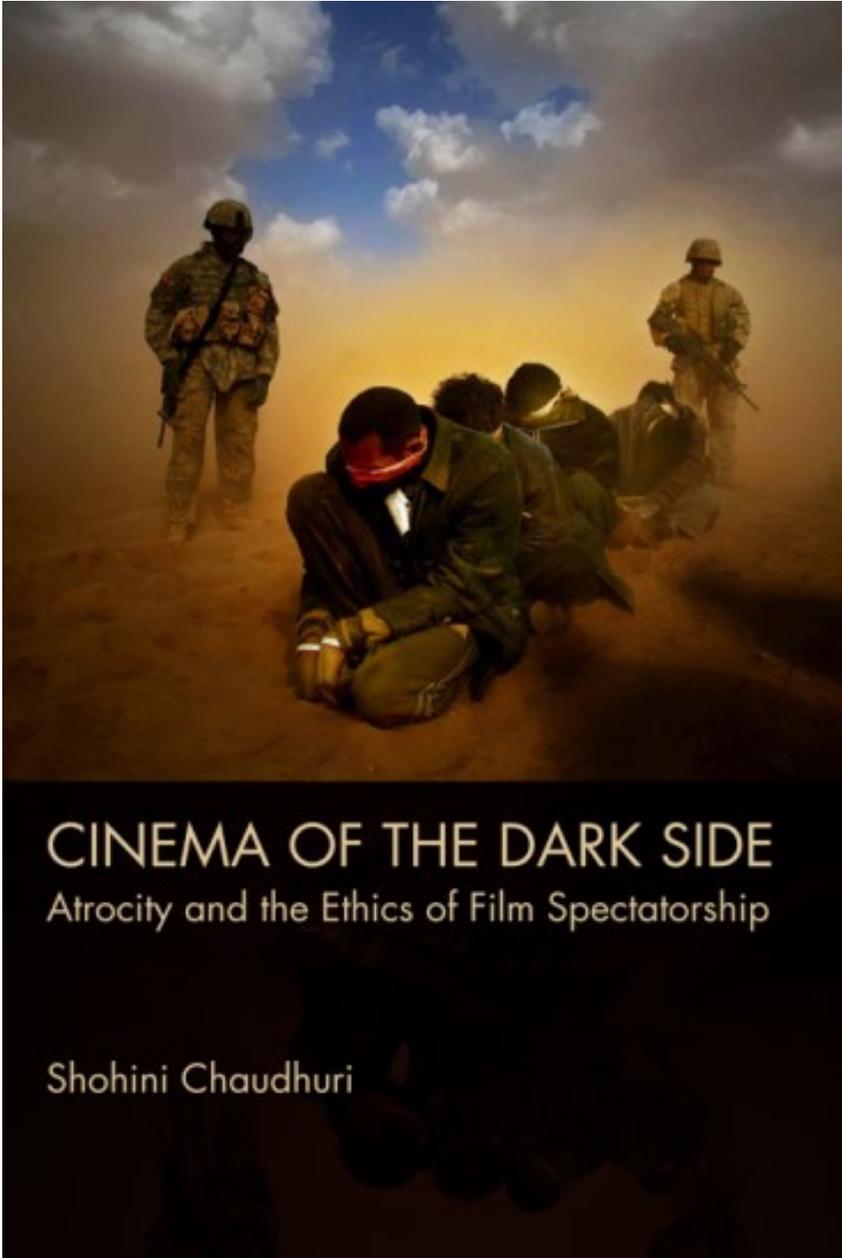


'Architectures of Enmity: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict through a Cinematic Lens'

An extract from *Cinema of the Dark Side* by Shohini Chaudhuri



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Architectures of Enmity: the Israeli–Palestinian Conflict through a Cinematic Lens

In the critically acclaimed Israeli co-production *Waltz with Bashir* (*Vals Im Bashir*, 2008),¹ Zahava Solomon, a post-combat trauma expert, relates an anecdote about an Israeli soldier who survived the ordeal of the 1982 Lebanon War by looking at everything through an imaginary camera. ‘Wow! What great scenes,’ the soldier exclaimed. ‘Shooting, artillery, wounded people, screaming. . .’ With a series of still images, the film envisions the scene through his imaginary viewfinder that enabled him to experience the war like a movie or holiday snapshots, shielding him from its horrors. But, then, Solomon tells us, his camera ‘broke’, which the film renders with images of frames disrupted in a shutter gate, extending the metaphor of camera malfunction as previously still images become moving ones. Roving across the ruined landscape filled with wounded and slaughtered Arabian horses, the ‘camera’ finally rests on a close-up of a horse’s eye, surrounded by flies, reflecting the soldier in its distended iris.

The film invites us to interpret the anecdote, as Solomon does, solely through the paradigm of trauma: the soldier’s experience of war as ‘a series of dissociative events’. In this chapter, I argue that the trauma paradigm forms part of a dominant discourse that co-opts morality to its own ends and deflects attention from the wider ethical and political issues of the Palestinian–Israeli conflict. Seen beyond the trauma paradigm, the anecdote reflects the ‘derealization of military engagement’ (Virilio 1989: 1) – the Israeli soldiers’ ability to distance themselves from the consequences of military actions which they themselves are orchestrating. The ‘abstractification’ of reality through its representation in a frame is a way of alleviating moral anxiety about those actions. This abstractification persists even after the proverbial camera breaks, as testified by the image of Arabian horses rather than Arabs.

Like the imaginary viewfinder, Western news media construct perceptions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict that usually do not provoke any moral

problems. While Al-Jazeera and some other news networks provide alternative viewpoints, Western journalists tend to avoid areas perceived as controversial, such as alluding to colonial history as the basis of violence. In a survey of the UK public, the Glasgow University Media Group revealed 'little understanding of the reasons for the conflict and its origins', due to reliance on primetime TV news (Philo et al. 2003: 134). Seventy-nine per cent of respondents did not know who was occupying the Occupied Territories and ten per cent thought it was the Palestinians – one of many examples in the survey suggesting that perceptions of the conflict fostered by news media are the opposite to reality. One reason, as an interviewed journalist commented, is that the media cover dramatic action 'but not the human inequities, the essential imbalances of the occupation, the day-to-day humiliations of the Palestinians' (ibid.: 138). Everyday oppression is rarely broached in the media, and never with 'the intensity with which Palestinian terrorism is discussed' (Said 1984). Furthermore, with the USA as Israel's ally, powerful voices speak on Israel's behalf. Because of Israel's strategic importance in the Middle East, the USA provides it with billions of dollars' worth of annual military aid. Because of the UK's close relationship with the USA, British media also offer little criticism of US or Israeli policy, especially since 9/11, when Israel has tried to enfold its battle against Palestinian militants into the global 'War on Terror'. Israel's actions against Palestinians are facilitated by this Western economic, military and ideological support.

One story we are repeatedly told through the media is that Israel is under terrorist attack, for example by Hamas rockets fired into Israeli territory from Gaza, and is simply 'responding'. This moral rhetoric of self-defence is one that Israel constantly uses to allay international concerns about its actions. In following Israel's lead with the vocabulary of state retaliation to terrorist attacks, Western news media do not countenance that a blockaded and imprisoned civilian population (with Hamas as its democratically elected representative in Gaza) may be attempting to defend *itself*. In news coverage, the word 'atrocious' is habitually applied to Israeli casualties of Palestinian rockets and suicide bombings but rarely to the much larger numbers of Palestinian deaths from Israel's deployment of its vastly superior military capabilities (Philo et al. 2003: 144). Where criticism of Israel is offered, it is often in the rhetoric of 'disproportionate response', which, too, confirms the moral validity of the aggressor, which merely has to measure its response.

Israel habitually regards itself as the victim, invoking the past of anti-Semitic persecution under the Holocaust and pogroms in order to justify its aggression. That identity of victimhood is determined in advance, serving to cover up its brutal actions. The creation of Israel was regarded by the West as compensation for the Holocaust – thus making Palestinians 'expiate for the historical crimes committed against the Jews in Europe' (Said 1992: xxiv).

This moral guilt over the Holocaust, linked to discourses about it as an incomparable and ‘unique’ event, is another story that subtends Western perceptions of the conflict and that has allowed Palestinians to suffer undeservedly for so long.

The third form of moral rhetoric that one finds in Western news media is that of ‘balancing’ the Israeli and Palestinian narratives in a way that is thought to be objective, as in the BBC’s famous rhetoric of ‘impartiality’. The resulting images present the conflict as an ahistorical ‘cycle of violence’ and ‘hatred’ between two communities who ‘can’t get on’ (Philo et al. 2003: 139, 141). This obscures the fundamental power asymmetry that underlies and upholds the conflict, in which one group dominates and controls the lives and livelihoods of another, albeit with some resistance. The attempt to take a position that is apparently midway between either ‘side’ effectively legitimates the state’s moral right to persist in its violence. Historical evidence uncovered by Israeli New Historians, such as Ilan Pappé (1992) and Avi Shlaim (1990), on the origins of Zionist colonialism during the British mandate period (1920–48) and the ethnic cleansing that it introduced supports the Palestinian narrative of expulsion and dispossession, previously dismissed as ‘propaganda’; moreover, Pappé argues that similar tactics underlie Israel’s present-day actions (Chomsky and Pappé 2011: 136).

The problem confronting films about the conflict, then, is to find a way of representing it in the face of public conditioning by this distorted media coverage. This chapter adopts spatial mapping as an analytical tool to explore how films allow us to perceive the conflict differently from news media. Since space is the instrument through which the conflict’s everyday violence is inflicted, spatial mapping subtly permits its causes and contexts to emerge. In some cases, those spatial meanings are part of a film’s dramatic intent, as in the Israeli films *Close to Home* (Karov *La Bayit*, 2005) and *Lemon Tree* (Etz *Limon*, 2008) and the Palestinian film *Paradise Now* (2005), as well as various documentaries about the Israel–West Bank ‘separation fence’, known by its opponents as the ‘Apartheid Wall’. In *Waltz with Bashir*, however, they derive from its mixing of the war genre and animation, which portrays war as a kind of video game.

This analysis relies on the notion of space because when the conflict is reframed in terms of colonialism, it is essentially spatial: Israel as a colonial state lays sovereignty claims to a territory to which it believes it has divine or historical (and exclusive) right, yet the same space is already inhabited by Palestinians. Hence, Israel’s colonial enterprise of gaining land that does not have Arabs living on it has historically taken the form of mass expulsions, population transfer and resettlement in refugee camps, destruction of Palestinian villages, erection of Jewish settlements in their place, and establishment of new colonies in the Occupied Territories. The chapter’s title is derived from

Michael Shapiro's term 'architecture of enmity', which he uses to describe an imagined geography, historically derived from colonial notions of identity and space, that divides the world into 'us' versus 'them' antagonisms in order to justify war and security policies (Shapiro 2009: 19). Resistance comes from critically tracing these architectures and mapping 'alternative imaginaries'. The term highlights the use of landscape to generate terror with 'visible signs' of military and sovereign power: for example, destroyed houses and villages as both the material vestiges and symbols of state terror, creating and exuding the sign of a 'space of death' from which people are incited to flee (Gregory and Pred 2006: 4). Spatial mapping shows state violence penetrating everywhere, pervading Palestinian lives at checkpoints and roadblocks that can materialise anywhere. Although he had French Algeria in mind, Frantz Fanon's spatial characterisation of colonialism – 'The colonial world is a world cut in two [with] the dividing line . . . shown by the barracks and police stations' (2001: 29) – accords well with Israel/Palestine, its internal frontiers governed by force, military surveillance and direct action capabilities. Fanon also identified the asymmetry between spaces on either side of the dividing line, and that the divide is, traditionally, fractured by the coloniser's need for cheap labour.

Newspaper journalists, political scientists, human rights activists, and even the former US President Jimmy Carter (2006) have employed the word 'apartheid' in this context. Designating a form of colonial control, the term highlights the separate and unequal lives of Palestinians within both Israel (where they constitute twenty per cent of the population, often treated as second-class citizens) and the Occupied Territories. It evokes comparisons with South Africa, which are justified by a similar history of conflict between settler and indigenous communities and reinforced by use of the label 'bantustans', by both Israeli authorities such as former Prime Minister Ariel Sharon and opponents, to refer to the fragmentation of the Occupied Territories under the quasi-autonomous Palestinian Authority. Like blacks relegated to marginal territories in South Africa, the bantustanisation of Palestine gives Palestinians a spurious independence, although it was advanced as part of the 'peace process' enshrined in the Oslo Accords. Since the two-state solution is widely perceived as having reached a dead end, an anti-apartheid-type struggle is advocated by some activist groups as a way of imagining a different future: one state with equal rights for all of its citizens.

For journalist and activist Ben White, the apartheid paradigm offers a crucial way of rethinking the conflict beyond 'occupation' discourse (2012: 85). This is a perspective broadly shared by Pappé: the conflict needs to be seen 'as a process that began in 1948 [when the state of Israel was created on Palestinian land], even in 1882 [when the first Zionist settlement was established in Palestine], and not 1967 [when Israel occupied the West Bank and Gaza]' (Chomsky and Pappé 2011: 136). Pappé qualifies the situation: 'Some

aspects of the occupation . . . are worse than the apartheid reality of South Africa and some aspects in the lives of Palestinian citizens in Israel are not as bad as they were in the heyday of apartheid' (ibid.: 147). However, in the International Convention on the Prevention and Suppression of the Crime of Apartheid (1973), apartheid is defined as a crime in its own right. Though drawn up in opposition to South African apartheid, the Convention's wording clearly indicates that it applies to 'similar practices and policies of racial segregation and discrimination' (UN 1973). Among practices against racial groups it includes 'arbitrary arrest and illegal imprisonment', 'deliberate imposition . . . of conditions calculated to cause its or their physical destruction in whole or in part', denial of 'basic human rights and freedoms' and 'expropriation of landed property' – all of which describe Israel's actions against Palestinians.

A crucial characteristic of spatiality, Doreen Massey states, is that 'it is always being made', lending it 'its continual openness and, thus, its availability to politics' (Lury and Massey 1999: 231). Films map and produce space in a variety of ways, not only entering real spaces but also constructing imaginary ones. Through their shot compositions, they activate various on- and off-screen spaces, alluding to spatial tensions that characterise the conflict, sometimes as much through their omissions as by what is actually depicted. The following analysis explores how they configure some of the conflict's key territorial *topoi* – invasions, checkpoints, roadblocks and fortifications.

INVASIONS: LEBANON 1982 / GAZA 2008

In *Waltz with Bashir*, the director, Ari Folman, attempts to recover his and other Israeli ex-soldiers' post-traumatic memories of the 1982 Lebanon war – specifically, his vicinity to the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps, where Lebanese Christian Phalangists (allies of the invading Israeli army) massacred thousands of Palestinians in revenge for the assassination of their leader, Bashir Gemayel. While recovering his memories, Folman realises that he and other Israeli Defence Force (IDF) soldiers illuminated the night sky with flares to facilitate the massacre. However, this acknowledgement of complicity is tempered by the discourse of Israeli victimhood. As I show in this reading, the film's focus on Israeli soldiers' trauma avoids ethical confrontation with how the massacre happened, who gave the Phalangists access to the camps, and what the Israeli army was doing in Lebanon. In this way, the film circumvents issues of individual and collective responsibility for the Lebanon War and Israel's continuing actions against the Palestinians – the film's release coincided with the 2008–9 Israeli bombardment of Gaza.

Created from a mixture of hand-drawn and digital animation, *Waltz* is an aesthetic tour de force, with documentary-style interviews punctuated by

reconstructions of dreams, hallucinations and flashbacks – all to a mesmerising composed score and 1980s pop tracks. Because of this, and its post-traumatic model of narration, the film tends to dazzle and deceive on first viewing. As Gideon Levy observes in his review, it requires repeat viewing to become aware of its other layers of meaning (2010: 127). The animation storyboard was based on filmed interviews with ex-soldiers, a therapist, the post-trauma expert and a journalist, whose voice testimonies are laid onto the soundtrack, along with Folman's voiceover, as dialogue for animated characters. Two ex-soldiers agreed to participate only on condition that their identities were concealed: Boaz Rein-Buskila and Carmi Cna'an, Folman's closest 'comrades' in the narrative, are two fictional characters with voices dubbed by actors.

Until its final scene, when animation yields to archival news footage, realist documentary conventions are discarded for a more subjective logic, marked by the displacements, denials and repetitions that feature in traumatic memories. Folman claims his film 'could only be done in animation with fantastic drawings' because 'war is so surreal, and memory is so tricky' (Sony Pictures Entertainment 2008: 4). He presents it as an anti-war film – nothing like Hollywood movies. Yet *Waltz* belongs to a wave of Israeli war films, including *Lebanon* (2009), that draw on the same winning formula as Hollywood films about the Vietnam and Iraq wars like *The Deer Hunter* (1978) and *The Hurt Locker* (2008). All these films attempt to enter the perspectives of soldiers as victims of the general horrors of war, which 'enables us to obliterate the entire ethico-political background of the conflict' (Žižek 2010). In *The Deer Hunter*, for example, the roles of victim and perpetrator are reversed, making US soldiers appear as victims of a random, senseless war. In *Waltz*, the war is the soldiers' terrible ordeal; they are its exemplary victims, rather than the Lebanese and Palestinian civilians whose cities and camps were being bombed and attacked.

The animation depicts the war 'like a bad acid trip' (Luciano-Adams 2009: 12), which imparts the altered reality that overcomes soldiers when they quit Israel for the Occupied Territories or Lebanon, colonial other spaces where different rules and norms seem to apply. A sequence set to the Hebrew rock song 'I Bombed Sidon Today' begins with a soldier playing his rifle as a guitar, while another surfs, dodging explosives sprayed into the sea. The lyrics boast: 'I bombed Beirut every day / At the pull of a trigger / We can send strangers straight to hell / Sure, we kill some innocent people on the way.' The helicopters dropping bombs on the countryside to a rock soundtrack evokes a fantasy of omnipotent control over the territory, with imagery reminiscent of *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The sequence inadvertently conveys the sheer arrogance of the war: Lebanon is reduced to a playground where Israeli soldiers can indulge their libidinal fascinations with their war machines. The popular soundtrack enhances pleasure at the spectacle of destruction; notably, music,

along with alcohol and drugs, is a means used by perpetrators to suppress moral anxiety about the violence they are carrying out.

The way the film maps space is through the aggressor's perspective, through the grids of power, surveillance and control. The soldiers dominate and master Lebanese space on account of their military superiority. Ronny Dayag reminisces how in a tank you always feel safe, invulnerable, while visuals show a tank coursing through a street, reversing into buildings and trampling cars in its wake. War film iconography, combined with video-game-like animation, turns all Palestinians (and other Arabs) into anonymous and often faceless enemies or victims. Carmi, who now lives in Holland, where he has made a fortune selling falafel (originally an Arabic food), relates how he and his comrades used to fire indiscriminately, at whom they knew not. In the visualised recollection, they continue shooting relentlessly when a Mercedes comes into view, riddling it with bullets until the door opens and a dead Arab flops out. Also pictured is Shmuel Frenkel's war routine: get up, lie on the beach, get back into uniform, then 'go after some terrorists'. Over a drink with his friend Boaz, Folman reminisces: 'A new trend started at that time – car bombs – still popular today.' They joke about it: 'A real blast! It is for just such a job (assassinating Palestinian leaders with booby-trapped cars) that Folman is called back to duty after his leave, though this is forgotten in the ensuing narrative.

After Solomon's anecdote about the soldier with the imaginary camera, the film transports us into Folman's own dissociated vision of Beirut airport, a hallucination in which he feels as if he is on holiday until he realises that jets on the tarmac outside are bombed-out shells, the shops are empty, and the flight schedule board has been unused for months. Emphasis on his traumatised trance state allows responsibility for the devastation around him – caused by Israeli bombing – to be denied.

'Suffering is not really suffering when it is drawn in lines' and 'even the blood is amazingly aesthetic,' Levy asserts (2010: 127–8). By this reckoning, *Waltz's* animated approach to reality is 'a safer, psychologically and esthetically subjective transfiguration' (Murray 2009: 66). Although, as I have argued throughout this book, all images transfigure the reality they represent, animation does appear to serve here as a kind of mask – a distancing device, like the imaginary camera in Solomon's anecdote or video game simulation. At one point, Carmi gives Folman permission to draw, but not to film; notably, he is one of the figures whose real identity is disguised. This need for disguise is in keeping with another genre to which the film belongs, the confessional, where perpetrators confess their atrocities. Israeli examples of the genre tend to be preoccupied with the moral dilemmas of the Occupation, wherein atrocities are regarded as anomalies rather than part of a systematic culture (see Alexander 2012). Similarly, in *Waltz*, we are summoned to ratify Folman's guilt (or,

rather, lack of it) regarding the Sabra and Shatila massacres, and allow him to 'move on'. The film is both confession and therapy.

The confessional thread starts from the opening scene. To an unnerving synthesiser score, a Tel Aviv street recedes before us against an apocalyptic sky. From a side alley, a dog with fiery eyes suddenly springs into view and races menacingly towards us. Another dog joins the chase, then another, and so they multiply, causing havoc on the streets. Finally, they halt at the foot of a building, where their intended victim, Boaz, looks down from a top-floor window. Boaz relates this recurring dream to Folman; he believes it derives from his Lebanese war experiences, when he was ordered to shoot dogs to prevent them raising the alarm in villages where the army was hunting out 'wanted Palestinians'. He was assigned the task as he was unable to shoot people: the archetypal reluctant soldier, self-agonising over his 'duty'. His actions return to haunt him in dreams where roles of victims and perpetrators are reversed.

Boaz's dream triggers Folman's memory. That night he has a 'flashback' of a palm-tree-lined seaside promenade in Beirut (the Corniche). Flares blaze in the nocturnal sky, staining the landscape with their lurid shade of amber. Folman and other soldiers rise from the sea, their scrawny figures silhouetted against the sky. They get dressed and walk into the city, where they meet Palestinian women emerging from Sabra and Shatila. The film expresses its forces through the visual rhyme of its colours, with amber as its leitmotif, starting with the hellish glow of the dogs' eyes, which become the flares that run through the film, 'like a guilty secret' (Klawans 2008: 34). This is the sole image Folman initially 'remembers' from the war, an uncanny afterimage of Boaz's dream. His therapist suggests it might be a false memory; in Freudian terms, a screen memory standing in for another memory that is more difficult to recover (Freud 1962: 320). As the narrative progresses, we are led to believe that Folman's seaside memory screens out his own role in the Sabra and Shatila massacres. What is suppressed is eventually revealed in flashback: his presence on a rooftop with other Israeli soldiers, lighting up the sky with flares.

Waltz's post-traumatic narrative and title evoke the IDF's guilty association with Bashir's followers, who believed Palestinians were responsible for their leader's assassination (though his real assassin was a Lebanese pro-Syrian militant). The film imagines the junkyard where Phalangist militia kept tortured and executed Palestinians' body parts in formaldehyde jars along with pictures of Bashir, whom they worshipped as an idol, finding the source of violence in their unnatural eroticism for their leader. The Phalangists are portrayed as thoroughly barbaric and immoral. Meanwhile, Israeli soldiers are idealised as innocent and morally conflicted. In flashbacks, they sport a youthful appearance, traces of which, for purposes of character recognition, are inscribed in the animation of their older selves, resulting in

a 'childlike vulnerability' being 'etch[ed] into the contours of grown men's faces' (Murray 2009: 66). That vulnerability aids the audience's identification of them as victims, bewildered by circumstances beyond their control, and supports their dissociated view of the war. Apart from Boaz's stated inability to kill people, there is Carmi's amnesia over whether he actually shot anyone, and Frenkel's waltzing into a sniper zone, spraying bullets into the air, apparently harming nobody. This dissociated portrayal of the war climaxes in the Sabra and Shatila massacres, for which the Phalangists take the blame, exonerating individual Israeli soldiers.

Waltz allows the possibility that the Israeli government may have known about the massacre in advance and had some responsibility. It figures this wider net of complicity when journalist Ron Ben-Yishai telephones Defence Minister Ariel Sharon, who nonchalantly thanks him for bringing the massacre to his attention. Ben-Yishai also reports Brigadier Amos's belated arrival at the camps, where he halted the killing with the command 'Stop the shooting! Stop the shooting immediately!' – another piece of evidence strongly implicating the army. An official 1983 Israeli inquiry held Sharon and some generals accountable for failing to prevent the massacre, and they were dismissed from their posts. Yet, Sharon's political career was far from over, and from 2001 to 2006 he was back in power as Israel's Prime Minister. An international commission stated its conclusions more boldly, charging Israel with 'genocide' of Palestinians in Lebanon as well as 'reckless', 'indiscriminate' bombing of civilian targets and use of 'forbidden weapons' (MacBride et al. 1983: 131).

An interview with tank commander Dror Harazi reveals that the plan was to allow the Phalangists to enter the camp and 'purge' it, while the IDF provided cover. 'Purge them of what?' Folman asks in voice-off. 'Palestinian terrorists,' Harazi answers. He reports that trucks and bulldozers went into the camps to evacuate the civilians. He was not bothered by the fact that the Phalangist militia ordered the civilians out because it was similar to IDF tactics of forewarning civilians about imminent attacks. These tactics persist to this day, except they have become more high-tech: the traditional 'knock on the door' has evolved through telephoning inhabitants to 'firing low-explosive "teaser" bombs or missiles onto houses' (Weizman 2012: 28) in order to scare people into fleeing, used during the Israeli bombardments of Gaza in 2008–9, 2012 and 2014). Those remaining are regarded as legitimate targets, either as 'human shields' for terrorists or as terrorists themselves – a tactic that criminalises by association, espousing the logic that anyone is a terrorist if they live in that neighbourhood or indeed if they are too old, sick or traumatised to leave. It relabels civilians as terrorists in order to justify acts against them.

However, *Waltz's* ambiguous narrative is more interested in its central protagonist's trauma than in issues of accountability. It transpires that Folman's amnesia about the war, particularly the Sabra and Shatila massacres, is due



Figure 5.1 The line of women, children and elderly relatives returning to the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps is compared to the Warsaw Ghetto photograph in *Waltz with Bashir*.

to a layer of transgenerational memory. As a child of Holocaust survivors, his interest in the camps stems from the “‘other’ camps”, his therapist, Ori, tells him. The massacre frightens him because he was close to it and helped those who carried it out, which, in his guilty conscience, makes him akin to a Nazi. The refugee camps’ resemblance to Nazi death camps forms one of the film’s several references to the Holocaust, starting with Folman’s ‘memory’ of rising from the sea and getting dressed before going to the camps: the emaciated silhouettes recall starving concentration camp prisoners. When Ben-Yishai sees the line of women, children and elderly relatives returning to the camps, he is reminded of the famous Warsaw Ghetto photograph. With the image of Palestinians being driven out and boarding trucks, the film also alludes to the Nakba, the catastrophe of 1948, when Palestinians were expelled from their homes – layering different historical memories. However, when Ori suggests Folman’s guilt is unwarranted, since it is a product of his inherited Holocaust trauma, unrelated to Sabra and Shatila, a genuine encounter between these historical memories is prevented. Instead, *Waltz* dehistoricises the massacre by psychologising it and insisting that Israelis carry the burden of an even greater trauma: the Holocaust, whose enormity cancels out all other events. This is an ideology that the film shares with the Israeli state, on behalf of whom appeals to the Holocaust are made to give moral legitimacy to its policies. As Slavoj Žižek declares, ‘the very need to evoke the Holocaust in defence of Israeli acts secretly implies that Israel is committing such horrible crimes that only the absolute trump card of the Holocaust can redeem them’ (2009: 95). This is not a question of asserting equivalences between the Holocaust and Israel’s oppression of the Palestinians. Rather, family resemblances (which, I have argued throughout this book, are not the same as equivalences) between these events should call into question the cultural acceptance of Palestinians’

expulsion to refugee camps and their ghettoisation in Israel/Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East.

Evocation of Holocaust memory forms part of *Waltz's* redemptive story structure, as the war's moral ambiguity is replaced by a sense of moral certainty about one incident within it. In its ending, we follow Palestinian women coming out of the refugee camps, with their actual cries laid over the animated images. On the other side of the street, we encounter Folman as a young man, manning an entrance to the camp, and recognise this as the place where his previous 'memory' ended. He breathes deeply, his eyes narrowing and widening in consternation at and sympathy with the suffering before him. The animation transforms into live-action archive footage of the women in their inconsolable grief. Afterwards, the ambient sound is cut, except for a throbbing beat as the film surveys the bodies of innocents on the ground, closing into a little girl's head in the rubble, before fading to black. Folman has explained his choices here by saying he didn't want audiences to think that this was just a "cool animated movie" . . . I wanted people to understand this really happened' (cited in Murray 2009: 68). The live footage is intended to confront audiences with an uncomfortable reality – it is the moment when, in the film's own analogy, 'the camera' breaks, preventing the possibility of dissociation or denial. The use of archival footage, with its indexical properties, imparts a revelation of 'truth'. But the archival footage is taken from British news sources (BBC World and ITN) and, as we know from the foregoing discussion, news media do not signify unmediated 'truth'. Moreover, the film controls how we view it by not subtitling the women, who are speaking Arabic; one of them approaches the camera in order to demand: 'Film, film and send them [the images] to foreign countries.'² Instead of taking responsibility for his own and Israeli state actions, Folman through his expression of compassion allows Israelis to be absolved of culpability and regain moral credibility in the eyes of the international community. This permits them (and Western governments and public who support them) to assuage their bad conscience, suppressing moral anxiety about long-term and ongoing Palestinian suffering. Meanwhile, those left behind, the Palestinian women, have served their purpose as passive icons of suffering in this drama of moral conscience.

Just as the film was released, Israel was committing huge human rights violations in Gaza (with US support), which resulted in what was then the highest violence against Palestinians since the occupation began. As with the 1982 Lebanon War, there were no lawful reasons for this attack. Despite Israel's official 2005 withdrawal from Gaza, its colonial presence there is as strong as ever. With the blockade, imposed in 2006 as a punitive measure after Hamas won elections and tightened in 2008, sealing all borders and affecting vital supplies, followed by successive bombardments, destroying homes, livelihoods and civilian infrastructure, the population has been 'deliberately

reduced to a state of abject destitution' (Chomsky and Pappé 2011: 198). In the 2008–9 attack, called 'Operation Cast Lead', Gaza's population, with nowhere to escape, was pulverised with the latest military technology, resulting in well over a thousand deaths and thousands more wounded in the space of twenty-two days.³ Like the Lebanon War, it gave Israel the opportunity to test out new weapons on largely defenceless civilian populations, redefined as a terrorist entity. Such actions are enabled by the logic of abstractification that dehumanises Palestinians and holds their lives to little account, precisely the same logic as *Waltz's* animated war game aesthetic.

Pointing to similarities between *Waltz's* images and the destruction raining down on Gaza, Gideon Levy notes that when Folman collected his Golden Globe award for the film, he made no reference whatsoever to events in Gaza (2010: 125). This underlines another risk of the moral redemptive narrative, where moral dilemmas are neatly solved so that one may no longer have any regrets. The film's post-traumatic mode of narration and its manner of closure work towards this end.

CHECKPOINTS AND ROADBLOCKS

Surrounding Palestinian towns and villages, checkpoints are one of many forms of border, also including 'separation fences', 'roadblocks', 'special security zones' and 'closed military areas', that fracture Palestinian space, while also opening and closing the routes between Israel and the Occupied Territories and between the latter and the outside world. Their apparent purpose is to protect Israeli settlers and reduce the chance of suicide bombings in Israeli cities, yet they have 'brought the Palestinian economy to a virtual standstill' (Weizman 2007: 146). Restricting freedom of movement and social and institutional connections, they lay physical obstacles in the path of workers, traders, family visitors and suppliers (of goods including food, medicines and building materials). It has therefore been suggested that the main aim of these checkpoints and other border structures is not security but 'to harass the Palestinian population and fortify . . . the "matrix of control"' largely without the need to deploy physical force (Chomsky and Pappé 2011: 98).⁴ In order to travel through checkpoints along the Israel–West Bank 'separation barrier', Palestinians must apply for a multitude of permits that are difficult to get, and wait in exhausting queues, while 'Jewish settlers cruise unhindered through separate gates and down protective corridors that lead to segregated Jewish-only roads' (Weizman 2007: 147).

Out of this matrix of borders, a new film genre has been born, the Palestinian 'roadblock movie' (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 153). Such films, as Ella Shohat notes, 'look at the hyper-regulation of movement as a daily nightmare' and

use the checkpoint *topos* to render ‘visible the usually invisible abuse by a technocratic maze’ (2010: 294). By ‘foreground[ing] quotidian dehumanization’ and ‘pithily encapsulating the daily indignities borne by Palestinians’, the checkpoint lends a concrete image of ‘structural violence, even if no spectacular bloodshed unfolds on the screen’, manifesting ‘the total lack of indigenous sovereignty’. Checkpoints, borders and the compulsory carrying of permits for Palestinians passing into and travelling inside Israel (reminiscent of pass laws, one of the most abhorred manifestations of South African apartheid) all depend on ‘the power of space to separate individuals from each other, to direct and control their movements, and to reinforce social distinctions’ (Barnard 2007: 6). Although ‘space is precisely the sphere of the possibility of coming across difference’ (Lury and Massey 1999: 232), checkpoints set up physical and ideological borders between self and other, between Israelis and Palestinians, placing the two groups in opposition to each other. In Israel proper, unofficial boundaries are also set up between neighbouring Palestinian and Jewish towns and cities, sealing off the more affluent Jewish areas from Palestinian ones, resulting in ‘further fractalization and fragmentation of the terrain into an archipelago of enmity and alienation’ (Weizman 2007: 155). The checkpoint/barrier system embodies a key belief that state security lies in the segregation of Jews and Arabs. However, a challenge to this underlying premise is offered from an unusual source, an Israeli military genre film, *Close to Home*.

Unlike war films set in the past and in neighbouring Lebanon, *Close to Home* depicts Israeli soldiers confronting the civilian population in present-day Jerusalem. Its directors, Vidi Bilu and Dalia Hager, wanted to present a female perspective in this genre, where male perspectives have predominated. Its focus is on two eighteen-year-old Israeli-Jewish women, Smadar and Mirit, doing their compulsory national service. Their job is to staff checkpoints and patrol the streets, checking the ID of all Palestinians entering the city. Though the film was underrated as a ‘rather slight’ coming-of-age story (Klein 2005: 20) and it has not received extensive scholarly attention, it is exceptional in attempting to tackle everyday realities of occupation and apartheid, topics that are typically denied in Israeli fiction cinema.

As we saw in *Waltz*, the war genre revels in the violent spectacle of combat and mastery of outdoor space, which is intertwined with the colonial rhetoric of conquest and land appropriation. In contrast, *Close to Home* is shot in a modest, realist style, adopting a minimalist approach in which direct violence takes place off screen. Although primarily about a female army unit, it is also, in its narrative interstices, about Palestinian lives affected by the soldiers’ daily duties: the mundane, humiliating rituals of military surveillance. The two stories are present in the same narrative space; although the camera does not follow the Palestinians, on one important occasion the soundtrack does.

The film begins in close-up on a Palestinian woman, waiting next to a curtain upon which opening credits are superimposed. From the off-screen area behind the camera, Smadar and her unit commander, Dubek, then invade her space, drawing the curtain behind them, revealing the location as an inspection booth at a West Bank–Jerusalem border checkpoint, where Palestinians are placed under Israeli security’s direct gaze. Smadar is instructed to search through the woman’s personal belongings. Harmless, everyday objects – lipstick, cigarettes, a letter and a toy car wrapped as a present – are scrutinised while the Palestinian woman and Dubek exchange wary glances. This near-wordless sequence is punctuated by Dubek’s terse orders (‘To the censor!’ ‘X-ray!’). Smadar looks away as the woman undresses in order to be scanned with a security device. Through its tight framings of objects and characters in a claustrophobic space, the film conveys ‘the state’s invasion of the very intimacy of life’, a form of biopower that surveys bodies with ‘a penalizing panopticon’ (Shohat 2010: 294), and the humiliation caused by these harassing searches. The minimal dialogue reflects the coloniser–colonised relationship in which the Palestinian woman clearly understands Hebrew, while the soldiers do not understand Arabic.

Outside, in the corridor, another soldier, Dana, refuses to carry out searches. Throwing open the terminal doors, behind which Palestinian women are kept waiting, she allows everyone to freely enter and go home. Other soldiers emerge from the booths, more concerned about punishment from Dubek than the alleged security threat of letting Palestinians through the checkpoint. It is at this point that Mirit first appears, piping up that she wasn’t involved when Dubek demands who is responsible, threatening them all with court martial.

This film’s emotional perspective on the conflict derives from its focus on ‘the individual, its desires and weaknesses in this political situation’ (Hager and Bilu 2005: 2). We see Mirit via the film’s ‘thinking’ of her, as small and timid, fearful of authority, always seeking others’ approval. Smadar, on the other hand, is initially presented as impulsive, bunking off duty and shoplifting, another unruly subject, like Dana, who neither wants to follow rules nor believes in Israeli state ideology. Yet, later, at the same checkpoint, facing a crowd of frustrated Palestinian women, Smadar becomes a hardline enforcer, inadvertently perpetrating administrative violence by pointing to the notice ‘Do not enter with food’, when ordering a woman to throw away the pitta she has brought for her son, even though he hasn’t eaten all day. The constant process of checking and searching, which dehumanises Palestinians, is also wearying (in another way) for her, increasing hostility and mistrust between the two groups. The checkpoint thus becomes ‘a topos for the banality of evil’ (Shohat 2010: 294). This is what makes *Close to Home* more than merely a drama about moral conscience: its interest in exploring the atrocity-producing situation at individual and collective levels.

The soldiers patrol the city in pairs, and are told to stop and register any 'Arabs' they find, noting down their names, addresses and ID numbers on a form. Purportedly, the rationale is security in the event of a terrorist attack yet, as the film conveys in several scenes, policing itself is a form of terror, power surveillance and intimidation. Moreover, it implies the racially discriminatory notion that every Arab is a potential terrorist: an Arab appearance signifies a possible security threat that requires policing. Therefore, it is an explosive moment when Dubek rebukes Smadar for her poor performance with the forms and she replies with the excuse 'Maybe I don't know what an Arab looks like'. For it is a claim that, along with her reluctance to carry out such work, declares her refusal to be caught up in the racism of the exercise and a state ideology that creates boundaries between Jews and Arabs.

How can you tell who is a Jew and who is an Arab? Despite the pitting of 'Arab' and 'Jew' in opposition, each against the other, as 'mutually exclusive and inimical identities', these categories do overlap (Shohat 2010: 303). Jewish-Israeli citizens are from diverse ethnic and national backgrounds, including Arab and other oriental lands. Israeli identity is multifaceted, also incorporating Palestinian Arabs (Muslim or Christian). However, Zionist-Israeli discourse attempts to imagine a single Jewish identity that does not acknowledge connections with other groups. Shohat's work shows how Arab Jews are repressed from Israeli public discourse, including cinema: 'Zionist discourse turned the concept of "Arab-Jew" into an antonym, an oxymoronic identity' (2010: 255).

Highlighting a hybrid entity in this context, as Shohat's work does, is truly radical, enabling of new political and spatial possibilities. *Close to Home* doesn't go as far, since it doesn't acknowledge the distinction, for example, between Mizrahi Jews (of Middle Eastern origin) and Ashkenazi (central European) Jews. Largely, it remains silent on the issue of Arab Jews. However, it does question 'the taken-for-granted master narrative of Arab versus Jew' (ibid.) and, with it, the Israeli state's underlying racism in its present formation. When Dubek patrols with Smadar and Mirit on a bus to 'show' them what an Arab looks like, the film also challenges Western (and Israeli) audience expectations of the Arab as a dangerous 'other', since such an audience may assume it has some idea of 'what an Arab looks like' or, rather, what an Arab is *imagined* to look like, as purveyed by Hollywood and other popular media stereotypes. As Shohat writes, 'unlike novels, cinematic narratives require complex choices involving complexion and facial characteristics' (ibid.: 261–2). Casting decisions are often based on racial conventions, including a chromatic range of complexions and physical types. The scene of having to identify an Arab on a bus forces the audience to confront this stereotyping. As some passengers come aboard, the film identifies which one is supposedly an Arab, with a panning action and then a tight framing behind his head. This catches out

the spectator, who has been forced to apply the same racist assumptions. Both Dubek and Mirit glance at Smadar, who looks straight ahead without reacting to the new passenger. Dubek immediately perceives Smadar's pretence, ordering her to register the man, while Mirit witnesses the injustice of the situation, not only towards Smadar but also towards the man who has been singled out.

In border checkpoint scenes, Jewish women were cast as Palestinian women. Although the directors present this as an ethical decision, it actually follows Israeli cinematic convention of casting (oriental) Jews as Palestinians. However, Hager and Bilu's comment about audience reaction is telling: 'Everybody, even in Israel, is convinced that these women are Palestinians, because actually we all look alike' (Soda Pictures 2005: 5). Indeed, as we see when the camera focuses on her dark eyes and long black hair on removing her veil, the woman surveyed in the opening could be an older version of Smadar, whose own looks could be interpreted as Arab according to those codes. Furthermore, it may be significant that, unlike Mirit's family, whom we see regularly, we never encounter Smadar's parents, whose off-screen presence is communicated via answerphone messages, as they are away from home; Smadar's own cultural identity (as potentially an Arab Jew) is hinted at yet kept a mystery.

Rather than employing further extras, the filmmakers frequently made use of location shooting with a telephoto lens, enabling them to film passers-by 'who were crossing the frame' (ibid.). One of these fortuitous shots is presented as Smadar's point of view through the bus window, following a headscarfed woman crossing the road. A road sign with an arrow directs the audience's



Figure 5.2 A road sign with an arrow seems to identify a woman crossing the road as a subject of racial difference in *Close to Home*.

gaze towards her, seeming to identify her as a subject of racial difference and again confronting us with racial discrimination in an environment in which differences are continually policed and literally pointed out.

Back on the bus, an officious passenger upbraids Smadar and Mirit for not noticing an apparently unaccompanied bag – though it happens to be his own – in order to warn them about security risks and the need to do their job properly. Annoyed by his condescending behaviour, Smadar asks for his ID. He categorically refuses, demonstrating power inequities not only between this older Israeli male and the young female soldiers, but also between Israeli-Jewish citizens and Palestinian Arabs. While Israeli security can pursue Palestinians anywhere, submitting them to daily humiliations of identity checks in their homeland, Israeli-Jewish citizens are shown in the film to be above such searches, secure in their entitlement to be there.

In what seems to be the turning point, a bombing occurs in the sector next to the one that Smadar and Mirit are meant to be policing. Like mainstream news media, the film identifies Palestinian resistance as terrorism and suggests that the security threat is genuine. The next day, a male commanding officer voices his appreciation of the important job the soldiers are doing and informs them that the city's security alert level is to be increased, urging them all to be vigilant. However, the bombing doesn't significantly enhance the soldiers' form-filling performance nor change their attitude to their policing role. Rather, its narrative function is the bonding that it develops between Smadar and Mirit.

While on patrol, Smadar and Mirit stumble upon Commander Dubek kissing an Arab man in a side street. To their surprise, Dubek and the man greet them bashfully and the girls leave in a fit of muffled giggles. A kiss between a Jew and a Palestinian Arab is taboo-breaking in a segregated and conflict-stricken society, although it taps into an existing genre of films about 'forbidden love'. Being intimate with the 'enemy' suggests a crossing of ideological as well as physical borders between Israeli Jews and Palestinians and hints at a potential for a 'multicultural and binational identity' (Loshitzky 2001: xvii). Narratively, however, it shows that Dubek has a 'soft side'; henceforth, she is no longer presented as authoritarian. Similarly, the military barracks, initially a hostile and forbidding place of military discipline, is no longer so by the third time it is shown. Here it becomes the scene of a fellow soldier's farewell party. The scene ends with the soldier, Julia, alone in the frame with the balloons and leftover cake. Although she is starting a new life, leaving the military, it seems as if the others, who have important work to do, have left *her* and it's her loss – affirming group solidarity and commitment to the cause. In these respects, *Close to Home* appears to serve the ideological function of institutionalising young people into military service.

Such a reading of the film might be reinforced by the fact that it doesn't

show the worst aspects of checkpoints. In one scene, a man misses his bus to work because he must present his ID and it is implied that he may lose his job. But we only view him walking off into the distance and don't see what happens to him, nor do we see the serious consequences of policing to any of the other Palestinians. Clearly, the female Israeli soldiers are the focus of the narrative and it is through their perspective that we are invited to see. That means the film doesn't foster intense identifications with the Palestinians, who appear only as minor characters, in brief appearances. It might be argued that, by depicting young women in the army, who look vulnerable when they confront people on the street, the film shows us a gentler face of Israeli occupation and apartheid, focusing on low-tech, small-scale activities without revealing their full horrors, including the tight turnstiles at border checkpoints that slow down the flow of crowds and crush them into narrow spaces.

Yet *Close to Home* is more complex than this. That complexity is encapsulated in its title (in Hebrew as well as English); the question is, what is close to home, or brought close to home? One of the title's predominant connotations is security and inhabiting the conflict at close range. The title is rationalised in the narrative as Mirit wishes to be posted far from home, away from her suffocating parents. But it also has a counterpart in the film's style, including use of the telephoto lens, which brings what is far away close up. For those who enjoy a comfortable living (as most of the film's target audience do), violence is usually positioned at a distance; this film finds ways of bringing that violence close to home, precisely through its focus on mundane routines.

This is particularly well realised in the final scene, when a Palestinian man objects to giving the girls his ID and is assaulted by some passers-by, who aggressively intervene. Instead of showing the assault, the film shifts to the girls driving away on Smadar's motorbike. It is implied, through sounds of the assault laid over the image of their faces, that Smadar and Mirit feel responsible for the beating of the Palestinian. The audio focusing gives clarity to those sounds, layered on top of the instrumental track that closes the film. The escalating violence, with Smadar screaming 'Leave him alone!' and crying in self-recrimination, is thus heard off screen. While they have initiated a situation that has spiralled out of control, which positions them as perpetrators, the girls are still shown as victims; nonetheless, the resulting effect for the audience is ethical as it is emotive, more so than it would have been had the camera stayed on the Palestinian and dwelt on the physical violence. It is ethical precisely because of the emotional identification the film has fostered with the girls, focalising events through them, including their realisation of the consequences of their actions and that even their small, minor harassments are part of a larger societal and systematic violence perpetrated daily against Palestinians.

In a statement that one could place alongside the film's ending, the directors claim that their focus on young women in the army is part of a gendered

critique of the system: 'We can't see any feminist values in that military world. We don't think that the women's role is to fight for equality in the army, but to struggle against those values which turn Israel into a military society' (Soda Pictures 2005: 4). The statement questions the values of a society that accepts the army's dominance, the conflict's continuation and the oppression of Palestinians as 'the exclusive past, present and future reality of life in Israel' (Chomsky and Pappé 2011: 167). Like the film, it moves towards a questioning of the normalisation of violence towards Palestinians by suggesting that what appears to be distant suffering is caused close to home.

From the other side of the 'security' divide, *Paradise Now* is said to be the first Palestinian film (though, technically, it is a German, Dutch and French co-production) to tackle the subject of suicide bombers. Its fictional plot is set in the West Bank city of Nablus and concerns Said and Khaled, car mechanics who are childhood friends and who are summoned for a suicide mission in Tel Aviv. It follows the would-be perpetrators as, with explosives strapped to their bodies, they are escorted to the 'security fence' between the West Bank and Israel, but then things go wrong and they are parted, each having to deal with his own doubts and resolve about the mission. Separately, they each encounter Suha, who, despite being a famous Palestinian martyr's daughter, voices the opinion that resistance can take other forms.

Shot on location in Nablus, at a hair's breadth from missile onslaughts by the Israeli military and assorted Palestinian armed groups, and in Tel Aviv, the film was produced directly out of Israel/Palestine's material and historical conditions. Filming in the West Bank, where the IDF has a permanent presence, carrying out targeted assassinations, using tanks, guns and rockets, required the cooperation of the Israeli authorities as well as of Palestinian armed organisations, who were suspicious of how such a large, well-equipped film crew had been allowed into the area. Amid rumours that the film was against suicide bombers, one armed faction kidnapped the location manager. Although he was finally released (with the help of Yasser Arafat), shortly afterwards a land mine killed three people close to the shoot and forced the crew to relocate to Nazareth.

Like *Waltz with Bashir*, *Paradise Now* won a Golden Globe award and an Oscar nomination but, unlike the other film, this high-profile exposure resulted in attacks and lobbying against it. A petition against its Oscar nomination was launched. The controversy has revolved around its so-called 'humanizing' of suicide bombers with calls for 'the need to historicize terrorism from the point of view of its historical victims' (Gana 2008: 24). As Nouri Gana notes, these reactions 'decontextualize and dehistoricize terrorism' by portraying it as 'a moral aberration', rather than engendered by the state's colonial violence. Moreover, 'the concern over the humanization of suicide bombers betrays, wittingly or unwittingly, an interest in their dehumanization' – part

of the dehumanisation of Palestinians ‘in theory and practice’ (ibid.: 25). The film has generally received short shrift from critics. Several reviewers were puzzled by the fact that its protagonists do not appear to be motivated by any kind of religious zeal, contrary to standard images of ‘fundamentalist’ violence: ‘There are no flames of fanaticism burning in their eyes, no bloodthirsty rage, and no crazed ecstasy at the prospect of their imminent trip to heaven. Their gazes are blank’ (Chahine 2005: 73). Even Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, in their excellent book on Palestinian cinema, characterise *Paradise Now* as inferior to other Palestinian films and attribute its success (it was picked up for distribution by Warner Independent Pictures, an arm of Warner Bros) to the ‘Hollywood chase structure’ in its second half, when Said and Khaled are separated (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 194).

What the extant criticism (apart from Gana’s article) seems to miss is the film’s satirical take on suicide bombers, through its occasional black humour, as well as its exploration of the West Bank’s real and symbolic spaces, highlighting the banal violence of Israeli apartheid and occupation, which are, in its analysis, what produces violent resistance. In this way, *Paradise Now* confronts how Palestinian resistance is portrayed in mainstream media through the stereotype of terrorism, and invites its viewers to attend to its causes, namely state terror. It eschews familiar reportage of suicide attacks – TV news flashes of carnage and outpourings of grief, Internet postings by groups claiming they were responsible for the attack, and clips from martyr videos. Instead, it attempts to take us ‘behind the scenes’ in the suicide bombers’ humdrum lives: firstly, in its foreground story which is concerned with their last twenty-four hours and, secondly, in spatial images that portray everyday situations in the background that motivate them to extreme actions. In interview, the director, Hany Abu-Assad, declared that audiences should see his film twice, as ‘the first time you will be busy with your own prejudices’ (Georgakas and Saltz 2005: 19). As we saw with *Waltz*, he is right to encourage a second viewing in which other layers of meaning, overlooked on first viewing, become apparent.

A sense of stasis and interminable waiting pervades the film’s portrait of the West Bank. For this, it utilises spatial symbols common in Palestinian cinema. The protagonists work at a repair yard, where wrecked cars are piled on top of each other, producing images of a wasteland of ‘stranded or engine-less cars’ and ‘vehicles whose destination is unclear’, representing a ‘dead-end’ (Gertz and Khleifi 2008: 137). Numerous roadblocks, arresting the traffic, figure literal and symbolic constriction within space. The checkpoint is an obstacle to be traversed even before the narrative can get under way. The film opens with Suha crossing a checkpoint, which she has to pass in order to return to her hometown. At another point in the narrative, a taxi drops its passengers before a roadblock so they can make their own way on foot, along dirt tracks. One roadblock after another continually rears up before the characters.

On a hill overlooking the city, Khaled and Said smoke water pipes, an image that evokes boredom and chronic unemployment since Israel largely ceased employing West Bank workers during the second intifada; their gazes are blank because of the imprisonment of the occupation and their lives' futility. As well as causing daily frustrations, roadblocks and other mobility restrictions prevent them from leaving their town, with devastating repercussions on the economy, now stagnant owing to a decrease in trade and movement. The film evokes day-to-day realities under Israeli occupation through these implied means.

Following the protagonists walking or driving around by car, the film exposes several places destroyed by Israeli bombing, as when Said and his handler Jamal pass a ruined ancient building on their way to the militia's headquarters: Israeli state brutality leaves its physical scars on the landscape. As Eyal Weizman writes, 'the visible ruin is an important symbol in the public display of occupation and domination; it demonstrates the presence of the colonial power even when the colonist is nowhere to be seen' (Weizman 2012: 28). Moreover, the land is envisioned as hot and dry, a tactile-visual referent reinforced by mention of water filters in the dialogue, once by a taxi driver in connection with Jewish settlements, raising issues of struggle over water resources and water purification. Khaled even interrupts his second attempt at the martyr video to pass a message to his mother about where to purchase better-value water filters – a moment of humour in the film, but also a life-and-death matter. With later scenes in Tel Aviv, the film unfolds two worlds on either side of the 'Apartheid Wall': one world gleamingly new, spacious, tidy, well supplied; the other cramped, old, haphazardly constructed, underresourced. Tel Aviv is a Westernised city filled with well-paved roads, skyscrapers and billboards; its beach, open horizons and well-connected communications contrast with the West Bank's parched, imprisoning, maze-like spaces, where there is no such freedom to roam.

The film parodies the genre of the martyr video, supposed to be a laudatory speech about a suicide mission, when Khaled is filmed for one in a tile factory (using an actual location where such videos are filmed). With a keffiyeh draped around his shoulders, he is pictured posing with a rifle in front of the militia's banner. In an impassioned speech, he names his suicide-bombing mission as an 'answer' to the occupation's injustices: Israel's continued building of settlements, confiscation of lands, 'Judaisation' of Jerusalem and 'ethnic cleansing'. With Israel's refusal to accept either a one-state solution, granting Palestinians equality 'under the same democratic system' (seen as 'suicide for the Jewish state'), or a two-state compromise (though this gives Palestinians 'unfair' terms), Palestinians 'are either to accept the occupation forever or disappear'. Trembling with emotion at the end of his speech, he asks his audience: 'How was it?' When the cameraman replies that the camera malfunctioned and

didn't record the performance, the tone shifts to bathos and continues as such when the militiamen pass around pitta sandwiches and start munching while Khaled is forced to do it all over again.

What this approach does is communicate the verbal 'message' that it is the occupation which motivates suicide bombers; at the same time, its absurdist humour satirises suicide bombing and militia leaders and religious teachers who are prepared to send young people to their deaths, presenting the enterprise as a personal honour. Individually greeted by the 'legendary' leader Abu-Karem, ritually washed, feasted and photographed for posters to adorn the town after their deaths, the men are told they will be celebrated as martyrs, with angels escorting them to paradise. Yet the leaders care neither about them nor those destined to be casualties of the bombing; all they really care about is their own glory, their small victories in an ongoing struggle.

The satire is present again in a later scene, where videos of martyrs and collaborators are found for rent in a local shop; furthermore, the shopkeeper tells Suha and Said, videos of collaborator executions are in greater demand and he could charge even more for them. The video rental business thrives on the cult of martyrdom and helps propagate its perverse model of heroism. *Paradise Now* therefore reveals destructive forms of masculinity on the Palestinian side, too – part of the internal violence that results from colonial control and occupation, manifesting in increasingly militant groups. We find out that Said's father was a collaborator, executed when Said was ten, a history for which he suffers continual humiliation. Recovering his father's damaged masculinity through his own martyrdom becomes his motive for his suicide mission, along with revenge for growing up in a refugee camp. It is the fact of dispossession and unbearable living conditions that produces terrorist violence, all of which is presented without context in Western news media.

When Said and Khaled are separated during their mission, the film turns into a chase within the West Bank's roadblock-strewn environment. *Paradise Now* thus becomes a pastiche of mainstream thriller genres, precisely because the elements upon which they rely (namely, speed and mastery of space) are thwarted: movement is constantly arrested; action becomes inaction; and the pyrotechnics of explosion, promised in the title's allusion to *Apocalypse Now*, is deferred. The title also parodies Peace Now, a well-known left-wing Israeli peace movement, referring to the failure of the so-called 'peace process' to improve Palestinians' livelihood and welfare and revealing the 'rhetoric of "peace"' as 'a gigantic fraud' (Said 2004: 6).

During this chase, a heated argument between Suha and Khaled ensues. Suha points out that suicide bombing gives Israel the excuse to carry on doing what it is doing. However, Khaled believes that, even without suicide bombing, Israel will not stop. Suha implores: 'If you kill, there's no difference between victim and occupier.' To which Khaled replies that if they had aeroplanes,

then they wouldn't need martyrs, pointing to the socially constructed nature of what are considered legitimate and illegitimate forms of violence, and suicide bombing as a product of power asymmetry between the two sides. Although the film does not endorse suicide bombing, it allows both their arguments to be aired. In the end, Khaled is persuaded by Suha, although Said is not, and resolves to go ahead with another mission.

The final sequence begins with solitary framings of those who remain: Suha, looking at a picture of Said, which she turns over; Jamal; Abu-Karem; Said's mother; and, finally, Khaled. Suha, Said's mother and Khaled are each shown in melancholy over a future they might have had but have now lost, the film dwelling in particular on the distraught Khaled, despairing at losing his childhood friend. We then move to the interior of a bus, filled with soldiers as well as civilians. The film picks out Said, sitting towards the back, framed between the bus bars, coincidentally in the same position as the 'Arab' on the bus in *Close to Home*. Here, however, Said, wearing a suit, has 'passed' as a Jew. The sounds of conversation around him fade as the film closes into his eyes, before the screen bleaches out.

The white screen leads us to assume that the mission has been completed, though this is left ambiguous. The predominance of soldiers on this bus contrasts with an earlier scene, during the botched mission, when a small child's presence deters Said from boarding a bus; it implies that, because they are soldiers, their deaths are more legitimate than those of civilians, although the violent resistance of non-state actors does not usually obey the 'rules of war', which forbid the deliberate killing of civilians, any more than state terrorism does. According to Raya Morag, the purpose of the white screen is to enable 'ongoing identification with Said and what he represents by abstaining from audio-visualization of the attack . . . if the film had shown results of the attack, the entire film would have had a different impact, a less sympathetic one' (2008: 14). For her, it makes the act seem more excusable, directing attention away from its violence. The film, however, wisely eschews images of explosions, which are in any case already overdetermined by media representations. Instead, it seeks, as Abu-Assad suggests, to shatter 'those prevailing perceptions . . . to build a new perception' (Georgakas and Saltz 2005: 17). That new perception has to do with who is the suicide bomber and their backstory. Additionally, there is perhaps an even more important point: if this final scene had focused on the bombing's abject outcome – the dead and maimed bodies – the activation of the viewer's visceral empathies would neutralise the foregoing narrative and images, which emphasise the violence of occupation and apartheid and present the Israeli state (not just Palestinian armed factions) as a terror organisation that causes suffering to civilians. In other words, it would cancel out the wider political and ethical point the film is making, in favour of a more commonplace one.

 THE WALL

The 1948 expulsion continues by bureaucratic means, through a web of measures designed to harass, intimidate, and ultimately drive Palestinians away. (Shohat 2010: 295)

It is about those on the other side of the wall that we fantasise: more and more they live in another world, in a blank zone that offers itself as a screen for the projection of our fears, anxieties and secret desires. (Žižek 2009: 88)

In 2002, Israel began building a barrier through the West Bank ('the Wall'), designed to separate Israeli towns and settlements from Palestinian ones. The Wall has been the subject of several documentaries, including *Wall (Mur)* (2004), *Budrus* (2009), and *5 Broken Cameras* (2011), all of which transport viewers to the 'real' spaces of the conflict, often with events unfurling in real time. Taking the broadest view, *Wall* begins with an exchange in Hebrew between the filmmaker, Simone Bitton, and two children, heard off screen as the film glides along a painted section on the Wall's Israeli side. When asked what the Wall is for, one child answers: 'They shoot Arabs from here.' 'No, Arabs shoot at us,' the other interjects. 'So we hide behind the wall.' 'Who shoots whom?' Bitton asks. The children admit that they initially ran away from the film crew because they mistook them for 'Arabs' before realising they were 'Jews'. Bitton inquires how they can be so sure; unfazed, the children specify language and facial features as sure-fire means of distinguishing Jews from Arabs. It transpires their mother is from Morocco and speaks Arabic, so Bitton proposes: 'When she speaks Arabic, one might say she's an Arab, no?' The children titter in response. It is apparent from their conversation that the Wall taps into, and helps to maintain, a geography of fear based on fantasies of self and other, us and them. Jewish children are constantly told stories about 'the enemy' and how only the Wall can stop them. In her documentary, Bitton, herself an Arab Jew from Morocco, explores the ideology of the Wall, which segregates the population on a racial basis and is designed to keep the Arabs out of Israel, as well as its impact on people's lives on either side. It features interviews with Palestinians who live under its shadow, including those employed as its construction workers, together with the IDF's director general and Israeli settlers.

At a desk flanked by Israeli flags, Amos Yaron, IDF director general, states the official line on the Wall – that its purpose is, firstly, to reduce Palestinian capabilities of entering Israel to carry out terrorist attacks and, secondly, to reduce the threat of Palestinians stealing Israeli property. He outlines how the Wall functions both as a physical obstacle and as a complete surveillance

system, activating an alarm relayed to a control room 'where everything is seen and heard' when anyone attempts to cross it. In urban areas, it consists of 25-foot-high concrete slabs. Elsewhere along its path, it is an electronic fence, fitted with high-tech sensors, surrounded by cameras, radar and watchtowers, and lined with supplementary barbed-wire fences ('the first obstacle'), ditches to prevent vehicle access, dirt tracks to register intruders' footprints and patrol roads to enable the military to respond speedily to contact with it. With its apparatus of remote sensors and fast-access highways, together with aerial strike capacities (Israel retains control of airspace above), the Wall is a method of controlling enclosed Palestinian populations from afar without the need for actual territorial presence.

Throughout his interview, Yaron refuses to acknowledge the Wall as an ideological enterprise, adhering to its official term, 'seam-line obstacle'. The film juxtaposes his commentary with views of the Wall painted with scenery of an idealised pastoral landscape, blending in with real trees and sky beyond it. The juxtaposition undermines his claim, offering a concrete image of the Wall as a 'solid, material embodiment of state ideology and its conception of national security' (Weizman 2007: 162), screening out the assumed threat that lies beyond it.

Although the Wall is touted as an emergency security measure, underlying it is a politics of separation. According to Yosefa Loshitzky,

the 'security' rhetoric behind this monstrous monument . . . cannot mask its ideological agenda, which goes far beyond Israel's immediate 'political gains', such as confiscating the most fertile lands of the West Bank, separating Palestinian villagers and their lands, disrupting the day-to-day life of the Palestinian population and controlling water resources . . . Walls raise questions regarding the creation of the politics of otherness . . . The Israeli wall functions in this way by erecting a boundary between self and other, the 'civilised' (Israeli) and the 'barbarian' (the Palestinian), the coloniser (the Israelis masquerading as the righteous owners of Palestinian land) and the colonised (Palestinians 'contained' under curfews and locked behind electrified barbed-wire preventing them from 'invading' their historical homeland). (2006: 333-4)

Different ideological connotations are attached to the various terms applied to the structure, the sanitised phrase 'security fence' contrasting with other labels, such as 'the Wall' or 'Apartheid Wall', which have played a part in raising international awareness about its injustices. Moreover, in contrast to the 'mundane, almost benign' images of Israel's 'red-roofed suburban settlements' in the West Bank, the Wall's menacing physical appearance, with its 'barbed-wire fencing and high concrete walls cutting through pastoral olive

orchards, wheatfields or vineyards, or through the fabric of towns and cities', has helped its opponents gain support from international NGOs and activists (Weizman 2007: 171). The Wall resonates as a 'powerful image within the media economy of the conflict', tapping into still-unresolved historical legacies of colonial and Cold War eras and evoking memories of the Berlin Wall and South African apartheid, 'although even at the height of its barbarity, the South African regime never erected such a barrier' (Weizman 2007: 171).

In real-time shots of concrete slabs being lifted by heavy machinery, Bitton's film documents the Wall's construction and the Palestinian labour upon which it depends: Jewish workers refuse to do such menial work, while West Bank Palestinians need the employment and pay. As one slab after another is heaved into place, obstructing the landscape behind it, the film highlights the irony that Palestinian labourers are literally building the wall around themselves. For the Wall does not advance along the Green Line, the internationally recognised border between Israel and the West Bank, but loops around several Jewish settlements in the West Bank, placing them on the 'Israeli' side, seizing more territory for Israel while cutting off Palestinians from their farmland, schools, services and water sources. The construction workers' village of Jabara is one of several villages trapped in an inter-border zone between the Green Line on the west and the Wall on the east, its inhabitants barred from entering either Israel or the rest of the West Bank, unless they have special permits; moreover, the gate in the Wall is opened only once daily. In Jerusalem, a Palestinian recounts how the fence encloses her community and prevents them accessing the bus network, while other vital municipal services like rubbish collection, to which they are entitled as tax-payers, have ceased. In its closing sequence, the film pictures people furtively crossing the Wall, temporarily defying this oppressive reality in their determination to continue their lives. Meanwhile, a helicopter passing above reminds us of the risks they are taking and that the Wall is a system of observation and control, not just a means of partition.

The documentary *Budrus*, directed by Brazilian filmmaker Julia Bacha, charts one village's popular resistance against the path of the Wall, planned to cut through its olive grove. It follows the story of community frontman Ayed Morrar, who leads a non-violent protest when soldiers declare the olive grove a closed military area and assume the prerogative to shoot any Palestinians who enter. The film takes the biblical David and Goliath motif, which Israel has traditionally adopted for its wars against its Arab neighbours ('tiny Israel / mighty Arabs'), and reverses it as the villagers take on the mighty Israeli army. The reversal also harks back to the largely non-violent first intifada, when stone-throwing became a weapon. But when Palestinian youths start throwing stones in *Budrus*, senior community members ask them to stop. The resistance is reinforced when Ayed's teenage daughter Iltezam mobilises a group of

female villagers. Israeli and South African activists are also shown joining the Palestinians in a demonstration against Israeli occupation and apartheid. Like other films in this section, *Budrus* underlines the colonised's agency, locating the secret of success in their steadfastness in holding their ground, despite the odds against them, and their ability to mobilise international opinion.

Both *Budrus* and *5 Broken Cameras* are testaments to the physical risks that their filmmakers took, filming from the conflict's frontline, with dramatic images of Israeli soldiers attacking protestors with tear gas and live ammunition. *5 Broken Cameras* is created from footage shot by a Palestinian farmer, Emad Burnat, who shares the director's credit with Israeli filmmaker Guy Davidi. It captures several protestors' deaths, its blurred, pixellated images reminiscent of news footage but depicting what few news organisations broadcast to the world. During the filming, Burnat's cameras broke one after another in the onslaught from Israeli bullets. This provides the film with its central conceit and aesthetic structure, which further distinguishes it from both news footage and amateur films on the Internet that also rely on the rhetoric of the camera as a 'witness' to events. The narrative is divided into segments, corresponding to footage from the successive cameras and concluding with footage from the sixth, as yet unbroken, camera. At one point in his voiceover narration, Burnat remarks: 'When I'm filming I feel like the camera protects me. But it's an illusion' – a statement that could be in dialogue with the soldier's anecdote in *Waltz with Bashir*. In *5 Broken Cameras*, the poetic concept of the broken camera has additional poignancy because at one point the camera does literally protect Burnat: a bullet lodges within it, saving his life. Not merely a protective, distancing device, the camera as a fragile, material object is itself susceptible to the ravages of the conflict: a metaphor for bodily vulnerability and life.

Together with the 'self-governance' of the Palestinian Authority, the Wall with its heavy fortifications creates the illusion of a political border, dividing 'Israel' from 'Palestine'. This illusion obscures the ongoing occupation and the fact that 'Palestine' is not a separate country from 'Israel', but one group of people under the colonial rule of another. The Wall does not mark a recognised border; rather, it materialises 'the violent reality of a shifting colonial frontier', erupting into Palestinians' lives and ripping into their homes and lands (Weizman 2007: 179). Since the Wall was approved as a concept without a pre-planned route, Palestinian farmers, human rights activists, NGOs, Israel's Supreme Court, international courts, foreign governments, settlers and other interest groups have attempted to influence and alter its path. In *Budrus* and *5 Broken Cameras*, popular resistance combined with international attention results in rerouting the Wall's path further west, nearer to the Green Line. But while this is an empowering struggle, which has succeeded in reducing harsh conditions in surrounding Palestinian areas, it does so only

incrementally, without contesting the principle and illegitimacy of the entire enterprise, campaigning instead for the least evil route the Wall can take.

Moreover, as Eyal Weizman notes, barriers deep inside the West Bank have not attracted the kind of international public attention of the more visible, 'exterior' Wall. He describes how the colonial enterprise of gaining land has 'operated by imposing a complex compartmentalized system of spatial exclusion' in three dimensions (ibid.: 10). In the Occupied Territories, this includes: the system of fast Israeli-only highways and tunnels that link settlements with Israel; airspace control using high-tech tools to police and kill from the air by drones, helicopters, and satellites; and a monopoly of underground aquifers as well as hilltops for settlements, affording strategic advantages for self-protection and resource extraction. The roads' spatial layout, one passing on top of the other, prevents 'cognitive encounter' between the two groups as well as enabling Jewish Israelis to enjoy superior infrastructure, freedom of movement and other privileges (ibid.: 181).

The Israeli-German-French co-production *Lemon Tree* dramatises this lack of cognitive encounter and the problems inherent in applying humanitarian discourse to the Wall. A fiction film directed by an Israeli, Eran Riklis, and co-scripted by an Israeli-Palestinian, Suha Arraf, it opens with removal truck drivers trying to find the town of Zur-Hasharon, 'right on the border with the Arabs'. The film flits to views of the 'security fence' before the van comes to rest in an upscale neighbourhood. Defence Minister Israel Navon is moving in with his wife, Mira, right next door to Salma Zidane's lemon grove, which was planted on ancestral land by her father fifty years ago. The Israeli secret service identifies the lemon grove as a security risk and persuades the minister that he should cut it down. Salma, a Palestinian widow who ekes out a living from the grove, decides to dispute the minister's order, taking her David-like battle for justice all the way to Israel's Supreme Court.

Well received internationally, though not in Israel, *Lemon Tree* has been interpreted as an allegory of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, with the security fence between the lemon grove and the minister's house (and his name) serving as 'obvious' metaphors (Elley 2008b). However, the narrative is not *merely* allegorical, as it is situated within the spatial and material environs of a real, ongoing conflict. The film's security fence is presented as *literally* part of Israel's Wall, as reinforced by various cutaways to its construction and, finally, its revelation in the final scene. Moreover, the fictional story is woven around a common situation faced by Palestinians – namely, legal disputes with the Israeli state over plans for destruction of their olive groves, demolition of their homes and other land expropriations.

Lemon Tree brings these stories to light by adapting the genre of melodrama focused on one woman's plight. According to its director, *Lemon Tree* is an attempt 'to fight against . . . global indifference' through an internationally

accessible, emotionally moving story, without making an overt political statement (Bowen 2009: 65). At its centre is a cross-cultural encounter relayed through its dual focus on a Palestinian woman's legal battle, on the one hand, and, on the other, an Israeli woman, Mira Navon, in her first contact with the injustices of the occupation and subsequent rift with her husband. Giving equal share of screen time and resolution to both women, *Lemon Tree* is a rare film in that it successfully portrays a dual subject position – both sides of the colonial divide – and attempts to bridge the spaces of self and other. Yet it does not fall into the trap of sentimentalising or simplifying the potential for such a cross-cultural encounter. As I suggest below, that cross-cultural encounter is ultimately portrayed as a failed encounter in the plot, although it is successfully bridged at the level of narrative form and use of both Arabic and Hebrew dialogue.

In its split-focus melodrama, *Lemon Tree* contains a number of images mirroring the two women, while underlining the social hierarchy between them. It pictures both of them gazing across the fence, alone in bed, and climbing over the barrier in Salma's yard. At the same time, it emphasises the emotional and ideological distance between Mira and her husband. In a TV appearance, Israel declares his aim is to hunt down terrorism in whatever form. The film satirises the state's tendency to define its acts as responses to terrorist threats. Here that suspected threat takes the form of a lemon grove, believed to be a potential terrorist hideout, which therefore must be cut down. On a talk show, the audience cheers at Israel's every word, indicating that his views on defence, particularly about the Wall's necessity, are widely shared.

Mira is disgusted when she sees a news item on Israel's objection on humanitarian grounds to the destruction of Palestinian olive groves, when he has ordered his neighbour's lemon grove to be cut down. The film does not present this merely as personal hypocrisy (the public avowal of humanitarianism at odds with his violent policies and practices) but rather as part of what Weizman calls the state's humanitarian violence. This includes its tendency to negotiate humanitarian problems arising from the building of the Wall not out of any real concern for Palestinians, but to appease the international community of human rights watchers, invoking their 'legal-moral rhetoric' so that potential restrictions or delays to the project may be averted (Weizman 2007: 175). Significantly, the Defence Minister's surname, Navon, sounds like the Hebrew word *na'or* ('enlightened'), used in the context of the occupation to imply 'a humane administration of the Palestinian population' (Ben-Zvi-Morad 2011: 285). It reflects the state's moral, compassionate façade.

In a newspaper interview with her journalist friend Tamar Gera, Mira bravely takes a stand against her husband and the state's actions. But though she claims to her daughter that her life has been turned upside down by the lemon grove dispute, it is not her life but Salma's that has been completely

overturned. Ultimately, Mira's world is not so different from her husband's world of war, security and state rhetoric. As an Israeli-Jewish woman, Mira is in an asymmetric colonial relationship with her neighbour, secure in her own sense of entitlement and bourgeois privileges. Ensnared in her high-security fortress, she can draw her blinds and block Salma out; Salma does not share these privileges, nor can she simply live her own life, which her neighbours control in every aspect, damaging her livelihood and means of income by preventing her from accessing her lemon grove. An architect by profession, Mira is the one who has designed the house, making her a wielder of spatial power, and, as its hostess, she decides who is welcome in it. At her housewarming party, the guests eat Arabic food but, unlike scenes with Carmi in *Waltz*, *Lemon Tree* highlights the irony, as they are unable to extend hospitality to their Arab neighbour – indeed, they behave in less than neighbourly ways by stealing lemons from her grove. Mira is also responsible for uprooting an olive tree, presumably from a Palestinian orchard, and transplanting it to her garden, yet she fails to connect her own and her husband's actions. Both the Defence Minister and his wife, like the rest of elite Israeli society with whom they mix, are shown to suffer from an unhealthy siege syndrome, barricading themselves behind defensive walls, fences and watchtowers to protect their own privileges. On the night of the housewarming, a rocket attack does happen, as if to confirm their need for security, yet, as representatives of Israel's dominant class, they benefit the most from its rapacious politics of separation.

In a press statement, Mira announces she would like to be a 'normal neighbour' to Salma but 'there's just too much blood and too much politics'. Israel proclaims that Salma 'strikes us as a very nice lady', yet he admits they have no contact with her. So, while there is an expression of aspiration for coexistence, there is a defeatist acceptance of enmity and violence as routine. As represented by Mira and the Defence Minister, the Israeli left and right alike are revealed to share the same worldview – historically, both have used settlement building to gain territory and have endorsed violence against Palestinians. They share an affinity in their underlying attitudes, including condescension towards Arabs, and harbour the same sense of entitlement. *Lemon Tree* thus highlights modes of unethical thinking and behaviour that help perpetuate the conflict. When Mira attempts to see Salma, the film emphasises how, though it is a small physical distance to cover, ideologically it is much larger, by the capturing of her movements on CCTV and later by the security guard, who follows her to Salma's doorstep. Even though Mira shows her solidarity for Salma by attending the Supreme Court on the final day, the two women never speak to each other. Afterwards, she leaves her home and husband, driving off in a car. Perhaps she finds her situation ethically untenable and decides to exit it, but it is left ambiguous where she is going or to what purpose, handing over to the audience the responsibility of finishing her story.

Unlike in conventional courtroom dramas, relatively little screen time is spent inside the courtroom itself or on legal minutiae. Instead, Salma's legitimate claim to the land is shown cinematically through her sensuous attachment to and association with abundance of growth. This is depicted from the film's opening shot, which fades up into a bountiful lemon tree and closes onto one luscious fruit. A montage focusing on Salma's activity of preserving lemons ensues, linking her to traditional food preparation as well as preservation of tradition. Her tender care of the trees, treating them as fellow sentient beings, caressing them with her touch, conveys her belonging to the space and soil, in contrast with Israel and Mira's sense of proprietorship and stealing produce from the land. When the lemons are left untended, the film empathises with Salma's sadness through sounds that convey heaviness as the fruits drop. The film stresses her 'generational continuity' (Ben-Zvi-Morad 2011: 290) with ancestral land belonging to her father, who planted the trees fifty years ago and tended them along with Abu Hassam, an old employee of the family; although her father is no longer alive, his legacy is represented by Abu's continuing presence. *Lemon Tree* thus evokes pre-1967 borders, but doesn't go as far as to evoke pre-1948 ones.

The film offers close-up details of Salma's everyday life – her long-distance relationship with her children and her complicated situation as a Palestinian widow, in which her behaviour is monitored by the community's patriarchs, who remind her of her husband's memory. Sometimes the film glances at his portrait, an overbearing presence that acts like an obstacle to her affair with her lawyer, Ziad Daud. The affair is only fleeting, unsentimentally concluded when the trial ends and Abu shows her the newspaper announcement of Ziad's engagement to a Palestinian politician's daughter – Salma tosses the paper into the incinerator. While the community patriarchs warn her against going head to head with Israel, Salma clings to the struggle to retain her land – superbly rendered in Hiam Abbass's dignified performance.

Since the film suggests a Palestinian woman can successfully take her case all the way to the Supreme Court, it might be interpreted as pro-Israeli, promoting a progressive justice system. Within the story, the media present the outcome (not to uproot all the trees, but merely to prune half of them) as a victory for Salma but she instantly knows it's an insult and stands up in court to say so. By this and other subtle means the film indicates the flawed, compromised justice system, and is not a simple confirmation of its virtues. Even the Supreme Court uses the rhetoric of security in its proposal to moderate state actions, weighing up protecting Palestinian human rights in the Occupied Territories with 'security needs'. The shortcoming here is failure to consider other unjust factors, including the illegality under international law of building the Wall and settlements on occupied territory. Because the Supreme Court accepts the logic of security with which the Israeli state justifies its actions, it

confers a certain legitimacy upon those actions, ruling in real cases that the Wall should be rerouted according to the principle of ‘proportionality’. In Eyal Weizman’s view, even if its ruling in favour of ‘better’ paths for the Wall reduces the amount of suffering that the original plans would have caused, it has the effect of making it more acceptable: ‘The “lesser evil” approach . . . thus allow[s] a “greater evil” to be imposed on the Palestinian people as a whole’ (2007: 175). In *Lemon Tree*’s last scene, the Defence Minister, now alone in his house, unrolls the blinds to reveal that the fence has solidified into tall concrete slabs, completely barricading his Palestinian neighbour out of sight. The film glides over the top of the Wall and reveals Salma walking through the orchard’s pruned section, tending the formerly glorious trees’ wounded stumps. Its final images, therefore, are of compromise and loss, sadness and triumph: a bittersweet ending.

CONCLUSION

This chapter has shown that, unlike TV news, films have the capacity to register perceptions of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict’s everyday violence through their mapping of real and imaginary spaces. In particular, *Close to Home*, *Paradise Now* and *Lemon Tree* portray some of the devastating consequences of Israeli occupation and apartheid, both to the colonised and to colonisers. However, films can also be complicit in perpetuating the violence, even when they bear a compassionate ‘message’, as we saw with *Waltz with Bashir*. There, compassion serves to mask the violence perpetrated by the Israeli army. In contrast, *Lemon Tree* offers an explicit reflection upon the state’s ‘humane’ rhetoric and the dominant society’s capacity to take for granted a system of inequality, since it maintains its privileges. We are invited to challenge Israel’s brutal actions and the narratives that support them, which present everyday oppression and killing of Palestinians as moral through their association with terrorism and Israeli state motives and methods as legitimate.

NOTES

1. *Waltz with Bashir*’s co-production credits include Australia, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Switzerland and the USA.
2. I am indebted to Sabine El Chamaa for pointing this out to me and for translating the Arabic.
3. As the book went to press in August 2014, Gaza was in the middle of a new bombardment in which casualties had already far exceeded the level of the 2008 onslaught.
4. The phrase ‘matrix of control’ derives from Halper (2000).

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