the possibility for a seemingly more authentic and self-apparent Palestinian film is foreclosed not only by the problems of co-production and foreign interests, but also because of the problem of representation per se—particularly the urgency yet impossibility of simply representing, as in documenting and exposing, the violence of occupation.

As Christison's study of U.S. foreign policy underscores, without knowledge of the historical context of the ways in which the frames of reference that make Palestinian dispossession and the Palestinian struggle unrecognizable have been shaped, evidence that contradicts the absence or illegitimacy of Arab inhabitance of Palestine, and contrary to the notion of Israeli democratic tolerance, seems doomed to remain to some extent unconvincing or, worse, unnoticed. This perspective also informs Al-Zobaidi's focus on cinematic practice during the Second Intifada and the contradictory logic of inclusion and exclusion the film forefronts. Likewise, Christison argues that the Arabs in Palestine were not simply underrepresented or excluded, but rather were included in the dominant historical narrative about Palestine as figures

out of place, few in number, non-nationalist, and so on. In light of this, my argument that the sense of inevitability attached to Jewish nationalism in Palestine was, and still is, achieved through knowledge structures that have rendered Palestinian claims to national self-definition and dispossession largely "unrecognizable," complicating the role cinema can play in a context that seems to lead only to representational traps.

2.3   CINEMA'S EXPANSE

By attempting to map some of the routes followed or implied by the disciplinary categories of Israeli and Palestinian film studies, I have so far adhered to "cinema" as a rather self-evident object of analysis, and have not yet explained what I mean by "cinema" in terms of my broader theoretical approach, nor in terms of "object," or, rather, what I'll be *following around* (to borrow an often-used phrase from Sara Ahmed) when I indicate "cinema" as a focus. I have already suggested the ways that transnational cinema studies has expanded frames for understanding cinema and challenging what seemed to be narrow and rigid national cinema models, and how it suggests conceptual and material expansions outside national borders. I argue however, that in the context of transnational studies of Israeli and Palestinian cinema, there are aspects of Palestinian media production that risk being overlooked since they do not make Palestinian cinema more recognizable as a field of study. Given that Palestinian cinema studies cohered as a separate field in English language academic spheres somewhat after Israeli cinema studies had established itself as a field with particular concerns, it has had to establish itself through clear acknowledgement of its own set of concerns, body of films, and notable filmmakers. The self-referential and immanently critical question of "why the cinema" appears

in so many Palestinian films, explicitly and implicitly, that it would seem remiss not to take this question seriously. Yet this question doesn't offer an easy consolidation of either the field of Palestinian cinema as a legitimate and valuable concern, nor does it make a claim for the further study of Palestinian film from within film studies' conventions.

Furthermore, while Hamid Dabashi's edited collection *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema* and Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi's *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory* marked out nation-production as a broad aim of Palestinian cinema production and offered a wealth of analysis from within that lens, it remains to be seen whether within the contemporary field of Palestinian cinematic and moving audio-visual media production the question of the nation is still pre-dominant. Are Palestinian filmmakers following Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions strategies in their production practices, for example? If so, they may not be working with particular notions of the "nation" in mind (since the official Boycott National Committee does not support any political party or border solution), and there may be other conceptions of modes of sociality and belonging behind the scenes as well as onscreen. These are not necessarily neglected through a national cinema frame, yet the contours of the question of the nation may have changed or taken on new forms in light of new strategies of Palestinian resistance and solidarity, in Occupied Palestine and in the diaspora. This dissertation explores some alternative routes for the study of cinema in the Palestinian context, which would allow for a further analysis of the question of the nation. First, though, I argue that the history of cinema in the region needs to be understood in relation to a broader visual culture.

"Cinema" in this context marks out not only a specific technology or set of media practices, but as a massive cultural apparatus—a matrix of audio-visual and textual forms and practices (including discourses of vision and visuality, and pre- and proto-cinematic

technologies) as well as a key component of dominant modes of perception. Because I believe that film studies has in many ways not fully accounted for cinema's role in shaping the idea and place of historic and Occupied Palestine, I am less interested in the various media forms (photography, radio, television, internet) key to understanding cinema's hybridity than I am in cinema's relation to visualizing logics and discourses. These frames of reference inform and shape cinema and include text, landscape, and architecture, as well as human rights discourses around visibility, recognition and belonging (including contemporary discourses of gay rights in and queer Palestinian activism. While I am not advocating a kind of total disciplinary flexibility, the stakes of which will become more apparent in the next section, I do want to question the established boundaries of what becomes easily recognizable in national and transnational Israeli and Palestinian film studies in order to explore cinema's less obvious investments (in state ideologies, for instance) and enlistments (in military occupation, for example), and ultimately its divestments, too (insofar as cinema can be a site of protest and refusal).

Following Beatriz Colomina in her book *Privacy and Publicity: Architecture as Mass Media,* which aimed to understand architecture as "a series of overlapping systems of representation," my approach to cinema does not mean abandoning the traditional film studies object, the film, similar to how Colomina's approach "does not mean abandoning the traditional architectural object, the building."[74] But where Colomina was trying to bring architecture into the realm of representation, alongside "drawings, photographs, writing, film, and advertisements," I follow "film" somewhat to the side of the realm of representation, at least momentarily, in order to understand its diverse roles as a technology related to other kinds of state and war technologies, to cite its influence and ongoing involvement in a variety of

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[74] Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 15.

discursive realms (political, artistic, militaristic, etc.), to explore its historic role as an archive preserving certain modes of belonging and denying others, and, moreover, to analyze it as a technique of power imbricated in a wider epistemological matrix, one that bears on recognition and intelligibility, and not just visuality and audio-visuality. For Colomina's project, the "site of architectural production" is no longer only the construction site but "the rather immaterial sites of architectural publications, exhibitions, journals" which seem "more ephemeral media than the building and yet in many ways are much more permanent: they secure a place for an architecture in history, a historical space designed not just by the historians and critics but also by the architects themselves who deployed these media."[75] Similarly, I suggest that sites of Palestinian cinematic production, broadly construed, are also immaterial and material sites of nation production, maintaining and reiterating the terms through which a sense of inevitability attached to certain forms of nationalism is continually secured. This take on cinema "displaced into" seemingly immaterial sites (like Zionist Jewish Agency publications and lecture notes about cinema, early twentieth century Jewish immigrant artist discourse on Palestine's perceptual problems, aerial photography and vertical imagery, and NGO human rights discourse) that are distinct from more recognizable cinematic sites (like the sites of film viewing, location-shooting, studio productions, and so on) is combined with an approach to locating more clearly material sites, yet still perhaps seemingly unlikely sites for a film studies project, including the Separation Barrier, Zionist settlement design, military training sites, and occupied Palestinian houses. This cultural studies approach to cinema studies is less common in Israeli and Palestinian film studies at this stage. This project locates cinema in larger processes of state-building that were to some extent documented and promoted through cinema and circulated as films about Jewish nation-

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[75] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 15.

building (for example), but which were also aided by cinematic technologies and by modes of perception, recognition and intelligibility that form aspects of the wider epistemological configuration significantly marked at the turn of the century by cinema as well as sexuality.

In other words, through this approach I inevitably find cinema in seemingly odd places—the seeing and non-seeing surveillance technologies used at the defacto borders of the Separation Barrier are one example of how film technology is incorporated into daily practices of occupation, but the site and sight of the Separation Barrier is tied to the cinema in less concrete ways as another technique of intelligibility and cinematic recognition. Given that the Jewish National Fund relied on film and photography in their early twentieth-century fundraising campaigns abroad, and that these films were seen by political leaders who could make transformative decisions regarding the fate of competing nationalisms and colonialisms in the region, the consequences of "cinematic recognition" cannot be reduced to representation or the circulation of meaning, since in that framework cinema too easily serves as a figuration of a conduit that transmits or reflects cultural meaning rather than shapes and produces it. As Natasa Durovicova argues in the preface to *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives,* "as a product of later-industrial modernity, all cinema is marked by, and itself reworks elements (labor, capital, body, raw materials, ideology) it shares with other commodity production, as well as elements which wary from period to period and place to place (mise-en-scene, performance, representational forms of meaning-making)."[76]

Cinema brings with it, and is embedded in, the historical and cultural formations of its technologies and practices—it indexes a wider epistemological configuration in multiple ways. In part, this means treating cinema like Derek Gregory treats photography in his study of tourist

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[76] Natasa Durovicova, preface to *World Cinemas, Transnational Perspectives,* eds. Natasa Durovicova and Kathleen Newman (New York: Routledge, 2010), xiv.

photography in Egypt during the latter part of the nineteenth century, "not simply as a medium but as a discourse," whereby photography "comprises agents and instruments, materials and images, conventions and practices, which are articulated through a complex actor-network that, like any such network, threads its way into many others; hence its imbrications in both the visual cultures of Orientalism and the cultures of modern tourism."[77] The medium/discourse split cited by Gregory is usefully complicated by the term "dispositive," a translation of the French 'dispositif' as used by Michel Foucault, for example, as described by Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada's *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era.* The dispositive, they explain, "includes everything that is laid out in front of the spectator, together with all the elements that allow the representation to be viewed and heard," and furthermore, "by approaching dispositives from the angle of discourses," as they do in the collection, they "are aiming to construct the conditions of possibility of the dispositives themselves as constituted knowledge."[78] Following Foucault, there is a distinction to be made between technologies like cinema and a broader cinematic discourse, since the "technologies of control (the key example being the *panopticon*) do not themselves define the category of *dispositive*, which is wider, i.e., the disciplinary regime or sexuality."[79] Neither cinema, in other words, nor "the whole collection of audio and visual 'machines in themselves constitute 'dispositives'," but belong to a larger frame that is itself put in relation to cinema. Thus, "the knowledge of dispositives is not only constructed within the heterogeneity of sources and data, but also in the confrontation between

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[77] Derek Gregory, "Emperors of the Gaze: Photographic Practices and Productions of Space in Egypt, 1839-1914" in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* eds. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (New York: I.B. Tauris & Co Ltd, 2003), 196.
[78] Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada, "Introduction to an Epistemology of Viewing and Listening Dispositives," in *Cinema Beyond Film: Media Epistemology in the Modern Era,* eds. Francois Albera and Maria Tortajada (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2010), 11.
[79] Albera and Tortajada, "Introduction to an Epistemology of Viewing and Listening Dispositives," 11.

the discursive and the concrete historical object, the social practice that it implies, and so on,"

and furthermore "is not determined by a type of enunciation or institution," which would include

cinema and media studies. Following this approach, I also engage the term "recognition" to

index how value and intelligibility get parsed out within an epistemological frame, and also to

complicate models and metaphors of inclusion/exclusion, visible/invisible, included/excluded

that appear somewhat common sense in dominant understandings and discourses of cinema

(where representation is often seen as positive and inclusive) and sexuality (where coming out is

equated with freedom and path to rights and recognition, a point explored in the next section).

Still, why cinema studies? There is no doubt that cinema has played and continues to play

an important role in Historic and Occupied Palestine. Marking my approach in terms of cinema's

expanse is intended to show that cinema is in many ways *more* powerful than has often been

accounted for, particularly given its interpenetration of other areas. Cinema, like what W.J.T.

Mitchell calls images or pictures, are often both more *and less* powerful than sometimes

assumed; in fact, "we as critics may want pictures to be stronger than they actually are in order to

give ourselves a sense of power in opposing, exposing, or praising them."[80] Since wider

epistemological configurations are not easily undermined, and yet undergo constant change, the

concept of national intelligibility serves to continually point to possibilities and limits, and to the

necessity for ongoing critique and investigation of new terms. While I hope to expand the diverse

contexts for interpreting cinema, particularly to take seriously the question "why the cinema?"

from Palestinian cinema, I also hope to continually pose cinema in the form of a question from

within cinema studies.

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[80] W.J.T. Mitchell, *What Do Pictures Want?: The Lives and Loves of Images* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 34.

2.4   WHAT'S QUEER ABOUT…?: QUEER RELATIONALITY AND CRITIQUE

In addition to questions compelled by cinema—"why cinema?" and "what is cinema?"—this project's focus on queerness and engagement with a queer studies critical frame implies the parallel inquiries "why queer?" and "what is queer?" For me, these questions are related to concerns raised by Judith Butler in the essay "Against Proper Objects," which appeared in the feminist journal *differences* in 1994 and was addressed to feminist studies, gay and lesbian studies, and queer studies. Butler was responding in part to the terms through which a new book on lesbian and gay studies explained and grounded its project as distinct from feminist studies. Butler takes issue with what seemed to be a gesture to "include and supersede" feminism in gay and lesbian studies, through a repudiation and reduction of several decades of feminist theory and activism. In light of the many problems Butler detects in this move, she cautions: "I would insist that both feminist and queer studies need to move beyond and against those methodological demands which force separations in the interests of canonization and provisional institutional legitimation."[81] The stakes of how we define a field's legitimacy matter, in other words, and, for Butler,

> what is incisive and valuable in feminist work is precisely the kind of thinking that calls into question the settled grounds of analysis. And even the recourse to sexual difference within feminist theory is at its most productive when it is taken not as a ground, foundation, or methodology, but as a *question* posed but not resolved.[82]

In many ways, queer studies has broadly worked in the nearly two decades since Butler's essay to produce a persistent question about what "queer" means, or what "queer" is doing, and this has continually shaped the field's varied concerns.

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[81] Judith Butler, "Against Proper Objects," *differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 6.2-3 (1994): 21.
[82] Butler, "Against Proper Objects," 6.

In light of forces unleashed by the war on terror, including the "reactionary (identity) politics" aligning some gay and lesbian subjects with neo-liberalism, David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Muñoz in a 2005 special edition of *Social Text*, "What's Queer about Queer Studies Now?" sought to return the category of "queer" to its full sense of engaged critique, since they sensed it might be undergoing some disciplinary settling.[83] Since resisting categorization is part of its definitional character for many queer studies scholars, queer, they explain, can be understood as "a political metaphor without a fixed referent" always committed to a "continuing critique of its exclusionary operations."[84] In other words, queer indicates openness to the continued critique of its own critical methods—a "*question* posed but not resolved." Queer is often also the temporary name given to whatever is marked unthinkable, impossible, or incalculable in the always-shifting terms of recognition and value in dominant social organizations in a historical moment and particular socio-cultural context. Lee Edelman argues something similar in his call to take seriously an association of queerness with negativity, and particularly with the psychoanalytic concept of the death drive:

> By denying our identification with the negativity of this drive, and hence our disidentification from the promise of futurity, those of us inhabiting the place of the queer may be able to cast off that queerness and enter the properly political sphere, but only by shifting the figural burden of queerness to someone else. The *structural position* of queerness, after all, and the need to fill it remain.[85]

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[83] David Eng, Judith Halberstam, and Jose Esteban Muñoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" *Social Text 84-85*. 23, 3-4 (2005), 3.

[84] Eng, Halberstam, and Muñoz, "What's Queer About Queer Studies Now?" 3.

[85] Lee Edelman, *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive,* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), 27. This was also picked up on in a recent *GLQ* special issue on "Queer Value" through reference to Theodor Adorno's negative dialectic, "a technique that distinguishes itself from the Hegelian dialectic in its fundamentally aporetic quality: a negative dialectic does not posit a comprehensive account of the social world but points up the conceptual barriers to understanding the material conditions of that world" and "does not posit an alternative to the contradictions that score capitalism." See Jordana Rosenberg and Amy Villarejo, "Queerness, Norms, Utopia," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.1 (2012), 4.

Expanding critiques of homonationalism, a term originating in Jasbir Puar's *Terrorist Assemblages* that provided new currency and increased attention to racialization in Lisa Duggan's term "homonormatvity," argue for the centrality of this "shifting [of] the figural burden of queerness" in increased state attention to certain forms of gay and lesbian recognition as a way to distract from and further pursue military aims and geo-political dominance. In light of this, does "queer" still have the potential to create forms of belonging and modes of sociality that challenge the state, as well as hetero- and homo-normativity, and that are transformational and not just bids for more inclusion or equality (aims readily associated with neo-liberal multiculturalism and capitalism)?

The question of belonging forms another aspect of concerns about proper objects and "inhabiting the place of the queer" considered in terms of disciplinary inhabitance. Who and what can inhabit, or find a home, in queer studies? Should queer continue to expand? In the *Transgender Studies Reader,* Jay Prosser takes issue, for example, with Butler's apparent desire to maintain queer critique as one that resists domestication and assimilation. Prosser disputes

> what is not a concern is whether queer *should* even attempt to expand; expansion, inclusion, incorporation are automatically invested with value. One wonders to what extent this queer inclusiveness of transgender and transsexuality is an inclusiveness *for* queer rather than for the trans subject."[86]

Jordana Rosengberg and Amy Villarejo echo this concern over queer's conceptual expansiveness regarding intersections of queer studies and Marxist critique, particularly on the issue of totality and its frequent conflation with universalism, cautioning that "queer studies might find itself surprisingly in tune with the disciplinary trespass endemic to totalizing thought in its best, most

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[86] Jay Prosser, "Judith Butler: Queer Feminism, Transgender, and the Transubstantiation of Sex," in *Transgender Studies Reader* eds. Susan Stryker and Stephen Whittle (New York: Routledge, 2006), 279.

capacious versions."[87] For Prosser, this concern about "queer inclusiveness" returns us to questions about disciplinary homes and the possibilities for strategic alliances:

> Domestication appears to represent the assigning of subjects and methodologies to specific categorical homes, the notion that there is an institutional place to which they belong…To resist queer's incorporation of trans identities and trans studies is not to refuse the value of institutional alliances and coalitions (in the form of shared conferences, journals, courses, and so on). But an alliance, unlike a corporation, suggests a provisional or strategic union between parties whose different interests ought not to be—indeed, cannot totally be—merged, sublimated for cohering—or queering—the whole.[88]

Yet Nael Bhanji has critiqued Prosser's own politics of home in his approach to transition narratives cited in Prosser's *Second Skins,* which deploys migrant metaphors to stress the importance of belonging for livable identities based in part on "tacit discourses of citizenship."[89] Bhanji compels us to question the goal of belonging altogether, through the disorienting presence of "the racialized body or Oriental" who "jeopardizes the fictive unity of belonging precisely because of its disorienting presence."[90] In other words, Bhanji questions whether the aim of inclusiveness is necessarily a positive or progressive one, given that the terms through which belonging is articulated often serve to mark out new spaces of unbelonging. This insight is important not only for my later discussion of solidarity and alliance in Chapter 4, but also for considering here how disciplinary belonging itself serves as a narrative of "fictive unity."

"Fictive unity" is an apt description of the neo-liberal multicultural and humanist discourses undergirding the narratives that often attend Israeli cinema and invest in the disciplinary tropes noted above (origins, archives, and representation). Israeli film studies, as it

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[87] Jordana Rosengberg and Amy Villarejo "Queerness, Norms Utopia," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18.1 (2011): 9.

[88] Prosser, "Judith Butler," 279.

[89] Nael Bhanji, "TRANS/SCRIPTIONS: Homing Desires, (Trans)sexual Citizenship and Racialized Bodies," in *Transgender Migrations: The Bodies, Borders, and Politics of Transition* ed. Trystan T. Cotton (New York: Routledge, 2012), 164.

[90] Bhanji, "TRANS/SCRIPTIONS," 170.

coheres in it dominant form in journals, anthologies, and at conferences, increasingly denies continued exchanges between war, the Israeli state, and cinema, through reference to narratives of progress that have moved past these questions. The popular narrative of Israeli cinema's progress charts a march from a propagandistic or useful cinema to a more mature and complex one, marked by a shift in focus formally and conceptually from the collective to the individual, from Orientalism to neo-liberal multiculturalism (marked by a focus on Arab Jews, ultra-Orthodox communities, the LGBT community, etc.), and from what is seen as patriotism (in the war films of the 1970s, for example) to a nationalism with an anti-nationalist alibi (hence an Israeli film might be promoted in Israel as refreshingly European or universalizing, having "moved beyond" purely national concerns).

Questions about proper disciplinary objects and proper disciplinary inhabitance bear, then, on how certain kinds of work and concerns become recognizable and on what terms. The concern raised by Bhanji about belonging in trans narratives is furthered through David Eng's notion of "the forgetting of race," whereby "ever since the Enlightenment race has always appeared as disappearing," which can occur through other seemingly inclusive processes of addition and reparation.[91] Progress narratives can maintain a certain degree of flexibility, it seems, as long as the dominant narratives remain intact and any real transformation is held at bay. In this way, the dominant Zionist narratives may have been unsettled by Israeli revisionist or "New" historians like Tom Segev, Ilan Pappé, and Benny Morris who revealed largely concealed violence at the heart of the state's founding, for example, and yet the dominant notion of a contemporary liberal and tolerant democratic state remains today intact seemingly regardless of the acknowledgment of its founding. Racism is often approached in contemporary Israeli

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[91] David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

political discourse through reference to a multicultural society (in spite of its imperative to maintain its Jewish majority) that simply needs to find ways to incorporate and assimilate racial minorities (who can easily be marked as unable to assimilate if they are non-citizen migrant workers, Palestinians, un-patriotic, etc.). For David Eng, the "racialization of intimacy marks the collective ways by which race becomes occluded within the private domain of private family and kinship today," and in which "racialized subjects and objects are reinscribed into a discourse of colorblindness," which has ultimately become an aspect of notions of progress within the liberal humanist tradition, including "queer liberalism."[92] Indeed, the Israeli state's taking up of a gay rights liberal progress discourse a decade ago, through Foreign Ministry projects aligned with Brand Israel, has prompted queer Palestinian activism and solidarity activism to mobilize at times around the question "what's gay (or queer) about the occupation?," an issue taken up in more detail in Chapter 3, and which, for example, gives new contexts for understanding the relation between sexuality and nationalism.

The notion of progress here seems to rely on the assumption that Jewish-Israeli society has moved from a predominant homophobia, exemplified by early Zionist patriarchal nationalist discourse and symbols, to ever-increasing tolerance. Only recently have critics begun suggesting that Zionism does not necessitate homophobia, but not many have posed the question of to what extent it ever did. Perhaps (and perhaps because of its highly racialized and ethnocentric formation) the security, unity, consolidation and maintenance of a sense of Jewish national belonging in Palestine relied less on binary gender and sexuality than it did on securing and reconstituting forms of national intelligibility that would continually render Palestinian dispossession and claims to self-determination unrecognizable to much of the world. In light of

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[92] Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship*, 10.

Edelman's positing of the "structural burden of queerness," it is tempting to conceptualize Palestine in terms of the queer negativity it becomes associated with through the homonational discourses marking Israel as gay-friendly. Palestinian society is largely marked as homophobic through this discourse, and queer Palestinians are construed only in terms of victimization. To suggest that Palestinian society is largely queered, in negative terms, through racialized homonationalist discourse is by no means to suggest that gender and sexual minorities in Israeli society are either not similarly queered (particularly if they are non-white/Ashkenazi), nor is it to analogize that Jewish sexual and gender minorities are "like Palestinians" in their subject positions, and it is also not to deny the grievances of gender and sexual minorities within Palestinian society. Rather, I am suggesting that Israeli nationalism emerged in part *through* the racialized categories of non-normative gender and sexuality emerging primarily from turn of the century medical discourse, and that homophobia cannot fully account for varied meanings and roles of queerness in this context.

In a similar vein, the editors of the book *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* suggest that in a variety of ways the Jewish question was always already a queer question. Zionist transformation of Jewishness cannot be reduced to a notion that Jews were perceived as "homosexual," although new conceptions and categories of sexuality and gender as producing types of persons played key roles in the discourse on Jewish degeneration and Zionist transformation at the time. This racialized scientific and medical discourse was formed through negative associations with whatever was seen to constitute Jewish sociality from European anti-Semitic perspectives—religious culture, the forms of habitation necessitated by ghetto, shtetl and other forms of oppressed Jewish life and modes of sociality, and, seemingly contradictory to this, a supposed suspiciously easy adaptation to cosmopolitan life (according to sexologist Max

Nordau). To suggest that all of these various, contingent and contradictory elements are what produced Jews as "queer" at the time is to recognize that a distinction between "normative" and "queer" does not rely on definitions of sexuality and gender alone, whereas within dominant liberal discourse on identity, rights, and recognition, the terms "gay" and "homosexual," and less often "queer," frequently attend the "forgetting of race." In other words, gay progress in Israel is another way of forgetting race, since the intersectional roots of what rendered Jews queer is elided in the narrative of historical progress from a homophobic to a tolerant nation, one which can be understood at its core as a racist state.

While the Jewish question, by all official accounts, seems largely solved through the establishment of the state of Israel, the "Palestinian question" appears to still be an open one that bears not only on Israeli society, but on international law, US foreign policy, on countries with large Palestinian refugee populations and, of course, it is a question that bears on a diverse and dispersed Palestinian society. The whole question of Questions, like the Jewish, Palestinian, and Queer Questions, is tied to this project's critical and intersection approach. Joseph Massad has argued compellingly and convincingly "the persistence of the *Palestinian* Question…*is* the persistence of the *Jewish* Question," since, in part, Zionism's "persistence in oppressing the Palestinians is precisely its persistence in suppressing the Jew within."[93] "Both questions," he concludes, "can only be resolved by the negation of anti-Semitism, which still plagues much of Europe and American and which mobilizes Zionism's own hatred of Jewish Jews *and* of the Palestinians."[94]

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[93] Joseph Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 178.
[94] Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, 178.

Massad's point here must be understood in relation to his critique of the Gay International, which similarly focuses on neo-Orientalism and racism. Yet, Massad has been criticized for the way that his critiques of gay imperialism leave little room to consider the varied approaches that queer Palestinian activists bring to intersecting struggles against occupation and discrimination. For example, the question of "queer Palestine" posed in terms of GLBT rights and recognitions at first appears as a question posed from without, from "the West," from Israel and from international and Israeli non-governmental organizations. In other words, to inquire about Palestine's queer population or Palestinian society's perceptions of queerness, appears to emerge from the West, from the "Western male white-dominated organizations (the International Lesbian and Gay Association—ILGA—and the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission—IGLHRC)" and their "missionary tasks, the discourse that produces them, and the organizations that represent them," which together Massad terms "the Gay International."[95] But queer and GLBTQ identified and/or allied Palestinian activists have been working for over a decade critiquing the discourse of these organizations to articulate their own perspectives on queerness, gender and sexual diversity, and what it means to be Palestinian. In an article on Arab queer activism, for instance, Haneen Maikey and Lynn Darwich critique the tendency from within and outside Arab queer and feminist activism to apply a West/anti-West binary to conceptual models and practices. They explain that the discourse they have adopted in their own queer activism "is the result of the summation of ten years of different grassroots experiences built on critiquing and rejecting power structures and dominance on the basis of ethnicity,

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[95] Joseph Massad, *Desiring Arabs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007)*,* 161. See also Joseph Massad, "Re-Orienting Desire: The Gay International and the Arab World," *Public Culture* 14.2 (2002): 361-85.

sexuality, gender, class (feminist) and on analyzing the limitations of identity-based LGBT organizing with a passion for equality (queer)."[96]

Jason Ritchie's ethnography of the experiences of queer Palestinians elucidates in depth the problems with Massad's framework. Explaining how Massad "fails to appreciate the political and ideological effects of the Gay International in Western countries," since Massad neglects to point out that it is queer Israelis, Europeans and North Americans who are the Gay International's audience and not queer Palestinians, he also argues that Massad "vastly overstates its effects in the Arab World."[97] Ritchie asserts, "the assumption that the emergence of self-identified Arab queers is a straightforward result of the Gay International's (neo)colonial imposition of Western values is, at best, naïve."[98] While Massad's work in some ways only affirms the dominant frame of reference that would mark queer Palestinians as victims, either of Palestinian homophobia or the Gay International, queer Palestinian activists have continually offered critiques to the NGO human rights discourses, to Israeli state and mainstream GLBT discourse, and to aspects of Massad's theoretical frame. Massad argues, for example: "that it is the very discourse of the Gay International, which both produces homosexuals, as well as gays and lesbians, where they do not exist, and represses same-sex desires and practices that refuse to be assimilated into its sexual epistemology."[99] For Haneen Maikey, director of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, however, "queer" is not an English word

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[96] Haneen Maikey and Lynn Darwich, "From the Belly of Arab Queer Activism: Challenges and Opportunities," *Bekhsoos.com: A Feminist and Queer Arab Magazine,* October 12, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.bekhsoos.com/web/2011/10/from-the-belly-of-arab-queer-activism-challenges-and-opportunities/.
[97] Jason Todd Ritchie, "Queer Checkpoints: Sexuality, Survival, and the Paradoxes of Sovereignty in Israel-Palestine," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010), 179.
[98] Ritchie, "Queer Checkpoints,"180.
[99] Massad, *Desiring Arabs*, 163.

that is borrowed by or imposed onto Arab Palestinians who use it; rather it is an "English/Arabic term," which is "useful for the time being."[100] Maikey's provisional formulation acknowledges and responds to an ever-shifting ideological terrain shaping the conditions on the ground for queer Palestinians in Occupied Palestine and in the diaspora. Queer Palestinian organizing draws attention to Palestinian visions for the future with a difference, bringing productive complexity to intersections of queer and Palestine and challenging assumptions about the issues key to social change and fighting occupation. Ritchie explains that many queer Palestinians manage "not so much in calculated acts of resistance or complicity as in manifest acts of survival, to formulate modes of queerness that allow possibilities—e.g., religious sentiment, familial bonds, political commitments—foreclosed in Western and Israeli discourses of queer liberalism."[101] This approach is reflected in the ever-changing strategies of alQaws' political and cultural activism.

Given what I have briefly laid out as the expanded role of cinema in reproducing the frame of reference of "unrecognizability" in relation to Palestine, this project invokes queer as a critical methodology attuned to recognition, intelligibility, disciplinary power, and process, as well as limits and possibilities. Queerness is intertwined with cinema in this history through, for example, the ways in which the progress narrative of Israeli film discussed earlier is often told through reference to increasing tolerance and democratic freedom, a point made through reference to gay rights and representation. An increasing turn toward racial, sexual and gender minorities in Israeli cinema since the 1980s supposedly marks the opening up of social taboos and a shift toward internal diversity and politics, in opposition to what is frequently posited as an exhausting pressure to always reference Palestinians, nationalism, and occupation. When Ilan

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[100] Gil Z. Hochberg, Haneen Maikey, Rima, and Samira Saraya, "No Pride in Occupation: A Roundtable Discussion," *GLQ: A Journal in Lesbian and Gay Studies* 16:4 (2010): 610.
[101] Ritchie, "Queer Checkpoints," 182.

Avisar writes "after completing a full circle from initial nationalistic propaganda to apocalyptic visions of national disintegration, Israeli cinema appears now at a fresh beginning," one of his examples of the "fresh beginning" is high-grossing and award-winning gay Israeli filmmaker Eytan Fox, suggesting that Israeli cinema takes queerness as a promising location from which to articulate national ideology[102] Likewise, Amy Kronish and Costel Safirman's concluding comment on Israeli cinema and its themes in *Israeli Film: A Reference Guide* tells a similar story, locating queerness not as a challenge to the nation, but as a sign of its "maturity":

> as Israeli society is developing and maturing and is no longer obsessed solely with cosmic and political issues, the new emphasis on human portrayals of the 'now' generation should bring more portrayals of gay and lesbian issues to the screen.[103]

Presumably, "political issues" refers to the Arab-Israeli conflict, the Palestinians, occupation, settlements, and a number of other issues seemingly more overtly racialized and ethno-national. "Comic" issues no doubt refers to the *bourekas* films of the 1960s and 70s, largely characterized by Israeli cinema studies as melodramatic, escapist, and dominated by ethnic stereotypes, again suggesting that cinema that underscores racial tension (between Mizrahi and Ashkenazi Jews in the *bourekas,* for instance, or between Jews and Arab Palestinians) is deemed anachronistic, immature, and irrelevant.[104] Perhaps presuming "gay and lesbian issues" ensure racialized politics will be sidelined, Kronish and Safirman situate queerness in Israeli cinema's progress

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[102] Ilan Avisar, "The National and the Popular in Israeli Cinema," *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies* 24.1 (2005), 143.
[103] Kronish and Safirman, *Israeli Film,* 51.
[104] As an interesting counterpoint, Ella Shohat argues that the *bourekas* "escapism derives from the almost utopian desire to bridge the gaps of Israeli society and thus promote an image of ethnic/class equality, pluralistic tolerance, and solidarity," which it seems Kronish and Safirman overlook in their desire to leave such films behind because of their emphasis on social tension and conflict. Shohat cites filmmakers Nissam Dayan, Yehuda Ne'eman and others for their attacks on *bourekas* as variously "'commercial,' 'vulgar,' 'cheap,' 'dumb,' 'Eastern,' 'Levintine,' and even 'anti-cinema.'" See Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 114-115.

narrative as markedly apolitical and private theme, one which marks and mirrors Israeli society's

progress toward a pluralist, multicultural and truly democratic state.

Even more blatantly drawing on a notion of queer progress to bolster a narrative of Israeli

cinematic progress, Gilad Padva "reevaluates the journey of the Israeli Queer Cinema from its

'closeted' days of the 1970s and 1980s to the dramatic changes in the 1990s and the new

challenges of the 2000s" in an essay on "(r)evolutionary queer identifications of Israeli

filmmakers," invoking the assumption that queerness is necessarily subversive and

progressive.[105] Alongside what Padva remarks as the "tremendous progress" of Israeli New

Queer Cinema's march from "the closet days" to the contemporary moment, marked by a society

"more tolerant and liberal toward sexual minorities," is a comparative and vague parallel to

progress for "diverse subcultures both outside and inside the mainstream queer community (e.g.,

Orthodox gays and lesbians, transgender people, Asian and Arab GLBT people) that were often

secluded and mistreated."[106] In the introduction to the collection in which Padva's essay appears,

the editors affirm "the opening of Israeli culture to alternative, new, and diverse directions []

articulated through new approaches to gender and sexuality, which challenge by now obsolete

cinematic and cultural models."[107] Padva's argument underscores how a certain narrative of

queer progress is invoked in dominant narratives reiterated in Israeli cinema studies about

national and cinematic progress, drawing a neat arc from the historical origins of Zionism,

cinema and the new discourses of sexuality to an inclusive, diverse, multicultural, tolerant and

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[105] Gilad Padva, "Discursive Identities in the (R)evolution of the New Israeli Queer Cinema," in *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion,* eds. Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 314.
[106] Padva, "Discursive Identities in the (R)evolution of the New Israeli Queer Cinema," 320.
[107] Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg, introduction to *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion,* eds. Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), xvi.

democratic Israel, which is still allowed its specifically Jewish, and normatively Ashkenazi, ethnonational character.

Yet, also quite recently, film scholars Boaz Hagin and Raz Yosef, who have consistently been highly critical of Fox's films and their version of patriotic, masculinist, and white/Ashkenazi gay Israeli citizenship, argue that critiques of queer Israeli cinema have exaggerated the role of the Israeli state and the Israeli public's financial and ideological investment in the notion of Israel as progressive due to its stance on gay rights.[108] They argue that this kind of representation of gay characters and Israeli-Palestinian politics is largely a tactic to appease European and North American audiences, particularly since many of Fox's films are co-funded by European countries (in addition to the Israeli Film Fund). Hagin and Yosef argue that scholars ought to see queer Israeli cinema in all its complexity (with examples that critique the military or challenge the gay liberation narrative), shifting the frame only slightly to highlight university-funded films over the more explicitly state-funded ones. Universities with film programs such as Tel Aviv University and the public Sam Spiegel Film and Television School similarly receive state funding. More research is needed to explore to what extent university funding decisions for film school projects are influenced by the Cinema Law (subject to Knesset influence) and discriminatory laws such as the Loyalty Oath. Controversy did arise over the

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[108] See Hagin, Boaz. "Male Weeping as Performative: The Crying Mossad Assassin in *Walk on Water*." *Camera Obscura 68* 23.2 (2008): 103-139, and Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers UP, 2004), "Homoland: Interracial Sex and the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict in Israeli Cinema." *GLQ* 8.4 (2002): 553-579, "The National Closet: Gay Israel in *Yossi and Jagger*." *GLQ* 11.2 (2005): 283-300, "Phantasmatic Losses: National Traumas, Masculinity, and Primal Scenes in Israeli Cinema—*Walk on Water*." *Framework 49* 1 (2008): 93-105, and "Homonational Desires: Masculinity, Sexuality, and Trauma in the Cinema of Eytan Fox," in *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion,* eds. Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), 181-200.

Oscar-winning Israeli and Palestinian co-directed film *Ajami* (2009), for instance, when one of the directors, Palestinian Scandar Copti, protested that the film's designation as "Israeli" denied his Palestinian identity. This prompted some MK Michael Ben Ari to suggest changes be made to the Cinema Law to restrict funding to unpatriotic films. Ben Ari is quoted in an interview stating, "support for a film should not be granted unless the editors, producers, directors and actors sign a declaration of loyalty to the State of Israel, its symbols and its Jewish-democratic values."[109] Hagin and Yosef overlook the possibility of that kind of direct political influence when they claim that short student films with queer themes are "free to ignore or subvert the self-othering formula that is the sine qua non for further distribution in art houses and dedicated multi-plex screens."[110] Hagin and Yosef's essay itself was funded in part by an Israeli Science Foundation research grant, state-funding that further calls into question their critique that their need to "self-exoticize" according to norms and standards implied by North American journals and books in order to cater to a "Western" audience. They perhaps avoid a discussion of Israeli state funding to counter both increasing critiques of Israeli cinema's involvement in a use of gay rights to improve its image abroad as well as to avoid real discussion of the Academic and Cultural Boycott aspect of the broader call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions, a strategy to end Israeli occupation of the Palestinian Territories, to achieve a right of return for Palestinians in the diaspora, and to bring about justice for Palestinians in Israeli society. They joke, "isn't Judith Butler boycotting us?" to remark on their "uncomfortable position" in encountering non-Israeli scholars who presume they are "representing and defending the country and its films,"

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[109] "Ajami director: I don't represent Israel," *The Jerusalem Post*, March 7, 2010, accessed December 2, 2012,
http://www.jpost.com/ArtsAndCulture/Entertainment/Article.aspx?id=170393.
[110] Boaz Hagin and Raz Yosef, "Festival Exoticism: The Israeli Queer Film in a Global Context" *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 18:1 (2011): 169.

and yet they do not explain what the boycott entails, or what Butler's role is.[111] Butler has

supported the boycott, which is particularly focused on encouraging academics to decline offers

to present their work in Israel, in part because the occupation makes the participation of many

Palestinians in such events impossible. While Hagin and Yosef in some ways contradict the

progress narrative in Israeli cinema studies that privileges queer cinema as a marker of maturity,

they do so only to replace the transnationally co-produced and globally marketed gay Israeli

cinema of Fox (which follows a "festival film formula") with the institutionally-produced and

presumably more authentic (since not "self-exoticizing) queer films that "reject or subvert" the

"individualist gay liberation narrative."[112] In this way, while Hagin and Yosef's argument could

productively complicate and contradict the gay progress narrative within Israeli film studies by

detaching queer issues from national progress narratives, it at the same time leaves little room to

simultaneously critique the politics of film funding and the continued intersections between

Israeli cinema and occupation.

The complementary narratives of queer progress and cinematic progress are so

commonplace within the field frequently marked out as "Israeli Cinema Studies" that the

invocation of one progress narrative frequently implies the other, which further compels my own

desire to seek out disciplinary difference with regard to cinema, queerness, and national

belonging. In the next chapter, I explore early Jewish Agency Zionist films through alternative

routes, working against Israeli film studies' tendency to historicize early Zionist films as "pre-

state" Israeli cinema, which implies the state had already established a sense of inevitability. I

emphasize Zionist cinema's fragmentation through examination of its history of collaborating

with British Empire colonial and US Protestant Holy Land discourse, its role in funding

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[111] Hagin and Yosef, "Festival Exoticism," 162.
[112] Hagin and Yosef, "Festival Exoticism," 170.

settlement and state-building, Zionist institutional disagreements over its ability to serve as a historical record of Jewish national homemaking, and its role in promoting a particular visual regime, in part through the figuration of the Sabra (the masculine figure of the New Muscle Jew and his pioneering effort) as a nationalist symbol. I draw on queer critique attendant to intersectional analysis of race, gender and sexuality in order to avoid the progress narrative I explored above, which tends to detach gender and sexual diversity from racialization and other categories in order to posit progress. In this way, queerness for me signals a kind of critique that is more concerned about how value and recognition get parsed out in any discourse of belonging, which means I am skeptical of attempts to mark out progressive moments.

3.0   CHAPTER TWO: ZIONIST "PALESTINE FILMS" AND THE SETTLING

OF A JEWISH NATIONAL HOME

In a 1922 letter, "A Voice from Palestine," published in the *American Cinematographer* periodical, Cecil de Freitas describes his perceptions of Palestine during a trip taken the previous year for an unnamed film project:

> At the time of year I was in Palestine everything had about an inch of dust over it and the buildings are of dust color, so everything was very dull and dead looking. As for the possibility of good composition there is some, but you have to watch very closely or you will not see it for only here and there is a tree of a curved line that will take off the hard look which things have.[1]

Non-Zionist American cinematographer Freitas' commentary suggests a detached observer's perspective as he chronicles perceived perceptual and aesthetic problems through prevailing, commonplace Orientalist constructions of the Palestine landscape. Perhaps inspired by descriptions of Palestine from popular travel writers like Mark Twain, Freitas' impression as he arrived at the port of Jaffa of the indigenous Arab Palestinian population is that they speak a language "that sounds like it came from the depths of hell." Indicating that the account addresses fellow cinematographers and photographers, Freitas couches his more derogatory comments in the technical language of his trade. At the same time, Freitas locates the challenges posed by Palestine in the landscape itself, rather than in his own perspective or in the cinematic technology. A particular image of Palestine as a holy and beautiful landscape had been well

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[1] Cecil de Freitas, "A Voice From Palestine," *The American Cinematographer* January 1, 1922.

established, especially after wide circulation of illustrated Bibles, and so visual technologies such as cinema and photography produced images in a context of an existing field of visual expectations. New visualizing technologies entered an already fairly well established perceptual field, which, while not unchanging, did carry certain common sense terms of value. Consequently, the cinematographer suggests that "good composition" is an attribute of certain places, and not primarily a skill of the photographer who has to "watch very closely" for the apparently few opportunities for good pictures in Palestine. His report on the problems of properly visualizing Palestine in part underscores the construction and selection that any documentary footage undergoes, and yet it also suggests something of the cinematographer's preconceptions of Palestine and its population.

While cinematic and photographic technologies would change the perceptual field delimiting Palestine significantly, they emerged in relation to already existing ideas about Palestine as image, idea, and place. Cinematic interest in Palestine was not limited to Zionists in the US in the 1920s, though most American producers and investors considered longer-term commitments for film production in Palestine risky and better left to the Jewish Agencies. By the early twenties when his letter was written, Freitas and his readers were probably aware of both the pristine image of the Holy Land depicted in biblical descriptions, as well as the negative perceptions of the contemporary landscape and its inhabitants from writers like Twain. Furthermore, a certain "Holy Land visual literacy" was well established through photography (especially after developments in the printing industry allowed for the mass reproduction of Holy Land photography), early cinema, and a variety of other media including panorama painting,

landscape architecture.[2] Yet, perceiving the landscape as disordered, unorganized, and lifeless, which to him had both a "hard look" and was "very dull and dead" at the same time, the photographer perhaps unwittingly expresses something of his own disorientation and unfamiliarity with what he saw and attempted to render on film.

The disorientation indexed in Freitas' descriptions of the pitfalls of filming in Palestine emphasizes how dominant ways of seeing can produce contradiction, even while maintaining certain preconceived ideas about Palestine's current and potential aesthetic value. Disorientation becomes important in this chapter's analysis of the broader imbrications of cinema in shaping Palestine, as well as this project's queer critical framework, for how it calls attention to processes of visualization and valuation and how they work through, and not in spite of, contradiction. I explore a loose network of other discourses of disorientation focused around early Zionist Jewish Agency moving images (including films and magic lantern slides), Zionist discourses on visuality, the Bezalel Art School, and Sabra imagery and discourse, in order to look more closely at the processes of negotiation within early Zionism between shifting terms of identity, landscape, and visualization that together formed particular notions about Jewish belonging in Palestine. Moments of disorientation offer a unique site for critiquing the making and re-making of ways of seeing and norms of recognition, since it allows a glimpse of them at work, or in the process of being undone, emphasizing the many failures inherent in the construction of the dominant that remind us of alternatives, even if they seem unlivable, unthinkable, or impossible. In this way, I see these sites of disorientation as indexes of when other modes and visions might have still been, and might still be, possible.

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[2] John Davis, *The Landscape of Belief: Encountering the Holy Land in Nineteenth-Century American Art and Culture* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1996), 73-74.

3.1   "PALESTINE FILMS" AND CINEMATIC ZIONISM

The story of cinema's influence on Zionist propaganda has been a compelling and lasting one. Most remarkably, it has been frequently noted that the birth of cinema coincided with the expansion of Zionism and the spread of images of the Holy Land.[3] The World Zionist Organization was formed, followed by the First Zionist Congress in 1897, and as early as 1905, Lumiére and Edison sent film crews to shoot Holy Land films.[4] Earlier photographic travelogues of "the Orient" and Holy Land include those of Maxime du Camp and Felix Bonfils, as well as indigenous Arab Palestinian photographer Khalil Raad who kept a studio in Jerusalem from 1890-1948.[5] An 1899 article in the Zionist newspaper *Die Welt* (whose editor would later head the Propaganda Department in the JNF Head Office in Jerusalem) suggests that the near-simultaneous birth of Zionism and cinema is no coincidence; Avraham Neufeld proposed the use of visual propaganda and actively promoted its use by other Zionists.[6] Theodor Herzl himself took interest in Neufeld's proposals and encouraged production of a film on *Eretz Israel*.[7] Zionist campaigns in Europe and North America subsequently began to rely heavily on photography and cinematography—including transparencies projected through magic lanterns, filmstrips used in filmoscopes, and motion pictures shown through film projectors—to secure political and financial support for Zionist land acquisition and settlement establishment in Palestine.

[3] See, for example, Hillel Tryster, *Israel Before Israel: Silent Cinema in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Central Zionist Archives, 1995).
[4] Ella Shohat *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 125.
[5] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 279.
[6] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1947* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 71-72. Also see Raz Yosef, Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 21.
[7] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 72.

While not all early cinema in Palestine was explicitly produced with Zionist funding or involvement, it predominantly depicted Palestine from an Orientalist and Judeo-Christian perspective. Depictions of Palestine and its people as curious, exotic remnants of the past did not need to be posed in explicitly Zionist terms to sustain and consolidate the idea that the land of Palestine had a historical and biblical connection to the Jewish people—or at least that it was a land available for conquest and development. In the US, the support for Zionism by non-Jews was held in place primarily by "the notion which had been predominant among the Protestants in the Anglo-Saxon world since the 16th century that, in accordance with the correct interpretation of the Bible, the end of the Jewish Diaspora and the territorial concentration of the Jews in Palestine were a preparation for the return of Christ."[8] The correlation between the notions of New World and the Promised Land also secured this connection to Zionism; Monika Häfliger notes "Thomas Jefferson even suggested using the picture of Jews fleeing from Egypt as the official seal of the United States."[9] Still, much of the film production in Palestine at the turn of the century was conducted under the auspices of Zionist Jewish Agencies, such as the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemeth Leisrael*) and the Palestine Foundation Fund (*Keren Hayesod*), which built prolific film units as part of the larger apparatus of settlement, fortification, and propaganda.

Though pre-state Zionist films were produced in a context of already established ideas about Palestine, they also emerged in relation to, or even as a key component of, a re-invention of Jewishness. Zionist leaders saw a recuperation or Jewish identity as a necessary step toward normative Jewish nationalism and toward a "return" to, and redemption of, the former Jewish

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[8] Monika Häfliger "Zionism in the USA," in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality*, ed. Heiko Haumann (New York: Karger, 1997), 258.
[9] Häflinger, "Zionism in the USA," 258.

homeland and way of life. In Max Nordau's words, the task of the Zionists was enormous in this respect, requiring physical relocation and transformation of Jewish productivity:

> Never before has the effort been made to transplant, peacefully, in a short space of time, on another soil, several million people from various countries; never has it been attempted to transform millions of physically degenerate proletarians, without trade or profession, into agriculturalists and cattle breeders, to bring townbred hucksters and trades people, agents, and men of sedentary occupation again into contact with the plough and mother earth.[10]

Prominent Zionists argued that Jewry and Jewish tradition had been corrupted by exile, ghettoization, and oppression in Europe, and cinema became a key technology of reinventing Jewishness through Zionist lenses. Although early Zionist films, like British and American productions, can be understood in some respects as expressing through the cinema already familiar notions of the Holy Land, and thus making Palestine visible only in terms that would be recognizable, Zionist films also emphasized and contributed to a deliberate and extensively planned and executed transformation of landscape, identity, and historical narrative. Not attempting to conceal their propagandistic nature, many of the Jewish Agency films have a kind of insistent and repetitive pedagogical mode of address that cannot simply be explained by their use as propaganda and Zionist education. Rather, the overt ideological form and content of Jewish Agency films should be understood as part of an effort to shape the places and people they *at the same time* claimed to simply document or reveal. While clearly circulating for propaganda purposes to primarily Jewish audiences, the Zionist films were also shown, in part or whole, to non-Jewish and not-specifically-Zionist contexts, such as Protestants in the US, as moving image travelogues and documentations of Jewish work in Palestine.

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[10] Max Nordau and Gustav Gottheil, *Zionism and Anti-Semitism* (New York: Fox, Duffield and Company, 1905), 42.

While the propagandistic use of cinema by Zionists is well remembered in film historiography, it has largely been subsumed under a narrative of progress within national cinematic terms[11]. This progress narrative has largely been told within the frame of Israeli Cinema studies and archiving, which retains a kind of blurring between the acknowledgment of early Zionist cinema as propaganda and an invocation of the films as documentations of historical reality in, for example, the Steven Spielberg archive's "pre-state" film collection. It is rarely noted that since many of the "Palestine films" were composed of shots arranged from other productions, and would be edited and re-titled to suit different needs, films that included scenes of Palestine were frequently only referred to as "Palestine films," rather than by title, perhaps because of their fragmented nature and their similarity. For this reason, it is misleading for historical film scholarship on "pre-state" Zionist films (a term frequently used in studies of "Israeli Cinema") to focus too much on particular films as discrete and stable objects of study without reflecting on the unique contexts and varied forms of their production, distribution, and exhibition. The work of this chapter is meant to emphasize both how these films fit into larger discourses on visualization and their relation to transforming Jewish identity, the Palestinian

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[11] Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg describe how "the pioneering national Zionist enterprise mobilized the moving pictures to stir Jews in the Diaspora to join the efforts and construction and national revival in Palestine" and more clearly reveal their own interpretation of history when they describe that "this pre-state Zionist cinema both expressed and determined the fundamentals of the inchoate Israeli culture." Furthermore, they reveal a deep political bias when they imply that the only problems that remain for Israeli society and cinema relate to Palestinian "terror" and "other moral issues that keep haunting Israeli society and culture" in its "deep longing for a stable and untroubled existence." Ariel L. Feldestein, in the same book, claims the early Jewish Agency films were not even propaganda because they were "private, not institutional, projects" and therefore "filmmakers were not compelled to curb their artistic liberty," though this employs a definition of propaganda indecipherable to this writer, particularly given the Agencies own consistent classification of these films as propaganda. See Miri Talmon and Yaron Peleg, eds. *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2011), xi, xii, xvii, and 13-14.

landscape, and the technology of moving images, as well as how these films productively disrupt

certain stories within film historiography about the place of cinema in relation to Jewish and

Palestinian belonging in Palestine and Israel.

In a 1948 essay in *Penguin Film Review* aptly titled "Film Production Problems and

Activities in Palestine," the author E. Harris' comments suggest how non-Zionists like him might

not have fully appreciated the distinctly propagandistic intent, funding, and production of such

films when he describes

> ordinary travelogues, made by every conceivable camera in the hands of every type of person, appeared as far back as the middle twenties. The impact of Jewish nationalism, however, conferred some emotional quality, all being characterized by a feeling of exultation: 'This is the land. See the houses we have built, the groves we have planted, we who used to be the People of the Book.' There was the theme of the immigrant who reaches Palestine after great tribulations and discovers regeneration in tilling the soil.[12]

While Harris characterizes the "*primitive* spontaneity of these early works," he also

acknowledges, "the Jewish Agency and kindred bodies like the Jewish Foundation Fund and the

Jewish National Fund commissioned and financed these documentaries."[13] In other words, while

this reviewer gleaned the ideological message of the films in direct line with their Zionist

propaganda intent, he still attributes to them the matter-of-factness of something like home

movies. This seeming coincidence of interpretation aligning so closely with Zionist discourse

suggests that the ideological message of the films was already so familiar that the films

registered as innocent reflections of facts on the ground.

By 1948 when this article was published, the notion of Palestine as a Jewish national

homeland had firm governmental support (from the US and UK, for example) and already

carried a sense of inevitability in the popular imagination of much of the world. Still, during the

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[12] E. Harris, "Film Production Problems and Activities in Palestine," *Penguin Film Review* (1948), 39.
[13] Harris, "Film Production," 39. Emphasis added.

earlier period of increased investment in settlement and filmmaking in Palestine, Zionism was composed of a variety of both conflicting and complementary political views. At the 1899 Third Zionist Congress in Basel, where the Zionist Organization was formed and the foundation was laid for the creation of the Jewish National Fund, the "most important occurrence was the agreement on the 'Basle Program,' which remained valid until the formation of the state of Israel," a statement that carefully declared Zionism's general purpose toward establishing a "home for the Jewish people in Palestine secured under public law."[14] The wording of the statement reflected a compromise amongst various parties whose views about a "home" versus a "state" greatly differed. The statement attempted to "integrate different schools of thought within the movement equally: those in favour of colonization, the assimilated Jews, those who wanted to work in their own native lands, the national Jews and the cultural Zionists."[15]

However, even during this period of debate and division, some, like prominent political Zionist figure Ze'ev Jabotinsky who formed the Zionist Revisionist party in the twenties, were quite confident that the primary message of Zionism already taken hold. Still, whereas the cultural Zionists were more interested in Palestine as a spiritual home, Jabotinsky and the Revisionists were insistent that a Jewish "home" ought to be a "state," Jabotinsky even wanted to "enforce the concept of the state of Israel, uncompromisingly and with any and all means necessary, including armed conflict."[16] Reiterating the importance of "return" for most Zionist discourse, and indicating the apparently successful efforts to solidify this idea, already by 1921—only 22 years after the First Zionist Congress—Ze'ev (then Vladimir) Jabotinsky was

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[14] Heiko Haumann, "Judaism and Zionism," in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality,* ed. Heiko Haumann (New York: Karger, 1997), 13.
[15] Haumann, "Judaism and Zionism," 14.
[16] Haumann, "Judaism and Zionism," 15.

able to confidently remark that "the historic connection of Jewry with Palestine is recognized."[17]

Kathleen Christison argues that by 1920 "the frame of reference in which the Arabs of Palestine were viewed was already firmly set," including the popular notion among Jews and non-Jews in the U.S. that Palestine was a Jewish land.[18] Yet, while the notion that Jews *belong* in Palestine had been established, Zionists had different opinions and operational plans for creating the specific and concrete terms through which the idea of belonging would be solidified, protected, and maintained. Likewise, the film units of the various Jewish Agencies had varying and sometimes conflicting ideas about the themes, images, and forms (i.e. animated sequences, inter-titles, and documentary footage) that ought to be promoted through the films.

"Palestine films," though not typically the main feature of a Zionist event like the kind Jabotinsky lectured at, were seen as an important aspect of fundraising and public relations. As Hillel Tryster points out, Zionist events could charge higher admission when they coupled lectures and other presentations with film screenings or magic lantern slideshows. Typically, Tryster explains, collection boxes would circulate a before and after a screening, and a films' success could be measured by its ability to draw out increased amounts of capital from Jewish audiences.[19] Advertisements for films or magic lantern slideshows that would frequently accompany Zionist lecture circuits often include reference to a new "Palestine film" or magic lantern show that featured the Jewish colonies.

As the founder of the Palestine Foundation Fund, or *Keren Hayesod*, which was formed in 1920 and began producing films in 1924, Jabotinsky was an important Zionist leader who, like

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[17] Vladimir Jabotinsky, "The Tasks Confronting the Zionists," *The Jewish Criterion* 55.26 (1921): 4-5.
[18] Christison, *Perceptions of Palestine*, 33.
[19] See Hillel Tryster, *Israel Before Israel: Silent Cinema in the Holy Land* (Jerusalem: Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Central Zionist Archives, 1995).

Herzl before his death, was keenly aware of how cinema could be mobilized in projecting the desired image of Jewish work in Palestine, in raising funds and awareness, and thus also in forming particular ideas about Jewish national belonging in Palestine. An article titled "She" written by Jabotinsky and published in a prominent Pittsburgh Jewish newspaper in 1924, around the time when Jabotinsky stopped in Pittsburgh on a national tour, on the topic of "Palestine films" suggests, through its matter-of-fact mode of address, that readers would have some familiarity with the films of the Palestine Foundation Fund. In the article, Jabotinsky criticizes the apparent lack of representation of Jewish settler-pioneer women in British Mandate Palestine in a particular film. Regarding the non-appearance of "She" in this particular film, Jabotinsky laments:

> Some time ago I saw a "Palestine film," showing the colonies and it struck me how very few Jewish women appear in it. I am afraid this peculiarity may strengthen the impression already too widely spread among Jewish womanhood—that the upbringing of our Homeland is, after all, a man's business. This is a wrong conclusion. The work of the woman, as usual, goes on in most cases behind the walls. The man tills the fields, the man parades in the uniform of a Jewish Legionaire, the man lets himself be photographed as a member of innumerable committees; the woman keeps behind the walls, and you miss her on the film. But her work, although less spectacular, is, too, the work of a builder. Man and woman are building Jewish Palestine together, and I, though a great admirer of the manhood of Palestine, am not so sure as to whose share is the more important one.[20]

In a correction of what is not visible in that film or in photographs, in "She" Jabotinsky uses detailed present-tense descriptions to project an image of what is not seen in the film but that, according to him, more accurately reflects the scene on the ground. At the same time, Jabotinsky draws attention to the scenes of visualization and production of images—the man that "lets himself be photographed as a member of innumerable committees," for example. As a corrective of the missing women in the film, he brings the reader into the following scene; "If you happen

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[20] Vladimir Jabotinsky, "She," *Jewish Criterion* 63.18 (1924): 18.

to visit Palestine…you will see men and girls working side by side…The Halutzim are resting, and suddenly in the darkness you may hear a beautifully cultured soprano voice…"[21] Perhaps to explain why cinematic technology misses the representation of the pioneer women, Jabotinsky describes a scene of "darkness" and the sound of a woman singing, both of which would not be represented in the "Palestine film" (likely unaccompanied by recorded sound) that he discusses.

With his articles widely published across North America and Europe, combined with his appearance at Zionist events to give lectures and the other fundraising events that fueled (and were fueled by) Jewish National Fund and Palestine Film Foundation films, Jabotinsky maintained two driving concerns with regard to the broader visualization of Palestine. First, Jabotinsky recognized and appreciated the importance of proliferating images of Palestine in the diaspora in order to fund colonization and promote the idea of Palestine as a future Jewish nation-state. Secondly, it was important to Jabotinsky, or so it appears given the trouble he goes to in order to construct through his article what the Palestine film seemed to omit, to show the Zionist pioneers who do the work of establishing the homeland for the Jewish people, particularly since the Jewish Diaspora needed to identify with and support this labor in order to donate money.

On the other hand, it is also difficult to understand the relevance of this article by Jabotinsky, which poses a complicated relationship between a political Zionist leader (one who vehemently supported the creation of a state) and the propaganda film, to a history of the use of visual media by Zionist propaganda agencies. Jabotinsky neither simply promotes the film at face value as propaganda, since he has to correct its message, nor does he accept it as a reflection of the reality on the ground, since he questions its lack of women pioneers. It is not difficult to

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[21] Jabotinsky, "She," 19.

point to discrete films and lectures that apparently did address the topic of women and Zionism,

and which would fit neatly in a narrative of pre-state Israeli film historiography told through

discrete films and arranged by topic and historical and cultural relevance. For example, a few

later Jewish Agency propaganda examples were devoted to the topic of the woman pioneer,

including titles such as the Jewish National Fund filmstrip *The Woman in the Agricultural*

Settlements (1925-6), the JNF film *The Working Woman in the Land of Israel* (1935-9)[22], and, in

JNF lectures that accompanied filmstrips, subjects included "the Zionist woman and her part in

the building of Eretz Yisrael" and "clinics for pregnant women."[23] A widespread association of

Zionism with women's increasing participation in national and political work is bolstered by the

fact that women were afforded the right to vote at the Second Zionist Congress in 1898.[24] Yet,

even those films and slides that could be cited as discrete and topical examples of the

representation of pioneer women ought to be considered in the complicated context of the

multiple aims of propaganda and their relation to other sites where such topics were being

debated, discussed, and constructed in particular ways as "topics." Indeed, the actual possibilities

afforded to women through Zionism were not as the leadership often claimed it to be.[25]

Although claiming its place as one of the first feminist political movements, evidenced by the

participation of women in settlement-building and other pioneering tasks, women were more

often ascribed the same or often more limited roles in relation to family, society and politics. Yet

even this point is often subsumed in Israeli film studies as evidence of progress from a

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[22] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 84.
[23] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 80.
[24] Haumann, "Judaism and Zionism," 16.
[25] See Deborah Bernstein*, The Struggle for Equality: Urban Women Workers in Pre-State Israeli Society* (New York: Praeger Publications, 1987), Deborah Bernstein, ed., *Pioneers and Homemakers: Jewish Women in Pre-State Israel* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), and Rachel Katznelson Shaza, ed., *The Plough Woman: Memoirs of the Pioneer Women of Palestine,* trans. Maurice Samuel (1932; reprint, New York: Herzl Press, 1975).

masculinist Zionist project and its "now obsolete cinematic and cultural models" to a more fluid, feminist, and inclusive society and cinema.[26]

Perhaps Jabotinsky recognized that Jewish women could play an important role in fundraising and propaganda, and thus they represented an untapped fundraising market, but in the article the lack of women is repeatedly posed primarily as a problem of perspective and representation, underscoring to an extent the limits, rather than the potential, of cinema for political Zionism. "Cameras cannot move through walls," as Jabotinsky puts it, and this prompts his intervention whereby the reader is invited to imagine what lies beyond, or rather within, these concealing walls—for "the woman keeps behind the walls, and you miss her on [sic] the film." Through this projection of reality *inside* the walls, and filmic representation *outside*, Jabotinsky constructs an image of "reality" that both reinforces the scenes depicted in the film (since he declares them not precisely incorrect, simply an incomplete representation) and orients viewers toward his descriptions of what the film does not, and cannot, show. This odd review-of-sorts of a "Palestine film" suggests Jabotinsky deliberately constructs and promotes the kind of proper visualization necessary for recognizing the truth of Zionist settlement in Palestine. The Jewish Agencies similarly seemed to recognize the potential for moving images to fail to fully reveal their intended messages, and so included detailed scripts and lecture notes with films and filmstrips intended to carefully direct viewers toward a single intended meaning. The seeming micro-management of the message also allowed for a certain malleability of the exhibition and production of the films and filmstrips since the same footage would be cut and re-cut to serve different interests, audiences, and political purposes (especially in the use of Zionist footage by British Empire exhibitions).

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[26] Talmon and Peleg, *Israeli Cinema: Identities in Motion*, xvi.

Although Jabotinsky attempts in "She" to make the supposedly invisible Jewish pioneer woman a recognizable, albeit reassuringly domestic, presence, he does so primarily through reference to her absence and to the apparent shortcomings of cinema's inability to cross through walls. Jabotinsky perhaps unwittingly reproduces the conditions through which what should be easily recognizable (the woman pioneer) slips into a kind of illegibility, since he makes the absent-present figure of the Jewish pioneer woman imaginable as a *visible* presence through text, yet only to be un-locatable in the primary source of visualization of the Zionist project—the "Palestine films." Even through the text, Jabotinsky constructs the woman's presence through reference to sound (a "beautifully cultured soprano voice") and invisibility ("suddenly in the darkness you may hear"). Rather than assume this production of recognition through non-seeing is an accident or a contradiction, I think Jabotinsky's complicated making-present making-absent of the pioneer woman well supported the conditions through which women were both incorporated and excluded by Zionism. A kind of paranoid knowledge seems to inform a larger rubric of national intelligibility in Israel and Palestine and explains how Palestinian claims to the Palestinian landscape and Palestinian dispossession became and have remained unrecognized even when visual evidence seems immediately available—for example, in the ruins of Palestinian villages in Israeli national parks today. Even though the remains of Palestinian villages "are highly visible in the landscape" of the national parks, "only 15 percent of the signposts include names of these villages."[27] Rebecca Stein describes the "abundant material evidence of pre-1948 Palestinian life" present in Israeli landscapes, yet these ruins remain largely

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[27] Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 101.

unremarked upon, uncharged with historical relevance, or described in terms of beauty and the picturesque. [28]

Rather than invoke Jabotinsky's article on an unidentified "Palestine film" to argue for its inclusion in and contribution to a more historically accurate and complex picture of "Palestine Films" and their relation to Zionist and/or Israeli film and visual history, I am interested in this film review for the ways that it, like the Freitas' letter and the Harris review, offer a more context-specific and contradictory perspective on the various processes through which the visualization of Palestine would undergo in relation to Zionist filmmaking and its related contexts. Directing his readers to view the Zionist films of the period critically, for example, Jabotinsky situated them in a larger context of a visualizing discourse that privileged certain ways of seeing over others. Since the diasporic Jewish community, like the large Jewish community in Pittsburgh for example, was more likely to see "Palestine films" than to visit Palestine and see the work of the pioneers themselves, this kind of training in proper visualization and conceptualization of the Jewish colonies in Palestine would likely influence Zionist fundraising in the U.S., but it would also inform what had largely already become, and would be continually reinforced as, a kind of common-sense visual and intelligibility schema through which Palestine would come to be understood and acted upon as idea and landscape. It is this visual schema that I attempt to explore, not in its entirety, but in terms of its dominant modes of establishing terms of legibility and calculability that can still be detected at work today in the ongoing constructions of the idea, image, place and people of Palestine.

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[28] Rebecca Stein, "Israeli Routes Through Nakba Landscapes: An Ethnographic Meditation," *Jerusalem Quarterly* 43 (2010): 7.

3.2 "AT ONCE REMOTE AND NEAR—A PARTICULAR PALESTINIAN PROBLEM"

In 1906, the Bezalel School of Arts and crafts was one of the earliest Jewish cultural institutions founded in Palestine. As Tryster describes, "it was recognized as a Zionist enterprise by nature, and enjoyed official Zionist support in its maintenance."[29] The Zionist Congress had already recognized the importance of art in relation to Zionism, and "the first exhibition of in the history of Jewish art took place in 1901 during the Fifth Congress in Basel"; Bezalel was founded during the Seventh Congress.[30] Out of Bezalel came the most prolific early Zionist filmmaker Ya'acov Ben Dov, and, as evidenced by the featuring of Bezalel in the 1911 *First Film of Palestine* by Murray Rosenberg, the school considered supporting film productions shortly after its founding. Eventually, after the war, Ben Dov convinced the Jewish National Fund to back his film endeavors, including a document of General Allenby's arrival in Jerusalem in 1917. In 1918, Ben Dov sent a letter to the Zionist Commission, which was affiliated with the British Foreign Office authority, indicating his interest in film toward the promotion of a future Jewish national homeland: "I am hereby honored to inform you that I have begun to collect and prepare various pictures of our present lives in Eretz Israel for a 'national archive.'"[31] At least from Ben Dov's perspective, cinema could be enlisted beyond the present needs of Zionist campaigns. He imagined films as important documents in an archive that would facilitate future remembering of the building-up of the Jewish national land. Though Ben Dov was apparently personally committed to producing a historical record of whatever was occurring on the ground in Palestine,

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[29] Tryster, *Israel Before Israel*, 26.

[30] Jerzy Malinowksi, "A Jewish National Art: The Ideas of Zionism in the Art of the Polish Jews" in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality,* ed. Heiko Haumann (New York: Karger, 1997), 316-17.

[31] Cited in Tryster, *Israel Before Israel*, 30.

the Jewish Agencies who contracted his expertise were more exacting in their decisions about what to film and how to film it. Though Ben Dov's filmmaking was frequently criticized and even derided for what struck some as a lack of technical knowledge, others considered his work "as not only the work of a good professional, but also that of a 'true son of Bezalel' who has the seeing eye of an artist and the emotional heart of a good Jew."[32] Ben Dov seemed to gain credibility through his association with Bezalel, given its early establishment as a Jewish art school in Palestine.

Though Ben Dov, who was referred to later as the "Father of Hebrew Cinema," was interested in filming for a specifically Jewish national archive, his work also came to serve the needs of the British Information Office and the Empire's cinematic display of the colonies. British Instructional Films used portions of his 1924 *Land of Promise (Banim Bonim)* in a film survey of the Empire for the British Empire Exhibition at Wembley. In exchange for footage that would appear in *A Tour Through the Holy Land, Land of Promise* was screened in its entirety at the Palestine Pavilion. *The Land of Promise* was "photographed on behalf of the Palestine Foundation Fund," although its initial inter-titles credit both the PFF and the JNF for supporting the efforts of the pioneers—*Chalutzim*—depicted in the film. Underscoring its use for propaganda and fundraising, the opening titles expand on the work of the PFF: "which is responsible for the immigration of the *Chalutzim*, their settlement on the land and in towns, Hebrew education, sanitation and the provision of all the other amenities of normal national life." As Tryster attests, "the PFF enjoyed a number of notable propaganda successes with this film,"

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[32] Cited in Tryster, *Israel Before Israel*, 35.

and sections of it even appeared in Hearst's "International Newsreel."[33] In promoting part of the Jewish Agency's own agenda, the footage, though marking itself as "a pictorial record of Jewish work in the restoration of Palestine," could also serve to promote British colonialism. In the overly didactic micro-management of image and interpretation common to many of the Jewish Agency films, *Land of Promise* uses matter-of-fact inter-titles and narration to guide the viewer's eye and understanding of what appears onscreen. I take note of several visualizing discourses in these films, which appear in *Land of Promise* as well: a heavy-handed exposition of the idea of Palestine "laid waste", which dramatizes the work of the Jewish pioneers, an emphasis on security and fortification through visual dominance (guards in watchtowers, aerial imagery, the dangerous proximity of Arab neighbors), and civilizational discourse that posits Palestinians as temporally behind.

A common ethnographic trope that also appears in many of the Jewish Agency films I came across in my research, *Land of Promise* opens from the perspective of a ship arriving at the port of Haifa. Given the context of the British Mandate rule, which at various times greatly limited legal Jewish immigration to Israel, arrival scenes are significant in Zionist narratives emphasizing the exultation felt by *Chalutzim* arriving "*on the Soil of the Land of Israel at Last!*" They set foot on land, after moving through certain checkpoints—what the film identifies as "customs" and "quarantine." Excerpts from the American PFF Agency edit of the film reveal something of the intended purpose of the scenes that follow the arrival of the *Chalutzim*: "Jaffa has been transformed into a modern city resembling in many respects a bustling American town…Contrast those scenes of progress with typical Arab section—unchanged throughout the

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[33] Tryster, *Israel Before Israel,* 107. Juda Leman produced another film carrying the title Land of Promise in 1935, which had a similar propagandistic function and was one of the earliest Zionist films to use sound.

centuries."[34] This particular kind of "contrast" was in fact common to many Zionist films of the JNF and PFF.

Appearing determined, strong and unified, the young pioneers dressed in white, "off to their first job," approach an old man along the road. They gather round the bearded man as he gives voice to what was by then a rather familiar narrative: "I came here with the first pioneers forty years ago. We found the land laid waste." Images intended to illustrate "the land laid waste" shown after this inter-title include a static desert scene populated with what appear to be Bedouin tents. Immediately following this image, paved roads, a white fenced home, and men on horseback demonstrate: "but by great struggle and sacrifice colonies were built. With fine streets and houses. 'GROVES' where once were malaria marshes. And Palestine began to be one of the garden spots of the world." Marking the young pioneers onscreen as the beneficiaries of a colonial legacy, the speech attributed to the old man passes the labor onto "the generation of the future"—the New Jewish native in Palestine: "The work is now in YOUR hands. Rebuild the land of your Fathers for the sake of your children."[35] Throughout the film, a large group of *Chalutzim* marches across the screen and throughout Palestine. All the while, the film continues its matter-of-fact inter-title narration that serves to guide the viewer's eye and understanding of what appears onscreen, perhaps meant to take the place of a lecturer attending, for instance, Jewish Agency magic lantern filmstrips. "There"—the title seems to point—are "the new suburbs of Jerusalem!" the watchmen and guards of the colonies, the "bonnie babies" delivered by the Hadassah Medical Organization, the city of Haifa, "the Jewish garden city of Tel Aviv built by Jewish labor over sand dunes," the "Building! Building! Building!" of houses, and so on until the final scene of *Chalutzim* dancing the hora in joy. "Seen from on high," images of Tel

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[34] Tryster, *Israel Before Israel*, 108.
[35] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema*, 32.

Aviv emphasize a modern city planned on a grid, with electric lines and a passing train emphasizing connection, prosperity, and modernity. A horse gallops next to the train, which quickly surpasses it and emphasizes the speed of the new technology.

Given that Tel Aviv, and later the state of Israel, was founded after the invention and widespread use of photographic and cinematic technology (as the "seen from on high" aerial view, a new kind of image developed during World War I by mounting cameras on warplanes, emphasizes), it is perhaps not surprising that the narrative of the "first Jewish city" and the "Jewish nation" would rely heavily on visualizing discourse to gain credibility and legibility. In a scrapbook dated "approximately 1926" and titled *Tel-Aviv* (compiled by Avraham Soskin), for example, time collapses between pages of photographs that narrate the building of the "Jewish garden city." Photographs from the first few years of the construction of the city are laid next to those of the same city over fifteen years later. In an image captioned "The meeting founding Tel-Aviv, 1908," a group of over 50 men gather in the desert sand dunes seeming to mimic the buildings that will take their place in the coming years. In the next image in the album—"Tel Aviv 1926," white buildings are stacked atop of one another, and the dunes have disappeared. The next image returns to the labor involved—"The leveling of the sand dunes, 1908." Turn the pages and various streets are shown before and after substantial construction—"Herzl Street 1910," "Herzl Street 1926."[36] While labor may seem mostly covered over in the temporal jumps between the static images that construct the narrative of this scrapbook, the hundreds of films shot in Palestine before 1948 focus almost entirely on the labor of the Jewish pioneer. Both photography and cinema could be enlisted, though, in this particular kind of representation of speedy Jewish settlement in Palestine, which was understood to align with modernity, whereas

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[36] Avraham Soskin, "Tel-Aviv." Photograph Album, 1926. Center for Jewish History Digital Collections, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research. PID: 119756.

the Arab Palestinian population was posited in terms of backwardness and slow-moving technologies like camel-drawn carts—"unchanged throughout the centuries" as *Land of Promise* puts it. That civilizational values are implied through the arrangement of photographs "spliced" together in a scrapbook invokes cinema as a metaphor. Jewish work in Palestine is seen to be *like* cinema insofar as they both become associated with modernity, speed, and the reinvigoration of Palestine as a valued cartography of time (i.e. a place that matters only when populated by Jews). This seemingly easy association of moving images with Jewish belonging in Palestine promotes the sense that Jewish national belonging in Palestine was inevitable, even going so far as in having been solidified as an assumption that there is nearly the sense that "if it can be seen, it belongs to the Jews." Underscoring this connection between seeing and belonging, whenever a real or staged presence of the Arab population is visualized in Zionist Palestine films, it is nearly always in terms of negativity, backwardness, and a static, fixed image that doesn't belong in the narrative of Palestine's or the image's modern progress.

Land of Promise director Ben Dov is characterized by Tryster as someone who imagined cinema as a simple window onto the colonies, and who perhaps did attach a kind of ease to the project of visualizing Palestine, but the many problems of seeing and representing Palestine were apparently addressed and felt by other Bezalel visual artists. Zionist Jews who immigrated to Palestine were more directly confronted with the reality of that place—the landscape and population—than the Diaspora audiences of Palestine films, and had to alter their perspectives to construct their own ways to imagine and confront the challenges they perceived in their new surroundings. In other words, those *Chalutzim,* like the characters in Ben Dov's film, probably had some difficulty seeing what the films and/or filmmakers and propagandists imply was self-evident about their experience in Palestine.

In *Art in Palestine,* written in the late 1930s, Bezalel painter Elias Newman describes the experience of Jewish immigrant artists arriving in Palestine in the early 20th Century from Europe and their particular problems "in the field of art requiring pioneer effort."[37] According to Newman, these newly immigrated pioneer artists, those whose work was featured in the New York World's Fair 1939 Palestine Pavilion, had trouble relocating from their former surroundings:

> The light of Palestine dazzled them. There seemed to be no color: the hot, brilliant sun turned everything white—or so it seemed to these newcomers. The transparency of the atmosphere and the brilliance of the sun created new problems of perspective that had to be solved. They set about seeking a way to give expression to this brilliant sun, experimenting with technical problems such as painting distance in a manner that makes it appear at once remote and near—a particular Palestinian problem.[38]

Newman states that the dazzling effect of the environment on the artists was due to the unfamiliarity of the landscape and its quality of light that "turned everything white—or so it seemed to these newcomers." Newman describes the experience of these painters and sculptors primarily in terms of a kind of visual and perceptual disorientation, remarking that not only did the artists find it difficult to paint the landscape surrounding them, they, similar to the cinematographer Freitas, found it difficult even to see due to problems of overexposure and contrast.

Though at first glance it seems Newman locates the challenges confronting these artists in their own perception when he writes "or so it seemed to these newcomers"—which suggests they need to adapt their trade to "give expression" to the strange landscape surrounding them— there is equal stress later in the book on the idea that the landscape itself needed to be altered. On the Jewish painter, architect and stage designer E. Luftglass (b. 1898, Poland), Newman sets up

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[37] Elias Newman, *Art in Palestine* (New York: Sibel Co., 1939), 9.
[38] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 9.

the necessity for a mutual transformation of immigrant artist subjectivity and landscape: "An impressionist…but in Palestine he feels the approach to nature cannot be through impressionism. The Palestine landscape to him is static, and it must be recreated before an attempt is made to paint it."[39] With nearly all of the artists in the book, Newman describes an apparently necessary process of adjustment the artists had to endure before they could adapt their artistic techniques to the new, apparently static, environment. One artist, after settling in Palestine in 1935, "is trying to orientate herself" since "a long transitional period must be passed through to understand the local life and problems of light" that are "still quite strange to her."[40] The Jews of Palestine, Newman writes, "are going through a period of readjustment, binding themselves to mother earth, and the future will most likely see a new type of Jew emerging—on that will express a homogenous Palestine."[41] Himself a fan of watercolor as "the medium best adapted to interpreting the brilliant transparent colors of the landscape," he argued that it best enables the artist "to give spontaneous expression to the very transparent atmosphere."[42] In each of these examples, Newman emphasizes process, transformation and duration in the artists' relationship to the landscape and its "problems of light," inviting another comparison to cinematic modes of temporality and their association within Zionism with Jewish belonging, which was also seen to undergo a process of reinvention.

While acknowledging that an artist like Luftglass recognized the need to adapt and change his artistic technique (impressionism was apparently not suited to Palestine), somewhat illogically Newman also remarks that transformations of the landscape ("recreation") should take place *before* "an attempt is made to paint it." Was the landscape being altered to suit

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[39] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 70.
[40] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 32.
[41] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 21.
[42] Newman, *Art in Palestine,* 80, 114.

impressionistic painting styles, or did painting techniques need creative re-invention in order to adapt to the problems posed by Palestine's unique quality of light and perspective problems? Mutual transformation was also for Newman in some sense a translation of artist subjectivity and landscape:

> Here are the struggles of the newly arrived artists with the strange environment, with its peculiar problems of light and perspective, and their efforts to translate the subjective material within their own individuality into the new language—the color of Palestine—a language all desire to master.[43]

While the artist's expression and even selfhood would come into being in a new way through translation into the language of "the color of Palestine," they would in turn "desire to master" the very language that articulated them. Again, the relation between identity, landscape and visualization are articulated in their mutual constitution and in their relation to process and temporary disorientation.

In Palestine, armed as they were with the notion that they were returning on a Biblical promise to their authentic homeland, Newman's Jewish artists, all European, would be familiar with Orientalist depictions of the Middle East. Thus they would in some ways be prepared to encounter a strange and distant landscape in Palestine. Adding to their feeling of bewilderment, Newman suggests that the artists struggled with unintentional appearances of European landscapes, their former homelands, as well as European formal techniques, in their work. One artist's "first canvases showed traces of the French landscape," even as he attempted to paint what was before him. As New Jewish artist-pioneers, then, they were tasked with representing Palestine as proximate—their new/old homeland—without at the same time rendering themselves distant, strange and other in relation to it. In other words, they needed to find new ways to identify with this place that carried the mark of the Orient and to "bring to their craft

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[43] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 14.

Occidental invention plus the charm of the East."[44] Though Zionism was distinct in many ways from the British colonial regime, the Jewish immigrant artists reflected the similarities between Zionism and imperial nationalism, particularly in their approach to the landscape. As Stephen Daniels argues:

> imperial nationalists, almost by definition, have been intent to annex the home-lands of others in their identity myths. They have projected on these lands and their inhabitants' pictorial codes expressing both an affinity with the colonizing country and an estrangement from it. It is often the very 'otherness' of these lands which has made them appear so compelling, especially as a testing ground for imperial energy and imagination…Images of barrenness and ruins activated histories of past prosperity under ancient empires [for France's Second Empire in orientalist paintings of North Africa].[45]

Newman's descriptions of these artists' work suggest their struggle to establish pictorial codes that would negotiate their attachment to the new/old landscape.

Offering a way to understand this seeming contradiction between near and far through her exploration of the phenomenology of Orientalism, Sara Ahmed posits, "orientalism involves the transformation of 'farness' as a spatial marker of distance into a property of people and places."[46] It is in this sense that I suggest that a particular kind of disorientation marked the experience of Jewish pioneers who, encountering the strange in their field of vision, experienced the threat of becoming themselves strange and distant. As Ahmed argues, one must always be oriented "*toward* something," whereby things become graspable through our facing them. Things are oriented to the extent that they are "what we face, or what is available to us within our field of vision."[47] Though visuality and perception do not enter Ahmed's queer phenomenology in any prolonged way, she suggests that the "reach" afforded through particular orientations is

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[44] Newman, *Art in Palestine*, 19.
[45] Stephen Daniels, *Fields of Vision: Landscape Imagery and National Identity in England and the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), 5.
[46] Sara Ahmed *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), 114.
[47] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 115.

not necessarily material or limited to bodily proximity and touch. If things become available within a field of vision, then they can be understood as "within reach" and graspable, and able to be possessed and knowable, through affect and recognition and not simply through spatial proximity. Orientation determines what "matters," then, in a broader sense than the material or physical, and bears on the process of visualization and its relation to intelligibility, bringing more complexity and contradiction to models of visibility and invisibility as well. Informed by Ahmed, "queer" can attend to the disorienting and incalculable aspects of processes of becoming "intelligible," which may not align with what is "visible," thereby placing affect and recognition in close relation to both visuality and spatiality.

If "geographic space is *phenomenal or oriented*" in terms of "what is and is not within reach," then the task that Zionism asked of the Jewish settlers was enormous: an orientation that was both a *re*-orientation to a rightful homeland and a *dis*-Orientation from "Oriental" Palestine and "Oriental" Jewry.[48] At the same time, this process produced the possibility for the supposedly distant place grasp back and contaminate at the same time as it became available for conquest. Thinking in psychoanalytic terms, Ella Shohat describes Zionism's disavowal of Oriental (Sephardi) Jews as "the European ideal-ego, which phantasizes Israel as the prolongation of Europe 'in' the Middle East, but not 'of' it."[49] In a further explanation of the history of Israeli and Zionist racist discourse in relation to Oriental Jews, Shohat reflects on how Israeli leaders repeatedly cast such prejudices in civilizing East/West terms. She cites Abba Ebban whose comments express the anxiety of another kind of orientation: that the "object should be to infuse [the Sephardim] with an Occidental spirit, rather than allow them to drag us

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[48] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 112.
[49] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 188.

into an unnatural Orientalism."[50] The "drag" of Orientalism implies again the temporal aspects

of civilization de-valuing that posits a kind of backwards and seemingly static, though wholly

irrational, space. For Daniel Boyarin, dis-orientation might be understood as an aspect of what he

describes as an ambivalence articulated by Zionist leaders between Jewish assimilation and

colonialism, which he characterizes in terms of colonial mimicry. Theodor Herzl, for instance,

"had come to the conclusion that anti-Semitism was essentially justified by the behavior of the

Jews…that only a radical act of self-transformation would win the esteem of Christendom for his

degenerate compatriots."[51] This would require Jews to "give up their primitive, 'Oriental'

distinctiveness and become 'civilized,'" according to the supposedly liberal explanation of

Jewish degeneracy in historical and cultural rather than biological terms.[52]

While watercolor was for Newman suited to depict the unique blurring of near/far and

horizon/atmosphere in Palestine, heavily fortified colonies among other conditions of separation

reinforced divisions between the new/native pioneers and the alien/indigenous Arabs. Still, the

land must have felt as if it shifted beneath those early Jewish pioneers, threatening to dissolve

them into the dust and desert surrounding them, as they built and were built by Zionist

articulations of Jewish nationalism in Palestine. Freitas and Jabotinsky hint at the particular

problems this posed for cinematographers, given that for Freitas the problem was of dust and low

contrast, and for Jabotinsky it was the sense that cameras cannot reach through walls to properly

represent the reality of Jewish work. Given the importance of the horizon as a focal point in the

European landscape tradition, the difficulty of seeing and locating a distinct horizon for the new

Jewish immigrant artists in Palestine would undermine their ability to take up a familiar

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[50] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 106.
[51] Daniel Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 282.
[52] Boyarin, *Unheroic Conduct*, 279.

viewpoint and arrange a familiar landscape composition.[53] The problems of diffuse and

overexposed light described by travelers, artists, and cinematographers would similarly challenge

the ability to see or represent formal tropes for the arrangement of compositional elements and

for the establishment of perspective.

At the same time as the pioneers may have experienced something of this sense of

blurring, dissolving and shifting in the environment surrounding them, they must have also felt

themselves shifting in their own skin as definitions of Jewishness seemed to hinge on the Jewish

pioneers and their ability to appear as such. "White"/Ashkenazi Jewishness positioned itself as a

distinctly European and Occidental presence amongst the others of the Middle East as well as in

relation to all those disavowed diasporic Jews—those Others of Europe. By focusing on modes

of disorientation, I mean to highlight the uncertainty, process, failures, and contradictions

involved in the construction of particular modes of Jewish belonging in Palestine, as well as the

many complex routes through which affect and recognition are constituted in the various Zionist

Jewish Agency films, their directed inter-titles, various lecture circuits, textual reviews and

revisions, and so on.

Newman's privileging of watercolor, for example, as well as the Bezalel mission to

maintain something of the Oriental quality of Palestine and artists working in "Oriental crafts,"

suggests that some forms of blurring of identity and place could be rendered non-threatening, but

only through careful adjustments made to the way the landscape was perceived, as well as

necessary adjustments to the landscape itself following the Zionist settlement project. Positing

themselves as the rightful and proper, even natural, inhabitants of this place, the Jewish pioneer-

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[53] John Barrell describes the common compositional elements, including a high horizon as the
brightest point, that organized vision in eighteenth century landscape painting and poetry in *The
Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare*
Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972.

artists of Bezalel could not simply project otherness, exoticism, negativity and anachronism onto the Palestinian landscape—unlike the British colonial artists in Palestine and the larger network of colonies. Furthermore, since pioneer-artists had previously only had access to the Promised Land in the form of what George Steiner calls a "textual homeland," the landscape would appear suddenly available for more accurate, authentic, and passionate representation. Shohat describes the recurring theme of the land and nature in Zionist films in terms of this newfound affection for the landscape:

> Two thousand years of living a vicarious textual geography through the scriptural
> The Zionist into a concrete touching of a palpable land transforms nostalgia for the
> Promised Land and of being forced into non-agricultural work.[54]

And yet, considering the difficulties plaguing the Bezalel artists according to Newman, the land would not appear immediately available for something other than "concrete touching" without a period of transition and adjustment. Seemingly at risk of dissolving into the haze of an ill-defined contrast between horizon and landscape, between East and West, more confident modes of visuality and spatiality would seem necessary. Yet it would be too easy to claim that the pioneers simply negated, rejected, or ignored the present landscape and population. As Ahmed cautions, the "fantasy of lack" involved in the desire for the Palestinian landscape and the apparent construction of its emptiness belies that Orientalism fills the Orient with "all that which is 'not Europe' or not Occidental," thus creating its "farness" as a "supply point" that "pushes us toward that 'not'."[55] More to the point, Ahmed argues "the directness toward this other reminds us that desire involves a political economy in the sense that it is distributed: the desire to possess, and to

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[54] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 28.
[55] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 114-115.

occupy, constitutes others not only as objects of desire, but also as resources for world making."[56]

Lack describes how Palestine was constructed spatially and temporally empty, particularly in relation to the narrative of Jewish return, as described by Yael Zerubavel:

> Hebrew culture placed the Jewish settlement at the center of its geographical map and related to the territory surrounding it as a symbolic desert. Within the context of the settlement process, these space metaphors assumed historical connotations. The long period of Jewish exile from the homeland, *galut,* was negatively portrayed as a symbolic void or vacuum in Jewish history, a state of homelessness and lack that was contrasted with Jewish national life during Antiquity and in the modern period. That state of lack was, in turn, inscribed onto the physical landscape of the homeland that Jews found upon their return.[57]

While the Jewish settlers may have projected a kind of emptiness on the landscape they "found upon their return," as Zerubavel puts it, this construction of lack also provided the resources for fulfilling a wish, in the form of a future nation, for Herzl's "garden cities" with paved roads, its pine forests, its wall and tower homesteads, its drained marshes, the new/old ethno-national language, and Tel Aviv, the first Jewish city, which promised to be, as it's insignia states, "a light to the Diaspora and a Gate into the Land of Israel." The straight lines of the Jewish National Fund forestation projects and the pre-fabricated settlement outposts emphasized the broad scale of the colonial project of filling the lack, but the task of making the desert bloom was also given figural form through "Sabra" iconography. Especially in the early Zionist Jewish Agency visual propaganda, the figure of the Sabra came to dominate this visual and visualizing narrative of becoming rooted, oriented, and visually and spatially dominant in Palestine. The Sabra also

[56] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 114.
[57] Yael Zerubavel, "Desert and Settlement: Space Metaphors and Symbolic Landscapes in the Yishuv and Early Israeli Culture," in *Jewish Topographies: Visions, of Space, Traditions of Place,* ed. Julia Brauch, Anna Lipphardt, and Alexandra Nocke (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2008), 203-04.

further emphasized the contradictory forms through which unrecognizability would be projected on Palestinian dispossession and legitimacy would be established for Jewish belonging.

3.3 SABRAS BLOOMING (IN) THE ARID WASTELAND

The formation of a Jewish identity in terms of being reborn or returned as a native of Palestine reflects the Zionist preoccupation with land as well as with transformations and translations of Jewish identity. "Sabra," the Arabic word for "prickly pear" cacti common in the region—a plant hard and thorny on the outside but sweet on the inside—was adopted to name the new native Jew in Palestine, a second generation born of Jewish immigrant-pioneers (mostly from the Second "Aliya" or in-gathering of Soviet Russian immigrants). The Sabras were envisioned in another sense as a first generation insofar as the Sabra was "born of the sea," "charting a new land-based Jewish identity" rather than a blood connection to diasporic Jewry.[58] The Sabra was idealized in literary and filmic representation as European, muscular, and tan, dedicated to cultivating and defending Jewish national life in Palestine. While the Jewish Agency films helped give the Sabra cinematic and representational form, the Jewish agencies further brought the Sabras into being through what Oz Almog refers to as "Sabra institutions," some of which, like the Hebrew educational system, were also funded by the Jewish Agencies.

A key characteristic of the Sabra was that he embodied everything the anti-Semitic image of Jewish masculinity did not. For Joseph Massad, the transformation of "European Jewish

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[58] Joseph Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 37.

bodies" into Sabras reflected "Zionism's own *embodiment* as a project."[59] This embodiment,

through turn-of-the-century writing by Zionist leaders like Max Nordau, posited a "pre-diasporic

model of Jewish male bodies," like Bar Kochba, to transform Jewish men into a "Jewry of

Muscle," the title of Nordau's article.[60] Heiko Haumann notes that Nordau's idea of Muscle

Jewry emerged out of discussions amongst Zionists who had "internalized the 'Zeitgeist'" and

"entered into the discussion surrounding the 'Arian' and 'Semitic' race."[61] Though this

transformation turned away from European Jewish tradition in many respects, it still represented

a historic continuity between pre-diasporic Jewry and what was envisioned as post-diasporic

Jewry in Palestine. Massad argues that this project was so successful that Jewishness has today

become legible *only* through a relation to Israel—effectively making a secular, non-Zionist

Jewry nearly unthinkable.

Reflecting on the specifically gendered and racialized formation of Sabra identity, Raz

Yosef argues that the Sabra, or

> the native-born Jew in *Eretz Yisrael*, is the Zionist prototype for the "white" male
> pioneer. As a counter-image of the feminized and passive diasporic Jew, the Sabra was
> represented in Zionist national mythology as a healthy, strong, hard-working man, as well
> as being conceived out of pre-genital reproduction.[62]

The Sabra was Zionism's answer to anti-Semitism, but was articulated primarily in the same

terms. Similar to how the desolation of the landscape was constructed through scientific and

medical discourse to explain how it fell into neglect out of a former fruitfulness, Jewish men

were conceptualized by Zionism as having fallen into a state of degeneracy due to oppression

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[59] Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, 26. Emphasis in original.
[60] Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, 26.
[61] Heiko Haumann, "Judaism and Zionism," in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality,* ed. Heiko Haumann (New York: Karger, 1997), 15.
[62] Raz Yosef, *Beyond Flesh: Queer Masculinities and Nationalism in Israeli Cinema* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 41.

and isolation from nature. For Nordau, this degraded state was symptomatic of the general *fin de siècle* affliction—marked by "convention, stagnation and decline"—referred to in his book *Degeneration*.[63] Oscar Wilde appears amongst his examples of the degeneration of civilization brought on primarily by cosmopolitanism, whereby Wilde's particular form of wit and obfuscation mark him as a degenerate male. Though Nordau in that text only hints at Wilde's non-normative sexual and gender identity as an aspect of his degenerate character, Nordau's model of a Jewry of Muscle was posited in opposition to what he considered degenerate forms of masculinity afflicting Jewish Diaspora men. As Massad puts it, the characterization of "European Jews as 'feminine' are derived from the then dominant anti-Semitic discourse that posited Jews as the racial/feminine other."[64]

A "return" to a future/past homeland in this context provided a seemingly tidy antidote to the problem of cosmopolitanism and degeneracy since the New Muscle Jewry would define himself through a relationship to working the landscape. Yet the contradictory and confusing temporal metaphors of degeneracy and delay suggested by Nordau and embedded in the dominant Zionist narrative of Jewish "return" and reinvention suggest an investment in logics of colonialism and modernity. Invoking civilizational hierarchies according to similar temporal metaphors again invokes certain cinematic logics of montage such as the splicing of disparate time periods (whereby the past and current Jewish inhabitance of Palestine produce the proper narrative timeline), and meaning made through the passage of time (which could be posited in opposition to the kind of delay and degeneracy represented by the seemingly static backwardness of 'Semitic' Jewishness and the Arab Palestinians).

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[63] Nadia Guth Biasini, "Max Nordau," in *The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality,* ed. Heiko Haumann (New York: Karger, 1997), 167.
[64] Massad, *The Persistence of the Palestinian Question*, 27.

Shohat describes how the Sabra began to take more concrete representational form through cinematic representation after the 1930s, making filmic space a site of consolidation of the Sabra figure. The increasing use of close-ups in Zionist film at that time seemed to support the construction of the Sabra, since it allowed for a new emphasis on subjective desire and narrative tension within the otherwise collective-focused topics. Shohat discusses one of the most well-known and popular films, *Oded the Wanderer* (1933), that form the individualized Sabra mythology and importance of landscape to the Sabra:

> The interaction of the Sabra with the landscape reveals still another dimension, one carrying with it a certain ambivalence. *Oded the Wanderer,* in accord with Zionist thought, typifies a Romantic image of the Sabra. The rootedness of the healthy, happy, proud Sabra, a member of the 'generation of the future,' forms an implicit binary contrast with the image of the presumably unhealthy, self-tormenting, and cowed Diaspora Jew lacking all concrete attachment to a land.[65]

It is in a similar vein that Nurith Gertz and Yosef describe the opening scene of *Avodah* (1935), the title that translates to "labor" or "work," as a kind of metaphor for Jewish masculinity's progress out of fragmentation and death and toward a new Jewish life in Palestine. *Avodah* opens with a figure only shown from the calves down as he walks what is constructed as a great distance through the joining of shots of disparate landscapes. He walks over rocky landscapes, through water, and finally through British Mandate controlled gates when the camera pans up his body and reveals his smiling face. For Gertz, the figure is finally represented as whole and unified, a complete body, upon his arrival in the Jewish homeland. Similarly, for Yosef the Soviet-montage style (director Lerski was a Soviet filmmaker) and frequent use of close-up shots in *Avodah* are indicative of a kind of maturation of Zionist cinema from its early use of primarily long shots (in the cinema of Ben Dov, Natan Axelrod and Murray Rosenberg) that prioritized landscape and the pioneer in terms of collectivity. In the later films of the 1930s, the more

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[65] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 32.

common use of close-ups of the human subject is linked, for Yosef, to the construction of Zionist male subjectivity. Thus, he identities "the subjective gaze of the new Hebrew male pioneer" as a characteristic of the close-up in pre-state Zionist films.[66] For Yosef, the new possibility for subjectivity in the films allowed for desire, suspense, and fetishism to enter into the cinematic language of the Zionist films. In *Avodah*, then, a suspenseful scene of drilling a well that finally and dramatically releases water becomes, as it does for Gertz, an occasion to dramatize and fetishize the male pioneer's bodies and the fertile landscape in close, fragmented shots. Furthermore, Yosef argues that "the introduction of crosscutting editing to Zionist cinema in the film *Sabra* [1933] corresponded with the first cinematic representation of the Jewish-Arab conflict," thus aligning new cinematic techniques with a progression away from "innocent and unconflicted" early Zionist cinema, and allowing for emergence of the "new Zionist heteromasculinity."[67]

The increasing use of close-ups might also reflect the ongoing management of the problems of nearness and remoteness that the Zionists encountered in their perception of the landscape and in their attempts to reconfigure Jewishness in relation to East-West ideas, Orientalism and the increasingly threatened Jewish communities in Europe. Rather than a primarily technological or narrative advancement in cinema and a growing complexity in the Zionist construction of normative national subjecthood, however, the increased use of close-ups suggests more of the ambivalence of Zionist Jewish identity in its emergent national formation— an ambivalence marked by the phenomenological problem of orientation posed earlier. Yosef similarly remarks on the "ambivalence, displacement, and disidentification" indicated by these techniques. I argue that Zionist Jewish Agency filmmakers and leaders used and discussed these

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[66] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 24.
[67] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 24.

cinematic techniques in relation to what they posit as visual, spatial and temporal problems in the landscape. Orientation offers a frame for critiquing the relational terms through which a Jewish belonging and intelligibility was produced, which, while indebted to visuality and cinema, must be understood in its mutual constitution through other related factors, including a the association of Jews in Israel with life (healthy bodies, reproduction, proper vision) and Arabs with death (disease, cultural backwardness, problems with vision and rationalization).

Achillé Mbembe explains how the historical trajectory of Zionism is better understood in terms of necropolitics, whereby Zionism's aligns becoming a national subject with a right to kill. "In this case," Mbembe writes of late-modern colonial occupation, "sovereignty means the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is *disposable* and who is not."[68] For Mbembe, the colonial occupation of Palestine is "the most accomplished form of necropower" in it's "combining of the disciplinary, the biopolitical, and the necropolitical."[69] Early examples of the association of the Arab population with death suggest the establishment of some of the terms of necropower locatable in a trajectory of early Zionist settlement and later Israeli military occupation, as well as the use of cinema as a technology of colonial occupation.

The Sabra describes not only an ideal type of person, but a particular process of becoming a subject through negation and struggle; in other words, the Sabra served as a figure through which to negotiate a variety of re-orientations of Jewishness in its threatening proximity to degeneracy and death. In necropolitical terms, the Sabra was a figure meant to project the death and degeneracy associated with Jews in anti-Semitic discourse onto the Arab population, who, through a contradictory and racist logic of social Darwinism and environmental determinism are marked for death through their own fault. Commenting on how dominant

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[68] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003): 27.
[69] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 27.

notions of Jewishness were closely related to ideas of non-normative gender and sexuality

forming around the turn of the century, and the specifically heterosexual construction of Sabra

masculinity, Yosef emphasizes the importance of sexual orientation in this analysis:

> Paradoxically, then, Zionism's (homo)phobia of the queer Jew and the Zionist movement's fantasy of a new heterosexual Hebrew male subject reinforced the same European anti-Semitic scientific-medical discourse that it tried to undo.[70]

In other words, as dominant academic and institutional notions of what constituted healthy

human bodies increasingly became understood in relation to dominant ideas about normative

gender and reproductive heterosexuality, the Sabra appeared intentionally formed in response to

ideas about Jewish queerness—thus the Sabra was understood as normatively masculine and

heterosexual from the perspective of European institutional thought.

In the introduction to *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question,* Daniel Boyarin, Daniel

Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini further establish how relational the figure of the Jew and the queer

are:

> Jewishness and queerness…are bound up with one another in resonant ways.   This crossover extends to the modern discourses of anti-Semitism and homophobia, with stereotypes of the Jew frequently underwriting pop cultural and scientific notions of the homosexual.[71]

Yosef, Massad, and Jasbir Puar are among recent scholars who have shown how Arab men have

come to take up a similar queer resonance in Israeli and U.S. popular culture, revealing that

racial, gendered, and sexual identities are never formed in isolation. In many ways, the Zionist

construction of a New (male, Ashkenazi or "white") Jew, evident in the construction of the

Sabra, attempted to sever the connection between Jewishness and queerness, and to shift the

definitional stress of "Jew" toward what European thinking would establish as the opposing

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[70] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 20.
[71] Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini, "Strange Bedfellows: An Introduction," *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 1.

binary terms: male, heterosexual, Occidental.

The dual project of re-building the self and the landscape became tied to particular ways of imagining subjectivity, embodiment and sexuality for Zionist discourse. Though aligned in many ways with dominant anti-Semitic discourse, Zionist re-imaginings of the Jewish man and a Jewish nation were never simply about racial difference. In other words, the Sabra was produced as "white" in relation to Zionist transformations in the embodiment of Jewish gender and sexuality, in addition to any characteristics that would mark him as civilized and modern in relation to Arab Palestinians. Yosef points out the relational construction of racialization and sexuality in this context, whereby "Zionist racial and racist discourse is not a byproduct or an effect of Zionist sexual politics, but actually a constitutive element of it."[72] Invocations of "queerness" in the historical context of Zionist and Jewish gender and sexual discourses should keep in mind, in other words, that the re-orientation of Jewishness did not rely on categories of normative gender and sexuality alone.[73] Boyarin argues as much through a discussion of Freud in which he suggests that "in the context of postcolonial theory, Freud's universalized theories of subjectivity, all centered on the phallus—the Oedipus complex, the castration anxiety, and penis envy appear as an elaborate defense against the feminization of Jewish men."[74] Yet Boyarin critiques Sander L. Gilman's "recoding of race *as* gender" in Gilman's reading of Freud "as responding to racism directed against Jews by displacing these differences onto an absolute (i.e. universal) difference between men and women."[75] Boyarin argues that although Freud had a

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[72] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh,* 14.

[73] David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 10.

[74] Daniel Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science,' "in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question*, eds. Boyarin, Daniel, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 185-186.

[75] Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science,'" 173.

critical opportunity to critique the dominant paradigms of gender and sexuality aligning Jews

with feminization, a gendered and racialized phallic lack, neither he, nor Fanon in this reading,

"make that move away from an ultimately Eurocentric, colonized universalism, to both

understand the antiphallus to which their colonized subject positions provides potentially

privileged access and then move to a political demystification of the phallus as representation

tout court."[76]

        A description by the Zionist poet Jacob Picard of the Sixth Zionist Congress highlights

this intersection of racialized and gendered discourse in the construction of the idea of the

properly masculine Jew:

> I saw Herzl amongst the others, although I did not hear him speak, but I heard Max
> Nordau with his square beard and his shrill, high-pitched voice. And how exciting I found
> the large statures of the Caucasian mountain Jews, very masculine and warlike with their
> ammunition belts slung diagonally across their breasts.[77]

While it would be easy to point to what seems to be both a homoerotic and homophobic affect in

this description, it is undergirded and inseparable from the racialized description of these

mountain Jews who fit the ideal type put forth by Nordau, himself described in derogatory

racialized and gendered terms by Picard. Indeed the ongoing process of establishing and

maintaining a certain kind of Jewish domination and belonging in Palestine today suggests that

queerness can shift from a seemingly dominant homophobia toward the contemporary situation

where Israeli state officials rely on a gay rights discourse to maintain legitimacy in the region

and to cast a different kind of queerness onto Palestinians, a casting which must be understood in

relation to the racialization of Arab Jews and Palestinians.

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[76] Boyarin, "Homophobia and the Postcoloniality of the 'Jewish Science,'" 180.
[77] Cited in Manfred Bosch, "'…and I Said to Myself, There is Something Great in Zionism,'" in
The First Zionist Congress in 1897: Causes, Significance, Topicality, ed. Heiko Haumann (New
York: Karger, 1997), 232.

Yosef remarks on the distinct homoerotics evident in Zionist poetry and cinematic imagery, like the bursting well in *Avodah,* that evoke the masculine pioneering body's working of the soil that releases the natural resources of the landscape.[78] They imply that the Sabra does not simply represent heterosexual masculinity. For Yosef, Sabra homoerotics suggests a certain masculine anality of the landscape that distinguishes it from the more common postcolonial reading of feminized "virgin" landscaped penetrated by masculine colonialists.[79] If the queerness implied in the notions of the land "laid waste" and the "degenerate" diasporic Jew together formed an implicit opposition to the New Muscle Jewry in Palestine, the opposing term to "queerness," and specifically the queerness of perceived Jewish gender non-normativity, was not necessarily precisely "heteronormative" or "heterosexual." In this way, queerness does not necessarily map onto what would then or now be understood (and by no means does "understood" mean to suggest a kind of stability was or is achieved through these terms) as homosexuality or gay identity, and suggests instead the need for a framework that attends to processes of national intelligibility, that is, to what gets cast as negative or unthinkable in the wake of positing or maintaining dominant and normative subjects and concepts of legibility, intelligibility and recognition.

Following Yosef, if a male homoerotics can be associated with the landscape's fertile reproductivity, I argue that a former queerness becomes attached to the landscape in its wasted, barren form, which is posited as queer *because* it is *neither* hetero- *nor* homo-normative. Given that Zionist and Holy Land discourse associate the land with either fertility or barrenness, the former queerness of the land during its period of non-Jewish settlement becomes aligned with the kind of supposed failed femininity and failed masculinity attributed to the Jew and the "queer" in

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[78] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 42.
[79] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh,* 10, 24.

medical and scientific discourse. The Sabra narrative compels the idea that the land wants to be worked, but had lacked both the masculine attention necessary, as well as the properly feminine or reproductive fertility, and that the Sabra is the masculine character able to take up this work. The land and its non-Zionist Jewish population become associated in this way with a kind of negativity hinging not only on notions of normative gender and sexuality, but on other racialized categories of civilizational hierarchy and value that suggest who belongs and who doesn't. Since this plays out in relation to the depiction of the landscape as much as in the depiction of the individual or collective pioneers, the focus on increased use of close-ups cannot fully explain the establishment of points out that "in Zionist medical discourse, the East's geography, climate, natural resources, and people were invented, time after time, as objects of death available for Zionist research and domination."[80] In the context of the 19th century when Jews were widely perceived as unhealthy, degenerate and queer, the Zionist campaign worked hard to associate the New Jewish pioneer in Palestine with any and all projects associated with rebirth, life, and fertility. Herzl, in his treatise on *The Jewish State*, for example, emphasized the importance of health and sanitation in preparing the Jewish people for nationhood, a familiar colonial sanitizing that emphasized the biopolitical aspect of Zionism's project of helping administer life to the British colonies.

Furthering the Sabra's imbrication in notions of the landscape and the founding of a Jewish nation through a rootedness in the land, the negativity associated with diasporic life was often given further figural and representational form in the idea of the uncultivated and irrational desert. The desert already held a particular place in imperial imaginaries, which Stephen Daniels describes in relation to the French Empire: "under the mantle of modern empire, and its material

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[80] Yosef, *Beyond Flesh*, 37.

power, the desert might be redeemed, restored to its former civilized glory. But, no less, the very wildness of the desert, its silences and vast horizons, might redeem the very materialism of modern France."[81] If the notion of the diasporic "wandering Jew" was associated with the shifting dunes and infertile sands of the desert, the Sabra appeared as the figure equipped to found civilization in the face of desertification of landscape and identity—he would lay down roads, plant forests, build permanent settlements, make the desert "bloom," and thereby "redeem" Jewry. Likewise, through sanitation projects closely linked to ownership and control of the landscape and population, a production of normative nationhood emerged to bring the Jews out of their association with death, with wandering, and with unhealthy and non-normatively gendered bodies. Furthermore, by administering to the Arab communities," the Zionist institutions, following the British colonial administration, could mark themselves as bringers of life, of caregivers for the land and the natives who did not know how to care for it or for themselves. Jewish Agency film *Behind the Blockade* (1947) notes, for instance, that "Arab infant mortality is lower near Jewish communities" due to "modern sanitation and science, This discourse served to associate Jewish children with life and redemption over and against not only the Diaspora ghetto conditions, but the supposedly anti-nurturing aspect of Arab culture, as well as the currently diseased state of the landscape.

That the Jews belonged properly in the Palestinian landscape was thus upheld both by environmental determinist explanations, as well as social Darwinist claims about the Arab population, marking them with a kind of un-belonging and death. While the Jews were understood to have degenerated due to the negative and unnatural environment of the European ghetto, for example, their cultural superiority would be proven through their ability to flourish in

[81] Daniels, *Fields of Vision*, 5-6.

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the Palestinian landscape, which would itself be renewed through the productive Jewish

pioneering effort. Though it would be easy to attribute a discourse of health and sanitation to a

kind of innate necessity of any nationalist discourse for strong, young, masculine bodies, it is

more apparent in the case of Jewish nationalism that all of these terms—racialization, gender and

sexuality—were in the process of reconfiguration toward creating recognizably normative terms

for Jewish national belonging.

Medical humanities and history scholar Sandra Sufian provides a heavily documented

and thoroughly researched context for the marsh-clearing projects which were undertaken in the

name of sanitation and health, but which gave further justification for the acquisition of

Palestinian land and the administration of life in Arab communities.[82] Not simply ignored or

excluded, the Arabs living nearby Jewish settlements were closely examined, studied, and tested.

Though at the same time represented as diseased as the threatening marshes themselves, Arabs

were also frequently understood to be innately immune to the diseases. Any justification could

be given to mark them as aliens on the landscape, or at least aliens to health, vitality and fertility.

Yoram Bar-Gal notes how the discourse of environmental determinism worked in contradictory

fashion to construct Arabs as innately sickly while at the same time associating the health of

Jews with the fertility of the land: "if it is the environment that produces health children, why are

the Arab children not as successful as the Hebrew children?"[83] As Bar-Gal notes, the

environmental determinist discourse could be supported with socially deterministic explanations:

"the Arabs corrupt their children and their health themselves."[84] In turn, this combination of

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[82] Sandra M. Sufian, *Healing the Land and the Nation: Malaria and the Zionist Project in Palestine, 1920-1947* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007).
[83] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education: The Jewish National Fund 1924-1947* (Rochester, NY: University of Rochester Press, 2004), 81.
[84] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 81.

seemingly contradictory explanatory frameworks could justify the Zionist transformation of the landscape while at the same time claiming in some ways to be borne of its natural state: "[the Jewish National Fund] even makes sure that what happened to Arab children (rolling around among bare rocks) will not happen to Hebrew children: the JNF is planting forests on the wastelands of Eretz Yisrael and is making the lands flourish."[85]

Bar-Gal describes a Jewish National Fund filmstrip of fifty slides on "The Hebrew child in the Land of Israel: How the Jewish settlement raise their children," which was produced for a Jewish audience in the Diaspora and meant to accompany a lecture, in terms of its construction of the exceptionality of the Hebrew child in contrast to the Diaspora and Arab child. In the transparency and lecture text cited by Bar-Gal, the negativity and death associated with the Arab child repeatedly aligns with a fascination with eye diseases, for example the "'filth, fleas, skin diseases, which often lead to blindness,'" as well as perceived problems of light and vision in the described natural environment. While the Jewish children grow "'under the wind-swept sunny sky,'" the Arab children are depicted (in the text of a transparency meant to be read aloud by the lecturer) "'rolling around among bare rocks, under the scorching rays of the sun, the babies among them with unprotected heads and all with bleary, diseased eyes.'"[86] In another comparison, a healthy dancing Jewish girl is to be shown "'next to *picture* no. 49—a Bedouin girl with an eye disease, also dancing her fantastic dance in the centre of the field."[87] In relation to both the children and the landscape, negativity becomes attached to visuality either through reference to eyesight or sunlight. This oscillation between positive and negative aesthetics when describing the landscape is similar to how the experience of immigrant artists was depicted in

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[85] Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 82.
[86] Cited in Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 81.
[87] Cited in Yoram Bar-Gal, *Propaganda and Zionist Education*, 82.

terms of the extent to which the landscape lent itself to accurate and positive representation on film (in the case of Freitas' letter) and in painting and sculpture (in the case of the pioneer artists discussed by Newman).

I argue then that the Sabra figure in Zionist discourse and visual culture served not only to re-orientate the gendered, racial, and sexual associations attached to Jewry and a Jewish homeland, but also to prioritize, naturalize and even nativize certain ways of seeing. In this way the Sabra can be located not only as a figure of the masculine Hebrew pioneer, but as a kind of locus of a proper re-orientation of race, gender, and sexuality aligned with a certain visual logic, which prioritized visual dominance over the landscape as well as an ability to recognize Jewish belonging in the landscape image. The Sabra is not just an image or representation himself, in other words, but represents a way of seeing that relied on visual and non-visual affirmations and re-orientations of Jewish belonging. The construction of certain ways of understanding and visualizing the landscape continues to be formative aspect of Israeli identity through a ritual called *Yediat Ha'aretz* that translates to "knowledge of the land," a process legible in the pedagogical narrative and formal construction of many "Palestine films."[88] The ritual primarily consists of school trips and nature walks, and a working knowledge (in Hebrew) of the variety of plant and animal life in Palestine. Orit Ben-David argues that post-statehood nature hikes are distinct from pre-statehood Zionist relationship which she describes as a "struggle against nature" that provided a basis for creating "legitimation" and a way to "reinforce their right to the land."[89] While blatantly ignoring even the possibility of shared or competing Arab Palestinian claims to the landscape, Ben-David suggests that Zionist "pioneers" shared with contemporary

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[88] Shohat, *Israeli Cinema,* 28.
[89] Orit Ben-David, "*Tiyul* (Hike) as an Act of Consecration of Space," in *Grasping Land: Space and Place in Contemporary Israeli Discourse and Experience*, eds. Eyal Ben-Ari and Yoram Bilu (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1997), 141.

Israeli hikers a desire to "mark out their possession," in part through co-opting Arab Bedouin language, cuisine, and dress and thereby "managing the impression of a greater sense of belonging."[90] This sense of belonging is intimately tied to that possessive visualization of the landscape as property, through which one could not only belong to the landscape, but belong to oneself—be one's *own* self through the ownership implied by the possession of the land.

In a similar fashion, Mark Dorrian explains how the inauguration of oblique aerial views of the landscape through painting and cartography was linked:

> to transformations in English society in the 18th century, the 'landscape idea' emerged as the privileged representational form of the new landowning class. Landscape imagery served an ideological function: it provided representations of land and nature that naturalised the claim and position of the new landholders.[91]

The sense of belonging established through the generation of the landscape "as an aesthetic object and as a zone of control" would need to be relearned and reiterated since at the same time that "the prospect is figured as a view that is grounded in a possessive, expropriating mode of vision" it necessitated "the estrangement of an observer who stood outside the landscape and looked in."[92] In other words, the process of Jewish belonging that must be learned and repeated through nature walks in Palestine can be understood in terms of its negotiations with otherness and through estrangement as much as with familiarity and possession. This marks a kind of ambivalence, for sure, but at the same time a dominant mode of knowledge was being reiterated nonetheless.

Offering a more self-critical reflection on nature hikes and "knowing the land," Israeli artist Larry Abramson describes his childhood experience: "I had been initiated into the

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[90] Orit Ben-David, "*Tiyul* (Hike) as an Act of Consecration of Space," 141 and 133.
[91] Mark Dorrian "The Aerial View: Notes for a Cultural History," *STRATES* 13 (2007), accessed December 2, 2012, http://strates.revues.org/5573.
[92] Dorrian, "The Aerial View."

landscape; and I had forged my link with a long chain of pioneers who had—like me—sacrificed their comfort to become one with the Land."[93] While "knowledge of the land" serves in part to nativize and naturalize Sabra and Israeli identity, it at the same time underscores the constructed-ness of nature and of national belonging since it a skill that must be learned and even adopted from others. Put another way, that dominant Zionist production of an arid and empty landscape allowed the Sabra to take root and re-orient Jewish identity, but the Sabras and pioneers were also given credit for "blooming" the land through which they built their own national identity. Through such a recursive process, the Sabra was always in the process building the landscape that built him. What can be readily "seen" or recognized in the landscape requires a specific knowledge adapted to promote Jewish belonging and to deny other forms of belonging.

Hence, for Abramson, a later process of *un*learning the geography of "knowledge of the land" caused a shift in his perception of a once familiar and gratifying landscape: "The pine forests, so enthusiastically donated by generations of Jewish children in the diaspora…and planted by the Jewish National Fund to 'make the wilderness bloom' *now looked* more like a Euro-centric desire to visually colonise the Levant, to conceal sites of depopulation, and to prevent Palestinian use of the land."[94] While the process of knowing the land was and largely still is considered a way to establish emotional and patriotic attachment by learning about topography in particular terms, the process was as much about un-learning those aspects of Jewish tradition and identity that became associated with the degeneration the Zionists hoped to leave behind. It must also be a way of not-seeing the landscape in ways that would not serve the Zionist vision—i.e. the fertility of native plants versus the acidic non-native pine tree. As Oz

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[93] Larry Abramson, "What Does Landscape Want? A Walk in W.J.T. Mitchell's Holy Landscape." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 50 (2009), 278.
[94] Larry Abramson, "What Does Landscape Want?," 280. Emphasis added.

Almog argues, unlearning actually undergirded much of the early Zionist discourse and visual culture as well:

> The pioneer's visual and verbal paean to the Israeli landscape—both the natural landscape and the landscape he domesticated—was also a way of saying that he had severed ties with the Diaspora's landscape and thus with its culture and had put down roots in his new homeland. It marked the pioneer's translocation from the "hell" of Diaspora to the "paradise" of the Land of Israel.[95]

Of course, again, the landscape in "the Land of Israel" was only described as "paradise" after Zionist intervention and the work of Jewish pioneers, or before the exodus of Jews thousands of years prior. Although Palestine in its depiction as an Oriental and Eastern landscape may have presented to Zionists what Ahmed refers to as "a lack"—where the Orient is all that the Occident is not, and in this case the Orient/Palestine is constructed as an empty space for Jewish reinvention—ambivalence over what aspects of Jewish identity would be recuperated and reinvented, in combination with the contradiction of a new/old homeland, together produced a certain anxiety over precisely what kind of orientation was being taken up in Palestine. Given that processes of national subjectivity are never finally determined or fixed, and thus always in the process of being taken up, this ambivalence, disorientation and at times even incoherence is in many respects iterated again and again in the reproduction of landscape and identity in constructing exceptional Jewish belonging in Palestine.

The Sabra was thus an ideal figure for organizing the intersecting terms of Jewish transformation, identity and topography, in visualizing terms, in part because of how the Zionist mastery of landscape seemed to be the condition through which it could become not only rationalized, controlled and possessed, but also the condition through which it could become beautiful and recognizable as a "landscape view" tied to norms of legitimate national belonging.

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[95] Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew,* trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 161.

In *Birthday of a Prophecy,* a film produced in 1947 that used a celebration of the UN decision to support Jewish nationalism as well as to solicit donations from a North American audience, the realization of the Zionist vision is quickly made literal through reference to a bust of Theodor Herzl and what he saw "with the brain behind these eyes." The "birthday of a prophecy" refers to the roughly fifty-year anniversary since Theodor Herzl described his vision of a future Jewish state. The twenty-minute 16mm color film, produced by the United Israel Appeal in New York City, includes a catalogue of landscape views, urban aerial and street shots of Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, close-ups of smiling Jewish immigrants and pioneers, workers in various trades from glass-blowing to textile production, and industrial and agricultural machinery. Three characters, a Polish immigrant, a Jewish Agency worker, and an American fundraiser, provide a creative frame narrative on the soundtrack accompanying these somewhat standard images for a Jewish Agency. Each discusses what they "see" in Palestine, and the fundraiser in Cleveland appeals to the American viewer by affirming his own connection to seeing Palestine only through film, "I'm not in these pictures, I'm 5,000 miles away in Cleveland, Ohio, but I too can see Herzl's dream coming alive." Emphasizing Zionism as *vision*, and specifically as a perspective on landscape and futurity, the film underscores that before the Jewish pioneer's (re-)arrival in Palestine, the "Holy Land" image was an image of the past and "not as an image of the future." On the image track, a camel pulls a cart past the static camera, and the next shot depicts an group of Bedouin while the narrator continues, "its sparse inhabitants clung to the past, the dim distant past, that constantly overshadowed the way they worked and lived…Herzl's' dream, they said, was a mirage." An wide shot of a mosque in the desert emphasizes the "sparse" atmosphere and the identity of inhabitants, although the film never mentions the words Arab, Bedouin, or any other term that might indicate that Palestine was indeed still populated by people other than the

newly arrived Jewish immigrants and the small population of Jews already living there.

The Jewish immigrant from Poland declares of his new homeland: "there is a view this time, a vista of peace and security, view of the landscape shown, a chance to work again, and as we build we build ourselves." As the Polish immigrant describes a "vista of peace," the camera pans across the side of an apartment building with balconies populated by Jewish men and women taking in the view. The relation between the sound track and the image track is markedly and almost distractingly didactic in their mutual confirmation, whereby the image primarily confirms the narration. For instance, the Jewish Agency worker, describing how her bureaucratic work with numbers supports productivity and state institutions, states that "our endless figures made it possible to turn a land of shepherds into a modern country…our planning and our people…for the people forged our numbers into reality." When she says the word "forged," speaking metaphorically, the image track, having just cut to an image of the Cluson Steel Works factory from the previous shots in a glass blowing factory, cuts to a series of medium close-up of two steel workers literally forging metal. After a few more shots of the steel workers' process, the narrator refers to "forging a new nation," furthering the metaphor. Throughout the film, cuts closely follow the cue of the soundtrack, seeming to reveal what the narrator has just described or is in the midst of describing. The literal and metaphoric sense of "vision" is emphasized throughout. Closely relating Jewish work in Palestine to self-work in stating "we build ourselves" with an ability to take in the "view of the landscape," the figure of the Sabra is called forth metaphorically through the film's emphasis on vision—in the narrator's question "what do you see?" in the inclusion of numerous aerial landscape images with commentary such as "these wasted shriveled lands could hardly support a modern nation," and in the realization of Zionism through the what is repeatedly emphasized as a process of visualization.

The many visual metaphors in the narration emphasize how this discourse works through, and not in spite of, contradiction. The Holy Land as a "sight" that should, but did not, "project[] an image of the future" is the first odd construction that suggests a hierarchy of images whose value is difficult to ascertain, similar to the contrast between Herzl's "dream" and the derogatory sense of "mirage." The past is posited in visual and spatial terms, as both "dim" and "distant," and as a place that the pitiable "sparse" inhabitants "clung to." Yet the valued "image of the future" doesn't clearly offer the clear contrast to the "dim" image of the past that the passage might intend to suggest. The counterpoint to those past-clinging inhabitants seems to be the fact that Herzl's dream turned out to be reality, not "mirage," and yet the "reality" of Holy Land is also implied to be a "sight" capable of producing further images. Dorrian elaborates on how the aerial view in particular—privileged in the many aerial shots of the desert, mountains, ports, and cities in *Birthday*—was established for imagining future, and specifically military, possibilities:

> This futurity in turn seems related to the military associations and functions of the oblique aerial view: the prospect is what the military general historically sought to command as it permitted the sighting of both the advance of enemy forces and a strategic overview from which the development of the battle could best be followed.[96]

The aerial landscape view works, in other words, not only in terms of spatial organization and control, but in terms of mobility and temporality, the ability to ensure certain spatial trajectories through a kind of visual confirmation of futurity (i.e. "there is a view this time," perhaps referring to the immanent declaration of Israeli statehood). The complicated and confusing layering of images, sights, and processes of seeing and knowing in *Birthday*'s narration suggests the importance of visualization to establishing terms of belonging, but in no simple terms.

In Jewish National Fund and Palestine Film Fund posters, leading up to and directly after statehood, a single Sabra figure provided a more simple and static depiction of the importance of

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[96] Dorrian "The Aerial View."

visualization and sight. The posters frequently situate a single Sabra figure in the foreground or looming in the background, shovel, weapon, or other tool in hand, with an extended view of the landscape, dotted and grid-like with new settlements and cultivated fields, behind and below him. Visual dominance is reflected through the Sabra's distinctly European and masculine features, which set him apart from caricatures of Diaspora Jewry, through the commanding and controlling view of the landscape. In Zionist films, this commanding view is represented not only through an increasing focus on the body of the toiling Jewish man in Palestine (or less often the image of women), but through an emphasis on advantageous perspectives and modes of surveillance. Towers, watchmen with binoculars, and aerial imagery make frequent appearances in Jewish agency films of the late 20s and early 30s. This ability to take up proper vantage points can be understood in the case of the Sabra, then, as a kind of cinemato-geographic process, whereby the cinema not only helped produce the empty landscape that served as a staging ground for Jewish reinvention, but secured the Zionist visual and spatial conquest of Palestine.

As already implied, however, "inevitably the oblique aerial view produces occluded or hidden zones within the representation." As Dorrian explains: "the spectator remains like the Duke of Wellington – a famous occupier of elevated positions – who remarked that he had spent his life trying to guess what was over the next hill."[97] Likewise, even the early formation of Sabra identity was not as mutually exclusive of the supposedly invisible indigenous Arabs as a model of exclusion might suggest. Oz Almog's work on Sabra identity, for example, describes the various ways that the New Jewish identity, while violently excluding and oppressing Arab Bedouins, was also closely modeled after them. Even the name "Sabra" takes the Arabic rather

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[97] Dorrian, "The Aerial View."

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than Hebrew word for the prickly pear cactus. Furthermore, the Sabras wore *keffiyehs*, rode Arabian horses, and so on.[98] Jewish actors even occasionally played Arabs in Zionist and Jewish-Israeli cinema, posing additional problems of proximity since, through what Carol Bardenstein calls "cross-casting" (a kind of racial passing), the Zionist Jewish Sabra would be presumed to have a kind of legibility as "Arab" to audiences abroad.[99] However, it is also likely that even if audiences were well aware of the cross-casting taking place, this knowledge would do little to challenge the ideological and negative stereotyping of Arabs, particular in the U.S. where virtually no other model was available. In other words, the regime of visuality that cast Palestinians in terms of unbelonging and a certain degree of unrecognizability was already well in place. This chapter has argued that the Jewish Agency "Palestine films" contributed to a larger visual culture, epitomized by the Sabra, that supported Jewish belonging in Palestine through discourses of spatial and temporal dominance, as well as through proper racialized, gendered and sexual orientations. The next chapter will build on this argument to emphasize the imbrication of architecture and landscape in this broad schema of recognition and visuality.

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[98] For more on the traits the Sabra modeled on the Arab natives, see Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew,* trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), though he spends little time on the influence of the Arab "other."

[99] Carol Bardenstein defines "cross-casting" as "the extra diegetic practice, outside of the narrative frame or plot of the film, of casting actors in particular roles and its effects", see Carol Bardenstein, "Cross/Cast: Passing in Israeli and Palestinian Cinema," in *Palestine/Israel and the Politics of Popular Culture,* ed. Rebecca Stein (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2005), 99.

4.0 CHAPTER THREE: CINEMATIC OCCUPATION

With its opening footage of a printing press producing a facsimile of the newspaper *The Palestine Post* proclaiming "Built in a Day," a 1938 Jewish Agency film of the same title, *Built in a Day*, sets forth as a story plucked from the headlines. As its title indicates, *Built in a Day* constructs a narrative loosely structured around the network of early 1930s Zionist settlements designed primarily for overnight construction. The proliferation of Jewish settlements throughout Palestine, in the over ten years after the Balfour Declaration that saw British and United States support for a Jewish National Home in Palestine, appears early on in the film as an increasing number of points on a map. Expanding networks of settlements spreading across ever-changing and Arabic-free maps are common in "Palestine films," marking a technique that helped establish a newsreel or documentary style. Emphasis on the speedy expansion of settlements, as well as their ability to maintain connection throughout the network complimented other commonly visualized contrasts such as Jewish pioneers on modern agricultural equipment and Arab farmers on slow-moving camels. Civilizational contrast forms a key implicit and explicit aspect of the Zionist "Palestine Films," particularly in their distribution within pro-Zionist networks through lecture circuits and other propaganda events. Take, for example, two of the edited chapter notes (which may have also been inter-titles) for the Palestine Film Fund Agency's version of the 1925 film *The Land of Promise*:

> 4. Jaffa has been transformed into a modern city resembling in many respects a bustling American town.

5. Contrast those scenes of progress with typical Arab section—unchanged throughout the centuries.[1]

Depictions of the construction of Jewish settlements and the "development" (in the historically Arab port city Jaffa, for example) of the land in "Palestine films" appropriated familiar perceptions of Palestine as desolate, past-oriented, and neglected due to years of Jewish absence.[2] Additionally, the comparison to a "bustling American town" shows how "Palestine films" could be tailored to suit British colonial and American Jewish and Protestant perceptions.

The opening titles of *Built in a Day*, appearing as text from a *Palestine Post* article, similarly frame the film's presentation of Jewish settlement building:

> There are many parts of Palestine, sandy waste and barren wilderness, where the land though bought by Jews, has not yet been settled…Young Jewish Pioneers—some little more than boys and girls—have pledged themselves to colonise these arid wastes by cooperative settlements. They will clear marshes, drain swamps, till the soil, bore wells for water and bring back to the land its long neglected fruitfulness.

Black matte frames, combined with a camera zoom on specific words narrow the visual focus of the *Post* article on the Tirat Zvi settlement. Following this textual confirmation of the film's ideological positioning, the Jewish pioneers set out—*Off They Go!*—in the Palestinian landscape, traversing the landscape on horseback. Superimposed on the passing landscape, the words "Barren wilderness" appear and disappear. Perhaps assuming the inability of images to simply speak for themselves, the large, bold English text, laid out to match the perspective lines of the landscape, renders the image hyper-legible (see Figure 1). This officious text provides the landscape with an odd kind of disembodied subjectivity—as if the land itself declares its own

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[1] Hillel Tryster, *Israel Before Israel: Silent Cinema in the Holy Land*, (Jerusalem: Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive of the Avraham Harman Institute of Contemporary Jewry, Hebrew University of Jerusalem and the Central Zionist Archives, 1995), 108.
[2] See Mark Levine*, Overthrowing Geography: Jaffa, Tel Aviv, and the Struggle for Palestine 1880-1948* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2005).

neglect and hails the pioneers, naming itself in terms that affirm their pioneering intervention. As speech attributed to the landscape, it appears as a cry for salvation and a return to its former fertility, having been "laid waste" and infertile since Jewish exile. This is a landscape wanting to be worked.

Comparing colonial discourses surrounding the "holy landscape" of Palestine to the Western United States, W.J.T. Mitchell argues that landscape becomes an idol; "that is, a potent, ideological representation that serves to naturalize power relations and erase history and legibility."[3] In light of Mitchell's analysis, the "Barren wilderness" landscape image compounds, even as it reveals, its ideological function. In other words, even though the text *lays bare* the Zionist ideological naming of the landscape as "barren," this explicit propaganda does little to undermine what Mitchell describes as landscape's ability to "naturalize power."

In their introduction to *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision* editors Diane Harris and D. Fairchild explain how landscape achieves a kind of ahistorical essence:

> Landscape is 'always already there' and thus seems not to have been created but simply to *be*, not a constructed form but rather a preexisting or even primordial one. It appears above all 'natural' because it is composed of plants, soil, geological formations, sunlight, and water and because it seems to exist in the absence of human management or design.[4]

Given landscape's apparently inherent and non-ideological character, it also forms a seemingly natural relationship to truthful representation. For this reason, the authors argue "of all the media and genres of imagery, landscape is the one that makes the constitutive blindness and invisibility of the visual process most evident."[5] As Tom Gunning writes of the emergence of cinema and its relation the landscape tradition in painting, "too often, discussion of landscape in cinema simply

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[3] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness" *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000), 194.
[4] Diane Harris and D. Fairchild, eds. *Sites Unseen: Landscape and Vision* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2007), 3.
[5] Harris and Fairchild, *Sites Unseen,* 35.

assume films, at least certain films, *contain* landscapes, positing a simple transfer of visual

principles and effects from canvas to cinema screen."[6] As Gunning argues, cinema "transformed

the possibilities of landscape, both as a form of imagery and a way of experiencing nature."[7]

Extending this argument, if landscape is a mode of seeing and not just an object of visualization,

it is also a technology imbricated in the visual and spatial logics of control and intelligibility that

I argue continually shape the landscape and the idea of Palestine.

Yet, if landscape *appears* self-evident, the interpretation of landscape imagery enters a

tricky critical realm regarding the notion of surface versus depth readings. When the text "Barren

wilderness" appears on the surface of the landscape image in *Built in a Day* (the text flashes on

and off several times as the camera pans across a field of scrubs or grass), for example, it is the

surface of the landscape image, which is also the surface of the filmic image, that is given visual

priority. Rather than inviting the viewer to imagine the depth of the landscape using cinema's

illusionist and realist potential, the text calls attention to the surface of the filmstrip and to what

might then appear as a perspectival trick, since the text appears to lay flat on the ground and

recede into the background. Inviting a reading of the surface of the image that appears obvious—

i.e. the text seems to repeat what can already be "read" in the image—Zionist colonization and

"development" of the landscape is naturalized and embedded precisely, and seemingly

paradoxically, by exploiting the surface of the landscape image. In this way, the film invites what

Mitchell refers to as a "surface model" that orients analysis toward "the remarkable capacity of

the surface of landscape to open up false depths, selective memories, and self-serving myths."[8]

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[6] Tom Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures: Early Cinema's Phantom Rides," in *Cinema and Landscape: Film, Nation, and Cultural Geography,* eds. Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010), 35. Emphasis added.
[7] Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures," 35-36.
[8] Mitchell, "Holy Landscape," 195.

Yet, by using text to direct the viewer toward a narrow and official interpretation of the image, the technique also reaffirms a kind of raw illegibility associated with the apparently unaltered landscape, furthering the sense that the landscape *requires* interpretation and rationalization, just as much as it desires to be worked upon.

The new "conspicuous legibility" of the barren landscape with the superimposed text suggests a similar logic to the a Balzacian detective story described by D.A. Miller in which "what had seemed natural and commonplace comes all at once under a malicious inspection, and what could be taken for granted now requires an explanation, even an alibi."[9] Suggesting the "sense that the world is thoroughly traversed by techniques of power to which everything, anything gives hold," the word/image combination emphasizes that the landscape has been placed under multiple forms of scrutiny—visualization, valuation, and plans for development among them. [10] Like the nineteenth century novel as described by D.A. Miller, the narration of disciplinary power "bases its interpretive mastery on minutiae…that it elaborates into 'telling' details," much like the overt "telling" of the text "barren landscape."[11] The seemingly natural landscape, as well as the seemingly legible landscape image on film, is visualized through this additional level of suspicion and detection, which for Miller shows "disciplinary power to inhere in the very resistance to it."[12] If a landscape image without text is worrisomely open to interpretation, thus potentially resistant to disciplinary power, the text underscores its potential to be articulated as discourse that proliferates justifications action. And so, once the "conspicuous legibility" and "alibi" of the "barren wilderness" has been established, *Built in a Day* describes the task of the Jewish pioneers: "They will clear marshes, drain swamps, till the soil, bore wells

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[9] Mitchell, "Holy Landscape," 195.
[10] Mitchell, "Holy Landscape," 195.
[11] D.A. Miller, *The Novel and the Police* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 29.
[12] Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 27.

for water and bring back to the land its long neglected fruitfulness."

Reflecting how the alibi for the landscape's improvement was continually reproduced in terms of conspicuous legibility, The Jewish National Fund, whose other visual propaganda repeated similar "barren wilderness" themes, would post-statehood reposition itself primarily as a conservationist environmental organization, since land acquisition was no longer directly approached as such. Considering the historical context of *Built in a Day,* the phrase "barren wilderness" speaks primarily to the dominant Zionist narrative at that time to settle, transform, rationalize and utilize, rather than the later reframing of that discourse as a conservationist initiative to preserve and maintain "wilderness." Yet, the contemporary conservationist angle of the Jewish National Fund only obscures its continued function of further land annexation and control of natural resources, in part marking a shift from a colonial to a neo-colonial discourse.[13] In both cases, the landscape and the landscape image are lent "conspicuous legibility" so that their interpretation fits the official narration of their use. This shift in discourse is evident in other aspects of Zionism's trajectory before and after statehood, for example in the shift from a more clearly colonial pathology discourse regarding supposed biological differences between the New Jewish pioneers and the indigenous Arab Palestinian population, to a neo-colonial social Darwinist discourse around the cultural difference of, for example, the contemporary Bedouin

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[13] For example, Jewish National Fund afforestation leads to the establishment of tree laws that allow the state to take over so-called uncultivated land, to raze pre-1948 Palestinian villages and their ruins (that in some place still visible in national parks), and to destroy Bedouin encampments through projects supposedly seeking to slow desertification. See the Jewish National Fund's current website (http://www.jnf.org/)for more on their "conservation" discourse. Related to this discourse is a similar one regarding land supposedly, as W.J.T. Mitchell writes, "'given' to the Palestinians, with one catch. It is not to be developed. It is to be left as a 'nature preserve'—in short, a landscape to be seen but not touched, not dwelled upon." See W.J.T. Mitchell, "Holy Landscape: Israel, Palestine, and the American Wilderness," *Critical Inquiry* 26 (2000): 207. On the continued conflict over trees in legal, political and cultural spheres, see Irus Braverman, *Planted Flags: Trees, Land, and Law in Israel/Palestine* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 2009).

population seen by the Israeli state as needing to assimilate to modern modes of urban living and citizenship.

In *Built in a Day*, the conquest, development, and settlement of "barren wilderness" is emphasized in close relation to what is depicted in the film as the hostile and dangerously proximate indigenous/invader Bedouin population "and others," which serve to dramatize the settlement-building narrative:

> But [the Jewish pioneers] cannot begin this work unless from the very first day they are able to defend themselves from attack by raiding Bedouins and others. THEY HAVE THUS TO BUILD A FORTIFIED HOMESTEAD IN A SINGLE DAY!

Linking the landscape in its neglected state to the indigenous population, both appear out of place—as strangers in their own land. Consequently, when indigenous Palestinian Bedouins and Arabs do appear in pre-state Zionist films, what is presented as their inability to understand the value of the landscape—explaining both their neglect and their willingness to sell to Jewish Agencies—is posited as yet another symptom of their inability to imagine themselves as "a people" or "a culture."

The construction of proper (Zionist, British, colonialist) versus failed (Arab Palestinian, Bedouin, native) vantage points can be found in the early Zionist film as well as in later Israeli films depicting those time periods of Jewish settlement and Zionist Jewish Agency land acquisition and institution-building. It is particularly evident in the 1961 Israeli film *They Were Ten*, which depicts a scene nearly identical to *Built in a Day* but with a crucial difference. Produced in the early 1960s but set prior to the British Mandate in Palestine, *They Were Ten* was described by one U.S. reviewer as:

> An Israeli counterpart of an American Western, this one set on the frontier of Palestine back in the late nineteenth century when that ancient country was under control of the

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Turks.[14]

In *They Were Ten*, an Arab Sheik, ultimately emphasized as inherently greedy and cunning in the narrative, proclaims to the Jewish settlers that the Palestinian landscape they are entering is fertile and beautiful. However, during this voice-over speech, a quite contradictory image of a desert landscape appears. As Ella Shohat explains, "the contradiction between the arid 'reality' on the image track undercutting the 'unreal' accusation of the Sheik is further underlined by a rhetorical panning of the camera along the desert sands following the Sheik's monologue."[15] Furthermore, and extending Shohat's observation, the "reality" is marked as such insofar as the proper way of seeing the image is aligned with the Zionist Jewish appreciation and knowledge of the land, in contrast to the Arab Sheik's apparent inability to see or to cultivate the land properly. The Sheik's later complaint over Jewish immigration is rendered illegible precisely through a filmic construction of his flawed vision, one that contradicts the self-evident perspective of the narrative and the way of seeing it promotes. Following the officious narration, the viewer presumably cannot visually verify the Sheik's description of the landscape, and the apparently self-evident mismatch between the Sheik's speech and the landscape image aligns the viewer with a proper way of looking at and knowing the land. This is not to say that other ways of viewing this landscape, as fertile (especially for native plants) and *not* barren, for instance, are impossible or even unlikely. I am interested in how this kind of example underscores the construction of particular ways of seeing and recognizing, which required reiteration precisely because they are not self-evident. So while there may be a rhetoric of the image's veracity, it is undermined by techniques such as the super-imposed text in *Built in a Day* and the voice-over

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[14] Bosley Crother, "*Heym Hayu Assara* [*They Were Ten*] (1960)," *New York Times*, April 18, 1961.

[15] Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989), 39-40.

narration in *They Were Ten.*

Though the example in *They Were Ten* more literally associates the native Arab in

Palestine with flawed vision and misrecognition, popular Oriental landscape imagery from the

late nineteenth and early twentieth century depicting native people as aspects of the landscape

produces a similar effect. In popular postcards, tour guide illustrations, and posed photography,

Palestinian Arabs (or Jewish actors playing Arabs) appear in the foreground, and serve as a

frame-within-a-frame for a more expansive view.[16] Such framing of the Orientalized native's

vision within a larger frame (particularly if the figures are also turned toward the view) suggests

a hierarchy of vision.[17] Since the viewer's perspective *sees the native seeing*, the landscape

rendered cannot represent the native's sight, but rather belongs to the figure *behind* the native

(the viewer) who envisions the native as part of a landscape scene. Mitchell further explains how

indigenous people become tied in this way to certain ways of thinking about perception and

landscape:

> The primitive or aboriginal dweller on the land (the "pagan" or "rustic" villager) is seen
> as part of the landscape, not as a self-consciously detached viewer who sees nature for its
> own sake as the Western observer does. In addition, the native dweller is seen as
> someone who fails to see the material value of the land, a value that is obvious to the
> Western observer. The failure of the native to exploit, develop, and "improve" the
> landscape is, paradoxically, what makes it so valuable, so ripe for appropriation.[18]

The failure of the indigenous Palestinian Arab to take up a proper vantage point suggests an

inability to recognize either aesthetic or capital value in the landscape, and perhaps even the

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[16] Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures*,"* 59 and 62. Gunning discusses
such figures in relation to Native American *staffage*, "a long tradition of Indian *staffage* figures
contemplating the landscape, providing a recognizable allegory not only of wilderness, but of a
vanishing past."

[17] One notable instance appears in a *Guide to Israel* tourist guide first published in 1955, and
several other examples can be found in the paintings, postcards, and "valuable plate" collections
in Hisham Khatib, *Palestine and Egypt Under the Ottomans: Paintings, Books, Photographs,
Maps and Manuscripts* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003).

[18] Mitchell, "Holy Landscape," 198.

inability to see the landscape *as* landscape. Scholar of literature, history and art in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain John Barrell explains the emergence of the idea of landscape, whereby even "a person of much education in the eighteenth century would have found it very hard, not merely to describe land, but also to see it, and even to *think* of it as a visual phenomenon, except as mediated through particular notions of form."[19] Using the word "landscape," rather than terrain for example, "we introduce, whether we want to or not, notions of value and form which relate, not just to seeing the land, but to seeing it in a certain way— pictorially."[20] As James R. Ryan points out in his study of British Empire photography and visualization, "the concept of 'landscape' include that of 'view' and operated within a number of contexts, including artistic genre and scientific record," and he cites a great deal of exchange between those realms as well.[21] In this way, to look upon a landscape, either as picturesque or in its potential for rationalist and scientific civilization, already implied a privileged position. Indeed, the "very idea of Empire depended in part on the idea of landscape, as both controlled space and the means of representing such control."[22] Yet, while Ryan emphasizes how British photographers in the late nineteenth century "disguised their dependence on pictorial convention in order to promote photography as an objective record of sight, in the process reinscribing imperial landscape as a natural way of seeing," the seeming exposure of certain pictorial codes and conventions on the surface of the film in *Built in a Day* and *They Were Ten* suggest a slightly different model.[23]

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[19] John Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840: An Approach to the Poetry of John Clare* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 2.
[20] Barrell, *The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place 1730-1840*, 1.
[21] James R. Ryan, *Picturing Empire: Photography and the Visualization of the British Empire* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 47.
[22] Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 46.
[23] Ryan, *Picturing Empire*, 47.

Depictions of the native Palestinian Arab's flawed vision, as well as images that direct a narrow ideological interpretation of the landscape, further the justification for the Zionist and British colonial intervention of a variety of "modern" technologies changing the face of the landscape, while at the same time they underscore the discursive and visual constructedness of that project. It seems to matter little, in other words, that films like *Built in a Day* and *They Were Ten* emphasize their own production of the native's vision and anachronism in colonialist terms. The cinematic construction of a "barren wasteland" in *Built in a Day* underscores how cinema, even through a contradictory self-exposure of ideological construction, makes landscape available to be imagined in particular ways, and in this case in ways that uphold Jewish national belonging and deny belonging to Palestinians. Moreover, this discursive and visual construction of the barren landscape was not only a key tool of Zionist settlement of Palestine, particularly since it provided the justification for specifically Jewish development and improvement of the land; it also helped establish certain dominant ways of seeing and intelligibility that serve as foundations for normative Israeli belonging today (discussed further in Chapter 4). Perhaps because Zionists were keen to promote the transformation of the landscape, which was seen to have fallen from a kind of ancient picturesque natural beauty into current disrepair, they did not need to disguise the codes and means of the construction of a re-visualization or representation of the view.

Cinema, in this context, does not simply reflect or passively participate in visual and spatial strategies of occupation through its propagandistic function; rather I would argue that it ought to be understood as a technology and a mode of visualization that consolidates, furthers, and contributes to the set of relations and material realities of Zionist settlement, and later Israeli occupation of Palestine. Cinema, in this analysis, takes on an expanded meaning not only in

terms of understanding its relation to historical conditions and sites of influence, but also in its

form. This chapter explores the fragmentation and dispersal of cinema and cinematic technology

across media to examine its diverse roles in relation to Zionism, Israeli occupation, and

Palestinian society, and emphasizes cinema's inter-relatedness with architecture, remote-sensing

surveillance technologies, landscape and geography, photography and painting, and in the

dominant visual and spatial logics and discourses that surround and inform each of these. I use

two main tropes, which are also concrete sites of power, of visuality and spatiality to guide this

expanded understanding of cinema that are bound up with the linked history of Zionism, Jewish

and Palestinian belonging, and cinema—the Wall and the Tower.

4.1   THE TOWER AND THE VERTICAL IMAGE

Jewish settlements in Palestine, which are the main subject and financial beneficiary of early

Zionist films like the 1938 *Built in a Day,* are bound up with the history of cinema not only

because of the financial support they received through Jewish Agency films and their subsequent

propaganda function, but also through their use of proto-cinematic technologies. In the mid-

1930s, Zionist architects and planners initiated a settlement design that can be detected in the

architectonics of the contemporary Separation Barrier and international court declared illegal

(and moreover unjust) Jewish settlements. *Homa Umigdal,* or Wall and Tower, was conceived of

as more than a style of settlement architecture, it was a "system of settlement" that Israeli

architect and scholar Sharon Rotbard characterizes as "seemingly defensive but essentially of

offensive form," and that was initiated in 1936 on land purchased by the Jewish National Fund.

The militaristic settlement outposts included housing for a "'conquering troop' of forty people,"

a quickly constructed wall of wood, gravel, and barbed wire, and a pre-fabricated tower."[24]

These key elements of the settlements suggest a preoccupation with managing problems of

distance, such as the relative distance between the settlements as well as the perceived proximity

of enemies. As Rotbard describes, the "primary tactical" purpose of a Wall and Tower

settlement required not only that it should be built in a single day or night, but that "it had to be

situated *within sight* of other settlements and be accessible to motor vehicles."[25] With the added

help of proto-cinematic communication and surveillance technologies such as light projectors,

flashlights, mirrors, and Morse code, settlement outposts quickly formed a network, in part

through visual connection over long distances.

Through the consistency of their design, the settlements were even more striking when

visualized—photographed, filmed, drawn, or imagined—from the aerial perspective. They

achieved further visual control and strategic vantage points through enclosed towers that allowed

for a commanding view of the surrounding landscape and that was seen to enhance fortification

and connection. Emphasizing the importance of the visualization of an expanding network of

settlements in Zionist films (see Figure 2), Rotbard explains the function of the proliferation of

settlements as points on a map:

> As a strategy, *Homa Umigdal* realized the impulse for expansion through territorial
> conquests by establishing new 'settlement points', a term that in itself hints at the fact
> that the 'point' on the map was more important than the 'settlement' itself. The location
> of the settlement as part of a greater strategic plan was of greater importance than its
> actual existence, and the location was determined according to optimal vantage points:
> the *Homa Umigdal* network was spread out in such a way that every outpost had eye
> contact with another.[26]

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[24] Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, eds. *A Civilian Occupation: The Politics of Israeli Architecture*
(Tel-Aviv-Jaffa and London: Babel and Verso, 2003), 42.
[25] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation*, 43. Emphasis added.
[26] Sharon Rotbard, "Wall and Tower," in *A Civilian Occupation,* eds. Rafi Segal and Eyal
Weizman (Tel-Aviv, New York: Babel, Verso), 48.

In other words, the strategy of maintaining commanding vantage points was built into nearly every aspect of the settlement design, particularly the design's emphasis on speedy multiplication and connection to a larger network. *Built in a Day* renders such a strategy cinematically recognizable by using animated map images that appear in the overtly didactic opening sequences to frame the narrative of a single settlement's construction.

Tailoring settlement construction to achieve maximum visual control and fortification, Wall and Tower settlements were intended to achieve "optimal vantage points." In the early part of the twenty-first century, settlement networks continue to expand, and the speed of the construction of the Separation Barrier has struggled to keep up to trace what become defacto borders of Israel. The contemporary mountaintop Jewish settlements in the West Bank, which form concentric circles around the apex of a mountain or hill, fulfill strategic political goals and serve as military surveillance sites. Rotbard argues that this mix of civilian and military operations in the contemporary settlements constitute "a military operation camouflaged in civilian clothes, civilians recruited under the patronage of the army."[27] Indeed, many settlers willingly take on the dual obligation of defense (by carrying weapons) and control (through surveillance afforded by the hilltop location). From this protected vantage point, settler-soldiers can shoot from their position while remaining shielded and hidden by the Barrier themselves; a tactic Paul Virilio has called the "art of hiding in order to see."[28] The spectacular visual presence of modern hilltop settlements similarly serves as a deterrent, insofar as it establishes visual control over low-lying Palestinian villages, prompting Israeli architecture critics Eyal Weizmann and Rafi Segal to characterize settlements as "optical devices, designed to exercise control

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[27] Sharon Rotbard, "Wall and Tower," 52.
[28] Paul Virilio, *War and Cinema: The Logistics of Perception* (London: Verso, 1989), 49.

through supervision and surveillance."[29] Similarly, Weizman notes the red-tile roof standard of

the settlement homes, which from the aerial view reaffirms Jewish presence throughout Israel

and in strategic positions in the West Bank (particularly when compared to the organic shape and

natural color of traditional Palestinian Arab towns).[30] The internationally illegal and officially

"unrecognized" settlements effectively alter the route of the Barrier, which snakes within the

West Bank to protect these enclaves that serve equally as fortresses and watchtowers. Further,

the settlements and their vantage point support the early dominant Zionist and European-colonial

ways of viewing Palestine that continue to inform Israeli state policy toward, and dominant

justifications for, the strategic appropriation of land for Jewish settlement and for maintaining a

Jewish majority, one that can be easily visualized in ever-fragmented and contested maps.

Not surprising in its paradox, the way of seeing suggested by the Wall and Tower design

is fully shot through with blind spots and other manifestations of not-seeing. While towers allow

a more privileged vantage point through sightlines that connect a network of settlements and

transform them into military force, walls seemingly obstruct the view of the very landscape that

the settlement project sought to control. The figure of the Sabra, the masculine icon of New

Jewish nationalism in Zionist discourse that was reiterated through the Jewish Agency films

(discussed in Chapter 2), similarly exemplifies the contradictory logic of Zionism in Palestine.

Though the Sabra was envisioned as the New Jewish native taking root in his new/old country,

the Sabras could also be spotted in towers, keeping guard over the landscape obscured by the

walls on the ground and more readily available to the oblique view from the tower (see Figure 3).

It was this view afforded by the tower that would seem to reassure the formation of a unified

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[29] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation*, 86.
[30] Sina Najafi and Jeffrey Kastner, "The Wall and the Eye: An Interview with Eyal Weizman," *Cabinet* 9 (Winter 2002/3), accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/9/wall.php.

Jewish national belonging, since only from that vantage point could the individual settlement make contact with the larger expanding network. But the supposedly necessary vantage point would also to some extent uproot the Sabra and place him in an ambivalent relationship to the landscape he was supposed to be born from.

Privileging aerial vantage points suggests a particular perceptual logic that emerged with the early Zionist settlement plans and continues to shape contemporary Israeli national discourse today through a reliance on satellites, missile defense systems, and remote-controlled drones, to name a few. Zionist discourse has for a long time attended a particular fascination, in other words, with what Mark Dorrian calls "the vertical image," which Dorrian argues emerged through new cinematic and photographic technologies and their use in military reconnaissance in World War I with the "strategic linkage of the camera with heavier-than-air aircraft".[31] For the Jewish Agency funded settlement of Palestine, the tower inaugurates the dominance of the aerial perspective and the vertical image in the visual and spatial logic of Zionist settlement and later Israeli military and civilian occupation. While the "oblique view" already supported visual regimes of control in its ability to "look down upon" the world below, the vertical aerial view was "uniquely non-aesthetic, non-auratic, instrumental, disenchanted, and technical – by virtue of its gaze directly downward onto the ground, by virtue of its historic relationship with photography, and because of the specific historical conditions of its emergence in World War I," and thus raises important ethical questions. Paul Saint-Amour, for example, describes how aerial perspectives diminish and dissolve individual bodies, which are "made visually contiguous with the material fabric of the city as viewed from above."[32] Such an "aesthetics of the surface," as

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[31] See Mark Dorrian, "The Aerial View: Notes for a Cultural History," *STRATES* 13 (2007), accessed December 2, 2012. http://strates.revues.org/5573.
[32] Paul Saint-Amour, "Modernist Reconnaissance," *Modernism/modernity* 10.2 (2003): 352.

Susan Buck-Morss argues, "gives back to the observer a reassuring perception of the rationality of the whole of the social body, which when viewed from his of her own particular body is perceived as a threat to wholeness."[33] In other words, while the vertical perspective of the Separation Barrier, from satellite imaging for example, and its visible organization of the landscape reveals such a unifying effect through the appearance of brightly demarcated borders, the horizontal perspective tends to offer less-reassuring way of seeing, such as when one faces the towering bald concrete wall or electrified fence. Visible from many miles up, concrete borders presumably reassure Zionist-Israelis about the defense and the continued existence of the State of Israel, which is rhetorically under constant threat. Thus the red-rooftop standard of Jewish settlements in the West Bank, as well as their concentric circle layout on mountaintops, suggests the continued investment in architecture and settlement as nationalist visual spectacle, "an assertive, dominant and spectacular presence."[34] Such aerial perspectives follow in a longer tradition of visualizing otherness by establishing distinctions between fields of perception, and therefore value hierarchies. As an example of this kind of valuing at work in the touristic visualization of Egypt, tourists went "to extraordinary lengths both to produce and to police boundaries between the observer and the observed: to enforce the distance and detachment necessary to obtain 'perspective.'"[35]

Yet, while aerial perspectives can be said to unify a social body that is reassuringly rationalized and protected, the individual Jewish-Israeli body on the ground is construed as constantly under threat from viewing potential enemies. In other words, while the logistics of the

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[33] Susan Buck-Morss, "Aesthetics and Anaesthetics: Walter Benjamin's Artwork Essay Reconsidered," *October* 62 (1992): 35.

[34] Segal and Weizman, *Civilian Occupation,* 47.

[35] Derek Gregory, "Emperors of the Gaze: Photographic Practices and Productions of Space in Egypt, 1839-1914," in *Picturing Place: Photography and the Geographical Imagination* ed. Joan M. Schwartz and James R. Ryan (London: I.B. Tauris, 2003), 211.

gaze enacted by hilltop settlements can be said to organize and rationalize the landscape, the view from the particular Jewish-Israeli body of Palestinian villages still acts as a threat to wholeness. In light of this, encircling Palestinian communities through the construction of the Separation Barrier can be understood, in part, as an attempt to frame the problem and contain the threat. In mainstream Israeli political discourse, the threat is "demographic" because of a growing Palestinian population with Israeli citizenship, as well as a large non-citizen migrant worker population, who are not demarcated by borders or a wall but through legal measures meant to protect the state's Jewish identity.

One of many examples of this dual containment and re-drawing of the physical, legal, and conceptual borders of the state is the case of Al Wallaja, a Palestinian village near Jerusalem. Al Wallaja resident and activist Sheerin al Araj is considered by Israel as a "present-absentee" since although her family was forced to flee their village in 1948, they returned and lived in nearby caves for over a decade to prevent becoming permanent internally displaced refugees. After the settlements Gilo and Har Gilo were constructed on parts of al Wallaja, the Separation Barrier also began construction, and not on the hillside of the settlements, but on the opposite hillside, inside the Green Line, and cutting through al Wallaja cemeteries and the grounds around homes. An article from *Electronic Intifada* describes al Araj's situation in 2012 in telling terms invoked by al Araj herself: "her house is trapped in between a settlement on one side, an Israeli-only road on another. A tunnel to connect the two runs under her house. She jokes that she will build her house upwards just to infuriate the authorities."[36]

This idea of building upwards as the only, even if absurd and unviable, option left for

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[36] Tanzil Chowdhury, "'Present absentee' keeps fighting against Israel's wall in al-Walaja," *The Electronic Intifada* April 18, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012, http://electronicintifada.net/content/present-absentee-keeps-fighting-against-israels-wall-al-walaja/11173. I met al Araj in January 2012.

Palestinians has been taken up elsewhere. Eyal Weizman describes the three-dimensional aspect

of the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza in which Israel controls the airspace and the

underground aqueducts.[37] Palestinians have only enclaves of self-governance (Area A, the

smallest portion of the West Bank, is the only area left to Palestinian Authority civil and security

control), and in the West Bank Jewish and settler-only highways pass over and under Palestinian

towns, which are already encircled by the Separation Barrier and the hilltop settlement-

watchtowers. The concept of a contiguous Palestinian nation-state has in this way been rendered

nearly impossible to imagine, thus complicating even further the notion of discrete national

identities and areas separated by clear borders.

Contemporary Palestinian artist Larissa Sansour's photographic series *Nation Estate*

similarly draws from the increasingly strained possibility of a contiguous and grounded

Palestinian state. Her photographs became well known in part due to controversy around its

source of funding, since although *Nation Estate* was initially nominated for a Lacoste-sponsored

Swiss Musée de l'Elysée photography prize, which means her project was pre-approved and

provided funding for its completion, the nomination was rescinded for political reasons. Sansour

was asked to announce that she had decided to pull out of the competition after Lacoste

complained the work was too pro-Palestine and contradicted the prize's theme of "joie de vie,"

even though artists were encouraged to respond to that theme with full artistic license.[38] The

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[37] Eyal Weizman, "Politics of Verticality," *Open Democracy* April 23, 2002, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.opendemocracy.net/conflict-politicsverticality/article_801.jsp. Also see Sina Najafi and Jeffrey Kastner, "The Wall and the Eye: An Interview with Eyal Weizman," *Cabinet*, Issue 9 (Winter 2002/3), accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.cabinetmagazine.org/issues/9/wall.php.

[38] Arsalan Mohammed, "Artist Larissa Sansour Speaks Out About Her Ejection From the Lacoste Art Prize for Being 'Too Pro-Palestinian,'" *ARTINRO: International Edition*, December 21, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.artinfo.com/news/story/754484/artist-larissa-sansour-speaks-out-about-her-ejection-from-the-lacoste-art-prize-for-being-too-pro-palestinian.

Nation Estate is a series of digitally manipulated photographs depicting an imaginary high-rise luxury apartment building in which each floor houses a different Palestinian town, layering a national geography otherwise fragmented and denied nation-state or "nation estate" status. Suggesting the need for a structure that would both contain, nurture and allow for growth for a Palestinian national space, the image "Olive Tree" has Sansour watering a single olive tree that appears to have pushed through the concrete floor of a fluorescent-lit industrial style flat, with a view of the al Aqsa directly out the large window. Another image has Sansour stepping off the elevator on the third floor, "Jerusalem" or "PL3," where the al Aqsa mosque appears immediately accessible to the viewer/visitor under the high ceiling and placed directly on the floor's surface.[39]

Nation Estate suggests that possibilities for visualizing a Palestinian state exclude the more traditional sort of mapping that emphasizes connection through a visualizable network of points enclosed by distinct borders. That said, this imagined three-dimensional tower has its own quality of flatness—since it would be built upwards, an aerial view (from a satellite or aerial vehicle, for example) would conceal the topographic details of each town stacked up and concealed within a single structure of the high-rise. Presumably, the Nation Estate from the non-stereoscopic aerial view would appear as a flat rectangular shape, quite distinct from the typical topographic lines determined by political and geographic factors. This view would conceal the details of each region, offering a fantasy of privacy through the housing of entire cities in a single building, invoking a different meaning of "coverage" (as in covered, concealed) from that of the coverage (as in expansion, exposure) suggested by expanding settlements. In another way, the tower denies the totalizing view at the same time as it offers a vantage point and easily

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[39] See "Larissa Sansour," accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.larissasansour.com/nation_estate.html.

accessible floors. This makes sense to the extent that Palestinians are already denied a

comforting view from above of a contiguous or connected landscape of belonging, whereas the

high-rise suggests a kind of closed, residents-only, and internally secure space.

The figure of the tower typically suggests a kind of scopic regime, involving dominance

over the regions visualizable from the high point. The *Nation Estate* tower constructed by

Sansour suggests an inversion of the usual visual and spatial modes of the tower, whereby it

collects the view of Palestinian towns in order to stack, conceal and archive them, protecting

them from further destruction and disconnection. Even the image, "Olive Tree," which offers a

view "outside" the tower, only provides another view of an internally contained region. In other

words, the outside is already inside, and one looks *across* to see a place that is also understood to

above or below. In this way, the ideology of the oblique view and its hierarchy of vision are

disrupted through Sansour's series.

Another instantiation of the three-dimensional nation-state appears in a very different

context—the Israeli Arrow Missile Defense system, which envisions a kind of absolute security

and surveillance through total aerial and visual control. The Arrow Missile Defense System is an

anti-ballistic Israeli and United States collaboration, overseen by Israeli Ministry of Defense

Homa (which means rampart or wall) division and the U.S. Missile Defense Agency that began

development in 1986.[40] One of the most advanced in the world, the system is portable and

combines early warning radars, a launch control center and the Arrow hypersonic anti-missile

interceptor.[41] The Israeli Ministry of Defense's online English-language portal explains the

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[40] Israel Aerospace Industries and Boeing.

[41] See Boeing "Arrow Weapon System," *Boeing Defense, Space & Security,* accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.boeing.com/defense-space/space/arrow/docs/Arrow_overview.pdf, "Missile defense systems: Arrow," *MissileThreat.com*, accessed December 2, 2012, and "The Arrow

Arrow system with a simple interactive tutorial, similar to a video game interface, which draws attention the ideological priorities of the program. The program is described in three steps: The Threat, The Solution, and the Concept of Operation. In the first step, "Israel" is depicted on the left side of the screen as a highlighted green area, surrounded by a single bright green border, on an otherwise brown, borderless and unmarked rendering of the region, with some topographic detail and the curvature of the earth suggesting the scale of the map. The Palestinian Territories are not demarcated in the image, and a small replica of an urban area implies Tel Aviv as an important "target" area for security attention. Three missiles are surrounded by flashing red targets in areas likely representing missile launch centers in Iran, Iraq and Syria, that, when clicked on, launch a missile that explodes in Tel Aviv. Advancing to Step 2, the Arrow Missile Defense System appears and the entire map takes on a green shade, though the area marked out as "Israel" remains a brighter green.

At this point only the missile from the area likely representing Iran appears, and when hovered over launches only to be intercepted and destroyed by the anti-ballistic system. While the online presentation of the Arrow system implies total expansiveness, especially as the entire visible portion of the globe becomes green during "The Solution," it also creates a kind of bubble, an imaginary border in the sky. The Arrow online demonstration supposes a drama between security and threat, insecurity and vulnerability, as much as it highlights military might and technological advancement. To interact with the Arrow system's online marketing platform, in other words, is to continually re-invest in the idea of Israeli vulnerability amongst a block of Arab enemies, since one is able to remain at Step 1 "The Threat," launching missiles over and

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missile program," *Jewish Virtual Library,* accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.jewishvirtuallibrary.org/jsource/US-Israel/Arrow.html.

over to momentarily conceal the unmarked Israeli city behind flashes of yellow light. Here, the

nation is rendered three-dimensional through a combination of radar, missile, and satellite

technologies that expand the nation's reach, even if only to consolidate the impenetrability of its

desired borders.

Suggesting a similar logic at work, Rotbard explains how the imagined visualization of

settlement cartography was indistinguishable from, and yet in some ways more formative than,

the concrete carving out of the Palestinian terrain:

> [The functions of fortification and observation] molded the entire landscape as a
> network of points, as an autonomous layer spread above the existing landscape,
> transforming the country by dividing it, not according to natural, territorial divisions, but
> according to dromological divisions, according to the speed of transportation and the
> lines of infrastructure.[42]

In other words, mapping works to construct the landscape toward particular uses and ways of

seeing that quickly come to dominate and overcome traditional demarcations like thousand-year-

old roads that gain significance from their repeated use throughout various periods of domination

and rule, rather than through unilateral city/state planning.

Emphasizing the role of temporality, indeed a fourth dimension for imagining the nation-

state and its recognized modes of belonging, Rotbard argues that the settlement design supports

connectivity at the speed of modernity, whereby Zionist rhetoric instrumentalizes landscape as

evidence of "Western civilization." This logic of progress banishes the presumably past-oriented

Arab communities to the margins of a civilizational discourse that naturalizes the disappearance

of racialized peoples, even or especially when their disappearance is in direct relation to

colonialism and its attending technologies of ethnic cleansing, genocide, disease, war and so on.

Although Zionist "Palestine films" can be explored to find evidence of the Arab Palestinian

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[42] Rotbard, "Wall and Tower," 52.

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society that much of Zionist discourse seeks to deny, those appearances for the most part manifest through a framework that not only served to delegitimize Arab nationalism in Palestine, but that also posited that Palestinians were not "a people" in line with civilization or humanity in the way that Jews were becoming "a people" through the establishment of a state. It is not so important to determine whether or not they were visible, but through what terms they became recognizable, particularly if that recognition occurs through negative terms (i.e. recognized as *not* "a people").

Johannes Fabian has explored this kind of civilizational hierarchization through temporal and spatial categories in terms of how anthropology posits its objects and others. Fabian explains how time became an important mode of classification: "by allowing Time to be resorbed by the tabular space of classification, nineteenth-century anthropology sanctioned an ideological process by which relations between the West and its Other, between anthropology and its object, were conceived not only as difference, but as distance in space *and* Time."[43] Furthermore, and with great significance for this analysis of visual and spatial logics of national intelligibility and occupation, Fabian extends this analysis to suggest that anthropology's other needs to be distant and visually fixed—

> To use an extreme formulation, in this tradition the object of anthropology could not have gained scientific status until and unless it underwent a double visual fixation, as perceptual image and as illustration of kind of knowledge. Both types of objectification depend on distance, spatial and temporal. In the fundamental, phenomenalist senses this means that the Other, as object of knowledge, must be separate, distinct, and preferably distant from the knower. Exotic otherness may be not so much the result as the prerequisite of anthropological inquiry. We do not 'find' the savagery of the savage, or the primitivity of the primitive, we posit them, and we have seen in some detail how anthropology has manage to maintain distance, mostly by manipulating temporal coexistence through the denial of coevalness.[44]

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[43] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 147.

[44] Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other*, 121.

Fabian suggests how anthropology produces its object through notions of spatial and temporal distance, which produce the other as a kind of image viewed from afar. If, in the analysis of Zionist and Israeli visual and spatial logics, the tower suggests the potential for infinite visual dominance, where the further it expands upward the farther its visual control can reach (as the settlement network suggests), the wall, understood as necessary for defense and fortification purposes, suggests a potentially troubling or contradictory spatial limit and visual obstruction.

However, the wall can equally be understood in terms of managing distance in another way, in terms of creating a material distinction and fortification in order to maintain at least *the concept* of strict boundaries, since in many places, like al Wallaja for example, the contemporary Barrier is *neither complete nor contiguous*. While the wall may at first seem to suggest a conflicting logic to that of the tower, upon closer consideration it seems that the wall and the tower support a dominant, if contradictory, intelligibility logic that carves out belonging according to certain visual, spatial and temporal logics and material technologies. The visual control and seemingly limitless expansiveness of the tower is contradicted by the limit constructed by the wall, and vice versa, but at the same time each requires the other to establish a fortified border and visualizing dominance. The complexity of the visual and spatial logic of the wall suggest that it is never simply a visual obstruction, but is yet another perceptual device and technique of knowledge that bolster a dominant schema whereby Palestinian attempts to shape the idea and the land of Palestine are posited as illegitimate and unintelligible, and Jewish belonging is further consolidated and naturalized in an ever-fragmented and militarized landscape.

4.2   THE WALL AND THE HORIZONTAL IMAGE

Paul Virilio's notion of "perceptual" warfare seems particularly apt in relation to Israel and Palestine, and the Wall and Tower's relation to this type of warfare is especially evident in the contemporary Jewish hilltop settlements and the Separation Barrier.[45] Beginning construction in 2002, as of August 2008 more than half of the approved route of 723 kilometers of the Separation Barrier was complete.[46] Most of the length of the barrier consists of electrified fencing fortified with some combination of deep trenches, barbed wire, radar systems, surveillance cameras, watchtowers, intrusion-tracking dirt roads, and paved roads for armed Israeli Defense Force patrols. In urban areas, the barrier takes its most visibly intrusive and structurally oppressive form as concrete blocks reaching up to 25 and 35 feet high. Israeli Defense Force-controlled gates and checkpoints provide the only authorized sites of passage through the Barrier, though Israeli-only routes allow easier access for primarily non-Palestinian citizens. According to Virilio, seeing machines like the cameras and watchtowers attending the Separation Barrier are extensions of the "war machine;" "the eye's function being the function of a weapon."[47] But non-seeing machines, such as radar and electronic tracking, actually serve a similar function in their role as what Virilio calls "invisible weapons that make things visible."[48]

Along the electrified sections of the Barrier, for example, the Israeli military uses remote sensing to detect if the fence has been touched and a patrol car can be immediately dispatched to that area. That Virilio's conceptualization of the imbrication of war and cinematic technologies

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[45] Virilio, *War and Cinema,* 12.
[46] "Separation Barrier: Statistics," *B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.btselem.org/separation_barrier/statistics.
[47] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 3.
[48] Virilio, *War and Cinema*, 71.

provides an opening to consider visibility not only in opposition to invisibility and suggests that

a model of recognition and intelligibility is useful in terms of unraveling some of the complexity

of *how* things become visible, what the terms of that visibility are, and to what ends discourses of

visibility and invisibility are mobilized. This is particularly relevant in the context of security

rhetoric after the policies introduced under the auspices of the global "War on Terror."

Sara Ahmed, following Brian Massumi, suggests that War on Terror discourse of the

terrorist continually insinuates that the terrorist "could-be" anyone, and, especially in light of the

increasing use of imaging technologies, "could-be" hiding in plain sight. This informs the

creation and use of ever-new surveillance and detection technologies for military operations, in

urban spaces, and in airports, for example, which reinvigorate the process by producing detection

failures at every site. Ahmed argues "*it is the structural possibility that the terrorist may pass us*

by that justifies the expansion of these forms of intelligence, surveillance and the rights of

detention."[49] The most relevant aspect of surveillance imaging technologies in this context may

be, in other words, that they continually fail to find "terrorists" or determine "terrorist-

characteristics," and thus continually justify further policies of detection, invasion, and

classification. To return to Miller's analysis of detective story narration, "this world is not so

much totally intelligible as it is totally suspicious," suggesting in this context that detection

technologies ensure that disciplinary power will continue to seek out and proliferate ever-new

areas of supposed incalculability.[50] Jason Ritchie, in his ethnography on "queer checkpoints" and

queer Palestinian subjectivity, similarly describes how, in this example, the literal checkpoint

functions even when it seems to fail:

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[49] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 79. Emphasis in
original.
[50] Miller, *The Novel and the Police*, 29-30.

> Sometimes, the checkpoint works: queer Palestinians 'answer' as expected and are rewarded with access to a given 'space.' But even when the 'answer' is wrong—when one refuses to 'be Israeli,' for example—the checkpoint still *works*: identities are checked, and the movement across space is properly regulated. 146-7

Ritchie suggests that in the terms of the checkpoint's logic, failure occurs when "a potential threat…slips through," implying that the "'anticipated' violence" of the checkpoint subtends its disciplinary function, in other words the checkpoint relies on failure in order to reveal the justification for its security purpose. Like the "structural possibility that the terrorist may pass us by" described by Ahmed, Ritchie's "queer checkpoints," literal and metaphorical (for example the compulsion to "pass" in Israeli queer scenes as Jewish), rely not only on the ability to see and detect queer Palestinians, but the possibility and the threat that they might be not-seen.

While these logics of detection suggest a kind of compulsory visibility at their core, the ideological, political, military and other everyday material effects of Separation Barrier do not rely solely on a drama between visibility and invisibility, though its function of concealing and obstructing might suggest so at face value. Though he does not mention the historical continuity with Zionist wall and tower construction, Meir Wigoder, in his article on photographing the contemporary Separation Barrier, characterizes the wall in terms of vision, perception, and a particular kind of orientation:

> The Separation Barrier-Wall is only a crude concrete variation of the invisible walls that have existed ever since the first Zionist pioneers propagated their ideology, envisaging themselves as a people without a land for a land with no people. The real purpose of the wall is not to protect the state from terror or to demarcate new borders, since Palestinians live on either side of it and the Israeli army patrols both sides. Rather, it enhances the Israeli aspiration *to see the Palestinians removed from their sight*, as though the entire wall were like the blindfold that covers a captive's eyes to disorientate his or her physical and mental relationship with space.[51]

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[51] Meir Wigoder, "The Blocked Gaze: A User's Guide to Photographing the Separation Barrier-Wall," *Public Culture* 22.2 (2010): 299. Emphasis added.

Interestingly, this excerpt posits the Zionist-Israeli position, in its desire to not-see, as captive of itself; Wigoder suggests Israelis perform a willing captivation to overlook the geopolitical reality of the Palestinian-Israeli shared landscape and conflict. For Wigoder, disorientation is therefore in some sense inherent to a Zionist perspective, much like the disorientation I explore in Chapter 2. Yet positing the wall as a blindfold suggests that its removal will reveal the truth—that Jewish-Israelis will be forced to face the Palestinians within an unobscured field of vision once the concrete obstruction is removed. This metaphor, and the metaphor of a wall that simply conceals, however, oversimplifies not only the surveillance technologies and the visual spectacle that are also aspects of the Barrier, but also the way that vision itself is constitutive of blind spots. I want to emphasize that walls in this context are not simply obstructions to seeing what's *really there*, implying that a model of inclusion/exclusion applies, but rather that walls constitute a way of seeing marked and undergirded by structural absences and not-seeing, by logics of compulsory visibility and calculability, but maintained through a constant reinvestment in areas of incalculability, "suspicion," "could-be" terrorist, and so on. Furthermore, the metaphor of the blindfold, and the idea that Israel wishes to not-see Palestinians neglects the importance of the civilian surveillance function of the West Bank settlements in particular, as noted by Weizmann in the design of hilltop settlement homes: "knowingly or not, settlers' eyes…are being 'hijacked' [by the state] for strategic and geopolitical aims."[52]

Perhaps nothing exemplifies the kind of visuality that complicates a visible/invisible, seen/unseen, inclusion/exclusion binary better than the tromp l'oeil paintings that surrounded parts of the Jewish settlement Gilo outside of Jerusalem until the end of 2010 (I photographed some of the paintings the day before they were suddenly dismantled). Although constructed by

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[52] Weizman, "Politics of Verticality."

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the Israeli Ministry of Defense with the stated purpose of defense from sniper fire originating in

the neighboring Palestinian village of Beit Jalla, Jewish residents in Gilo apparently did not

immediately appreciate the gesture. Ugly concrete blocks suddenly obscured the view of what

was for many a pastoral Biblical landscape (and perhaps a large reason for moving to the

"disputed neighborhood," as it was frequently called in Israeli as well as US media, a rhetoric

that waned when Israel began to dismiss Obama administration pressure to halt the expansion of

Gilo and other settlements), and the residents reportedly covered the wall in hostile graffiti. This

prompted municipal authorities to commission artists to paint the concrete blocks, and Jerusalem

Municipality official Shlomo Brosh had no illusions about the intention of the project: "the idea

was to make the wall transparent."[53] For Brosh, the paintings represented a defensive response to

Palestinian aggression: "if they have forced us to shield ourselves, then we decided that at least

we wouldn't give up the landscape that used to be there."[54]

      As W.J.T. Mitchell notes in his short article on the paintings, the artists commissioned to

recreate the disappearing landscape were recent Russian immigrants who questioned the ethical

implications of the aesthetic forgery. Mitchell describes the experience of the artists who used

"what they considered a 'sad' style of painting, derived from socialist realism, which they

regarded as a relic of 'the Soviet system…of living with lies.'"[55] Ruchama Marton and Dalit

Baum, who see the paintings as a realization of the contentious Zionist axiom "a land without a

people for a people without a land," further articulate this complicated set of lies:

      the painting is meant to conceal the wall itself by reconstructing the concealed view by

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[53] Dana Gilerman, "Trying to Make the Wall Transparent," *Ha'aretz,* April 1, 2004, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/culture/arts-leisure/trying-to-make-the-wall-transparent-1.118566.
[54] Gilerman, "Trying to Make the Wall Transparent."
[55] W.J.T. Mitchell, "Christo's Gates and Gilo's Walls," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Summer 2006): 587-600.

concealing the concealment. The reconstructed view serves as a second concealment, since the painted houses on the painted hills are devoid of people.[56]

For Marton and Baum, the paintings activate a particular kind of willful nonseeing mechanism for Jewish settlers in Gilo. Consumption of the landscape is crucial particularly to settler ideology in the West Bank since, as Weizman shows, "the admiration of the landscape…functions as a cultural practice, by which social and subjective identities are formed."[57] However, what make the landscape Biblical and pastoral in the traditional sense are the Palestinians, who cultivate the land and whose architecture is typically admired. One message of the painting is, Weizman argues, "the Palestinians are there to produce the landscape and then disappear."[58] Of course, both the landscape and the progression of time work against this illusion of a static ideal landscape. Trees grow larger than the painted trees and create a disjunction, the wrong time of day sends shafts of light and shadow to reveal the two-dimensionality of the illusion, and even the view that looks at the picture askance will reveal the forgery.

The paintings disappear the wall, to some extent, but they also equip the wall with a disappearing function. The wall collapses distance and produces a two-dimensional picture of an imagined Palestine, yet the illusionistic paintings do not simply disappear or destroy in a more concretely violent sense. Rather, they support an old logic whereby Palestine is always already a picture—an ideal image of the pastoral homeland.[59] Put another way, the wall paintings in Gilo also suggest that the "problems of perspective" in Palestine identified by Elias Newman in the

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[56] Ruchama Marton and Dalit Baum, "Transparent Wall, Opaque Gates," in *Against the Wall*, ed. Michael Sorkin, (New York: The New Press, 2005), 213.
[57] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation,* 92.
[58] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation,* 92.
[59] See Lester I. Vogel, *To See a Promised Land: Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*. (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993).

thirties (discussed in Chapter 2) were not overcome with the establishment of the Jewish state.

The watercolor style privileged by Newman in his *Art in Palestine* survey of Jewish artists has further correlation to the soviet realist style of the Gilo mural shown above as well as to a dominant painterly movement that emerged around statehood and that Israeli artist Larry Abramson identifies as Lyrical Abstraction, lead by Yosef Zaritsky who came to Palestine in 1923.[60] Abramson describes how Zaritsky made watercolor studies in the hills around Jerusalem around the same areas where Abramson had gained his own "knowledge of the landscape" growing up in Israel. He describes Zaritsky's paintings through his own experience:

> Remembering Zaritsky's *Tsuba* watercolors, I went back to look at them and was amazed to discover that for al his *plein air* pathos, he had 'not seen' the deserted Palestinian village; it had disappeared from sight in his delicate harmonies of abstracted form and painterly *valuer*. I had stumbled across the missing art historical link, the long overdue explanation for the almost universal acceptance of 'Lyrical Abstraction' as the quintessential Israeli visual style. Abstraction—even more than forestation, archaeology, cartography and nomenclature—was the ultimate Israeli 'scopic regime', an 'Art of Camouflage'…

What both Abramson and Wigoder identify is a way of seeing that they argue undergirds Israeli national discourse reflected in not only aesthetic production, but through the logic of Jewish National Fund afforestation projects, settlement design, architectonic solutions to problems of security, and so on. In this way, paintings and films are never simply metaphors for more obvious structures of the occupation, nor are the more concrete obstructions to seeing and structures that constitute an "Israeli 'scopic regime'" simply metaphors for what Wigoder describes as the purposely unseeing Israeli captive. Rotbard, likewise reminds us that "beyond the fact that the wall was a program, and was destined to become an 'ideology', it was, first and

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[60] Larry Abramson, "What Does Landscape Want? A Walk in W.J.T. Mitchell's Holy Landscape." *Culture, Theory and Critique* 50 (2009), 281.

foremost, a *wall*; it was a plain wooden mold of 20 centimeters width filled with gravel."[61] For these reasons, revealing the forgery of the mural paintings, their constructed-ness, and their historical legacy in earlier attempts to not-see, or rather not-recognize, the Palestinians, does little to undo their ideological function in relation to the consolidation of Israeli national intelligibility. Consequently, although national intelligibility is invoked in this analysis as a revisionary process, there are historical conditions and processes that can be recognized as repeatedly holding certain ways of not/seeing in place and maintaining a certain status quo or common sense notion of the facts on the ground.

Although artists and artist-collectives, including individual activists and others, find ever new creative ways to protest, "disappear," poke holes in, circumvent, expose, and educate others about the devastation to Palestinian and Israeli society caused by the Separation Barrier in particular, Wigoder argues

> All the creative attempts to dematerialize the wall are admirable, but in the end they must only be seen as artistic weapons meant to raise our awareness of the existence of walls. To photograph a wall as a protest is also to acknowledge the impotency of the photographic act.[62]

Thus, rather than (only) searching for "creative attempts" or subversive modes to challenge scopic regimes or scripts of national intelligibility that repeatedly condition perspectives on and material conditions in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, this study aims to identify the working and re-working of norms of recognition that continually mark Palestinian belonging and dispossession as unrecognizable. Rather than imagining that analysis and uncovering, revealing and unmasking, could fully dismantle such scripts and norms, I aim in part to better understand the ways that Palestinians have experimented with ever new modes of sociality,

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[61] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation*, 54
[62] Wigoder, "The Blocked Gaze," 308.

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visualization, recognition, spatiality, and belonging in spite of, or even through, this context. I

suggest that when we attempt to put aside the compelling and commonplace idea that exposing

and revealing are the only modes of resistance, reparation, response and critique, a host of other

possibilities and failures appear at work, which will be discussed in this chapter and others, and

which may not be properly named "resistant."

With this approach in mind, it still proves fruitful to consider some of those "creative

attempts" to make the wall invisible, particularly since several of the projects Wigoder alludes to

equally serve to emphasize the both the impossibility of dematerialization through visual tricks,

as well as to point out the ways in which the Barrier maintains a rather contradictory relationship

between seeing and not-seeing. Saree Makdisi offers an account of the wall's effects on the

relation between erasure and visibility that suggest such attempts can be useful for reminding

Israelis of the erasure taking place, since:

> From the Israeli point of view, the effect is not only to render the Palestinians on the
> other side invisible but, even if only in fits and starts, to render the process of rendering
> them invisible *itself* invisible. When possible, then, the wall as the signifier of erasure is
> itself erased in turn—as though there were some magic trick that could erase the
> Palestinians from the landscape without the trace of that erasure being evident.[63]

Abramson, the painter and scholar noted above, produced a painterly response to state-

commissioned murals that lined Highway 443. Paintings on the walls on both sides of Highway

443 from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem, the controversial Israeli-only highway that passes through

Palestinian areas to reach West Bank Jewish settlements, are another example of disappearing

both the wall and the Palestinians in one swift brush stroke. The murals give the illusion of an

architectural structure with arches providing identical mini-views of a minimalist landscape to

the drive-by viewer. This peripheral illusion reinforces the stated purpose of the wall—a

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[63] Saree Makdisi, "The Architecture of Erasure," *Critical Inquiry* 36 (Spring 2010): 535.

reminder that Israel cannot have real arches because Palestinian snipers would use them to shoot through—and thus justifies its existence.

Conceived as an act of resistance to the illusory images of Highway 443, Abramson, for the 2005 exhibition Three Cities Against the Wall, painted "Israeli Abstraction," probably an allusion to the Lyrical Abstraction movement cited by him above. As he writes in his artist's statement,

> In 2004 I appropriated the wall's green/blue 'ideal' landscape, put a vertical black 'zip' across it, and published it under the title 'Israeli Abstraction.' Amazingly, within days the streets of Tel Aviv, and later of other Israeli cities, were covered in graffiti based on this image, the work of anonymous street artists seeking for an icon to express their desire for peace and coexistence.[64]

Although the Separation Barrier serves as a canvas for state-approved messages, like painted murals or advertisements, the wall is also a surface for the inscription of protest messages— against the barrier, against the occupation, and a variety of other non-state messages of political affiliation, of hate and of peace. Approved messages (when seen from proper vantage points) draw attention to the wall, with bright colors and optimistic scenes, while attempting to draw attention away from the negative effects of the structure—it appears to beautify public spaces rather than fragment, obscure, obstruct, and destroy. Beautiful pictures ask to be looked at and their ideological effect is to normalize the presence of the wall by framing it as an artistic object for public appreciation, as a proper part of the landscape. Protest graffiti messages also draw attention to the wall but point to its negative, chaotic, and fragmentary effects, re-inscribing its concrete presence with explicit and implicit messages and meanings. These inscriptions interrogate the blank concrete wall, what John Berger calls its "expressionless face of

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[64] *Three Cities Against the Wall: Palestinian, Israeli, and American Artists Protest in Three Cities* (NY: Voxpop, 2005), 18.

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inequality," which says so much even without words or pictures.[65] For Makdisi, the "brutalist design" of the wall seen from the Palestinian side "communicates unequivocally to the Palestinians what Israel thinks of them."[66]

So-called Art Terrorist Banksy, a street artist from Bristol who became an international art world star, began painting on the Separation Barrier for the Occupied Space-Art for Palestine Exhibition in London in 2006.[67] In one of the graffiti paintings on the Barrier in the West Bank, a child stands triumphantly on the rubble left from a blasted hole in the wall; the blue skies beyond announce the liberation of the once obscured view. In another image, children play near a hole in the wall that reveals a picture postcard view of an ideal tropical landscape. This image, with its striking photorealism, appears as a direct critique to the walls in Gilo and the Highway 443 murals. Banksy undermines and critiques the practice of disappearing the wall to imagine an ideal view by presenting the viewer with an impossible view. The viewer is reminded that any attempt to render the wall transparent is to willingly participate in a collective fantasy and to ignore the violence of the Separation Barrier and the occupation.

Artists Without Walls, a collective of both Israeli and Palestinian artists, similarly created a virtual hole in the concrete Wall in Abu-Dis for several hours with a real-time participatory video event. Abu-Dis is a Palestinian neighborhood outside of East Jerusalem that had at that time recently been divided by the Separation Barrier. In the exhibition catalogue for Three Cities Against the Wall, Artists Without Walls explain the project; "A closed-circuit of two video cameras was positioned at the same spot on opposite sides of the wall. Each recorded the view facing away from the wall. The cameras were connected to two video projectors, each

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[65] John Berger, "Undefeated Despair," *Critical Inquiry* 32 (Summer 2006): 607.
[66] Makdisi, "The Architecture of Erasure," 535.
[67] See "Banksy at the West Bank Barrier," *The Guardian*, accessed December 2, 2012, http://arts.guardian.co.uk/pictures/0,,1543331,00.html.

one projecting in real-time the image on the opposite side."[68] In their search to find an appropriate critical response to the wall, Artists Without Walls have criticized the use of the barrier as a canvas or screen, arguing that treating the wall as a kind of neutral ground amounts to tacit approval of its existence.

The event in Abu-Dis seemed to dissolve the material presence of the wall for several hours, overcoming the obstacle placed between the two communities and providing a window to dialogue and critical artistic practice. Rather than provide yet another illusory view through images that would beautify or distract from the obstruction, Artists Without Walls re-presented the concealed view to the communities on both sides of the barrier in a way that would call attention to the wall's violence as well as the inadequacy of visual exposure, temporary exposure at that, to contest the harsh visual and spatial logic of 25 foot high concrete blocks. In other words, the project seemed to emphasize in part its failure to provide connection, since the video projection provided only the illusion that the wall was disappeared, and underscored the frustration of the unattainability of crossing the short distance between the communities on either side. While the ability for the camera to move through walls may serve the military interest of a full penetrability and malleability of space, the Artists Without Walls project necessarily provided a more complicated relation between visibility and invisibility, since the re-appropriated vision of the other side of the wall did nothing to challenge its physicality or its legal, military and ideological infrastructure and underpinnings.

In another way, this temporary hole allowed for the temporary claim on a particular vantage point otherwise denied, the obstruction of which can sometimes be the primary effect of the wall's concrete sections in certain areas. For example, in the Palestinian village Mas'ha, Abu

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[68] *Three Cities Against the Wall*, 25.

Nidal's home is surrounded by the Separation Barrier in its towering fence form, except for the length of the property that would otherwise allow a view of Mas'ha. A 24-foot high and 40-meter long concrete section of the Barrier stretches for about the length of the home and yard. No such concrete barrier separates Abu Nidal's home from the settlement homes a literal stone's throw (or aren't we supposed to imagine worse—like a rocket's throw?) away. If the primary purpose of the wall was security, as the government has consistently claimed, why is there only concrete where the Nidal family would see their village?

In 2004, artists and peace activists from the San Francisco Break the Silence Mural Project and the International Women's Peace Service joined children from the nearby village of Biddia to paint a mural on the concrete section of the wall outside Abu Nidal's front door.[69] In January 2012, I met Abu Nidal and saw the Barrier surrounding his home, as well as the striking proximity of the settlement. I had seen the mural in photos by Israeli feminist/queer anti-occupation activist and scholar Dalit Baum online years earlier, but since then they had been covered over in white paint except for a bird with open wings that resembles a phoenix. The care it would take to paint around the bird, painted in strokes of yellow and red, suggest that someone other than the military had covered over the mural's many colorful animals and flowers, perhaps disturbed by what could seem an attempt to beautify the structure.

Another painting from the "West Banksy" series depicts a cartoonish living room scene that sets a homey scene for a framed image of a landscape painting. This particular wall painting takes aim at the collective illusions of normalcy around the Separation Barrier, particularly in the settlement home where the preoccupation with "taking in the view" comes into tension with the

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[69] International Women's Peace Service, "Children, Artists Paint Mural on Apartheid Wall as Mas'ha," *If Americans Knew,* July 18, 2004, accessed December 2, 2012, www.ifamericansknew.org/cur_sit/masha-mural.html.

notion of security that justifies the installation of a major obstruction to the settlement vantage point. The painting depicted in the living room image is like a picture window that reveals a view of a what looks like an ideal European landscape, one distinct from the Middle Eastern landscape but which appeared in early Zionist art (like the Bezalel European-trained Jewish artists' work), and which also seems to mock the Jewish National Fund's privileging of non-native pine species in their afforestation projects.

Like Banksy's living room image which seemed to reference the settlement home's ideal and imagined view, Weizman and Segal describe mountaintop Jewish settlements as "optical devices" due to the spectacular presence of concentric circles they draw around the apex of a mountain or network of mountains (like the five-finger style of the massive Ma'ale Adumim settlement near Jerusalem). Banksy's living room painting underscores the contradictory visual and spatial logic of the wall and tower figuration by the concealment and replacement of the supposedly pastoral, and natural landscape, which takes place on the concrete manifestation of a state project carving up and destroying that same landscape.

The idea that a living room window can act like an "optical device" appears in a combination of film and architecture theory in the work of Beatriz Colomina, whose conceptualization suggests that we might also see the settlement home itself as a kind of picture-taking mechanism that relies on a certain cinematic logic. With living rooms organized around picture windows that *capture* views of holy and picturesque landscapes, settlement homes establish particular looking relations with low-lying Palestinian towns. Colomina argues, "architecture is not simply a platform that accommodates the viewing subject. It is a viewing mechanism that produces the subject. It precedes and frames its occupant," insinuating in this context the contradictory logic that informs Israeli national belonging. To *belong* in such a home,

like the settlement home, does not simply connote a kind of familial, safe, and private comfort, but is fully enmeshed with a militant ethno-nationalism, as Colomina writes "the view enters the house." Weizmann and Segal describe how the state has at times built settlement homes faster than they can fill them (in other words, the construction is not "market based but state directed"), suggesting that, in their words, "the *civilian occupation* relies on the presence of *civilian architecture* to demonstrate a Jewish presence across the landscape."[70] The private living room view from the settlement home suggests, in other words, suggests how the logic of the tower and the wall work in tandem to construct a schema of visual, spatial and classificatory logics that hold in place certain notions of proper belonging in Palestine.

4.3   CINEMATIC OCCUPATION

In August 2011, *The Guardian* ran an article about twin brother filmmakers in Gaza. The article, by Gaza-based reporter Harriet Sherwood, was titled "Tarzan and Arab: The Gaza artists determined to make it against all odds," and included a tagline that read "despite a lack of training, equipment, funding or an audience, Gaza's twin artists are determined to succeed as film directors."[71] One of the brothers, whose actual names are Ahmed and Mohamed Abu Nasser, describes what its like to be a Palestinian filmmaker in Gaza: "let's be realistic. Our life is under siege, under control. People don't have time for art. They spend all their time looking

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[70] Segal and Weizman, *A Civilian Occupation*, 22.
[71] Harriet Sherwood, "Tarzan and Arab: The Gaza artists determined to make it against all odds," *The Guardian,* August 15, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/aug/15/tarzan-arab-gaza-artists.

for crumbs. They say, 'What use is art? Art will not give you bread.'"[72] The brothers aspire, it

seems, to make feature films, but, given their limited resources, in the meantime they make

posters and long-form trailers for films that don't exist. The production company for these

impossible films is called "Gazawood," an unimaginable counterpart to Hollywood. In one

trailer produced by the brothers, the camera spins around the two brothers on a rooftop, catching

them in a dramatic but generic standoff. The trailers and posters emphasize the impossibility of

making films under military occupation and oppressive local governance, not to mention the

complex situation created by the interaction between the Palestinian factions as well as between

those political parties and the more powerful Israeli control of the region. A series of film posters

point to the ridiculously cinematic grandeur of the names the Israeli military gives to its

operations in Gaza: Autumn Clouds, Cast Lead, Summer Rain, Colorful Journey, and Cloud

Pillar (also known as Pillar of Defense). "The idea is you look at the poster and imagine the film.

But there is no film," one brother explains, but in addition to foregrounding the many

impossibilities and restrictions facing Palestinian cinema, especially in Gaza, they also explain

that occupation itself has a cinematic aspect.[73]

Tarzan and Arab's story both corroborates and challenges the question of whether it

makes sense to talk about a Palestinian cinema. How can there be a Palestinian cinema when

Palestinians in the Occupied Territories rarely see, let alone have opportunities to produce

Palestinian films? At the time of the interview, the brothers have never seen a film in a cinema,

even though their own trailers and posters have now been exhibited at some cinemas in the West

Bank and elsewhere. Livia Alexander asked this question in an essay titled "Is There a

Palestinian Cinema?: The National and Transnational in Palestinian Film Production," that,

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[72] Sherwood, "Tarzan and Arab."
[73] Sherwood, "Tarzan and Arab."

rather than offering a clear response, maps the many obstacles, the industrial and cultural context as well as transnational, global and local national struggle influences that explain why this question arises so frequently in relation to Palestinian film studies. Alexander also identifies motifs such as land, struggle for decolonization, and a "complex notion of Palestinianness." [74] Alexander points out that Palestinian cinema is caught between national cinema modes and transnational or exilic modes, it is "neither national nor transnational, but a hybrid cinema that offers a complex relationship between the two," but many now question whether there is any cinema that maintains strict national boundaries or entirely surpasses them.[75] The twin brothers in Gaza challenge the idea that Palestinian cinema is a European phenomenon (as some primarily Israeli film critics suggest given that most Palestinian films are backed by European funding), since they not only make films in Gaza, they make films that offer their own critique of the restrictions limiting Palestinian cinema.

The story about Tarzan and Arab exemplifies Palestinian cinema under siege (what might be called occupied cinema), but at the same time shows how Palestinian films take the question of their own possibility head on to critique their situation and to fuel their artistic vision. Furthermore, the posters for films named after Israeli military assaults index multiple forms and modes of the violence of occupation, rather than attempting to document violence and ignore the role of cinematic form in producing the limited frames through which Palestinian dispossession are understood. Film scholar Terri Ginsberg critiques North American Palestine solidarity film and video on similar grounds, arguing that their reliance on cinema verité conventions to document the violence of occupation serves to

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[74] Livia Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema? The National and Transnational in Palestinian Film Production," in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, ed. Rebecca Stein (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 151.
[75] Alexander, "Is There a Palestinian Cinema?," 157.

offer little more than generic compilations of albeit damning footage juxtaposed with albeit revolutionary testimonials, which [], in their relative aesthetic alienation from larger explanatory contexts, [supply] limited and sometimes ironically self-contradictory counterproof.[76]

Tarzan and Arab's trailers and posters in contrast index the conditions of their own un/making rather than make film more explicitly "about" the occupation and the conditions in Gaza.

While Tarzan and Arab's film posters only hint that there is something cinematic about Israeli occupation, the Israeli military-constructed "city" called Chicago suggests more concrete collusions of cinema and military occupation and the enlistment of cinematic technologies and techniques toward militaristic and ethno-national ends. Constructed at the Tze'elim base in the Negev desert, Chicago serves as a military training ground and, perhaps like many military training grounds intended to replicate urban civilian areas, it resembles a film set. Alexander Trevi, discussing photographs of Chicago by Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin, described Chicago this way:

> This is where generations of Israeli soldiers rehearse over and over again like actors in a Hollywood studio set. Here, with props on hand or littered about, they perfect their stage presence, try out some new moves and hand gestures, and fine tune their dialogues in front of cardboard cutouts of generic terrorists.[77]

Trevi invokes cinema as a metaphor, where soldiers are "like" Hollywood actors. Eyal Weizmann, elaborates on a further Hollywood connection to Chicago, noting, "this was to

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[76] Terri Ginsberg "Radical Rationalism as Cinema Aesthetics: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in North American Documentary and Experimental Film," *Situations: Project of the Radical Imagination* 4.1 (2011): 92-93, accessed December 2, 2012, http://ojs.gc.cuny.edu/index.php/situations/article/view/767/1198.

[77] Alexander Trevi, "Chicago" *Pruned: On Landscape, Architecture and Related Fields Blog* February 24, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012, http://pruned.blogspot.com/2009/02/chicago.html.

become the world's largest mock-up oriental city erected since the filming of *Ben-Hur*."[78]

Chicago has served since the early 1980's as a training site for multiple Israeli military

operations in Lebanon, in planning to assassinate Saddam Hussein in Tiqrit, and during the

second Palestinian Intifada Chicago was altered to mimic Palestinian urban areas, including a

section meant to resemble a refugee camp. According to Weizmann, the military "employs a

stage-set designer normally employed in a well-known Tel-Aviv theatre to provide and organize

the relevant props and effects."[79] The military's adoption of cinema and theater industry

conventions, techniques, skills and technologies runs deep in order to construct the most realistic

"scenes" of war:

> In similar mock-up sites, simulations have been designed by fun-fair, theme-park and
> filmset specialists. Action film directors are brought in to help military planners think up
> possible scenarios for complex urban fights. Soldiers, actors, civilians — and sometimes
> prisoners — simulate urban crowds. Special effects and 'cold-fire' systems, recordings of
> urban life, the sounds of planes, tanks and gunfire, and the revolting combination of
> smells from cooking, decomposing bodies, sewage and stagnant water are released
> throughout this and other mockup cities, to give military forces a 'taste' of the 'urban
> mayhem' of refugee camps and urban slums.[80]

An attempt to recreate visual and sensorial spectacle of armed conflict is assumed to benefit from

the expertise of technicians who create the experience of cinema-going and theme-park

attendance. The cinematic aspects of the mock-city training site conspire in this way with a

rhetoric of "smart destruction" of buildings in urban warfare, suggesting that the credibility of

the notion of so-called "surgical" destruction as a more humane form of warfare relies on the

acceptance that the cinematic scene of warfare training can be mapped onto the reality of urban

warfare. It is not clear in such a scenario, in other words, when the cinematic and theatrical ends

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[78] Eyal Weizman, "Walking Through Walls: Frontier Architecture," *Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin*, accessed December 2, 2012,
http://www.broombergchanarin.com/files/walking-through-walls.pdf.
[79] Weizman, "Walking Through Walls."
[80] Weizman, "Walking Through Walls."

and "real" warfare begins. As Weizmann explains, the tactic of removing the inner wall of a building allows the military to move through a city undetected from the air—to walk through walls, as the IDF refers to it. Since, as Zionist leader Vladimir Jabotinsky noted in a 1924 newspaper article on the lack of women in "Palestine films" that "cameras cannot move through walls," the Israeli military has found a way to thwart the visual logics of warfare and cinema, to cause seemingly invisible forms of destruction, a technique discovered with the help of cinema and, as Weizmann notes, through adapting Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's notion of smooth space to conquer the striated space of Palestinian urban environments.[81] Imagining the Palestinian urban space as a cinematic set, while at the same time evading a visualization of this destruction that would expose its violent effects on Palestinian lives, suggests that "perceptual warfare" is not fully explained in terms of visualization, but draws on cinema for non-visual forms of recognition and of making spaces available for military penetration. The "smart" advantage of such concealed technologies of destruction might be that they remain hidden from the documentation of human rights non-governmental organizations that increasingly rely on visual forms of proof of destruction of civilian areas.

Furthermore, while both the wall and the tower seem to invite theories of violence based on visual control and the military use of visibility as tactic of war, the many gaps and holes in the route of the wall, for example, suggest that these devices work as much through strategies of indirect, suspended and often affective violence, like humiliation, insecurity and intimidation, as through spectacular and highly visual forms of violence such as military incursions into urban spaces, demolitions, and surveillance. In this way, Virilio's important observation that "if you can see it you can kill it," which seems especially relevant in light of the increasing use of

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[81] Vladimir Jabotinsky, "She," *Jewish Criterion* 63.18 (1924): 19.

unmanned drones today, perhaps overstates the visualizing aspect of camera-equipped war

machines, since while such technologies visualize in order to destroy, they also alter the ways in

which space is made recognizable and available for military conquest, for security, containment,

and other functions. In other words, the organization of visual fields and spaces of control is not

solely a process of making-visible, since the proliferation of un-recognizable or un-visualizable

spaces is also an effect of these technologies and their attending discourses of exposure and

concealment.

4.4   QUEER CINEMATIC OCCUPATION

The 2011 documentary *Invisible Men*, directed by Yariv Mozer, claims to tell the "untold side of

the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict"—gay Palestinian men escaping what the director calls the

"ghettos" of the West Bank for Israel's "most liberal city, Tel Aviv." Although the film at least

in part purports to document Israeli deportation and lack of protection for queer Palestinians, it

also reiterates a familiar narrative of Palestine as "closet" under the claim that this "untold" story

is being exposed "for the first time" (as the project's Indiegogo page argues). As growing

critiques of Israeli pinkwashing have shown, the "untold story" of tolerant gay Tel Aviv and

homophobic Palestine has actually been told and retold, and the Israeli Foreign Ministry has

invested heavily in promoting it. The first spoken line of *The Bubble*, the 2006 internationally

screened Israeli film by gay Israeli power couple Eytan Fox (director) and Gal Uchovsky

(screenwriter) about a doomed gay Jewish-Israeli and Palestinian love story, suggests that film's

similar investment in the logic of an "untold story:" the words "you can't film here" originate

from an Israeli soldier shown through the video camera perspective of a checkpoint watch

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activist in the first few seconds of *The Bubble*. That this prohibition on filming is introduced in the film's opening scene of gay cruising at a military checkpoint underscores my attention to the specifically cinematic terms through which Israeli pinkwashing's so-called untold stories have been able to be told over and over, and yet still maintain an alibi of being hidden, and of requiring a kind of repeated exposure. In that film, scenes that emphasize mediation create the sense that Palestine can only be viewed through screens and frames, placing it is some distance—spatially, temporally, and conceptually—from the Jewish-Israeli spaces of the film.

As a homonational discourse, the "untold story" promises to never find what it is looking for, which in turn seems to justify its continued reiteration. Like the still expanding use of new bio-imaging and surveillance technologies to detect potential "terrorists" mentioned above, the continued failure to provide security serves as the alibi for the increasing use of tracking technologies and the suspension of basic protections against surveillance, illegal detention and even assassination. Since this kind of paranoid knowledge, as Eve K. Sedgwick following D.A. Miller would call it, both produces and claims to expose what is purportedly hidden, counter-narratives offered by queer Palestinian and solidarity activists and critics are often wary of reproducing similar tactics of exposure. In the context of Israeli pinkwashing and global homonationalism, in other words, visibility and representational strategies are fraught, since while the discourse of the "untold story" claims to want to locate and even "save" queer Palestinians (for example), it at the same time continually reproduces queer Palestinians in terms of invisibility and un-locatability. In the popular Israeli documentary on the 2006 World Pride parade in Jerusalem, *Jerusalem is Proud to Present,* Jason Ritchie's detects a similar narrative in the film's larger theme of "the dangers of religion" to queer liberalism. Boodie "*disappears* as a character in the story" after recounting a familiar story of victimization by Hamas activists, while

"the film's other queer victim, Adam Russo," who Ritchie describes as "the posterchild for queer liberalism in Israel," is cast as the hero of the film.[82] While the film "works hard, in line with liberal discourses of tolerance, multiculturalism, and diversity, to equate the suffering of queer Israelis and queer Palestinians," by the end of the film "the queer Palestinian fades away, an unredeemed victim of the hopeless illiberalism of Palestinian culture."[83] In this way, the queer Palestinian fades from view, while at the same time maintaining a kind of hyper-visibility as suffering victim, in the broader ideological project of improving Israel's image.

In the context of Israeli pinkwashing and global homonationalism, strategies of visibility are fraught for this reason, since while the discourse of the "untold story" claims to want to locate and even "save" queer Palestinians (for example), it at the same time continually reproduces queer Palestinians in terms of invisibility, un-locatability, and suffering. Haneen Maikey, director of alQaws for Sexual and Gender Diversity in Palestinian Society, and other queer Palestinian activists have been critiquing the discourse and effects of pinkwashing since its beginnings, and before the term took on a kind of widespread use after Sarah Schulman's op-ed "Israel and 'Pinkwashing'" appeared in the New York Times in November 2011. In a 2009 *Ha'aretz* article, Maikey suggests that the perception of Palestinian society already well in place in the mainstream media, for example, made the media well primed to accept the narratives of pinkwashing: "each time a journalist from the western or Israeli media talks to Haneen, she hears the same questions: 'How many gay people were killed by their families last year?' and 'Can you

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[82] Jason Todd Ritchie "Queer Checkpoints: Sexuality, Survival, and the Paradoxes of Sovereignty in Israel-Palestine," (PhD diss., University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2010), 82.
[83] Ritchie, "Queer Checkpoints," 83.

help me find an oppressed gay Palestinian that has suffered an attempted honor killing by his family?'"[84]

Pinkwashing as a state strategy has changed somewhat since its beginnings. As an article in the independent media collective *indybay.com* put it well, "Brand Israel was launched in response to the recognition that Israel is the worst-received brand name in the world."[85] Since as early as 2002, Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, with the help of British and US PR firms, has made it official policy to attempt to re-brand Israel.[86] During this process, the re-branders determined that one sure-fire topic would convince even the most anti-Zionist activists to associate Israel not with conflict, occupation and deserts but with beaches and tourism, democratic values and tolerance, was gay rights. In 2009 group of student fellows with the California-based multi-million dollar pro-Israel group StandWithUs (which in their words is "an international education organization that ensures that Israel's side of the story is told in communities, campuses, [and] libraries") received scholarships to design and implement an Israel advocacy scheme, and they decided that GLBT rights were the perfect issue to promote Israel to an anti-Zionist constituency. Program organizer Noa Meir explained, "when people see

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[84] Morten Berthelsen, "'Stop Using Palestinian Gays to Whitewash Israel's Image,'" *Ha'aretz Online*, October 1, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/news/stop-using-palestinian-gays-to-whitewash-israel-s-image-1.6887.

[85] Queers for Palestine, "NYC queers cry 'Foul' & 'Tacky!' to pinkwashing of Israel's bloody occupation," *Indybay.org,* December 10, 2010, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.indybay.org/newsitems/2010/12/10/18666251.php.

[86] In 2007, Ido Aharoni, who had already served as Consul for Media and Public Affairs at Israel's Consulate General in New York prior to and after September 11, 2011, took on the position to head Israel's Brand Management Team in Jerusalem. See the entry for Aharoni at *Israel Politick: The Political Blog of the State of Israel,* accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.israelpolitik.org/about/ido-aharoni/.

that Israel is so progressive on this issue, they realize that it can't just be on this issue, and realize this must apply to Israel as a whole."[87]

However, even before official Brand Israel, mainstream Israeli gay rights groups were working on their own public relations with Israeli state institutions, primarily toward the agenda of representing a certain kind of gay white/Ashkenazi Jewish- Israeli as normative and patriotic, what Joshua Gamson calls a "soldiers and mothers" discourse; gay men as good soldier-citizens and lesbians as good mother-citizens.[88] So, for example, in 1998, the first gay Israeli theater performance *Words of His Own* toured the US "as part of the country's fiftieth anniversary celebrations, under the auspices of the consulate general."[89] Even earlier, in 1979, a meeting of the World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Jewish Organizations raised money to plant 3,000 trees in the Negev and demanded recognition from the Jewish National Fund.[90] As discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, the Jewish National Fund, founded at the First Zionist Congress, was tasked with conquering the Palestinian landscape for Jewish settlement and was also the primary producer of early Zionist propaganda films depicting the New Jewish pioneers settling and cultivating what they depicted as barren wasteland. While early normative gay Israeli politics looked to the JNF for legitimacy in the eyes of the state, in this decade, the JNF's more recently formed gay and lesbian committee seems intended to lend a more positive, tolerant face for this core Israeli state institution.

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[87] Nathan Jeffay, "Waving Israel's Rainbow Flag Abroad," *The Jewish Daily Forward*, June 17, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012, http://forward.com/articles/108005/waving-israel-s-rainbow-flag-abroad/.
[88] Joshua Gamson, "The Officer and the Diva," *The Nation*, June 10, 1999, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.thenation.com/article/officer-and-diva#.
[89] Alisa Solomon, "Viva la Diva Citizenship: Post-Zionism and Gay Rights," in *Queer Theory and the Jewish Question,* eds. Daniel Boyarin, Daniel Itzkovitz, and Ann Pellegrini (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 155
[90] Alisa Solomon, "Viva la Diva Citizenship," 155.

Evidence of pinkwashing ranges from clear-cut cases of Israeli Foreign Ministry funding for specifically LGBT-focused events like film festivals, to more convoluted and bizarre strategies such as a YouTube video, quickly exposed as a hoax, in which an Israeli gay actor purports to be an American activist turned off by what he claimed to be homophobia and links to Hamas in the Gaza aid flotilla movement. Critiques of pinkwashing have also changed over time, particularly as North American and European activists, academics and others have caught up with the critique first articulated by Palestinian queer activists. The increasing use of Jasbir Puar's term "homonationalism" has both allowed for a larger context for critiquing Israeli pinkwashing, and caused some differences in approach and focus of activism and research. For Puar, "homonational" is a term that allows us to see how "the nation is not only heteronormative, but also homonormative" and to consider the racialized split between "proper, national (white) homosexuality […] and improper (colored) nonnational queerness."[91] Whiteness, in other words, undergirds the ability for some GLBT identified people to access rights and privileges of citizenship, achieving a kind of normative recognition previously largely considered impossible through conceptions of the nation as always and everywhere exclusively heteronormative and patriarchal. In a recent *Jadaliyya.com* article "Gay Rights as Human Rights: Pinkwashing Homonationalism," Maya Mikdashi writes "critics of pinkwashing who assume an international queer camaraderie repeat a central tenet of homonationalism: homosexuals *should* be in solidarity with and empathize with each other *because* they are homosexual," citing Schulman's op-ed as an example. Mikdashi argues, in other words, that "both the Israeli government and pinkwatching—not pinkwashing—activists partake in different aspects of homonationalism because they *must* in order to be heard by the same intended audience: white gays who have

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[91] Jasbir K. Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 50 and 78.

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economic and political resources."[92] Mikdashi's critique suggests that it is no longer enough to simply enumerate examples of Israeli pinkwashing—as she suggests pink*watchers* do—, if it ever was, since the terms of the critique may only further entrench its effects.

Furthermore, while some Israelis have joined the critique, they frequently curb the harsher criticism with a reminder of the undeniability of Israel's progressive gay rights record. For example legal scholar Aeyal Gross criticizes that "gay rights in Israel and the relative liberalism of Israeli society in this area are flaunted and used to paint a picture of Israel as a progressive liberal democracy," points out that the notion of Israel as a gay haven for Palestinians is a "false narrative," and argues that "gay rights have essentially become a public-relations tool," he also argues that "we must not deny the progress" of LGBT rights in Israel.[93] Given that the recognition entailed in "not denying the progress," is, I believe, the primary goal of Israeli pinkwashing, particularly as conceived by the StandWithUs fellows, Gross' form of critique shows how pinkwashing survives in some instances its own critique, or, put another way, pinkwashing works in part *through* a neo-liberal version of difference, which allows for the strategic inclusion of rights discourse but without significant transformation of legal, state, or institutional structures maintaining gender, sexual, economic, racial and other forms of inequality. This accounts for why some supposedly staunch anti-pinkwashing critics remain skeptical of, opposed to, or even unknowledgeable about the Palestinian civil society call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions to end Israeli occupation and to call for real justice for

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[92] Maya Mikdashi, "Gay Rights as Human Rights: Pinkwashing Homonationalism," *Jadaliyya* December 16, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.jadaliyya.com/pages/index/3560/gay-rights-as-human-rights_pinkwashing-homonationa.

[93] Aeyal Gross, "Israeli GLBT Politics Between Queerness and Homonationalism," *Bully Bloggers*, July 3, 2010, accessed December 2, 2012, http://bullybloggers.wordpress.com/2010/07/03/israeli-glbt-politics-between-queerness-and-homonationalism/.

Palestinians. While pinkwashing critiques seem to allow for some liberal hesitance about calling for real social change, BDS aims at the core issue that Israeli pinkwashing itself hopes to obscure—Palestinian liberation from Israeli military occupation and injustice.

The Bubble reflects this liberal mode of discourse insofar as it seems on its face to be a film critical of Israeli society, taking the teeth out of some of its best critiques that rightly accuse the film of promoting pinkwashing. While Rebecca Stein notes that "for many Israeli audiences, the figure of the gay Palestinian from the territories was already legible and indeed permissible within the terms of popular Israeli discourse about the persecution of homosexuals within Palestinian society and their efforts to seek refuge within the tolerant context that Israel provides," her reading of the film relies almost exclusively on narrative, plot points and dialogue. Stein focuses on the political terrain of the film, the conditions that she argues allowed for the subjects to become "possible as an object of cinematic inquiry," and thus explains how the film participates and makes meaning in the context of larger cultural conditions.[94] Written and directed by gay Israeli power couple Eytan Fox and Gal Uchovsky, *The Bubble*, like other films by Fox including the 2002 *Yossi and Jagger*, has been screened at a number of Ministry-funded LGBT-themed festivals abroad, including the 2010 Out in Israel festival in San Francisco and the Toronto International Film Festival's focus on Tel Aviv in 2009, which occurred at a time when Toronto was a major testing ground for broader Brand Israel advertisements selling Israeli companies and tourism. Fox's films have been critiqued for their tendency to normalize, nationalize, and largely militarize a certain vision of gay Israeli citizenship. At both the San Francisco and Toronto festivals, queer activist organizations such as Queers Against Israeli

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[94] Rebecca Stein, "Explosive: Scenes from Israel's Gay Occupation," *GLQ* 16.4 (2010): 529.

Apartheid (in Toronto) and Queers Undermining Israeli Terrorism (of San Francisco) headed

protests and called for cultural boycotts.[95]

My aim is also to suggest the necessity of thinking about how pinkwashing works

through, and not just in spite of, contradiction, failure, and exposure, and thus how critiques of

pinkwashing need to be careful not to stop at pointing to and exposing those many contradictions

and failures, since this has not stopped pinkwashing as a strategy, nor as an ideology from

spreading, and in some cases it has multiplied its effects. As *Invisible Men* suggests, the "untold

story" of queer Palestinians, especially in the wake of US threats to pull funding from countries

that don't respect LGBT rights, is more popular than ever. Yet, while this sense of a queerly pre-

occupied cinema, enlisted by Brand Israel pinkwashing, reflects what might be seen as a merely

cultural and discursive phenomenon, a patriotic pornographic film shoot in a depopulated and

destroyed Palestinian village offers a more concrete meeting of queerness and military

occupation. I am referring to ultra-conservative Michael Lucas, known for his anti-Muslim

scorn, whose film *Men of Israel* included scenes shot in a Palestinian village that was ethnically

cleansed around 1948.[96] Lucas Entertainment's description describes that on that day of the shoot

the cast and crew "went to an abandoned village just north of Jerusalem. It was a beautiful

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[95] In 2003, similar protests focused on Frameline's Israeli Consulate co-sponsored screening of Fox's *Yossi and Jagger* (2003), a gay romance set against the backdrop of the Israeli military offensive in Lebanon.

[96] Lucas has criticized the gay left for voicing support for Muslims in an article titled "How Can Gays be Anti-Israel?," in which Lucas concludes that gays "engaged in [Israel] bashing are doing it because of deeply-rooted anti-Semitism." More recently, in February the NYC LGBT Center cancelled events scheduled around Israeli Apartheid Week after Lucas threatened to enlist certain prominent donors in a boycott. See Michael Lucas, "How Can Gays be Anti-Israel?," *New York Blade,* May 4, 2007, Michael Kaminer, "Don't Mess With Jewish Porn Kind Michael Lucas," *The Jewish Daily Forward*, February 23, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012 http://blogs.forward.com/the-shmooze/135615/, and Jenny Aisenberg, "Occupy the LGBT Center for Palestine," *Velvet Park: Dyke Culture in Bloom*, February 28, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.velvetparkmedia.com/blogs/occupy-lgbt-center-palestine.

ancient township that had been deserted centuries ago…however that did not stop our guys from mounting each other and trying to repopulate it."[97] Lucas' film serves as a type of Brand Israel gay tourism promotion through its emphasis on natural and distinctly "Israeli" settings.

Lucas' film also underscores the violence that underpins the production of normative gay Israeli citizen-subjects as well as how both cinema and queerness are enlisted and embedded in occupation. His films re-stage the occupation through Ashkenazi male homosexuality and emphasizing the potential for homonationalism to work alongside what was previously presumed as an exclusively heteronormative nationalist project. In other words, dominant discourse on normative citizenship in Israel does not simply find oppositional categories in the identity positions suggested by GLBT, rather, queer negativity is produced through intersecting and shifting terms such as racialization and the projection of illiberal and unmodern attitudes and behaviors such as 'closeted homosexual,' homophobia, hetero-patriarchy, religious piety, and so on. In spatial terms, this kind of queering posits Palestinian society in the Occupied Territories as a homophobic enclave—a large closet, uninhabitable by the kind of proper homonational gay citizen subject imagined through the kind of gay rights discourse promoted by Israel and the U.S.

This figuring of Palestine as closet participates in what Jasbir Puar marks as a symptom of "sexual exceptionalism…enacted via the discursive tactics through which the identity categories of 'homosexuality' and 'Muslim [or Arab] sexuality' are relegated to mutually

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[97] "Michael Lucas Tells *Try State Magazine* All About Inside Israel," *Try State Magazine* Wednesday, November 25, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012, http://trystatemagazine.blogspot.com/2009/11/michael-lucas-tells-try-state-magazine.html?zx=d924c8fe312e8cec. Also see Max Blumenthal, "Money Talks, Desecration Walks: Nakba Porn Kingpin Michael Lucas Bullies LGBT Center Against Anti-Apartheid Party," *Max Blumenthal*, February 24, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://maxblumenthal.com/2011/02/money-talks-nakba-porn-kingpin-michael-lucas-bullies-the-lgbt-center/.

exclusive spaces."[98] Puar's focus on racialization and racism in the conceptual framework of homonationalism is a reminder that insofar as queer is meant to mark a structural negativity, it is not simply a synonym for gay or homosexual, and indeed ongoing intersectional and relational analysis is needed to detect shifts in the formation of new modes of normativity and non-normativity, value and valuelessness, and life and death.

While Lucas' occupied location shoot suggests a queer cinematic site that takes advantage of the infrastructure of occupation to play out sexual fantasy in close relation to Zionist and nationalist fantasy, the term "occupation" after the Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S. has taken on a resistant meaning, indicating the collective possibility of the protests. The occupation of the NYC LGBT Center by Queers Against Israeli Apartheid and others is one example of the intersection of queerness, Palestine and occupation, but in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, occupation takes on a more immediate and perhaps less apparently resistant meaning, implying the negative "structural position of queerness" marked by Lee Edelman, one clearly less desirable for resistant occupation. Given the spatial logic of Israeli occupation, more careful use of the term occupation needed, perhaps especially in relation to queerness, which is now used to code certain places uncivilized, anti-democratic and unmodern for their supposed inhabitability by queers. It was Lucas who prompted the LGBT Center in New York City to close its doors to Palestine solidarity activism, queer or otherwise, and so the call to "occupy" the center takes on a disturbingly ironic aspect. The next chapter will more closely take up the question of occupation through literal and figurative housings of resistance, belonging, and alliance in cinema and queer Palestinian film and activism to allow for a more complex look at what it means to inhabit Palestine, as place and idea, today.

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[98] Puar, *Terrorist Assemblages*, 141.

5.0   CHAPTER FOUR: PALESTINIAN CINEMA AND QUEER

PALESTINIAN ALLIANCE

5.1   HOUSING IMAGES

Characterizing a Palestinian literary and artistic theme "of the formerly proud family house

(village, city, camp) now wrecked, left behind, or owned by someone else," Edward Said

determines that "each Palestinian structure presents itself as a potential ruin."[1] In addition to the

large body of Palestinian literature, poetry and art on the topic, the real or "potential" ruin of

Palestinian structures has also for some years also been a common theme in North American

Palestine solidarity and anti-occupation documentary film and video work of the kind that, as

Terri Ginsberg explains, "tend to utilize the camera as a relatively transparent index of external

reality: an empirical device of raw 'witnessing,' a progressive populist instrument of social

intervention and mobilization."[2] In light of Ginsberg's analysis, these documentaries can also be

understood in terms of how they participate in what Thomas Keenan has analyzed through

reference to a dominant human rights discourse of "mobilizing shame"—the "watchword of the

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[1] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 38.
[2] Terri Ginsberg "Radical Rationalism as Cinema Aesthetics: The Palestinian-Israeli Conflict in North American Documentary and Experimental Film," *Situations: Project of the Radical Imagination* 4.1 (2011): 92, accessed December 2, 2012, http://ojs.gc.cuny.edu/index.php/situations/article/view/767/1198.

international human rights movement."[3] Keenan explains, "the concept gathers together a set of powerful metaphors—the eyes of the world, the light of public scrutiny, the exposure of hypocrisy—as vehicles for the dream of action, power, and enforcement."[4] However, the concept has met a crisis—which Keenan analyzes in relation to widely televised and mediatized conflicts and so-called "humanitarian interventions" such as the 1999 NATO air campaign over Kosovo—due to "the effective erasure of a fundamental axiom of the human rights movement in an age of publicity: that the exposure of violence is feared by its perpetrators, and hence that the act of witness is not simply an ethical gesture but an active intervention."[5] Keenan posits that while exposure still carries a sense of action—that if only the world could see what is happening atrocity could be prevented—it does not actually happen this way, primarily since "images never speak for themselves, never make anything in particular happen, even if they seem often to make something happen and are now indispensible in war."[6] Keenan does not mean to suggest that ethical action is impossible in a human rights field and broader public sphere saturated by image-production, rather "if we continue to think that images by virtue of their cognitive contents or their proximity to reality have the power to compel action, we miss just the opening of new fields of action they allow."[7] For Keenan, interpretation of and a critical relation to images is key.

House demolitions and the wreckage left from Israeli military assaults, common occurrences of the occupation and a frequent image in solidarity and documentary films on Palestine are indeed visually striking examples of the violence of occupation and ethnic cleansing, and can serve as concrete evidence to document and seek justice in response to Israeli

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[3] Thomas Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame," *South Atlantic Quarterly* 103:2/3 (2004): 437.
[4] Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame," 438.
[5] Keenan, "Mobilizing Shame," 446.
[6] Thomas Keenan, "Publicity and Indifference (Sarajevo on Television)," *PMLA* 117.1 (2002): 114.
[7] Keenan, "Publicity and Indifference (Sarajevo on Television)," 113.

war crimes. Yet, while images of violence, including against architecture ("Palestinian structure[s]"), became increasingly popular in international courts after human rights organizations began to use the same remote sensing technologies as the state, the production of these images seem to follow the logic of exposure and mobilizing shame critiqued by Keenan. Indeed, despite a wealth of evidentiary material documenting Israeli military crimes such as the destruction of Gaza during "Operation Cast Lead," little legal or punitive action has been taken. In fact, the controversy surrounding the Goldstein Report, Judge Richard Goldstone's UN Report on the 2009 Israeli assault on Gaza that alleged intentional Israeli war crimes perpetrated against Palestinian civilians, underscores the limited field of action for conducting field research into Israeli military assaults.[8] Furthermore, Andrew Herscher argues that visualizations produced by remote sensing technologies, including satellite and aerial photographs, de-legitimize victims insofar as they replace the need for the witness on the ground, whose testimony becomes secondary corroboration of satellite images and Google maps: "remote sensing does not only *substantiate* human witnesses to human rights violations, but also *supplants* those witnesses as authoritative sources."[9]

Well-known Israeli human rights non-governmental organization (NGO) B'Tselem (whose name, somewhat ironically, means "in the image of"), seemingly aware of the potential de-legitimation of the victims they purport to work in the name of, has initiated more than one camera-distribution project encouraging more Palestinians to document Israeli military and

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[8] See Ali Abunimah's analysis of Judge Goldstone's retraction of certain aspects of the report in "Answering Judge Goldstone's Defense and Denial of Israeli Apartheid," *The Electronic Intifada* November 1, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/answering-judge-goldstones-defense-and-denial-israeli-apartheid. Also see *The Goldstone Report: The Legacy of the Landmark Investigation of the Gaza Conflict* eds. Adam Horowitz, Lizzy Ratner, and Philip Weiss (New York, NY: Nation Books, 2011).
[9] Andrew Herscher, "From Target to Witness: Architecture, Satellite Surveillance, Human Rights," *Architecture and Violence*, ed. Bechir Kenzari (New York: Actar, 2011), 131.

settler violence. [10] Given their mission to "document and educate the Israeli public and policymakers about human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, combat the phenomenon of denial prevalent among the Israeli public, and help create a human rights culture in Israel," it would seem that B'Tselem uses such camera-distribution initiatives to mobilize shame in Israeli society.[11] They further explain their mission through logics of exposure and shame:

> The focus on documentation reflects B'Tselem's objective of providing as much information as possible to the Israeli public, since information is indispensable to taking action and making choices. Readers of B'Tselem publications may decide to do nothing, but they cannot say, "We didn't know."[12]

The videos are also used in legal proceedings to provide "vital evidence" and they reference a "few cases" where "broadcast of the footage has contributed to genuine policy changes."[13] Yet, given that the Palestinian-run human rights organization Al Haq, a frequent partner of B'Tselem that also documents Israeli and Palestinian violence (and its elder by a decade), tends to receive less positive international attention, it may still be easier for Israeli organization to effectively document and expose the world to examples of Israeli violence.[14]

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[10] On B'Tselem's camera distribution project specifically focused on Palestinian women, see "Out My Window," *B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.btselem.org/video/20120307_out_of_my_window_dvd.

[11] "About B'Tselem," *B'Tselem: The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories*, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.btselem.org/about_btselem.

[12] "About B'Tselem."

[13] "About B'Tselem."

[14] As a striking example, while a Danish Foundation awarded it Prize for Freedom to both Al-Haq and B'Tselem in 2011, the director of Al-Haq was unable to attend due to a ban on his travel outside the West Bank by Israeli Authorities. See "Lift Travel Ban on Human Rights Defender," *B'Tselem* November 29, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.btselem.org/press-release/lift-travel-ban-human-rights-defender. While B'Tselem came to Al-Haq's defense, some Palestinian rights groups, such as the Palestinian Centre for Human Rights criticize, for instance, B'Tselem's participation in an event that featured Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert. See "'Dismayed' B'Tselem scolds Palestinian Rights Groups for 'Conduct,' Speaking Out Over Olmert Gala," *The Electronic Intifada*, March 22, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012,

Ginsberg similarly argues, regarding "contemporary North American Palestine solidarity films made in the documentary tradition" that they "echo preponderantly what Palestinian filmmaker Omar al-Qattan refers to as the 'commando' reportage of international corporate news agencies…in its subordination of oppressed voices and perspective to Western politics priorities."[15] She describes two rather distinct types of Palestine solidarity documentary film work according to how much the films invest in logics of exposure and the cinematic image's availability and recognizability as proof. Ginsberg characterizes the tendency of the majority of North American Palestine solidarity documentaries to

> offer little more than generic compilations of albeit damning footage juxtaposed with albeit revolutionary testimonials, which, for reasons no longer subject to serious debate in film circles, supply, in their relative aesthetic alienation from larger explanatory contexts, limited and sometimes ironically self-contradictory counterproof.[16]

Thus, as cinematic documentary conventions like those critiqued by Ginsberg collude with the same techniques of mediation that limit discourse on Palestine, and as the dominant evidentiary modes of visualization favored by human rights NGOs further de-authorize the victims on the ground, the logic of exposure, that seeing is believing (and eventually action), is undermined at the same time it is invested in. Herscher concludes that:

> the predominant use of satellite imagery suggests that it is only *remote seeing* that offers fully believable representation and that sight on the ground is subject to distortions, biases and obstacles that render it inherently unreliable. When remote seeing is believing, seeing up close and personal becomes an undependable and only preliminary form of vision.[17]

In light of this, images of the Palestinian house, primarily in its form as a ruined structure—resulting, for example, from recent military incursions, common in the West Bank or Gaza, or

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http://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/dismayed-btselem-scolds-palestinian-rights-groups-conduct-speaking-out-over.
[15] Ginsberg "Radical Rationalism as Cinema Aesthetics," 92.
[16] Ginsberg "Radical Rationalism as Cinema Aesthetics," 92-93.
[17] Herscher, "From Target to Witness," 141.

from earlier destruction and dispossession, as can be found in remains of former Palestinian villages throughout contemporary Israel—can have the arguably unintended effect of serving a discursive context in which Palestinians are seen as illegitimate sources, unable to lay claim to mediating their own experiences.

This is yet another way that the Palestinian house is ruined, then, and indeed the broader meanings that houses take on in Historic and Occupied Palestine, as well as in Israel and in the contemporary Jewish settlements, suggest that they are highly charged images in relation to ethno-national intelligibility. In Chapters 2 and 3, I explored a different aspect of the landscape's formation as part of a network of visuality and spatiality that continually reinvests Jewish national belonging with a sense of inevitability and self-evidence. Underscoring the continued relevance of the power of the Wall and Tower figuration in the contemporary perceptual field in the region, the final shots of the 2008 Israeli film *The Lemon Tree* point to the irony of the visual and spatial logic of the hilltop settlement home when it meets that of the Separation Barrier. The character of the Defense Minister, whose own absurd commitment to so-called security measures have caused his wife to leave him, appears alone in his home, sitting in the dark, only the back of his head is visible as he sits in a chair facing one of the still closed windows. He f activates automated metal blinds, which slowly open to reveal his bittersweet victory: the Minister's "picture window" now affords a view of the Separation Barrier in its most concrete and imposing form. A medium shot from behind the Minister reveals him centered of the frame, a dark silhouette against the bright view outside of the concrete barrier, which nearly reaches the top of the frame, leaving only a sliver of sky visible. The frame is further bisected by the window frames as well as by two columns supporting the back porch. This is a view

obstructed, but at the same time it underscores the blind spots, fragmentation, and not-seeing that

constitute the dominant logic of Israeli national intelligibility discussed in Chapter 3.

Yet, it is important that the structure in this image is a house, particularly given how

affectively and politically charged houses are in a context of home demolitions, evictions,

expanding settlements, and also given the association with the home as both a private space and

a site where national belonging is reiterated. Architecture scholar Beatriz Colomina emphasizes

the important connection between architecture and subjectivity: "architecture is not simply a

platform that accommodates the viewing subject… it is a viewing mechanism that produces the

subject. It precedes and frames its occupant," insinuating in this context the contradictory logic

that informs Israeli national belonging.[18] To *belong* in such a home like the settlement home,

with its military functions of surveillance and control, does not simply connote a kind of familial,

safe, and private comfort, but is fully enmeshed with a militant ethno-nationalism, or, as

Colomina puts it "the view enters the house."[19] The continued militarization of Jewish-Israeli

belonging in Israel is exemplified by recent "loyalty laws" that compel adherence to the *idea* of

Israel a "Jewish democratic state," by the Nakba Law that bans commemoration of the nakba, or

"catastrophe," which describes the near destruction of Palestinian society that occurred when the

state of Israel was founded, the many laws that distinguish between Jews and non-Jews and

discriminate against the Arab minority of Israel, and the inequality within the Jewish-Israeli

population between European and Arab Jews in Israeli society. While exclusion or un-belonging

are often more readily associated with violence, in Israel belonging is *compulsory*, even if

illusory for all but a small minority. What kinds of belonging, national or otherwise, can

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[18] Beatriz Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity: Modern Architecture as Mass Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1996), 250.
[19] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 323.

Palestinians construct in this context, particularly given the potential or actual ruin of the

Palestinian structure and the denial of Palestinian belonging in Israeli and other contexts?

Suggesting that architecture is a form of mass media, Colomina likens it to cinema,

whereby "the house is a device to see the world, a mechanism of viewing. Shelter, separation

from the outside, is provided by the window's ability to turn the threatening world outside the

house into a reassuring picture."[20] In this way, the view from inside the house can be as charged

with meaning as the image of the house from the satellite, suggesting the house's ability to

produce ways of seeing in multiple ways. Colomina describes the picture window, like the one

in *Lemon Tree*, in particular for its dual functions and for how it complicates the notion that the

house provides clear private/public or interior/exterior boundaries. The picture window

> turns the outside world into an image to be consumed by those inside the house, but it
> also displays the image of the interior to that outside world. This shouldn't be confused
> with exposing one's privacy.[21]

The *Lemon Tree* emphasizes the irony of security and surveillance logics, particularly in a shot

from behind the Minister's back as he looks out his picture window at the blank Separation

Barrier, which fills "the view." The movie camera, the subject, the house with its picture

window, and the Separation Barrier are aligned in this scene in such a way that suggests their

formation of network of techniques of viewing that posit contradictory and yet complimentary

modes of micro-power, state power, and subjectivation in the inhabitance of such a house.

Colomina interprets Le Corbusier in terms of positing modern architecture's definition of

inhabitation in terms of inhabiting the picture produced by the house, whereby "to inhabit means

to see." Even the window of modern architecture is never simply suggestive of the logics of

exposure compelled by Enlightenment thinking, since the window is like a screen that

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[20] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 7.
[21] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 8.

"undermines the wall." Not "a *physical* undermining, an *occupation* of the wall, but a *dematerialization* following from the emerging media," by which Colomina means radio, television, cinema and photography.[22] Thus, for Le Corbusier, "the interior no longer needs to be defined as a system of defense from the exterior," perhaps explaining the importance of metal blinds and a view of a concrete wall, defined in dominant Israeli discourse as purely defensive, which seems to attempt to re-instate physical boundaries of interior and exterior while at the same time undermining claims of inhabitance seemingly threatened by an apparent obstruction to seeing "the view."[23]

As one of the primary ways Zionist Jewish Agencies articulated, in a widely distributed form, their claim on the land of Palestine, I have argued that cinema serves as a site of the continued reiteration of the terms through which some modes of belonging and forms of national homemaking in Historic and Occupied Palestine are and have been legitimated and others are and have been denied. While the Sabra figure permeated Jewish Agency propaganda films, the complex notion that Jewish "pioneers" were both creating and returning to their rightful homeland similarly functioned to establish a particular and stable notion of home and nation through which normative Jewish nationalism was sustained. And although it makes sense to interpret Palestinian cultural productions and Palestinian histories as a response to the repeated claims of Palestinian nonexistence, inconsequence, and illegitimacy, Palestinian cinema does not simply respond and/or recuperate. Rather, in many ways Palestinian filmmakers decline to respond in the same terms used by those who seek to de-legitimize them, and thus attempt to avoid representational traps like the logic of exposure. The stakes of such a strategy is explained by Said, since a Palestinian critique of those who deny Palestinian rights lies in the very terms of

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[22] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 335.
[23] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 334.

the denial itself: "every assertion of our nonexistence, every attempt to spirit us away, every new effort to prove that we were never really there, simply raises the question of why so much denial of, and such energy expended on, what was not there?"[24]

Using the house as a frame to hone in on how Palestinian filmmakers and activists posit and inhabit forms of belonging that fall to the side of the conventional modes of belonging compelled and regulated by the Israeli state, I explore what it means to inhabit Palestinian sociality and collectivity in a context of dispossession, dispersion, and seeming unlivability. Queer diasporic, queer of color, and women of color feminist critiques of home, resistance, and solidarity are turned to a different moments of this accounting of Palestinian belonging and unbelonging, compelled by the many crossings over between queer, feminist, and Palestinian interpretations of these concepts, and following the many examples of queer Palestinian activism and creative work prominent in the broader Palestinian social justice struggle in recent years. The concept of the house as a viewing mechanism, and the exchanges between the house, camera, subject, and other techniques and technologies of visuality and power further organizes the concerns of this chapter. First, though, I'll provide some context for thinking through the material and conceptual terms of "Palestinian unbelonging," in order to explain what it means to say that certain modes of belonging are maintained over others in the context of occupation.

5.2   PALESTINIAN UNBELONGING

According to a widely familiar narrative, Israel provided Jewry a place to settle both physically and ontologically, but the state's founding was also an opportunity to re-configure the image of

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[24] Edward Said, *After the Last Sky*, 42.

Jews and the meaning of Jewish belonging, which took on a national imperative at the beginning of the twentieth-century. Distancing their vision of the new nation from the rather literally unsettled figures of the wandering Jew, the *shtetl* and the ghetto, Zionist leaders sought to establish Palestine as a place where Jews would make a home that conformed to the same contemporary European norms that deemed Jewish communities unfit or undesirable. In his diaries, Herzl described his dream for Jewish national homemaking in terms of the components of an ideal city: we shall build houses, palaces, workers' dwellings, schools, theatres, museums, government houses, hospitals, lunatic asylums—in brief, cities." (11) While these places suggest a particular kind of social stratification associated with a diverse secular and modern society, Herzl recognized that a Jewish state should also establish some unique attributes:

> We shall not only copy Paris, Florence, etc., but look for a Jewish style also, expressing relief and freedom. Open cheerful hallways, borne on columns. Make air zones between cities. Every city like a large house situated in a garden. (13)

The "relief and freedom" of the architecture Herzl imagined would emphasize a clear distinction between the style of living made possible by a Jewish state, a kind of unconstrained expressive Jewish homemaking, and the mode of living associated with survival under conditions of increasing repression in Europe and the former Soviet Union. The "open" hallways and "airzones" oppose the stereotype of the cramped and overcrowded urban Jewish ghetto or the isolated *shtetl*. Writing in a mode of creative invention, Herzl imagined Palestine and the figure of the new Jewish pioneer as blank slates onto which certain "homing desires" could be projected on and enacted through.[25] Avtar Brah's notion of diasporic "homing desires" construes diaspora as a productive kind of orientation, which creates certain notions of home and is not simply or necessarily a condition of displacement from a clearly defined and original home.

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[25] See Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Desire: Contesting Identitie*s (New York: Routledge, 1996).

In a book on queer migrant narratives, A.M. Fortier suggests the notion of "home" is usefully complicated by narratives of home that don't presume it as a secure, heteronormative, homophobic or un-queer space. In other words, Fortier suggests that 'home' needs to be conceptualized differently, and not as always already stable, hetero-normative, and original, nor as the "quasi-mythical" and de-contextualized queer home often invoked in mainstream discourse on "coming out." Fortier suggests that home is often conceived of as a space from the past:

> the childhood home is more effectively rethought not by refusing 'home' and leaving it behind—which merely reinstates the authority of the heteronormative model of 'home'—but, rather, by conceiving it as a contingent product of historical circumstances and discursive formations—of class, religion, ethnicity, nation—that individuals negotiate in the process of creating home. In this sense, home is never fully achieved, never fully arrived-at, even when we are in it.[26]

The imagined future queer home, in other words, is posited as the ideal space that the childhood home never provided. Through this model, "'home' remains widely sentimentalized as a space of comfort and seamless belonging, indeed fetishized through the movement away from the familial home toward an imagined other space to be called 'home.'"[27] If we understand home as already constituted through certain kinds of un-belonging, and not just through similarity, security and community, then the possibilities for understanding belonging and its relation to home and identity expand, and queer can no longer serve as a too easy metaphor for "not-home," nor in the service of an idealized future "queer" home, one again posited only in terms of security and

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[26] Anne-Marie Fortier, "Making Home: Queer Migrations and Motions of Attachment," in *Uprootings/Regroundings: Questions of Home and Migration,* eds. Sara Ahmed, Claudia Castaneda, Anne-Marie Fortier, and Mimi Sheller (Oxford: Berg, 2003), 131.
[27] Anne-Marie Fortier, "Making Home," 119.

sameness.[28] Fortier explains how the notion of the diasporic home can accommodate a multiplicity of spaces of belonging and unbelonging and "encounters with estrangement and familiarity"[29]:

> the diasporic home is already queer because it is always somehow located in a space of betweenness: that it is a site of struggle with multiple injunctions of being and 'fitting in' that come from 'here' and 'there.' In this respect, *'home' is intensely queer, and queer, utterly familiar.*[30]

With this emphasis on the proximity between queerness and familiarity, as well as Fortier's reference to home as a "contingent product of historical circumstances and discursive formations" formed through a process of negotiation, that, like Stein's notion of national intelligibility, emphasizes process, contingency and unstable notions of belonging. Considered together, these models suggest ways to think about both queer and home in unsettled terms.

The sense that the diasporic home is "never fully achieved, never fully arrived-at" is a driving concern of Ghada Terawi's short film *The Last Station* (2007), from Shashat's 3rd Women's Film Festival on the theme *Palestinian Portraits.* Terawi narrates, through first-person inter-titles, the story of her parents; driven out of Palestine and forced to live in diaspora where no place (Beirut, Tunisia) could be home for long. Terawi only first sees Palestine herself in 1995—she describes checkpoints, the Separation Barrier, soldiers, tanks—a homeland under siege. At the end of the film the narrator explains that "the road back home was more beautiful than home itself. But this was not the end of my journey." In *The Last Station*, home is unstable, particularly when the ideal home Terawi imagined does not match the reality of the homeland under siege. This diasporic experience of home is similar to how David Eng describes Asian

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[28] On the violence involved in claims to belonging in racialized queer Israeli contexts, see Adi Kuntsman, *Figurations of Violence and Belonging: Queerness, Migranthood and Nationalism in Cyberspace and Beyond* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2009).
[29] Anne-Marie Fortier, "Making Home,"121.
[30] Anne-Marie Fortier, "Making Home,"125.

American experience as "suspended between departure and arrival…permanently

disenfranchised from home, relegated to a nostalgic sense of loss or to an optative sense of its

unattainability."[31] *The Last Station* emphasizes a sense of suspension between departure and

arrival, and between the home of her parent's memory and the home she encountered in 1995,

through the use of both still photographs and video. The still photographs emphasize the kind of

stasis the idealized notions of Palestine took on in her parent's stories, while archival footage of

Palestinians forced to leave their homes, combined with Terawi's footage of contemporary

military occupation, underscore the ongoing processes of the unmaking of the Palestinian

homeland. Terawi's film simultaneously contends with and maintains the sense of unattainability

that a Palestinian homeland has for many Palestinians, without attempting to solve or settle the

desire to finally arrive at home, presumably the home waiting at "the last station."

For David Eng, "queer diasporas" is "not only an object of knowledge" but "also a

critical methodology," one that explore movements and migrations "through the lens of

queerness, affiliation, and social contingency" and the "declines the normative impulse to

recuperate lost origins, to recapture the mother or motherland, and to valorize dominant notions

of social belonging and racial exclusion that the nation-state would seek to naturalize and

legitimate."[32] Furthermore, Eng's methodology of queer diasporas "denaturalizes race precisely

by contesting and rethinking the pervading rhetoric that 'situates the terms 'queer' and 'diaspora'

as dependent on the originality of 'heterosexuality' and 'nation.'"[33] In Terawi's film, a similar

"decline" to recover the lost origin of the idealized Palestinian homeland allows for a less linear

and more open-ended exploration of Palestinian dispossession. A sense of unbelonging, in other

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[31] David Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship: Queer Liberalism and the Racialization of Intimacy*
(Durham: Duke University Press, 2010): 110.
[32] Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship*, 13-14.
[33] Eng, *The Feeling of Kinship*, 14.

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words, is not countered with uncomplicated claims of belonging, and home as a concept is unsettled, mirroring the sense that Palestinians and the Palestinian Question are unsettled. If normatively ideal Jewish Israeli identity defines a settled people (or, more romantically, the settling of a unsettled people), Palestinians are both *unsettled by* and *unsettling to* Zionism. Refusing to concede their right to the land of their ancestors, Palestinians have had to construct ever-new ways to articulate their attachment to Palestine as home and their understanding of what it means to belong to such a home.

This is not to say that certain notions of home are not regulatory and idealized, compelling certain routes toward home over others and restricting, in some very concrete and violent ways in Israel and the Palestinian Territories, access to detours toward any recognizable version of home. If home is frequently an ideal concept, then it makes sense to analyze how it functions as a regulatory norm. Judith Butler describes regulatory norms in terms of binary gender and compulsive heterosexuality:

> When the disorganization and disaggregation of the field of bodies disrupt the regulatory fiction of heterosexual coherence, it seems that the expressive model loses its descriptive force. That regulatory ideal is then exposed as a norm and a fiction that disguises itself as a developmental law regulating the sexual field that it purports to describe.[34]

In other words, idealized notions of home (and national home), act, like gender, to regulate lived experience, while at the same time appearing to merely describe it. It is also in this way and for this reason that Butler describes gender as "a project with cultural survival as its end," whereby "the term *strategy* better suggests the situation of duress under which gender performance always and variously occurs."[35] In Israel, duress and regulation take on a specifically legal aspect through the enactment of a loyalty oath bill, which first applied to non-Jews and was extended to

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[34] Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 185.
[35] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 190.

include Jewish immigrants, that compels patriotic commitment to the *concept* of Israel as a

"Jewish democracy," even, or especially, for those who are excluded by those terms.[36] In other

words, the master narrative of an idealized national home, a safe haven for all Jews (and, in

Brand Israel pinkwashing discourse, all queers), is quite literally a compulsory narrative. The

criminalization of the *Nakba* through 2011 bill that "calls on the government to deny funding to

any organization, institution or municipality that commemorates the founding of the Israeli state

as a day of mourning," seems in this context aimed at willfully ignoring the ruins and remains

(many visible on the Israeli landscape) of other instantiations of the landscape as "home."[37]

National identity and subjectivity, as it becomes bound to particular idealized notions of home

for Jewish-Israeli society, requires repetition that, like gender, "is at once a reenactment and re-

experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established; and it is the mundane and

ritualized form of their legitimation."[38] The idealization of home in this context confirms the

extent to which Zionism involves rigid protection of certain ethnic and conceptual borders of

belonging.

For example, Jewish homemaking in Palestine was by no means universally applied to all

Jewish immigrants.[39] For this reason, in describing a Zionist formation of particular notions of

Jewish home and belonging, it must be acknowledged as a primarily Ashkenazi, or Jewish-

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[36] See Chaim Levinson and Jonathan Lis, "Netanyahu wants loyalty oath bill to include Jews as well" *Ha'aretz* October 18, 2010, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/news/national/netanyahu-wants-loyalty-oath-bill-to-include-jews-as-well-1.319864.

[37] Jillian Kestler-D'Amours, "Israel criminalizes commemoration of the Nakba," *Electronic Intifada*, March 29, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://electronicintifada.net/content/israel-criminalizes-commemoration-nakba/9289.

[38] Butler, *Gender Trouble*, 191.

[39] In a recent example, Israel halted Ethiopian Jewish immigration between 2008 and 2010. See Jessica Elgot, "Israel reopens Ethiopian Immigration," *The Jewish Chronicle Online*, January 19, 2010, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.thejc.com/news/israel-news/26183/israel-reopens-ethiopian-immigration.

European, phenomenon constituted against, and imposed onto, internal and external others. In other words, bound to an overly stable and settled notion of home, according to a particular version of the "homing desires" fulfilled through the Israeli state, Israeli national intelligibility is maintained as exceptional and exclusive, affording an absolute right to belong for some, and denying it in any real sense to others. Ashkenazi Jews are posited as the ideal citizen of a democratic Jewish State. Ella Shohat underscores how this framework limits analysis of Arab Jews within Israeli society and in relation to Palestinians:

> Arab Jews presented some challenges for Zionist scholarship, precisely because their presence "messed up" its Enlightenment paradigm that had already figured the modern Jew as cleansed from its shtetl past. In Palestine, freed of its progenitor the Ostjuden, the New Jew could paradoxically live in the "East" without being of it.[40]

Even the Jewish Right of Return brings with it certain compelling duties and obligations that during different periods of immigration and transformations in citizenship and population, were not optional; including the impossibility of returning to former homes in Europe, North Africa, and the former Soviet Union.[41] As the description for Rachel Leah Jones' documentary *Ashkenaz* (2007) succinctly articulates it, Ashkenazi Jewish identity transformed "from the other of Europe to the Europe of the others."[42] In contradictory fashion, though, the idea that Ashkenazim are Europeans amongst the Near Eastern "other" also refigures a kind of unbelonging in the very attempt to construct notions of ideal Jewish citizenship in Israel. Acknowledging that Palestine is an "other" place, and that Ashkenazim represent "Europe," reiterates displacement. Furthermore, echoing Herzl's wish to "not only copy" European cities, Ashkenazi Europeanness,

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[40] Ella Shohat, "Zionist Discourse and the Study of Arab Jews," *Social Text* 75 21.2 (2003): 49.
[41] Especially on former Soviet Union Jewish immigrants in Israeli society, see Adi Kuntsman, *Figurations of Violence and Belonging: Queerness, Migranthood and Nationalism in Cyberspace and Beyond* (Bern, Switzerland: Peter Lang, 2009).
[42] See the Trabelsi Productions' synopsis of the film at http://www.trabelsiproductions.com/Ashkenaz.php.

if it only appears as such outside of Europe in the Middle East, may indeed appear to be "only copy."

The actual social inequalities in Israeli society, which aren't always reducible to a model of inclusion/exclusion or center/margin, emphasize the extent to which national belonging in Israel enacts a certain kind of violence typically associated only with exclusion. In other words, even those who come closest to the state's idealized notion of national citizen subject are subject to a contingent regulatory and obligatory process (including compulsory military service), not to mention the many forms of racism and sexism that underlay access to privilege in Israeli society. As perhaps one might expect of any concept of nationhood and belonging, especially one founded on a particular ethno-religious identity, the national homeland is predominantly conceived of in its negative relation to Others, and necessarily exclusive or repressive of Others. For example, the Sabra, conceived of as a native identity, was a deliberate and new construction through which Jewish masculinity was intended to be reclaimed and idealized. Diasporic Jews were increasingly encouraged to take up the Sabra identity (through various institutionalized and cultural coercions including the compulsory learning of Hebrew) in part as way to mark their *re*-settlement in Palestine, in other words to shed what were seen as undesirable diasporic qualities. The Sabra was also modeled, in contradictory fashion, after behaviors and practices associated with the Arab population of Palestine, those who Zionism would deny as having any legitimate claim to the landscape. [43] In other words, the Palestinian Arab and Bedouin population was *neither unknown nor entirely excluded* by the dominant Zionist narratives of Jewish national

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[43] See Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew,* trans. Haim Watzman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), especially sections on "the Arab as 'Noble Savage,'" and "The Arab as a Model for the New Jew."

homemaking in Palestine, though the Sabra concept would *at the same time* seem to compel rigid

exclusion and exceptionalism.

At the same time, this kind of willed unknowingness regarding these restrictive

separations and markers of difference produce what Yael Berda has described as a kind of erotic

fascination or "the erotics of the occupation." Berda shows how Arab culture is certainly not

unknown to Jewish-Israelis, indeed a kind of erotic exchange takes place through an incredible

proximity to and adoption of certain Arabic foods, cultural interests, words, and so on: "Israelis

have to know, to touch and to smell everything that the other has—the land, the coffee, the

music—but without knowing the other."[44] Erotics in this way are about orientations and

desires—through this play of proximity and distance—which is not reducible to a notion of

repression since, again, Palestinians and Palestinianness are neither unknown nor entirely

excluded in this paradigm, but for Berda is also intimately tied to incredible degrees of violence.

For Berda, this erotics subtends Israeli national security discourse and the intimate knowledge

pursued constantly at airports, checkpoints, nightclubs, military routines, and so on. Berda

describes the kind of willed ignorance of Israelis to *know* and *possess* Arabic language, cuisine,

music, and land. For Berda this is a kind of attraction/ revulsion that in some ways implies an

attraction toward one's own incoherence and destruction, while at the same time compelling a

strict identification as "not other." Presuming that erotic relationships necessitate an aspect of

mystery, Berda shows how these secrets and distances are produced by the contradictory

inconsistencies and over-administration that is part and parcel of the occupation. With this kind

of constantly withheld and yet carefully cultivated desire described by Berda, we might wonder

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[44] Yael Berda "The Erotics of the Occupation," trans. Hilla Dayan. *Ma'arav,* June 9, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012. http://www.maarav.org.il/english/2009/06/the-erotics-of-the-occupation/.
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whether the occasional spectacular violence of the martyr operation, or deadly IDF incursion into

Gaza, can be interpreted as a kind of erotic release—for Israelis, at least, since the erotic desire

of Palestinians doesn't really enter Berda's analysis.

Berda's description of the erotics of the occupation serves as a reminder to be skeptical of

discourses of exclusion and inclusion. As Michel Foucault describes, the "repressive hypothesis"

did not fully explain the "machinery of power" of the new science of sexology around the turn of

the century that

> did not aim to suppress [sexual perversion], but rather to give it an analytical, visible, and
> permanent reality: it was implanted in bodies, slipped in beneath modes of conduct, made
> into a principle of classification and intelligibility, established as a *raison d'etre* and a
> natural order of disorder.[45]

In other words, this generation of sex as discourse produced it not as a site of liberation from

censorship, repression, or power in a broad sense, but "in the very space and as the means of its

exercise."[46] In a similar way, Jewish national homemaking *produces* Palestinians as a ghostly

presence (or "absent-presentee," terminology the state uses to describe some Palestinians who

refused to leave their villages). This proliferation of Palestinianness occurs in part through the

discourse of exclusion that borders on extinction through the often repeated notion that

Palestinians have never existed, no longer exist, are not who they say they are (i.e. they are

Arabs with no special relation to the land of Palestine), and/or are an ancient uncivilized people

of the past (Bedouins, who need to assimilate and join modern society). In other words, even in

the discourse of exclusion and absence, Palestinian intelligibility, recognizability and visibility

proliferates. Like Native Americans in Renee L. Bergland's study of a particularly North

American national uncanny, Palestinian and Bedouin populations represent the uncanny for

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[45] Michel Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Vol. 1: An Introduction.* Translated by Robert Hurley.
(New York: Vintage Books, 1990), 44.
[46] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 32.

Zionist Jewish nationalism through their mere presence as indigenous people still inhabiting the

landscape of Israel and Palestine. This presence implies their historic and continued claim to

Palestine as a homeland (even as the most concrete claims, bolstered by proofs of former or

present ownership, are frequently ignored and denied by the state). In this light, given that

Zionism was and continues to be a program of Jewish settlement in Palestine, a definite colonial

sense of this uncanniness emerges, as explained by Bergland:

> The sense of unsettledness in the word *unheimlich* is important, because it evokes the
> colonialist paradigm that opposes civilization to the dark and mysterious world of the
> irrational and savage. Quite literally, the uncanny is the unsettled, the not-yet-colonized,
> the unsuccessfully colonized, or the decolonized.[47]

In the case of Palestine and Israel, the indigenous populations are unsettling from the perspective

of Jewish nationalism in part because of their seemingly unstable relationships to a particular and

idealized concept of national home; Bedouins, for example, continue to present a threat as a

people somewhat defined by their flexible and borderless sense of home. The Israeli Foreign

Ministry website, for example, characterizes the Bedouin population as an Israeli "minority

community": "formerly nomadic shepherds, the Bedouin are currently in transition from a tribal

social framework to a permanently settled society and are gradually entering Israel's labor force."

This description conceals the ongoing destruction of Bedouin encampments and demolitions of

homes, especially in the Negev where Bedouin communities continue to be forcibly "relocated"

since they live near the largest Israeli settlement Maale Adumim[48]. A longer article from 1999,

which still appears on the Israeli Foreign Ministry website, explains that "the Bedouin to some

extent fail to distinguish between objective difficulties and those connected with their changing

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[47] Renee L. Bergland, *The National Uncanny: Indian Ghosts and American Subjects* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 11.
[48] Yolande Knell, "Bedouin oppose Israeli plans to relocate communities," *BBC*, November 11, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-middle-east-15024958.

sub-culture and thus feel an exaggerated sense of deprivation." The state's self-serving description of Bedouin as irrational and "formerly nomadic" emphasizes the state's discourse of modernity and democracy for all while blaming the Bedouin for their own "sense of deprivation." At the same time, these descriptions suggest the state is threatened by the existence of a community that refuses to adhere to state-sanctioned forms of settlement and national life; the article goes on to describe Bedouin "land offenses," including "illegal building," and "grazing in protected areas."[49]

The ever-increasing Arab minority in Israel also serves to continually complicate and challenge the state's concept of itself and what a Jewish democracy entails, and this of course is what is meant by Israeli discourse of an Arab "demographic threat." These fantasies cast Palestinians and the visible evidence of present and past Palestinian livelihood in the ruins of demolished villages in national parks, for example,[50] as ghostly and impossible absent-presences co-habitating in a relatively small geographical region. In this way, the notion of the strictly Jewish-Israeli homeland, although it repeatedly posits itself in exaggerated security terms, produces a continually disavowed figure of insecurity its core, haunting every new proclamation of belonging with figures of unbelonging. Even the potential of a competing non-Jewish indigenous *national* attachment to the land poses a structuring contradiction of the Zionist claim to a Jewish natural and holy right to Palestine while at the same time imposing and articulating the 'holy' and the 'natural' through the relatively recent European Enlightenment concept of the nation and through British colonial rule. Given that Israel was meant to settle and provide safety

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[49] Dr. Yosef Ben-David, "The Bedouin in Israel," *Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs,* July 1999, accessed December 2, 2012,
http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/MFAArchive/1990_1999/1999/7/The+Bedouin+in+Israel.htm.
[50] See especially Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992).

for Holocaust survivors and for at-risk Jewish populations everywhere, and before that to provide a Jewish homeland to liberate Jewish communities from repression in Europe and elsewhere, it is perhaps no surprise that the national concept of homeland would appear as idealized and strict as it does in dominant Israeli national discourse.

While every new Jewish settlement demands Israeli recognition as a part of the ever-expanding Jewish national home, the continued destruction of Palestinian homes shows something of the endurance of Palestinian nationalism beyond such settled or idealized concepts of 'home.'[51] This is not to say that Palestinian nationalism refrains from an idealization of Palestine as national homeland, indeed there are many examples where it does. The concept of Palestine as homeland is a central and driving concern of Palestinian cultural production and resistance. Furthermore, the centrality of the right of return for Palestinian refugees in the Palestinian national struggle, particularly in widely popular Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement,[52] underscores the importance of Palestine/Israel as home and as a *national* home for Palestinians. Still, Palestinian society is largely dispersed, dispossessed, besieged, and possesses little to no recognized and/or respected sovereign land rights. In this context, where does Palestinian resistance reside, how can resistance be inhabited, and, following a question from Palestinian films, what can cinema do?

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[51] Jonathan Lis, "Despite opposition from cabinet, Knesset to vote on legalizing outposts," *Ha'aretz*, January 30, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/news/despite-opposition-from-cabinet-knesset-to-vote-on-legalizing-outposts-1.409911.
[52] PACBI, BNC, PQBDS all include the right of return in the three major goals that the strategy of BDS hopes to achieve.

5.3   INHABITING RESISTANCE: WHAT CAN CINEMA DO?

Joseph Massad, discussing the importance of "cultural resistance," argues, "Palestinian cinema, along with other Palestinian cultural expressions more generally, has been integral to Palestinian resistance."[53] Yet many Palestinian films suggest there is no simple relation between cinema and political resistance. As explained in Chapter 1, the question "why the cinema?" appears both explicitly and implicitly throughout a constellation of Palestinian cinema and visual media that refer to the material and medium specific conditions of their production. An initial way to understand why the question 'why the cinema?' is so prevalent seems related to the early adoption of cinema as a propaganda tool by Zionists to establish the legitimacy of Jewish nationalism in Palestine. But Palestinian cinema cannot be simply seen in terms of a response to Zionist and Israeli cinema, and indeed it has its own unique history in relation to Palestinian political struggles against Israeli military and cultural forces. I will explore this question through Palestinian films that take up questions of inhabitance, ruined houses, and resistance.

In the opening scene of *The Shooter* (2007), by Ihab Jadallah, a film that implicitly takes up the question of the relation between militancy and cinematic practice, a protagonist speaks directly to the camera about the hypocrisy of the American Western film hero John Wayne who was a hero "even when he was a bad guy." "I was never a hero," the Palestinian John Wayne tells us as he takes out his own gun from his holster and looks at it. "Plastic!" he yells, referring to the gun, "Fuck this production! Fuck all the films in this country!" A Palestinian film that begins by saying "fuck this film" is indicative of a sentiment that connects much of Palestinian

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[53] Joseph Massad, "The Weapon of Culture: Cinema in the Palestinian Liberation Struggle," *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006)*,* 31.

cinema and perhaps derives from the earlier notions of revolutionary cinema, which was made in

a context not only of a lost war (of 1967) but which also resulted in a notoriously lost film

archive. Much of the remainder of *The Shooter* takes place in a nearly destroyed warehouse or

home structure, the walls crumbling from explosions and gunshot. The protagonist seems caught

in the crossfires of an unknown conflict, while a journalist attempts to provide live reports of the

action unfolding, offering a variety of approaches to the task. A description for *The Shooter* for

the 2009 Chicago Palestine Film Festival reads:

> Detached from many of the daily horrors of the occupation, Ramallah filmmaker Ihab
> Jadallah finds himself compelled—by producers, collaborating artists and viewers—to
> present himself and his work in accordance with a "meta-script" that features violence,
> with good-guy and bad-guy narratives. This film is at once a parody of and a rejection of
> these constraints.

In fact, *The Shooter* takes this theme of narrative constraint as its primary theme, suggesting how

Palestinians are caught up in certain scripts of violence and caricature, and that since these

scripts are perpetuated through news media and cinema, a film such as *The Shooter* has no

simple option for response or resistance. *The Shooter* suggests in this way that cinema takes

your guns away (or only gives you plastic ones), and yet the film itself posits cinema as a form of

critique that can self-reflexively disrupt "shooting."

One might expect more explicitly militaristic references to shooting in an early

Palestinian Liberation Organization film, particularly one that features and celebrates guerilla

fighters, yet even in Palestinian filmmaker Mustafa Abu Ali's 1969 film *They Do Not Exist*, the

film emphasizes the conditions of its political possibility. As the title underscores, self-

reflexively, the film is not just an ironic response that speaks the opposite ("they *do* exist"),

rather, it is a repetition that emphasizes citationality. The film does not make the mistake,

according to Foucault, that the discourse that would insist, "they *do* exist" is excluded; rather it

acknowledges the "tactical polyvalence of discourse."[54] Foucault writes

> we must not imagine a world of discourse divided between accepted discourse and excluded discourse, or between the dominant discourse and the dominated one; but as a multiplicity of discursive elements that come into play in various strategies.[55]

Repeating the Zionist discourse of "they do not exist" calls attention to a strategy of a nationalist

discourse by calling its bluff—how can the nonexistent speak in the same terms as the dominant

discourse that would supposedly exclude them? Citation, in other words, highlights what

Foucault calls "the complex and unstable process whereby discourse can be both an instrument

and an effect of power, but also a hindrance."[56] Massad describes the Palestinian militant cinema

of the 1970s, of which Abu Ali was a major player, as "characterized by their purpose of inciting

politics and critiquing it simultaneously."[57]

Most scholars of Palestinian cinema argue that these early films fit into a rubric of a

Third Worldist revolutionary film aesthetic, sharing much of its rhetoric and even some of its

major artists who worked alongside the Palestinian filmmakers. But even Abu Ali's film is

ultimately more interested in a broad critique of colonialist violence and ethnic cleansing than a

clear articulation of Palestinian existence and a specific Palestinian nationalist politics (in

revolutionary film style the film uses bold text to link Native American, Jewish and Vietnamese

genocides to the Palestinian catastrophe). The close-up of the fida'e with his head lowered in the

end of the film (the last few minutes are marked as missing), is intercut with a battle scene and

fighters illuminated only by gunshots, and suggests the threat of a Palestinian resistance caught

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[54] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 100.
[55] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 100.
[56] Foucault, *History of Sexuality*, 101.
[57] Massad, "The Weapon of Culture," 35.

between visibility and invisibility that is perhaps more threatening for its refusal to participate in dominant modes of representation.

Hamid Dabashi suggests that in general Palestinian cinema is in some ways necessarily a militant cinema, a cinema with guns, insofar as its "defining moment" is the *Nakba*, whereby "what ultimately defines what we may call a *Palestinian cinema* is the mutation of that repressed anger into an aestheticized violence—the aesthetic presence of a political absence."[58] For Dabashi, aestheticized violence marks the "mimetic crisis" and paradox of Palestinian cinema and it's "traumatic realism."[59] Dabashi relates the militant to the filmmaker literally when discussing Suleiman:

> a manner of storytelling when all else has failed. Elia Suleiman does with his camera what the Palestinian fighters do with their mutilated bodies. They both find ways of telling their stories—one with exploded bodies, the other with disjointed staccatos of narrative stutters that magically mutate into coherent statements, with pitiless precision. As suicidal violence means denying the colonial state the very last (bodily) site of violence by a violence that out-explodes the institutionalized violence of the state, as Weber theorized it, disjointed narrative amounts to the discursive dismantling of that state, and of the violence that brought about and sustains it.[60]

Guy Hennebelle, a somewhat forgotten (or, rather, rarely cited at length) scholar of Arab and Palestinian cinema was onto a similar approach to thinking Palestinian cinema in relation to the militant cinema of the late 1960s and 1970s, but with more of the sense that it was unclear what effect cinema would and could have in the Palestinian context. In the late 70s, Hennebelle and Janine Euvrard edited a special issue of *CinemAction* on the question "Israel-Palestine: What Can Cinema Do?" Omar al-Qattan has also questioned the role of cinema in struggle:

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[58] Hamid Dabashi, introduction to *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006)*,* 11.
[59] Dabashi, introduction, 11.
[60] Hamid Dabashi, "In Praise of Frivolity: On the Cinema of Elia Suleiman," in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema,* ed. Hamid Dabashi (New York: Verso, 2006), 136.

> One of the things that I have learnt over the last fourteen years making films as a Palestinian is how organically linked are the subjective and the objective, metaphor and militancy, the aesthetic and the political indeed the struggle for Palestine and the strategies deployed for making films on and in it.[61]

Abu Ali's film, like a whole body of Palestinian cinema, highlights the many obstacles to producing meaning, specifically those obstacles particular to a Palestinian history of dispossession, and locates resistance in the terms of the obstacle. Said describes this mode of meaning making when he writes that Palestinian creativity "expresses itself in crossings-over, in clearing hurdles, activities that do not lessen the alienation, discontinuity, and dispossession, but that dramatize and clarify them instead."[62]

By relating the self-conscious critique that reference citation and constraining contexts for "shooting" to Butler and Foucault's conceptual frames for understand power, subjectivity and recognition, I am suggesting that Palestinian political filmmaking have always maintained an aspect of a kind of political stance that Mona Lloyd describes regarding the possibility of a resistant politics in Butler's work:

> Subversion must be a political project of erosion, one that works on norms from the inside, breaking them down not through external challenge but through an internal repetition that weakens them. A subversive politics thus becomes a subtle politics, one that requires patient, repeated, local action…. The politics of subversion remains a politics of the incalculable, a non-programmatic and ungrounded politics of possibility, but the incalculable should not be conflated with the indescribable or the unthinkable.[63]

The references to "erosion" and an "ungrounded politics" suggest the correlation to Palestinian modes of belonging that proceed without a secure foundation, proper objects, or recognizable claims to the ground on which, or to which, they might speak. While "unrecognizable" within dominant frames of understanding national belonging, particularly those instituted by the Israeli

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[61] Dabashi, "In Praise of Frivolity," 110.
[62] Said, *After the Last Sky*, 41.
[63] Moya Lloyd, *Judith Butler: From Norms to Politics* (Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2007), 143.

state and implied through neo-liberal capitalism, Palestinian modes of belonging still maintain an aspect of possibility, even if only through their persistence. Films preoccupied with the theme of partial and damaged homes and house-like structures suggest how different modes of belonging are established through different moments of Palestinian history, from various and intersecting Palestinian subject positions (older and younger men and women, diasporic second generation, etc.), and through seemingly unlivable and uninhabitable positions.

In Alia Arasoughly's 2006 short *Clothesline*, for example, a woman is concealed in her home under curfew as Israeli tanks invade the streets of Ramallah. Incorporating documentary footage of the siege of Ramallah during the Second Intifada, the film constructs the sense of a sharp distinction between the exterior military zone outside, represented through documentary footage of tanks and the sound of their fire, and artificially lit interiors of the woman's home, the primary location of the film's personal drama. The clothesline separates the two realities, providing a domestic screen through which the woman seems to view the smoke and destruction outside. The interior shots unfold a quiet anxiety as the woman boils water, gathers her purse and papers, and resorts to sleeping on the floor. The everyday banality of boiling water and moving about the house turns eerie and claustrophobic as the woman camps out, like a squatter, in what seems to be her own home. A voice-over suggests a more intimate conflict, as if she speaks to a lover—"why did you make me wait?" This seemingly personal narrative dissolves into one more obviously related to the siege; indicating that house searches have begun, she asks, "when will they get to mine? What will they find?" The sound track serves as a bridge between the interior and exterior image tracks, making the violence implied by the psychological siege and confinement to the home more legible. The personal space is rendered even more unhomely through reference to the potential and immanent intrusion of soldiers in the woman's house.

Indeed the anxiety, boredom and fear of military-imposed curfew has already altered the way she lives in her home—close shots emphasize the constraint of her predicament. Yet, although the woman's home seems claustrophobic, uncomfortable, and likely not to provide safety or refuge, the woman's determination to remain there, regardless, seems ultimately the point of the film.

The theme of uninhabitability in *Clothesline*, and the sense of resilience in the face of siege and immobility that it implies, is echoed in the film's mode of production and distribution, which imply how cinema can foster alternative forms of belonging. Arasoughly is the director of the NGO Shashat, a women's filmmaking organization based in the West Bank, which funds and supports Palestinian women's filmmaking and programs an annual festival. The 2011 Shashat film festival, which had 85 screenings in the West Bank and Gaza, many adapted to the particular location (universities, etc.) and to the fragmentation of Palestinian society under occupation, contested the popular notion that there is no Palestinian audience for Palestinian cinema. Shashat films also, according to the organization's mission, represent a challenge to patriarchal Palestinian society from within. In other words, Shashat films both make space for an audience that is not supposed to exist, but at the same time challenges the parameters of what kind of society can be fostered and envisioned through that spectatorial space. Shashat films challenge masculinist assumptions about what a national cinema might address, and at the same time they lay claim to particularly *Palestinian* stories and cinematic practices.

Clothesline, furthermore, suggests the need for alternative cinematic and visual strategies that avoid the pitfalls of reproducing the conditions of illegitimacy that conventional modes of expository documentary and the logic of exposure offer Palestinians. Relating the house to a camera producing views and classifying landscapes, Colomina explains that, especially with series of windows, "the house is no more than a series of views choreographed by the visitor, the

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way a filmmaker effects the montage of a film."[64] In *Clothesline* the viewer is aware that the "choreographed" views are the documentary footage while the frame narrative is likely re-created, furthering a sense that the filmmaker is acknowledging the claustrophobic impatience ushered in by a context where it is not enough to document the atrocity. The perspective from inside the house is framed precisely as an internal, subjective, and psychically violated one, rather than an objective and contextualized documentary. The line between the subjective inside and the objective outside are blurred through this visual framing, as well as through a narrative that emphasizes the projection of the siege into the internal space of the home and the woman's psyche. That the footage of the tanks in the streets of Ramallah has a different visual quality than the interior house scenes emphasizes, though, that this blurring is taking place, that it is both a strategy of the filmmaker as well as a technique of the Israeli occupation, which uses the logic of objectivity and documentary evidence toward its own ends.

Saverio Costanzo's 2004 Italian-produced feature *Private* similarly focuses on the theme of a Palestinian home under siege, and with its European co-production and Italian-Palestinian director, it faced controversy over its status as a Palestinian film.[65] In *Private,* a Palestinian family endures an Israeli military occupation of their two-story home. Since they refuse to leave their home, the soldiers force the family of five to sleep in the living room, where they have to retire after curfew hour and are not allowed to leave until morning. As many have remarked, the house becomes a metaphor for the larger occupation, its closed zones and daily humiliations. The family's father insists they remain in their home from the beginning of the domestic siege, even while he encounters resistance from his family, particularly his oldest daughter who would

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[64] Colomina, *Privacy and Publicity*, 312.
[65] It was argued to be ineligible for an Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences Oscar nomination for Italy since the languages in the film are Arabic and Hebrew. See Ray Bennett and Chad Williams, "Acad Rules 'Private' Ineligible," *Hollywood Reporter* 391.21 (2005): 73.

prefer to fight back or simply leave. After more than one incredibly tense scene where the

daughter spies on the soldiers from inside a cabinet, she comes to understand and adopt her

father's approach to resistance and resilience. In the end of the film a new shift of soldiers comes

to the house to complete the same supposed security measures and monitoring of the previous

shift, but the family remains. Although the family home has been transformed into the military

fort, the father emphasizes above all that they refuse to leave, regardless of how un-homelike

their house has become.

Much of the Palestinian landscape in Palestinian art is depicted as shrinking, undergoing

transformations beyond recognition, and for many a Palestinian homeland is a dream or fantasy

limited to memory, to poetry, art, oral narration, and embodiment.[66] While no subject position is

ever stable, the remarkable contingency of contemporary Palestinian identity is perhaps

particularly unique in the way that it becomes recognized *primarily* through suspect and/or

partial conditions—i.e., from the stereotypical perspective Palestinians are primarily terrorists or

stateless refugees—rather than through the appearance of coherence and essence. Even the most

well known Palestinian public figures, such as the late Edward Said, are accused of not "really"

being Palestinian—a charge too easy to elaborate on. Palestinian national subject status is more

often denied than granted to individuals through various kinds of ID absences: permits, passports

and other documents and rights that would seem to prove official national embodiment.

Alternative visions of home in Palestinian cultural production, marked by modes of

persistence that occur under damaged conditions and without fixed meaning, can serve as a

model, then, for precarious orientations to the notion of national home. Further, these alternative

modes of aligning with 'home' suggest possibility of forming alliances and building coalitions

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[66] See Gannit Ankari, *Palestinian Art* (London: Reaktion Book, 2006) and Kamal Boullata, *Palestinian Art: From 1850 to the Present* (London: Saqi Books, 2009).

on terms other than according to strict notions of home, belonging, and identity. In other words, adopting what I would characterize as a survival strategy, Palestinian society has had to adapt to ever decreasingly idealized or normative concepts of home in order to maintain a persistent critique of the destruction of their society and their unwillingness to give up their native historic homeland and/or their attachment to "Palestine," whatever "Palestine" might indicate to diverse and dispersed Palestinians. The structuring paradox of Palestinian cinema as a national cinema without a nation, further emphasizes that Palestinian expressions are always produced through compromised, partial or damaged conditions. Palestinian cinema, like other Palestinian photography and moving imagery, tends to posits versions of Palestinian nationalism that are constituted through an unstable and ungraspable home, embracing a defiant nationalism that persists with or without any claim on normative national structure, without a definite place, without distinct Palestinian citizenship, and without an acknowledged history. I want to suggest, though, that this persistence of Palestinian modes of sociality posited even through conditions of un-belonging represent more than a resilient expression of nationalism against all odds, or complement to, a revolutionary struggle, or even simply an artistic instantiation of resistance. Following a sentiment described by Said, I see this approach in Palestinian cinema as a kind of persistence of living through supposedly unlivable conditions, "in any case, we keep going."[67] This approach exposes the Palestinian position in the world, rather than denying it, which works to turn that position into a question, to explore the nuances of it, and to use it against those who presume it as a space of non-existence, defeat, or victimhood.

NGO and European-funded films like *Private* and *Clothesline* might be presumed to some extent cater to neo-liberal aims of normalization, rights and recognition, and excluding

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[67] Said, *After the Last Sky*, 37

other forms of resistance in cinema. Such recognized funders do provide a certain sense of

legitimation to Palestinian films, even though such films are still often subject to controversy if

they are seen as criticizing Israeli policies, military occupation, and society, so it is worth

comparing such films to a Palestinian cinema posited in primarily British and North American

media in terms of resistance. In 2009, the news broke that Hamas had written and produced a

film, *Imad Aqel*, which was shot in a set built on the site of the former Jewish settlement Ganei

Tal in the Gaza Strip. Various news sites picked up the story, either to sensationalize on the idea

of the "terrorist" Hamas producing a feature film, or to suggest that Hamas' was expanding

resistance to include cultural resistance marked by the increasing use of mass media (including a

satellite TV channel, a radio station, and newspapers) and the arts. According to the various

reports, the film focuses on Hamas' founding in the 1980s, while the title refers to a Palestinian

killed by Israeli soldiers for allegedly killing thirteen soldiers and settlers.[68] Hamas' "Cinema of

Resistance" suggests that the older model of PLO guerilla film units has not been completely

surpassed by transnational funding models and increased NGO-ization of Palestinian cultural

production and strategies toward improving the human rights and social justice situation for

Palestinian society. The Cinema of Resistance suggests a more militant housing of resistance

and cinema, particularly since *Imad Aqel* was shot inside a former Jewish settlement.

Additionally, a Cinema of Resistance would presumably have very different mode of address

than a U.S., European, Arab state, and independent co-funded Palestinian cinema—*Imad Aqel*

does not currently have a wide internet or regional distribution, and my discussion of it here is

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[68] See Ethan Bronner, "Hamas Shifts From Rockets to Culture War," *New York Times,* July 23, 2009, accessed December 2, 2012,
http://www.nytimes.com/2009/07/24/world/middleeast/24gaza.html, and "First Hamas-made Movie Begins Gaza Strip Run," *Al Arabiya News* November 2, 2010,accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.alarabiya.net/articles/2009/08/03/80675.html.

based on (primarily sensationalist) secondary news reports. And yet, although the co-funded Palestinian cinema may primarily rely on significantly less militant institutional housings for its existence, such films still tend to offer critiques of home, belonging, and resistance that imply a political mode of cinematic practice.

In Annemarie Jacir's 2008 feature *Salt of This Sea*, themes of mobility and belonging are immediately associated with the bodily invasion of Soraya (Suheir Hammad), the Palestinian-American protagonist, as she makes her way through Ben Gurion Airport security and the extra scrutiny focused on travelers with Palestinian heritage. Soraya is visiting Palestine for the first time, but after she is unable to retrieve her grandfather's money from the bank where it was held prior to 1948, she begins an adventure, joined by two West Bank men who have been refused visas to study abroad, in hopes of remaining in the country indefinitely. Soraya's desire to settle in Palestine is thwarted at every turn by the Israeli military occupation, by the historical legacy of 1948, and by her own resistance to traveling within Israeli imposed restrictions. In Jaffa, the group finds the former home of her grandfather, where a young leftist Israeli woman now lives. The woman, who uses anti-occupation mugs for her coffee, welcomes them inside, but Soraya insists they drop the polite behavior, demanding that the girl acknowledge that the house belongs to Soraya—"recognize it!" she yells after smashing a vase. Soraya and Emad, leaving behind Marwan with the Jewish-Israeli girl, move from their short stay at her family's historic and now disposed home in Jaffa to a crumbling structure in the destroyed village Dawayima where Emad's family lived prior to 1948. Disguising themselves as Israeli settlers, the couple purchases a few home furnishings, including a "home sweet home" sign written in English, to make the space more livable, acting as if they will stay there indefinitely. Soraya wakes up and pretends they are Jewish campers when a history teacher (played ironically by the late Juliano Mer

Khamis) happens upon them while leading his students on a tour of the land, ignoring the Palestinian Arab history of the place and discussing only its Jewish and Biblical history. They leave Dawayima and are eventually stopped by police. Soraya is deported and Emad's future is unclear, but he would likely be jailed for traveling in Israel without a permit or citizenship. The film emphasizes the deep connection to settling and making a home in Palestine, even in homes that are occupied and ruined.

Salt of This Sea suggests the necessity of constrained alliances amongst Palestinians, whether living and desiring to live in Occupied Palestine or abroad, and implies a subtle critique of the place of cinema in such precarious solidarities. Marwan, a filmmaker, remains in Jaffa in Soraya's family's home, seemingly having hit it off with the Jewish Israeli girl living there. His breaking off from the group is not so much characterized as a betrayal as much as it suggests that there is no single position for Palestinians living under occupation. Though Emad criticizes Soraya for her seeming naiveté and idealism as an urban Palestinian-American hoping to connect with the Palestinian countryside, he stays with her as they move from the occupied house in Jaffa to his family's destroyed former village. Their journey models a kind of alliance between diasporic and non-diasporic Palestinians, suggesting how their solidarity need not arise from a settled position or place. They find "home sweet home" in a ruined house, imagining a future family in a de-populated village on what has been appropriated as Israeli state park lands.

5.4   QUEER PALESTINIAN ALLIANCE

The seeming impossibility of firmly aligning oneself with Palestine for identificatory purposes, because of its continued political denial, makes it a kind of explicitly damaged orientation. In

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other words, Palestinianness, or an orientation 'for' (i.e. being "pro-Palestinian) or 'toward' (i.e.

a "homing desire" fixed on Palestine) Palestine, describes a kind of alignment that cannot seem

to ever really stick as much as more recognized identity categories (whether national, ethnic,

religious, etc.), even if those are as equally contingent, intersectional, and performative—that is,

they only *appear* coherent, stable, and prolonged because they are repeated and citational. This

in part explains why Judith Butler emphasizes the compulsory and regulatory aspects of the

performativity of gender, rather than something like the sense of free choice suggested by the

notion of performance. National intelligibility, in what I have described as its processural and

performative aspect, serves as a reminder of which meanings of queer constitute a more critical

and intersectional analysis that can account for contradiction. The more recent turn in queer and

trans studies toward migrant studies, surveillance, racialization, critiques of neo-liberalism, queer

liberalism, homonationalism, and so on, underscores that the queer critique need not only point

to possible horizons or potentials, since the production of new possibilities seems to always also

produce new forms of abjection, impossibility, inadmissibility, unexpressability, and

unintelligibility in their wake. My emphasis on processes of national intelligibility in part

emphasizes, then, what's queer about the queer critique of this project, but also how supposedly

unlivable or non-normative positions have some purchase on the livable and the normative, and

given the on-going processes of performativity, undergo constant renegotiation.

  The notion of unrecognizability also bears on the questions of resistance and agency, and

alliance and solidarity by extension. While Hegel posited that it is only through experience of

recognition that we become constituted as socially viable, Butler argues that this doesn't account

for how "the terms by which we are recognized as human are socially articulated and

changeable. And sometimes the very terms that confer 'humanness' on some individuals are

those that deprive certain other individuals of the possibility of achieving that status, producing a

differential between the human and the less-than-human."[69] Thomas Keenan, in addition to

Butler, has taken up this question in relation contemporary human rights discourse, particularly

in the context of the War on Terror, in which certain "terrorist" figures, in seemingly

contradictory fashion, employ the same discourses of human rights. He reads a 2005

communiqué from the military wing of Jaish Ansar al-Sunnah in Iraq, a Sunni jihadist group

fighting against coalition forces and their Iraqi allies, which asks, in an address to the US and

coalition forces, "where are human rights?" in response to the detention and killing of Muslims.

For Keenan, a broader field of perception, regulated in part by dominant understandings of the

human and human rights, marks some kinds of communication and speakers unrecognizable or

illegible victims, meaning that

> the burden on those who would be heard is not simply to speak, communicate, and
> exchange but, first of all, *to be understood as speaking*. The event marks an entrance into
> a political space, which by definition excludes them. Moaning, lowing, crying—
> expressing one's private suffering—makes no claims on others, remains outside
> discourse, the political sphere, humanity. For something to become a matter of justice, of
> politics, of sharing and division, one must transform the boundaries and definition of the
> political or public space, change the definition of who speaks and what counts as
> speaking within it.[70]

Butler further explains this constrained and precarious sense of political possibility, here through

reference to Fanon's taking up of similar concerns: If Fanon writes that 'a black is not a man,'

who writes when Fanon writes? That we can ask the 'who' means that the human has exceeded

its categorical definition, and that he is in and through the utterance opening up the category to a

different future."[71] More to the point, Butler states, "those deemed illegible, unrecognizable, or

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[69] Judith Butler, *Undoing Gender* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 2.
[70] Thomas Keenan, "'Where are Human Rights…?': Reading a Communiqué from Iraq," *PMLA*
121.5 (2006): 1603. Emphasis added.
[71] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 13.

impossible nevertheless speak in the terms of the 'human,' opening the term to a history not fully constrained by the existing differentials of power."[72] For both Butler and Keenan, the broader epistemological configuration that determines who and what counts as human is not undermined through the utterances of the supposedly unspeakable, and yet the constant renegotiation of terms such as "the human" means that transformation is possible.

Yet, in accounting for sites, subject and acts that might count as resistant, certain normative values can get re-iterated through supposedly progressive politics. For example, Sara Ahmed succinctly describes the terms through which freedom is frequently construed, whereby

> the positing of an ideal of being free from scripts that define what counts as a legitimate life seems to presume a negative model of freedom; defined here as *freedom from norms.* Such a negative model of freedom idealises movement and detachment, constructing a mobile form of subjectivity that could escape from the norms that constrain what it is that bodies can do.[73]

Ahmed expands on this sense of freedom as one that privileges movement and mobility. This critique of the terms of freedom and resistance is similar to Saba Mahmood's question regarding whether "the category of resistance imposes a teleology of progressive politics on the analytics of power—a teleology that makes it hard for us to see and understand forms of being and action that are not necessarily encapsulated by the narrative of subversion and re-inscription of norms."[74] Lisa Marie Cacho, in her essay on mourning her brother, looks to Cathy Cohen and Robin D.G. Kelley to suggest a different model, a "politics of deviance" through which "we would read nonnormative activities and attitudes as forms of 'definitional power' that have the

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[72] Butler, *Undoing Gender*, 13-14.
[73] Sara Ahmed, *The Cultural Politics of Emotion* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 151.
[74] Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: The Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2005), 9.

potential to help us rethink how value is defined, parceled out, and withheld."[75] For Cacho, "the

act of ascribing legible, intelligible and normative value is inherently violent and relationally

devaluing," and so we ought to be cautious that politics of possibility are careful not to re-

inscribe the same terms of value often implied by resistance and freedom, particularly in context

increasingly influenced by neo-liberalism.[76] As the editors of *Strange Affinities: The Gender and*

Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson

argue, it is in women of color feminism and queer of critique such as this that "we find an

analytic for understanding how the creation of categories of value and valuelessness underpins

contemporary racialized necropolitical regulation."[77]

In light of these insights into notions of resistance, freedom, political possibility and

value, I argue that an attention to constrained modes of Palestinian sociality cannot simply be

explained as subversive. Said explains a Palestinian mode of living as a sense of partiality, where

meanings attach to events and objects in seemingly accidentally ways, which perhaps better

explains the relation between the politics of possibility:

> For where no straight line leads from home to birthplace to school to maturity, all events
> are accidents, all progress is a digression, all residence is exile. We linger in nondescript
> places, neither here nor there; we peer through windows without glass, ride conveyances
> without movement or power.[78]

Said's point is as much about spatiality as it is about temporality, since he speaks both of

"nondescript places, neither here nor there" as well as of a kind of suspended time; "digression,"

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[75] Lisa Marie Cacho, "Racialized Hauntings of the Devalued Dead," in *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization,* eds. Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, eds. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2011), 48.
[76] Cacho, "Racialized Hauntings of the Devalued Dead," 27.
[77] Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson, introduction, *Strange Affinities: The Gender and Sexual Politics of Comparative Racialization*, eds. Grace Kyungwon Hong and Roderick A. Ferguson (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2011), 16.
[78] Said, *After the Last Sky*, 21.

"we linger," and the image of a conveyance without power. Here Said describes a mode of being

in the world that marks exilic or diasporic experience, but which also shares a kind of damaged

(insofar as it fails in normative terms) life itinerary with notions of queer temporality. As

Jack/Judith Halberstam points out:

> all kinds of people, especially in postmodernity, will and do opt to live outside of
> reproductive and familiar time as well as on the edges of logics of labor and
> production...here we could consider ravers, club kids, HIV-positive barebackers, rent
> boys, sex workers, homeless people, drug dealers, and the unemployed.[79]

Palestinian existence, in its general contours as mapped by Said, similarly cannot follow

normative, and by extension hetero-normative time; a linear and progressive narrative that marks

a "normal" life as following a "straight line...from home to birthplace to school to maturity" and

which marks those who fail as immature, backward, and inconsequential. For Said, Palestinian

communal identity is similarly already fostered through unstable routes that indicate the

insurmountable instability of Palestinian identity:

> How rich our mutability, how easily we change (and are changed) from one thing to
> another, how unstable our place—and all because of the missing foundation of our
> existence, the lost ground of our origin, the broken link with our land and our past. There
> are no Palestinians. Who are the Palestinians? 'The inhabitants of Judea and Samaria.'
> Non-Jews. Terrorists. Troublemakers. DPs. e*l pueblo palestino, il popolo palsetino, le
> peuple palestinien*—but treated as interruptions, intermittent presences.[80]

With the sense that queer diasporic temporalities and spatialities are non-aligned, damaged, and

follow non-normative itineraries toward unhome-like ends, a more processural and contingent

notion of alliance emerges, including a sense that alliance is a particular kind of orientation

associated with some "homing desires" that posit desire as a direction rather than a fixed identity,

which, again, seems unattainable for Palestinians. Since queer and diasporic positions generate

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[79] Judith/Jack Halberstam, *In a Queer Place and Time: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives*
(New York: New York University Press, 2005), 10.
[80] Said, *After the Last Sky*, 26.

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their own kinds of sociality and possibility, this suggests they persist regardless of unstable

foundations and unfixed meaning.

This in turn suggests a compelling model for solidarity, similar to Ahmed's definition of

solidarity:

> Solidarity does not assume that our struggles are the same struggles, or that our pain is the same pain, or that our hope is for the same future. Solidarity involves commitment, and work, as well as the recognition that even if we do not have the same feelings, or the same lives, or the same bodies, we do live on common ground.[189]

For Ahmed, the "ground" of solidarity is not identity, but the physical grounding of bodies on the

grounds of the planet. If all coalitions are in some sense temporary and contingent, and only gain

a sense of stability through repetition, it seems possible that some coalitions can form without

requiring the kind of identification and mutual benefit that seems to define the notion. In light of

this, queer alliance suggests a kind of alliance that, through sustained critique of identity, need

not be mutually beneficial, and may be at times about risking the self for the other. A queer

alliance does not compel proper positioning or straight lines, but attention to constant change, to

the re-ordering of priorities and positions (perhaps what Ahmed means by commitment and

work), to letting what one is aligned with change and remain somewhat uncontrollable, unfixed,

and unknowable; in a word, different. For Judith Butler, Palestine is today a kind of queer

question, which she links to a discussion of solidarity and coalitional politics: "I think that queer

people should have solidarity with those populations whose lives are not considered livable.

That's a kind of alliance that I would understand as a queer alliance. So that explains why I

would – as someone who elaborated a queer theory – be very concerned with the situation in

Palestine where violence is waged against Palestinians, and where the loss of those lives is not

regarded as equally valuable, as equally lost."[81] Haneen Maikey, Director of alQaws for Gender

and Sexual Diversity in Palestinian Society, and Lynn Darwich similarly suggest that queerness

can be a framework for broad social justice in their discussion of queer Arab activism, arguing

that "one of the powerful characteristics of PQBDS [Palestinian Queers for Boycott, Divestment,

and Sanctions] is in its ability to link the struggle for sexual and gender diversity with the

Palestinian struggle for freedom and justice." For Maikey and Darwich, queer Palestinian

activism prioritizes issues and concerns that not only affect a self-identified LGBTQI community

and that cannot wait until after the hopeful end of occupation. In this way, queer Palestinian

activism seeks to transform the terms of Palestinian struggles for ending occupation and

injustice.

The terms and form of Palestinian resistance are necessarily quite different than the terms

of Jewish-Israeli national belonging. Jewish homemaking in Israel compels a process of

orientation toward certain strict and stable notions of what kind of home constitutes national

belonging, where the ideal is a regulatory norm carrying the threat of deportation, loss of

citizenship, loss of national identity, and worse. Jewish-Israeli identity itself mandates certain

strict alignments, and makes others seem unthinkable or undesirable. "To align" suggests placing

things in proper positions and straight lines, while "alliance" typically invokes the ideal of

mutual benefit and a certain affinity of interests between parties. In the US, a discourse of "we

are all Israelis now" became especially prominent after 9/11, emphasizing identification with

Israel that has been the norm in the US—in mainstream media and in foreign policy—since the

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[81] Marcus McCann, "Whose Lives Matter? An Interview with Judith Butler," *Xtra! Canada's Gay and Lesbian News*, 11 March 2011,
http://www.xtra.ca/public/National/Whose_lives_matter_An_interview_with_Judith_Butler-9866.aspx.

late 1920s. The notion that there is mutual benefit for a US-Israeli affinity is widely accepted. In this context, what kinds of coalitions can one form *with* or *for* Palestine?

I have characterized the Palestinian cinematic theme of resiliently taking up residence in seemingly unlivable spaces as a kind of anti-foundational persistence, which, like queer strategies of identity critique, marks a Palestinian cinematic strategy. I have explored this through the rather literal example of anti-foundational forms of belonging and community forged in spite of, or rather through, houses in various conditions of destruction, occupation, and apparent unlivability. Creative reconfigurations of home and belonging are, I argue, ways that Palestinian society has been able to persist in a struggle for recognition and rights from positions that are seemingly impossible, unlivable, or inexpressible. These reconstitutions of home "dramatize and clarify" the modes of violence that positions of national intelligibility always pass through, rather than conceal them through reference to seemingly positive terms like inclusion and tolerance. In their resistance, refusal and/or failure to adhere to dominant schemas of national representation and recognition with normative national homemaking scripts, much of Palestinian cinema poses Palestine as a kind of queer question. Furthermore, queer critique offers a way to think differently about the various strategies within Palestinian cinema that reject conventions of representation and assumptions about visibility, appearance and recognition. The inability to easily claim space, metaphorically and literally, as Palestinian has allowed for more transformative critical politics to emerge at increasingly mainstream levels, as evidenced by the Boycott National Committee's non-attachment to a particular state solution or political party and it's popularity within Palestinian society as the most important strategy to end the occupation, stop discrimination within Israeli society, and allow for a more just Right of Return that would apply to Palestinians and not just Jews. Adaptive and critical modes of Palestinian belonging

found in Palestinian media, art, and activism are challenging the continued Israeli destruction of Palestinian homes and the possibility for livable lives, combatting Israeli pinkwashing and its positing of Palestine as uninhabitable for queerness, but also putting increasing pressure on Palestinian society to produce a more just collective possibility for transformation. Palestinian queer activism in particular suggests the potential to resituate queerness in relation to the spatial logics of occupation, to complicate ideas about queer versus un-queer spaces and what kinds of mobility or immobility queerness compels. New queer cinema and media projects are also taking on the topic of sexual and gender diversity in Palestinian society, using strategies that attempt to circumvent commonplace discourses around visibility, coming out, and public/private divides, implying new routes for belonging, sociality, and the continued inhabitance of Palestine.

6.0   CONCLUSION

The visual and discursive terrain that constituted "Palestine" at the turn of the century largely

positioned it as a site primed for "immense transformations." Literary, popular, and medico-

scientific discourses helped create the conditions for Zionism to posit itself as a Western and

civilizing project on par with, and at times in cooperation with, the British Mandate

administration, and with the discourse of an exceptional historical and religious claim to the land.

The static image of Palestine in travel literature, illustrations, and maps, which constructed

Palestine as a place out of sync with civilization—a desolate, desert non-place—seemed set in

motion through the will of Zionism and with the help of new cinematic technologies, as

suggested by Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman:

> The State of Israel initiated immense transformations in the geography of the country:
> seas were dried up, roads were laid, a network of infrastructure was spread out, ports
> were excavated, forests were planted, deserts were made to bloom, towns and cities were
> founded. In Israel every view of the landscape is merely a single frame taken from one
> continuous documentary film. Every photograph is only a coincidental image in an
> endless saga. In the same way, every built object is perceived according to its
> circumstances; always as a single co-ordinate on the long path of construction or ruin.[1]

While the metaphor invoked by Segal and Weizman of a shift from photography to the moving

image is useful for explaining Zionism's transformation of Palestine, as a metaphor cinema's

role is somewhat under-emphasized. This dissertation has argued for a better understanding of

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[1] Rafi Segal and Eyal Weizman, eds, *A Civilian Occupation* (New York: Verso, 2003), 53.

the various ways cinematic technology has been enlisted in shaping the terms of belonging in

Historic and Occupied Palestine, and how cinema itself has been a "co-ordinate on the long path

of construction or ruin."

Given the common sense and contradictory tendency to think about images as both

universal and indecipherable (since non-textual), it is worth emphasizing that images, including

photographs and films, cannot speak for themselves outside of the historical contexts that not

only shape the means and intentions of their production, but that continue to shape and reshape

how they are seen and understood. In *On Photography,* Susan Sontag offers an explanation for

such critical historical occasions when photographic evidence of an important, and often tragic,

event was not absent, but where "there was, ideologically, no space" for it to be seen:

> Though an event has come to mean, precisely, something worth photographing, it is still
> ideology (in the broadest sense) that determines what constitutes an event. There can be
> no evidence, photographic or otherwise, of an event until the event itself has been named
> and characterized. And it is never photographic evidence which can construct—more
> properly, identify—events; the contribution of photography always follows the naming of
> the event. What determines the possibility of being morally affected by photographs is the
> existence of a relevant political consciousness. Without a politics, photographs of the
> slaughter-bench of history will most likely be experienced as, simply, unreal or as a
> demoralizing emotional blow.[2]

I have argued that Palestinian dispossession and claims to national belonging were rendered

unrecognizable sometime before the presentation of what would otherwise be damning proof of a

former vibrant place for Arab Palestinian life in Historic Palestine, which was largely destroyed

after the creation of the state of Israel. Consequently, even those seemingly irrefutable

photographic and filmic images only primarily reiterate a still lingering and reiterated illegibility.

In part, then, this research was driven by a desire to understand how rigorous archival work like

that of Palestinians historians and scholars Walid Khalidi (author of *All That Remains: The*

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[2] Susan Sontag, *On Photography* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977), 19.

Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948, and *Before Their Diaspora: A Photographic History of the Palestinians, 1876-1948*), Rashid Khalidi (author of *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*), and Edward Said, the oral history and extensive documentation of destroyed Palestinian towns on Palestineremembered.com (a project inspired in part by Walid Khalidi's *All That Remains*), and many more, seem to have little effect on the recurring question—where is the visual proof of that place, of those people, which you claim exist? Rather than attempt to recover further visual proofs or unmask false images, I have aimed, with a particular focus on the role of cinema as and intersectional discourses of race, gender, sexuality and belonging (national and otherwise), to historicize and analyze particular processes that have worked to maintain an epistemological configuration marked by Palestinian unrecognizability.

At the same time, I do not mean to ignore the possibilities of cinema and cinematic practice in promoting and inciting transformation. As Thomas Keenan argues, given the "interplay of preservation and destruction" involved with imaging, particularly in reference to conflict or human rights abuses, there is "no destruction without images, yes, but also no response to the destruction, no critique and no intervention."[3] While Chapter 4 largely critiqued the use of visual technologies to document human rights abuses, the logic of arming victims of occupation, siege, and other types of oppression with cameras to document abuse and "become the media" recording their history is not necessarily flawed. Julia Bacha, director of the 2009 Israeli/Palestinian/American produced documentary *Budrus (*on civilian protests against the building of the Israeli Separation Barrier inside the West Bank village Budrus) argued in a "Ted" talk that cinema has the potential to create cognitive dissonance for broad audiences not used to

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[3] Thomas Keenan, "Light Weapons," in *Harun Farocki: Working on the Sightlines,* ed. Thomas Elsaesser (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2004), 206.

thinking of Palestinians outside a frame of misunderstanding, due largely to a widespread lack of attention to what she refers to as a Palestinian "peaceful resistance movement."[4]

The types of documentation Bacha describes can be powerful, and documentary video activism, including solidarity video work, has in some cases succeeded to bring wider attention to the harsh realities of Israeli occupation and its broad system of Apartheid-style segregation, ethnic cleansing, and injustice. Yet, in this dissertation I have wanted to make room to consider where a more skeptical tradition in Palestinian cinematic practice fits. In Chapter 1, I refer to this tradition in terms of the repetition of the question "why the cinema?" across Palestinian cinematic practice, which I took as a prompt to question my own methodological approach within transnational film studies. This tradition in Palestinian cinema of a more questioning approach is expanded on in Chapter 4's discussion of Palestinian belonging through the figure of the house, and in relation to contemporary modes of queer and trans critical thought. Palestinian cinema and queer critique were brought together in this project to complicate

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[4] See "Julia Bacha: Pay Attention to Nonviolence," *TED: Ideas Worth Spreading* August 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.ted.com/talks/julia_bacha.html, and "TEDxRamallah— Julia Bacha—One Story, One Film, Many Changes," *Peace and Collaborative Development Network*, June 11, 2011, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.internationalpeaceandconflict.org/video/tedxramallah-julia-bacha-one#.UI6WSWl27dI. The acclaim for *Budrus* and *5 Broken Cameras*, and the media attention to video distribution projects by B'Tselem, the Israeli human rights organization that distributes video cameras to Palestinian in the West Bank to document daily abuses, all suggest, however, that to some extent these projects find more widespread recognition and acceptance if they are lead by or produced in partnership with Israeli and European or North American peace activists and human rights organizations. While *5 Broken Cameras* was shot by Palestinian journalist Emad Burnat, for instance, it was largely assembled by Israeli Guy Davidi, a collaboration that was largely celebrated, while any critique of that collaboration has been largely attributed to hostility toward Jewish Israelis. See "'5 Broken Cameras: Can West Bank Film Change Israel?," *The Daily Beast*, June 22, 2012, accessed December 2, 2012, http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2012/06/22/5-broken-cameras-can-west-bank-film-change-israel.html.

visibility/invisibility dichotomies, particularly as they get mapped onto conceptualizations of power, identity, and resistance.

Without the "relevant political consciousness" of which Sontag speaks, it makes little sense to respond to false images with accurate images, since there is a larger epistemological framework at work that to some extent pre-figures how they will be recognized, valued, and understood. I have attempted to chart some of the usual routes of such a framework in its development and reiteration in relation to Historic and Occupied Palestine, and through a particular focus on cinema. Revealing the extra-Zionist routes of early Jewish Agency "Palestine films," for example, Chapter 2 aimed to detach them from reigning progress narratives in Israeli transnational film studies, instead exploring their implication in a broader visual culture that promoted exclusive Jewish national belonging in Historic Palestine. I explored how the Sabra figure, the visual representation of the New Muscle Jew in Palestine, re-oriented racial, sexual and gender tropes associated with Jewry as part of the Zionist claim to belonging in Historic Palestine. At the same time, exploring examples from the early Zionist reinvention of Jewish masculinity in Chapter 2 to contemporary debates around Brand Israel's use of gay rights in Chapters 3 and 4, I also engage race and sexuality as dimensions of Zionist, Israeli and Palestinian visual culture in ways that counter Israeli state discourses of Jewish national progress and Palestinian intolerance. Given this dissertation's concerns for how certain modes of belonging in Palestine become recognizable and legitimate while others are continually marked as illegitimate or unthinkable, it was important to emphasize how Jewish national belonging was constituted through new ideas about sexuality as an identity type in legal-administrative, medico-scientific, and cultural discourses. Cinema and sexual identity, in other words, were explored in this project as techniques of a wider epistemological configuration developed and developing at

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the same time as the transformation of Palestine and the creation of Jewish belonging through Zionism. Chapter 1 also described my approach to queer theory in the dissertation, drawing from recent work in queer migrant studies, trans studies, and queer of color critique. I further complicated Israeli cinema's supposed progress from a propagandistic past to a multicultural democratic present by tracing the last decade of Israeli state investment in nationalist gay Israeli cinema in Chapter 3, and by analyzing alternative modes of belonging and queerness in Palestinian cinema in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 focused on cinema's enlistment in somewhat more concrete sites where cinema was enlisted toward settlement and occupation through the aerial mapping and re-imagination of the Palestinian landscape for settlement planning, in the fortification of those settlements, and in the visuality of the Separation Barrier. I hoped to show how the Zionist transformation of the Palestinian landscape was assisted by cinematic technologies, by regimes of visuality drawn from the landscape tradition, and by militaristic and architectonic purposes and investments for cinema such as the use of proto-cinematic technologies in the construction of settlements and settlement networks. I explored these concrete transformations in close relation to how norms of belonging were shaped through these reconfigurations of visuality and recognition. Furthermore, I argued that contemporary debates around Brand Israel pinkwashing, homonationalism and queer Palestinian activism suggest alternative ways to think about social transformation through diverse approach to visuality and recognition, to thinking about the relationship between images and power, and to modes sociality and belonging to the side of nationalism.

The wider epistemological framework through which I argue cinema and sexuality ought to be understood emphasizes the kind of contradiction I think is inherent at the horizons of thought, where much queer and critical theory sets its sights. On the horizon in the landscape

view, Tom Gunning writes, "instead of the point where things vanish, the far distance becomes the point of entrance into visibility."[5] According to Sara Ahmed, the farness of The Orient for The Occident "takes the direction of wish," whereby the Occident's orientation toward this other marks a "desire to possess, and to occupy, [which] constitutes others not only as objects of desire, but also as *resources for world making*."[6] Ahmed writes that such an orientation *toward* the other marks the other as "available to us within our field of vision."[7] However, Ahmed suggests that it is not vision alone that confirms the availability of the other on the horizon as a site of occupation and world making, since "what is reachable is determined precisely by orientations that have already been taken and that have been repeated over time."[8] And, as a counterpoint to the sense of positive futurity that the horizon might imply, Ahmed reminds us that the wish involved in the Occident's desire for the Orient "points to the future, or even *to a future occupation*," suggesting that the entrance into visibility that Gunning discusses must be understood with the context of ongoing colonial and neo-colonial occupations.[9] Following Ahmed, I want to suggest that we might not want to look to the horizon to find resources for transformative thought and action, but rather to better understand the contours of who and what are coming into view, or becoming recognizable and available, and under what terms.

In conclusion, by mapping new contexts for understanding the role of cinema in shaping the idea and place of Palestine, I aimed to better prepare myself to witness new Palestinian cinematic practices, modes of belonging, and visualizing discourses that intervene in the broad

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[5] Tom Gunning, "Landscape and the Fantasy of Moving Pictures: Early Cinema's Phantom Rides," in *Cinema and Landscape: Film, Nation, and Cultural Geography*, eds. Graeme Harper and Jonathan Rayner (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010): 59.

[6] Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*: *Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006): 114, 115. Emphasis added.

[7] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 115.

[8] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology*, 117.

[9] Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology,* 115. Emphasis in original.

context of the unrecognizability of Palestinian dispossession, especially from a dominant North American perspective. I also hoped to be attendant to the ways in which cinema continues to be enlisted in state and military power, as well as in more everyday forms of micro-power that continue to unsettle the grounds for action and thought.

APPENDIX A: LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1 "Barren Wilderness," *Built in Day* (1938), produced by the Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal). Screenshot taken by the author from the online holding in the virtual catalogue of the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive.

Figure 2 Network of settlements map, from *Built in a Day* (1938), produced by the Keren Hayesod (United Israel Appeal). Screenshot taken by the author from the online holding in the virtual catalogue of the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive.

Figure 3 Surveillance images (binoculars, watchtower), from *Behind the Blockade* (1947), produced by the Jewish National Fund. Screenshot taken by the author from the online holding in the virtual catalogue of the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive.

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