

A Cinematic Intifada
Palestinian Cinema and the Challenge to the Dominant Zionist Narrative

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Of the requirements for the degree of
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Abstract:

The notion of the "founding myth" for a nation usually relies on narratives promoted by nation-states. Yet in the case of the State of Israel, the Zionist narratives have become dominant over the lesser-known narratives of the Palestinian people. This thesis will examine three provocative films dealing with the Palestinian-Israeli conflict: *Divine Intervention* (Elia Suleiman, 2002), *Paradise Now* (Hany Abu-Assad, 2005), and *Private* (Saverio Costanzo, 2004). Specifically, I argue that these three films, having all received international recognition and appraisal, challenge the dominant Zionist narratives and expose its distortion of Palestinian history. Through the use of images and dialogue, these films present heterogeneous counter-narratives that are often unheard on an international scale – the narratives which are essential to the ongoing struggle of the Palestinian people, seeking their nation and legitimate identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Palestinian cinema provides a visual alternative, a visual articulation, a visible incarnation of Palestinian existence in the years since 1948, the year of the destruction of Palestine, and the dispersal and dispossession of the Palestinians; and a way of resisting an imposed identity on Palestinians as terrorists, as violent people, by trying to articulate a counter-narrative and a counter-identity. These films represent a collective identity.¹

- Edward W. Said

The films that Edward Said was referring to in this quote were showcased at the “Dreams of a Nation” Palestinian film festival at Columbia University in January of 2003. Two of those films were by Hany Abu-Assad, and three by Elia Suleiman, who have received critical acclaim for their recent films about Palestine. Along with Italian filmmaker Saverio Costanzo, they have presented powerful cinematic alternatives and articulations, as Said states, in the struggle for Palestinian identity. This identity has been, and continues to be, jeopardized by the narrative presented by the State of Israel whose claims to nationhood, according to the Palestinians, came at the expense of their people and their homeland. This thesis seeks to examine how internationally recognized Palestinian cinema, particularly since the Second Intifada in 2000, seeks to counter history as defined by what I refer to as the *dominant Zionist narrative*, and reclaim the narrative of the Palestinian people.²

The most important question, at the outset of such an endeavor, is “What is Palestinian Cinema?” This query is one that has confounded both film scholars and the film industry at large. In attempting to discuss Palestinian cinema, one must concede to

¹ Edward W. Said, “Preface,” in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (London: Verso, 2006) 3.

² I specifically use the term “Zionist” in discussing this narrative, as many Jews and Israelis who oppose the national narrative of the State of Israel consider themselves “anti-Zionist.”

the reality that such a cinema, in the context of already established configurations of national cinemas, is both challenging and problematic. How is one to discuss the cinema of a nation that only exists, as Benedict Anderson would say as an “imagined community”? With no recognized physical boundaries, hundreds of thousands of citizens living either under occupation, in diasporic communities or in exile, and a corpus of films that exist as a result of complex and contradictory production means and processes, the task of defining Palestinian cinema becomes increasingly difficult. The critical framework of national cinema, therefore, begs further reconsideration in the case of Palestinian films.³ Yet to undertake a major exploration of this question would distract from the particular focus of this piece, namely a study of three recent films dealing with Palestine that have received international acclaim. Attempting to delve into deeper issues of national cinema outside of the scope of this study would result in a much larger project, one that cannot be tackled at this juncture in my academic life. I will, however, discuss some of the discourse that informs Palestinian cinema, insofar as it contextualizes the research at hand.

A national cinema, or rather films claiming to *belong* to a particular nation, attempt to adhere to certain criteria that have been used to qualify, both currently and in the past, these inclusionary claims.⁴ Among these are: nationality of the production company, nationality of the director and majority of crew, language and style of the film (think Italian neo-realism), and national source of funding for the film. In the case of

³ I will not, in this particular body of work, explore with any great detail the discourse that currently surrounds national cinema theory. The case of Palestinian cinema in *this* regard deserves a major undertaking of its own, and has already been explored by other writers. My focus will remain devoted to the particulars of the three films that constitute the bulk of this thesis.

⁴ Again, in an attempt to avoid complicating the issue of national cinema any more than is permissible, I will briefly list some of these criteria while leaving the specifics and the discourse surrounding them open to the reader’s own inspection.

certain international film festivals and award committees, a film is classified according to the country that submits it for consideration. In all of these cases, Palestinian cinema, or any film claiming to be *Palestinian*, faces numerous complications, none more obvious than the absence of a *nation-state*, which is often used to determine nationality.

Producing an answer to the question of What is Palestinian Cinema?, therefore remains an ongoing endeavor, often producing a multitude of responses. According to Livia Alexander, “issues of nationalism are at the heart of Palestinian cinema, and cultural expressions of nationalism remain central to many Palestinian films.”⁵ She goes on to suggest that Palestinian cinema cannot be discussed in terms of specific genres or styles, such as Italian neo-realism, “except for the thematic focus of the political desire and dream for a Palestinian state.”⁶ Her statement resonates in the opinions of Palestinian filmmakers, among them Rashid Masharawi, who suggests that “Palestine in the cinema is not only a political situation. It’s a people with culture, language, art, with negative and positive sides. We exist in cinema as a nation.”⁷ Filmmaker Omar Al-Qattan, commenting on his experiences as a Palestinian filmmaker, states that he has learned “how organically linked are the subjective and the objective, metaphor and militancy, the aesthetic and the political, indeed the struggle for Palestine and the strategies deployed for making films on and in it.”⁸ He goes on to suggest that the films

⁵ Livia Alexander, “Is There A Palestinian Cinema? The National and Transnational in Palestinian Cinema,” in *Palestine, Israel, and the Politics of Popular Culture*, eds. Rebecca L. Stein and Ted Swedenburg (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), 150.

⁶ Ibid., 151.

⁷ Kamran Rastegar, “Rashid Masharawi, Buthina Canaan Khoury, Nahed Awwad, Hazim Bitar, Annemarie Jacir and Ahmad Habash,” *Bidoun*, Fall 2006: 54.

⁸ Omar Al-Qattan, “The Challenges of Palestinian Filmmaking,” in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (London: Verso, 2006), 110.

he considers Palestinian are “any film(s) engaged with Palestine.”⁹ Finally, Malek Khouri states that New Arab cinema, among which he includes Palestinian cinema, “remains focused on becoming a proactive player in the struggle for national self-determination and social change.”¹⁰

Within all of these claims, a certain truth exists – Palestinian cinema emerges in the context of an ongoing situation of conflict. This results in a cinema, as well as a nation, in a state of constant flux. According to Ella Shohat, “the responsibility of [such] cinema is to orchestrate the war of competing discourses, while intimating the long-term possibilities of change.”¹¹ This ongoing cinematic project addresses the heterogeneous nature of the Palestinian identity on the levels of class, gender, religion, sexual orientation, internal vs. external, Palestinian versus Israeli, and Arab versus Palestinian. This heterogeneous project, like the diasporic and exilic struggle, tends to materialize as a unifying reflection of these seemingly contradictory elements. A study of the heterogeneity of Palestinian society, as reflected in such a cinematic project, would present a significant challenge to any scholar. Simply narrowing the focus of which films to examine would be in and of itself a massive undertaking.

Another issue relating to heterogeneity is one of film styles. This is one aspect of Palestinian cinema which has been looked at by numerous writers. While it stands to reason that a people who live in exile and in the diaspora would produce different films than those living under occupation, and that filmmakers in different regions are both influenced and burdened by various local issues, to examine the effects of this

⁹ Ibid., 111.

¹⁰ Malek Khouri, “Origins and Patterns in the discourse of New Arab Cinema,” *Arab Studies Quarterly* 27, no. 1-2 (Winter-Spring 2005): 18.

¹¹ Ella Shohat, *Israeli Cinema* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1989) 273.

heterogeneity in films by Palestinian filmmakers would distract considerably from my focus herein. The films I discuss share the common trait of being fiction films, yet that is where their generic similarities end. While there have been numerous documentaries on various Palestinian issues, as well as several other fiction films, they have not been distributed widely outside of the Middle East.¹² It is worth mentioning, however, that in the many films produced by Palestinian filmmakers in the last thirty years, there has never been as much attention given to them internationally as the films discussed further in.¹³

Two further issues that will not find themselves examined in relation to Palestinian cinema are “memory” and “the Other.” My reasoning that the limited scope of this study does not provide adequate space for dealing with these two broad issues is only one factor in my decision to omit them from consideration. In fact, it was precisely my research into these two topics, specifically in the writings of Haim Bresheeth and Ella Shohat, that indicated that a reconsideration of them would also require a much broader study. Shohat’s writings on Israeli cinema, most notably the topic of the Palestinian Other, seem to beg consideration in a study referring to competing narratives. However, the sphere in which these two narratives are at odds are not in the cinemas of two nations, but rather in the cinema of one (Palestine) and the international media’s recognition of the other (Israel). I will not be examining Israeli cinema at any length, not only for this reason, but also because few, if any, Israeli films have garnered the same international

¹² For an excellent list of films by Palestinian filmmakers, see the filmography included in Dabashi’s *Dreams of a Nation*; it is the most complete list uncovered during my research.

¹³ The thirty-year mark is significant, as it points to the Michel Khleifi’s *Fertile Memory* (1980), which was the first feature film to be shot entirely in the West Bank during the occupation. Khleifi is thus considered the founder of contemporary Palestinian cinema, as referenced by Hamid Dabashi in *Dreams of a Nation*, page 19.

acclaim and criticism as the Palestinian films examined in this study. As well, Israeli cinema offers itself as yet another “Other” in the question of Palestinian cinema; by adding to the already complicated question of defining Palestinian cinema, we are simply straying away from the essential question of competing international narratives, as told by internationally recognized recent Palestinian films.

This brings us back to the earlier question of What is a Palestinian cinema? Merely asking this question, we are assuming perhaps an unproblematic conclusion. The reality we face is that a Palestinian cinema cannot exist outside of the current Palestinian project. This cinema exists inextricably within the interstitial spaces between homeland, exile, diaspora, and alienation. It reflects not one, but many identities, while continuing to represent a single ideal.

This single ideal, perhaps best summarized as the struggle for nationhood, faces insurmountable odds internationally. The narrative for historic Palestine has already been written, as is the case with most histories, by the victors in the struggle for domination of the land.¹⁴ This thesis, as stated earlier, is interested in the struggle against this dominant version of history. This cinematic Intifada is one that is being waged globally, at film festivals and awards ceremonies, in art-house cinemas and in major video retailers. As I have indicated, I am not interested in all films which challenge the dominant Zionist narrative, but specifically those which have been recognized internationally. While there are many films which should have been recognized for their efforts in this cause, I believe that those films, which have received wider attention, are waging their struggle within the same sphere of perceptibility. That is to say that the dominant Zionist

¹⁴ For more on the writing of histories, see Howard Zinn's *The Use and Abuse of History*.

narrative exists and is recognized outside of the State of Israel. Therefore, a challenge to that narrative, which exists outside of historic Palestine, possesses a greater chance of being seen and possibly recognized as legitimate opposition to the dominant norm.

While my approach for this topic is primarily narrative focused, I will also examine how certain imagery is used to reinforce certain cultural specificities. In the case of Palestinian cinema, and particularly this study, a narrative approach is not only acceptable, it is warranted. In the field of Film Studies, this approach is not often weighed favorably, especially since the rise of postmodern theory in the readings of films. Yet this cinema, as I stated above, is one that is struggling with the issue of nationhood. Its nation has been deprived of opportunities to speak that narrative on a global scale. While the conflict rages on across various media platforms, the Palestinian narrative remains trapped beneath other narratives and the powers which propagate them. Postmodernity is primarily focused on the deconstruction or fluidity of identities. To attempt a postmodern reading of a cinema, which at its heart is about building an identity, would be to ignore what I see as one of the goals of these films and other Palestinian films in recent years – that is the reestablishment of a national narrative that has been suppressed for nearly a century. As well, the methodological approaches of Western film studies, in relation to non-Western cinemas, often risk assuming a colonial perspective. We cannot, even momentarily, assume that those theories which are applicable to one cinema can, or should, be evenly applied to another. Ella Shohat's work, particularly in her article "Gender and Culture of Empire," demonstrates how such approaches fail to achieve the desired effect. She carries forth this notion onto her work on Israeli cinema, continuing to deal with notions of the colonial vs. the colonized, as well as the image of "the Other."

While this volume of work proves helpful in understanding certain aspects of Palestinian cinema, my particular focus is geared towards other issues. While a return to these commonalities may prove useful in the future, my current study of the narratives of three films by the aforementioned filmmakers, within the limits of this thesis, must remain faithful to the specific task at hand.

Before addressing the films and the challenges they put forth, we must first define the dominant Zionist narrative. In doing so, I turn to the official historical narrative expressed by Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first step in outlining this history is the chronology of the modern State of Israel, which can be found both on the ministry's website and in the appendices attached to this thesis.¹⁵ While some would argue that the history of Israel could be traced back to ancient times, this thesis recognizes that the notion of nation-states is a modern concept. The Israeli-Palestinian quagmire is thus a modern conflict that is the result of rising national aspirations of two groups of people with historical ties to a single territory. For centuries, under Ottoman rule, Jews and Arabs lived in relative peace and territorial struggles between the two peoples were limited at best. It is modern European thinking, particularly in relation to nation-states, that influences the birth of Zionism, and therefore it is this moment that I have chosen as the starting point for the official history of the State of Israel, or the dominant Zionist narrative.

¹⁵ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "Facts About Israel: History"; (1 October 2006) Available from <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/History/Facts+About+Israel+-+History.htm>; accessed 10 March 2007.

I. The History of the State of Israel

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs offers a number of chronologies, some dating as early as the seventeenth century Before the Common Era (B.C.E.). The modern chronologies tend to start in the late 19th Century, either in the 1860s or the 1870s. This period is known as “The Forerunners of Zionism,” and referred to the Hibbat Zion movement that advocated a return to Zion and the “restoration of national life in Palestine.”¹⁶ The pre-Zionist era culminates with Theodor Herzl’s publishing of *Der Judenstaat* (*The Jewish State* or, according to some translations, *The State of the Jews*, 1896), in which he “declared that the Jews could gain acceptance in the world only if they ceased being a national anomaly [and through] the establishment of a Jewish state with the consent of the great powers.”¹⁷ This writing would be among the various collections of Zionist ideologies that inspired European Jewry to immigrate (in waves called Aliya) to the territory then referred to as Palestine. The First Aliya, composed mainly of Russian Jews, lasted from 1882-1903. Facilitating this process was the Zionist Organization, founded in 1897 at the first Zionist Congress. Successive Zionist Congresses would gather to discuss issues relating to the “social, cultural, economic and political revival of Jewish life.”¹⁸

The European Jews were not met with open arms. The ruling Ottoman administration was “hostile and oppressive” and the land was unfit for farming as “the

¹⁶ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Lexicon of Zionism”; (22 September 2003) Available from <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern%20History/Centenary%20of%20Zionism/Lexicon%20of%20Zionism>; accessed 10 March 2007.

¹⁷ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Binyamin Ze’ev Herzl: Father of Zionism”; (29 October 2002) Available from <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern%20History/Centenary%20of%20Zionism/Binyamin%20Ze-ev%20Herzl-%20Father%20of%20Zionism>; accessed 10 March 2007.

¹⁸ Ruth Ben-Haim, ed., *Facts About Israel* (Jerusalem: Ahva Press, 2003) 22.

soil had suffered from centuries of neglect.”¹⁹ The Jewish National Fund is founded at the Fifth Zionist Congress with the planned purpose of purchasing land. The Second Aliya, consisting of Polish and Russian immigrants, lasts from 1904 to 1914. This wave sees the continued growth of agricultural settlements. At the Eighth Zionist Congress (1907), the decision to politicize Zionism through “international efforts to obtain a charter for the Jews in Palestine” is made.²⁰ By the start of World War I in 1914, the Jewish population in Palestine was 85,000.²¹ From this population would emerge three Jewish battalions that would aid the British in their conquest of the Ottoman Empire. Following the war, the area would be delegated to British rule and renamed the “Mandate of Palestine.” The British administration would entrust the affairs of the Jews and Arabs to their respective populations, leading to the founding of the Jewish Agency in 1922.

Leading up to this, however, was strong opposition by the Arab population. This would lead to riots and harassment, and “unprovoked attacks [that were] launched against the Jewish population.”²² This violence would lead the British to the conclusion that the Mandate of Palestine should be partitioned into two separate territories – a plan the Jewish leadership accepted and which the Arab population was “uncompromisingly against.”²³ In 1939, two years after the proposed partition plan, the British government issued a “White Paper” whose aim was to impose limits on Jewish immigration. With the start of World War II it was the decision of David Ben-Gurion, then chairman of the

¹⁹ Ibid., 23.

²⁰ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Zionism – Timeline of Events.”; (October 29, 2002) Available from <http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Centenary+of+Zionism/ZIONISM+-Timeline+of+Events.htm>; accessed 10 March 2007.

²¹ Ben-Haim, 23.

²² Ibid., 28.

²³ Ibid.

Jewish Agency executive, to ignore the White Paper in order to provide a safe haven for persecuted European Jews.²⁴

Britain, facing a growing dilemma in the region as a result of the two factions' conflicting goals, opts to leave the "Question of Palestine" in the hands of the newly formed United Nations in 1947. Their decision, following the British proposal, was to partition the land into two states. According to the Israeli Foreign Ministry's publicly distributed material, the Jewish community accepted the plan while the Arabs rejected it. This would lead local Arab fighters to revolt and launch attacks on Jewish communities. In the ensuing battles, "Jewish defense organizations routed most of the attacking forces" and took control of the planned Jewish territory; the Arab population, under the instruction of the Arab states, was told to temporarily flee their homes and return once the Arabs had achieved victory.²⁵ The Jewish population, then numbering 650,000, declared the territory "Israel" and was subsequently attacked by neighboring Arab countries.²⁶ The "poorly equipped" Israeli Defense Force (IDF) would stave off the invading armies over fifteen months of fighting. Jerusalem would be divided between Israel (western and southern parts) and Jordan (Old City and eastern part). Negotiations with the United Nations would lead to the separation (from Israeli rule) of Judea, Samaria and Gaza. Egypt would be responsible for the administration of Gaza while Jordan would rule over Judea and Samaria. The ensuing armistice would last until 1956, when the Sinai Campaign would be launched. The Foreign Ministry website provides the following account:

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "The Middle East Refugees – Jan-92"; (27 January 1992) Available from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Archive/Peace%20Process/1992/THE%20MIDDLE%20EAST%20REFUGEES%20-%20Jan-92>; accessed 10 March 2007.

²⁶ Ibid., 31.

1956 – [The] Sinai Campaign is launched by Israel, Great Britain and France after terrorist incursions, an Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran and the signing of a tripartite military alliance by Egypt, Jordan and Syria; in the course of the fighting, Israel captures the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai peninsula.²⁷

Following the Sinai Campaign, Israel’s industrial sector would grow considerably, while its agricultural industry would also see vast improvement. It gained prominence in international politics, as it fostered relationships with the United States, the British Commonwealth countries and Europe.²⁸ This second decade of prosperity would culminate with the Six-Day War in 1967.

This war would begin with the buildup of Arab armies on all the fronts surrounding Israel – the Syrians to the North, the Egyptians to the South, and the Jordanians to the East. Facing possible destruction, Israel “invoked its inherent right of self-defense, launching a preemptive strike” on the armies surrounding it. After six days, Israel would occupy new territories, including Judea and Samaria, Gaza, the Sinai peninsula, and the Golan Heights. Most importantly Jerusalem, having been wrested from Jordanian rule, was now under Israeli control.

The period following the 1967 war would see a rise in Palestinian and Arab terrorism, spearheaded by the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO), which was formed in 1964.²⁹ The PLO would serve as the umbrella group for other organizations that would carry out various attacks against Israeli targets during the 1970s and the 1980s. Among these was the “murder of the Israeli athletes at the Munich Olympics in

²⁷ “Zionism – Timeline of Events.”

²⁸ Ben-Haim, 38.

²⁹ Ibid., 41.

1972.”³⁰ The PLO’s major infrastructures, located in Lebanon, would be removed by Israel in “Operation Peace for Galilee” in 1982. After years of negotiations, specifically “intensive behind-the-scenes contacts in Oslo,” the Declaration of Principles was created in 1993.³¹ This document was the foundation for Palestinian self-governance in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria), and the Gaza Strip. The PLO was recognized by Israel as the legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. The peace agreement would be marred by suicide bomb attacks in 1996 and would not resume in earnest until 1999. In 2000, the Camp David talks ended without any agreement, and were followed by a Palestinian-initiated “campaign of indiscriminate terror and violence.”³² Negotiations towards peace have failed since due to “the ongoing and escalating Palestinian terrorism supported by the Palestinian Authority.”³³

According to the Israeli Foreign Ministry’s published materials, Israel faces “all forms of terrorism which threaten daily life.”³⁴ It is therefore the task of the IDF to ensure “security in the West Bank and Gaza Strip.”³⁵ These territories, however, are considered “disputed,” not “occupied,” and therefore Israel has rights within them that are “deliberately disregarded” by the Palestinians.³⁶ The Israeli Foreign Ministry does not consider “occupation illegal” and it states that it “does not violate international law.”³⁷ It refutes the claims that Palestinian terrorism is a response to the “occupation”

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., 44.

³² Ibid., 46.

³³ Ibid.

³⁴ Ibid. 74.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Disputed Territories – Forgotten Facts About the West Bank and Gaza Strip”; (1 February 2003) Available from http://www.mfa.gov.il/mfa/mfaarchive/2000_2009/2003/2/disputed%20territories-%20forgotten%20facts%20about%20the%20west; accessed 10 March 2007.

³⁷ Ibid.

by indicating that the PLO was formed in 1964, three years before the start of the 1967 war.³⁸ As well, the Ministry states that violence against Israel is “fostered by the hatred of Israel, and nurtured by incessant incitement from Palestinian officials and religious leaders.”³⁹ This statement is accentuated by stating that:

It should be remembered that Palestinian terrorism predates Israel's presence in the territories. Not only were there endless terrorist attacks on Israeli civilians during the two decades that preceded the Six Day War, they even occurred prior to the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel.⁴⁰

The continued presence of the IDF in the West Bank and along Gaza's borders is thusly justified. As long as terrorism threatens the State of Israel, security through military means seems inevitable.

The history of Zionism, as stated by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, presents a narrative that acts as the basis for a national identity. Accepted internationally, this identity presents the State of Israel as “unprovoked victim of Arab aggression”; yet upon closer scrutiny, according to scholar Norman Finkelstein, “the Israeli narrative does not . . . withstand closer scrutiny.”⁴¹ The following section will examine the objections to the dominant Zionist narrative by various scholars. Palestinian filmmakers often reflect the objections made by these scholars' arguments. While there exists a large body of literature concerning the refuting of this narrative, I will only explore those specific arguments that exist in relation to the history as I outlined above. My goal is to present a scholarly basis for the arguments made by filmmakers who, much like the Israeli Foreign

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Norman G. Finkelstein, *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestine Conflict* (London: Verso, 2003) 2.

Ministry, are interested in providing their own historical narrative. My goal is *not*, however, to determine the validity of either claim.

II. Objections to the Dominant Zionist Narrative

In accordance with the methodology I chose for the outlining of the dominant Zionist narrative above, I will begin this section in the 19th Century, where many scholars locate the emergence of Zionist thinking. Zionism, as mentioned above, would emerge out of religious thinking. Located in the writings of Rabbis Yehudah Alkalai and Zeev Hirsch Kalisher, the early form of Zionist thinking advocated colonial settlement in the Holy Land. Alkalai's published works would have limited influence during the period in which they appeared, yet they would serve to influence the political aspect of the movement in later decades.⁴² Kalisher's writings emerge in the 1860s and their content, like Alkalai's, would support the return to Zion based on religious thinking. During the same decade, however, Moses Hess would publish *Rome and Jerusalem: The Last Nationality Question* which would lead to the eventual acknowledgment of Hess as the first prophet of political Zionism.⁴³ Yet it would remain Herzl who would be remembered for his writings on Zionism.

Early political Zionist writings rarely recognized the existence of the native Palestinian population. In fact, any such recognition would have complicated the pioneering image of early colonial Zionism. One could effectively question the role of such a pioneer on an already inhabited land. When the Palestinians were recognized,

⁴² Fouzi El-Asmar, *Through the Hebrew Looking-Glass: Arab Stereotypes in Children's Literature* (London: Zed Books, 1986) 11.

⁴³ Ibid., 16.

they were seen not only as obstacles to the formation of an exclusively Jewish nation, but also characterized as cultural inferiors. As Herzl states in his diaries, the role of the Zionist colonial is to “bring cleanliness, order, and the well-distilled customs of the Occident to this plague-ridden, blighted corner of the Orient.”⁴⁴ As such, one of the primary myths underlying the formation of the Israeli state is that it would be a harbinger of European civilization and progress to a backwards and uncivilized population.

The Palestinians were also characterized as belonging to a lower economic class, while the Zionist colonials imagined themselves as benevolent aristocrats. Herzl, again in his diaries, discusses the need to “spirit the penniless population across the border” and “denying it any employment in our own country.”⁴⁵ What is demonstrated here is not only the portrayal of the native population as economic inferiors, but also the discriminatory practices that will become part of the future Jewish state.

This erasure of the Palestinian identity by early Zionist writers would become more problematic once the Israeli colonies grew in numbers. As the population of European Jews in Palestine grew, and in accordance with the policies regarding employment mentioned above, the native population became increasingly disgruntled. The Arab opposition, characterized by the dominant Zionist narrative as being “unprovoked,” would begin in earnest in the early 1900s when the nationalist paper, *Filastin* (Palestine), would carry a letter by Arif al-Arif (who would later become mayor of Jerusalem), in which he stated his concern that the Zionists would take over Palestine.⁴⁶ The rise of European Jewish immigration to the territory led to a rise in Arab

⁴⁴ Theodor Herzl, *Complete Diaries*, Volume 1 (New York: Herzl P., 1960) 343.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 88.

⁴⁶ Clifford A. Wright, *Facts and Fables* (London: Kegan Paul International, 1989) 36.

unemployment, which, compounded with the fear of territorial loss, led to increased tensions between the two peoples. The culminating clashes would result in death and injury on both sides, and lead to the formal and public establishment of the Jewish paramilitary organization, *Hashomer* (the guardian).⁴⁷ These armed settlers would defend land that had recently housed Palestinian farmers, but was sold by absentee landlords, as well as guard newly formed settlements on similar land. In either case, Palestinians were witnessing the disappearance of rights to their lands.

Armed resistance by Palestinian peasants would encourage opposition to Zionism among the urban elite as well.⁴⁸ This ongoing backlash would lead to a general strike in 1936, which in turn would result in the Arab revolt. As such, it is evident that early attacks on Jewish settlements were not “unprovoked” as the dominant narrative would have people believe, but rather a natural response by a peasant population whose very way of life was under attack by colonial expansionism. The British, who at the time still controlled the Mandate of Palestine, would suppress the revolt.

Tensions would remain high until the U.N. Partition Plan in 1947. While it is true that the Palestinians rejected the partition, the reality is that they were standing behind a position that they had held since 1918 – namely, that they opposed dividing their territory with European colonizers.⁴⁹ Therefore, they chose to *boycott* the discussions with the U.N.; an act that would be read, however rightly or wrongly, as rejection of the partition plan. The Zionist organizations, conversely, did attend the meetings and used their

⁴⁷ Rashid Khalidi, “Palestinian Peasant Resistance to Zionism Before World War I,” in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 1998) 219.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 227.

⁴⁹ Ilan Pappe, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2007) 32.

diplomatic preparedness to their advantage.⁵⁰ The final U.N. resolution (Resolution 181) divided the land in such a way that there would be “400 Palestinian villages within the designated Jewish state.”⁵¹ David Ben-Gurion who, at the time, led an unofficial group named the “Consultancy” would commandeer the Jewish response to this. Israeli historian Ilan Pappe best describes an account of their actions:

The Consultancy. . .was a combination of security figures and specialists on ‘Arab affairs’. . .[whose thinking] evolved until it devised a final plan for the dispossession of one million Palestinians, no matter where they happened to be in the country.⁵²

The Consultancy would be the major Zionist decision maker regarding Resolution 181, which went into effect in November of 1947. According to Pappe,

[T]he ethnic cleansing of Palestine began in early December 1947 with a series of Jewish attacks on Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods in retaliation for the buses and shopping centres that had been vandalized in the Palestinian protest against the UN resolution during the first few days after its adoption.⁵³

The Zionist plan was executed efficiently; by May 1948, when Israel declared its independence, nearly 300,000 Palestinians had fled the land.⁵⁴ The reported Arab instructions telling the Palestinians to flee have been examined by Christopher Hitchens, who produces significant arguments against the existence of such a mandate.⁵⁵ The “invading Arab armies” of the dominant Zionist narrative were not, in reality, as powerful as Israeli history would have the world believe. They comprised three main

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid., 34.

⁵² Ibid., 38.

⁵³ Ibid., 40.

⁵⁴ Noam Chomsky, *Fateful Triangle: The United States, Israel & The Palestinians* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1999) 96.

⁵⁵ Christopher Hitchens, “Broadcasts,” in *Blaming the Victims*, 73-83.

legions – the Syrian troops, the Egyptian troops, and the Jordanian troops which numbered some Iraqi troops in their battalions. These armies found themselves short on supplies early on, whereas the Zionist brigades were being supplied arms by the Eastern bloc of the Soviet Union.⁵⁶ In addition, the Jordanian troops were under orders, in part due to talks between Jordan and the Zionist leadership, to limit their fighting to the protection of the Arab territories under the U.N. plan, which Jordan hoped to annex.⁵⁷ This interpretation of the events surrounding Israel's 1948 War of Independence presents a more complex image than that put forth by the dominant narrative. In this version, the Palestinians are seen as the victims of colonial aggression, a fact emphasized throughout the ongoing struggle by Palestinians for recognition, and by the name given to this event – *Nakba* (catastrophe). Israel is seen as a violator of human rights, and the Arab states are shown as either weaker than Israel or as collaborators with it.⁵⁸

The official Israeli narrative is further undermined by scholars in their examination of the later wars with the Arab states. Noam Chomsky indicates that after the 1949 armistice, Israel continued its policy of Arab expulsion, which he considers the basis for the “terrorist incursions” mentioned earlier in the Zionist narrative in regards to the 1956 war.⁵⁹ The consensus among numerous scholars and historians is that Israel had been planning a strike on Egypt for nearly a year prior to the actual war, and that Egyptian President Gamal Abdel-Nasser’s nationalization of the Suez Canal would serve

⁵⁶ Pappe, 129. Pappe also notes here that the main suppliers of the Arab armies, the French and the British, had placed an arms embargo on Palestine.

⁵⁷ Ibid., 119.

⁵⁸ It should be noted that the term “collaborator” is specifically used within the political context to refer to those individuals who cooperate with the occupying forces, thereby committing treason against their own nation.

⁵⁹ Chomsky, 101.

as the pretext for the execution of those plans.⁶⁰ A similar situation would arise in 1967. The official Zionist narrative is adamant that the Egyptian army was preparing for war, as were the other Arab nations. Yet once again, historians point to specific indicators that this narrative is simply supporting a myth. The most incriminating piece of evidence that the narrative is false lies in a speech given by former Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin in 1982. Chomsky, Norman Finkelstein, and Clifford Wright all reference the text of that speech, reprinted in the Jerusalem Post, in their examinations of the 1967 war. The reference they point to reads as follows:

In June 1967, we again had a choice. The Egyptian Army concentrations in the Sinai approaches do not prove that Nasser was really about to attack us. We must be honest with ourselves. We decided to attack him.⁶¹

This particular war would lead to the current occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip (henceforth referred to as the “Occupied Territories”). It is true, in accordance with the Zionist narrative’s claims, that occupation is not illegal under international law. It fails to mention, however, that the *manner* in which this occupation is carried out violates numerous international laws. Chief among these is the settlement of Israeli citizens on Palestinian land, which serves to “disrupt the continuity” of Arab settlement and serve as a pretext for later land negotiations.⁶² These settlements, along with the military apparatus, which serves to protect them, form the basis of the current occupation of Palestine. It should be remembered that the Zionist narrative points to 1967 as the start of the occupation, while it might actually be argued that the occupation of Palestine began with the First Aliya as early as 1882.

⁶⁰ For more on this, with references, see Wright’s *Facts & Fables*, 125-129.

⁶¹ Menachim Begin, “Address By Prime Minister Begin at the National Defense College, 8 August 1982,” reprinted in *Jerusalem Post* 20 August 1982: 16.

⁶² Chomsky, 104.

A solution to the ongoing conflict seemed to emerge with the Oslo Accords in 1993, yet the critics of Oslo emphasize that this agreement favored Israel far more than it did the Palestinians; the Israelis continued their military occupation, under the guise of security needs.⁶³ Former American President Jimmy Carter recalls a journey he made to the Occupied Territories in 1996:

When we arrived there in January 1996, it was obvious that the Israelis had almost complete control over every aspect of political, military, and economic existence of the Palestinians within the West Bank and Gaza. Israeli settlements permeated the occupied territories...[and] more than one hundred permanent Israeli checkpoints obstructed the routes still open to Palestinian traffic....⁶⁴

Carter was in the region for the purpose of monitoring the Palestinian election. Shortly thereafter, in March of 1996, two suicide attacks against Israeli civilians would be carried out; an act which Carter believes led to the victory of “hawkish” Israeli leader Binyamin Netanyahu who “promised never to exchange land for peace.”⁶⁵ The deteriorating situation under successive hawkish governments would lead to the Second Intifada in September of 2000, which itself became the catalyst for the tightening of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Currently the situation remains highly volatile. The Israeli occupation continues to exist in many forms: “border closures, abuse at checkpoints, house demolitions, the assassination of military and political activists, mass arrests and the [continued building] of a wall separating the territories of the West Bank from Israeli territories.”⁶⁶ The IDF has moved settlers out of Gaza yet continues to control its borders

⁶³ Ibid., 541.

⁶⁴ Jimmy Carter, *Palestine: Peace Not Apartheid* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2006) 141.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 147.

⁶⁶ Ilan Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006) 278.

and airspace, effectively making it an open-air prison. Uprisings, both physical and artistic, are commonplace.

III. A Cinema of Resistance

While this thesis is not aimed at studying the wealth of films that can be considered Palestinian, it is worth mentioning that Palestinian cinema, as well as Arab cinema as a whole, is undergoing what many scholars are referring to as a ‘New Wave.’⁶⁷ Since perhaps the early 1990s, Palestinian and Arab filmmakers have infused their films with a greater international cinematic awareness, and yet have managed to maintain both regional and cultural specificities in their films. That is to say that while a Palestinian filmmaker may demonstrate techniques familiar to European art-house audiences, the film nevertheless remains rooted in both the culture and the history of its origins.

Earlier Palestinian films were also restricted by severe Israeli censorship laws, which left the production of films dealing with Palestine to other Arab countries. While it may be argued that the recent political climate offers fewer solutions, it is safe to say that today’s Palestinian cinema faces fewer objections at the level of filmmaking. Yousry Nasrallah’s recent film *Gate of the Sun* (2004) deals with the *Nakba* visually; this would not have been permitted under Israeli military rule. Similarly, Michel Khleifi and Eyal Sivan’s *Route 181* (2004) also deals with the *Nakba* and was shot in the Occupied Territories. Distribution, however, remains problematic for this revolutionary cinema. This is most evident in the case of *Divine Intervention*, as we shall see further in.

⁶⁷ For more on the ‘New Wave,’ readers should visit the various essays compiled in *Dreams of a Nation* and the works of Malek Khouri who examines Arab Cinema as a whole.

There are other forms of cultural production (such as graffiti, song, and poetry) that are distinctly Palestinian that are instrumental in the struggle for nationhood. While I am aware of these many modes of production, I have chosen a particular set of films, which I feel have made an impact on the international scene. Elia Suleiman's *Divine Intervention* (2002), Hany Abu-Assad's *Paradise Now* (2005) and Saverio Costanzo's *Private* (2004) have all received international critical acclaim in recent years.

Additionally, or perhaps consequently, they have received criticism from particular circles. These recent Palestinian films, in the words of Joseph Massad, "are deployed in an important battle of images with the Zionist-friendly international media covering the Israeli occupation."⁶⁸ That is to say that in presenting certain images, particularly ones which counter those forwarded by the dominant Zionist narrative, Palestinian cinema engages the struggle for the Palestinian narrative within the cultural domain. The following chapters will serve as case studies for each of the aforementioned films. I examine how each film deals with particular Zionist myths, and the method through which it does so. The cinematic medium allows for both dialogue and image to coexist within the same text, yet artistic preference can often foreground one over the other. As we shall see, the three films that I consider for this study vary in their approaches, yet

⁶⁸ Joseph Massad, "The Weapon of Culture: Cinema in the Palestinian Liberation Struggle," in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (London: Verso, 2006), 36. The term "Zionist-friendly media" should be understood as more than simply a perception by non-Zionists. For more on the strategies employed by pro-Zionist lobby groups and their use in conjunction with various American media outlets, see the Media Education Foundation documentary *Peace, Propaganda & the Promised Land* (Sut Jhally and Bathsheba Ratzkoff, 2004). For mention of the strategies employed by CanWest Global, see Sean Condon's "The Death of Canadian Journalism," in *Adbusters* #73, Aug-Sep 2007. In this piece, he references CanWest's practice of replacing the term Palestinian "militant" with "terrorist" in newswire copy. Other examples include CNN.com's history of the conflict, particularly the section on the U.N. Partition (available at <http://www.cnn.com/SPECIALS/2001/mideast/stories/timeline/partition.html>, Accessed August 20, 2007) which recontextualizes the myth that the Arabs rejected the partition in terms of anti-Semitic policy. U.S. News & World Report's regular articles by Arab neo-con writer Fouad Ajami also serve as examples of how certain media outlets employ pro-Zionist viewpoints.

they share the common trait of representing the struggles of the Palestinian people and their narrative in an international cultural sphere.

CHAPTER ONE – DIVINE INTERVENTION

Attempting to locate new trends in the larger concept of Palestinian cinema would be considerably problematic without the examination of the films of Elia Suleiman.

Divine Intervention and *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), both representing the director's most mature work, also represent different periods in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. As Suleiman stated in an interview, “*Chronicle of a Disappearance* was a document about the time that I shot it. For me it was the silence before the storm. This one [*Divine Intervention*], which also follows some of the same individuals, shows all hell breaking loose.”⁶⁹

This “breaking loose” that he refers to can be read as a reflection of the atmosphere in the region after the Second Intifada, which began in September of 2000. This uprising, sparked by the visit of then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, marked the definitive end of the Oslo peace process. It signaled a time of increasing despair for the Palestinian people, as their hopes for a sovereign nation grew increasingly slimmer, while the Israeli population suffered growing anxieties in the face of increased attacks. The vicious circle of violence was covered widely by the international media, which developed its own opinionated language to describe the events.

This language, used by what Joseph Massad refers to as “Zionist-friendly international media,” utilizes both words and images, which often reflect the myths described earlier. The lack of pro-Palestinian media often serves as a catalyst for artists

⁶⁹ Steve Erickson, “A Breakdown of Communication: Elia Suleiman Talks About ‘Divine Intervention’”; (15 January 2003) available from http://www.indiewire.com/people/people_030115elia.html; quoted in Hamid Dabashi, “In Praise of Frivolity: On the Cinema of Elia Suleiman,” in *Dreams of a Nation: On Palestinian Cinema*, ed. Hamid Dabashi (London: Verso, 2006) 149.

to expose aspects of the political struggle otherwise unavailable to international audiences. The difficulty for many of these artists lies in the distribution of such works. For artists living in the Occupied Territories proper, movement is limited and infrastructures which support Palestinian artists are often opposed by the Israeli occupation.⁷⁰

Suleiman's cinema, like the efforts of the Second Intifada fighters, is more visceral than earlier cinemas. Although considered "art cinema" by numerous critics, and perhaps rightfully so, the images within this carefully crafted form of political expression remain highly controversial, and may seem to be acting offensively rather than defensively. This chapter will primarily focus on Suleiman's *Divine Intervention*, with references to *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, and their use of controversial imagery and scenarios to deliver a political message – one which counters that forwarded by the dominant Zionist narrative.

Suleiman's cinema operates in a non-narrative manner, using loosely connected "tableaux," each occasionally acting on its own while others serve as segues. His approach to filmmaking was highly influenced by European filmmakers. With little access to filmmaking instruction under the occupation, Suleiman turned to theoretical books on filmmaking and read numerous interviews with Godard, Bresson, and Antonioni.⁷¹ This research, according to Suleiman, would later influence his first film, *Introduction to the End of an Argument* (1990). Suleiman realized that "there was

⁷⁰ The night before the premier of *Divine Intervention* in Ramallah, IDF soldiers broke into and vandalized the theater in which the premier was set to take place. See Dabashi, "In Praise of Frivolity: On the Cinema of Elia Suleiman," for more on this.

⁷¹ Elia Suleiman, personal interview with Hamid Dabashi, New York, October 2002; quoted in Dabashi, "In Praise of Frivolity: On the Cinema of Elia Suleiman"; 149.

another way of telling” and the resulting film was “a counter-attack,” particularly against the portrayal of Palestinians in mass media.⁷²

Suleiman’s films “insist on the visual register as the primary mechanism for expression, relegating verbal discourse to secondary status.”⁷³ This reliance on the function of images in producing a counter-narrative is heavily rooted in symbolic language. Rather than simply using a didactic approach, he uses a variety of symbols and symbolic motifs. In doing so, his cinema then becomes one that can be interpreted in many ways, by many audiences. According to Suleiman, a spectator from Los Angeles was able to relate to *Divine Intervention*, saying that the Nazareth portrayed in his film reminded her of home.⁷⁴ Suleiman attributes this to a certain level of “universality” in his film; while Los Angeles is not under military occupation, he feels the world is being “globally occupied” and that cities like Los Angeles have “illusionary checkpoints.”⁷⁵ As such, a viewer in a North American city can relate, on some level, to some of the themes presented in *Divine Intervention*.

This flexibility in interpretation can obviously be problematic for filmic analysis, as the personal biases of the viewer will certainly bear on the examination. Yet Suleiman suggests that this trait of his cinema leads to a more global appeal in terms of audience reception.⁷⁶ With this in mind, the approach I use in examining Suleiman’s films is similar to that taken by Tim Jon Semmerling in his book *Israeli and Palestinian Postcards: Presentations of National Self*. One of the methods Semmerling uses in

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Massad, 38.

⁷⁴ Jason Wood, “A Quick Chat with Elia Suleiman”; (17 January 2006) available from http://www.kamera.co.uk/interviews/elia_suleiman.html; accessed 12 April 2007.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Ibid.

examining the visual medium of postcards is based on the anthropological approach to identifying and reading cultural symbols, particularly as outlined by Sherry Ortner in her essay “On Key Symbols.”

In order to understand how and why this anthropological approach is applicable to Suleiman’s films, I will first examine the fundamentals behind it. For Ortner, as well as other anthropologists, cultures contain elements within them that are “crucial to [their] distinctive organization.”⁷⁷ These elements, or *key symbols*, not only serve to convey essential meanings pertaining to the culture, but also to *function* in a particular way, which reinforces those meanings.

Ortner defines two approaches used by anthropologists in working with key symbols: the first is to search for underlying elements within a culture, and then seek out those symbols which seem to represent them. The most easily recognizable issue with this approach, and hence perhaps why it is less commonly used, is that it relies heavily on the judgment of the observer and could thus lead to an ethnocentrically biased reading of the culture. The second approach, which Ortner claims is more frequently used, involves the identification of “an object of cultural meaning, and analyzes it for its meanings.”⁷⁸

While the second approach continues to rely on the subjectivity of the observer, there are certain indicators which inform this method of identification – the following of which are outlined in the article: the natives inform us that X is culturally important; that the natives are either positively or negatively aroused by X; that X appears in many contexts or symbolic domains; that there is greater cultural elaboration surrounding X;

⁷⁷ Sherry B. Ortner, “On Key Symbols,” *American Anthropologist* 75, no. 5 (October 1973): 1338.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 1339.

and/or that there are greater restrictions surrounding X.⁷⁹ The other major indicator that a symbol is key is that it appears in the public system. It is in the public system that “natives themselves discover, rediscover, and transform their own culture.”⁸⁰

These symbols are then broken down into two major subdivisions: *summarizing* and *elaborating* symbols. Summarizing symbols are encompassing – they collapse multiple ideas and feelings concerning the system into a single symbol. Quite often, this symbol enters the realm of the sacred. An example of this may be a nation’s flag, which can be seen to summarize emotions (patriotism) and ideas (political systems such as democracy or Communism) under one banner. In essence, they “compound and synthesize a complex system of ideas...under a unitary form which...‘stands for’ the system as a whole.”⁸¹ A flag is thus an obvious choice for an observer to examine as, quite often, it is a symbol that is both locally and internationally recognized. The Palestinian flag is a symbol that I will return to numerous times in the analysis of not only Suleiman’s films, but those of others as well.

The second category, elaborating symbols, are more specific and thus function to “sort out complex and undifferentiated feelings and ideas.”⁸² As opposed to many summarizing symbols, these symbols are rarely seen to be sacred yet their importance to the culture lies in their recurrence throughout the symbolic system. Ortner sees the elaborating power of these symbols operating in two modes – *conceptual* elaborating power and *action* elaborating power. Those that function conceptually are often “static formal images, serving metaphor functions for thought” while the other describes

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid.

⁸¹ Ibid., 1340.

⁸² Ibid.

“dramatic, phased action sequences serving scenario functions for action.”⁸³ She labels the former “root metaphors” and the latter “key scenarios”.

A brief explication of the difference between these two terms is as follows: root metaphors help an individual to “conceptualize the interrelations among phenomena by analogy to the interrelations among [its] parts,” while key scenarios help foster key cultural strategies by formulating “the culture’s basic means-ends relationships in actable forms.”⁸⁴ Key scenarios may include not only rituals, but their individual elements as well, insofar as they emblemize the rituals themselves. These scenarios are important because they often depict strategies for culturally defined success. A familiar example of a key scenario, for a Judeo-Christian culture, would be the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (a symbol which appears in *Divine Intervention*, albeit in a curious manner). This event symbolizes the sacrifices made by an individual for an entire society and acts as a model for his followers. To society as a whole, it suggests that self-sacrifice for others is greater than individual needs or survival. While this scenario does not *literally* suggest that individuals must become martyrs on a regular basis, it evokes among Christians an understanding that no sacrifice is too great in their search for spiritual enlightenment.

The root metaphor associated with this key scenario would perhaps be the meaning of the death and resurrection of Christ as it pertains to Christian notions of forgiveness and salvation. The resurrection myth plays an important role in Christianity as it provides evidence of Jesus’ (and hence Christian) potential for life after death. While this event is viewed both as a root metaphor *and* as a key scenario, Ortner suggests that the boundaries between the two, as well as between summarizing and elaborating

⁸³ Ibid., 1342.

⁸⁴ Ibid., 1341.

symbols, can be blurred at times. This is fittingly demonstrated through a symbol such as the cross, which can stand for the religion as a whole or signify the key scenario of Christ's crucifixion. I will return to this particular symbol during my analysis of the climactic showdown in *Divine Intervention*.

The most obvious dilemma with a symbolic reading of cinema is that, not unlike Suleiman's films, it is open to a multitude of interpretations. While a study of Palestinian imagery could fill tomes, this thesis is less concerned with the identification and interpretation of Palestinian symbols, a task which has already been dealt with rather well in Semmerling's book. Rather, I am interested in the political function undertaken by these symbols in Suleiman's films. The use of Palestinian imagery in his films would suggest that indeed there is a political motivation informing the film. In exploring what imagery is used, and how, we can better determine the political function, particularly in relation to the dominant Zionist narrative.

For this task, I will look at a number of specific "scenarios" in *Divine Intervention*. First among these is a scene in which a Palestinian prisoner gives directions to a tourist. This scene uses the heavily coded image of the bound and blindfolded Palestinian prisoner in both a humorous and highly political manner. The second scene, in which the film's main character E.S. (played by Elia Suleiman himself) releases a balloon over an Israeli checkpoint, also supports the ideas found in the first. The final scene I will explore involves a female Palestinian revolutionary fighter, often referred to by critics as a *ninja*, in a tableau which incorporates the Palestinian flag, the image of geographical Palestine, the *kaffiyeh* (traditional Palestinian headdress), and both Islamic

and Christian religious motifs. Essentially, each of these scenes individually challenges one or more traditionally accepted notions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The scene involving the Palestinian prisoner begins with a long shot of an Israeli police van parked roadside at a three-way fork. A French tourist approaches the van and informs the officer that she is lost. She then says that she is trying to get to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is located in the Old City. The guard exits the van and takes alternating glances from her map to the various roads leading away from the intersections. He hands back her map and tells her to wait a moment, during which time he retrieves a blindfolded and handcuffed Palestinian prisoner from the holding area at the back of the van. The guard tells the prisoner to help the young lady if he can. The prisoner, upon hearing her request, gives her a multitude of options on how to get there. The irony is that he does so without removing his blindfolds or his handcuffs. The tourist goes on her way, and the prisoner is returned to the holding area.

This scene presents the viewer with an unflinching take on what is perceived by many to be a reality – that the colonizing power (represented by the police officer) is less aware of his historical surroundings than the “original” inhabitant of the land. This can be further read as an attack on the historical claim to the land as forwarded by Zionist colonizers within the dominant narrative. A closer look at the scene’s various elements will demonstrate this further. The foreign tourist asks the guard about a particular site in the Old City – the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. The significance of this church is twofold. First, it is a site that is of importance to numerous Christian denominations: Coptic and Greek Orthodoxy, Roman Catholics, and Syriac Coptic. These various groups, among others, believe the site covers the original tomb in which Jesus was

buried, and thus it remains a location linked historically to the first century. Secondly, the church itself was built in the fourth century, thus marking it as a historical site – one that the officials of the land should be able to recognize. The inability of the police officer to recognize the site demonstrates not only a lack of historical knowledge, it may also signify a level of disinterest, or perhaps even insensitivity, to the importance of the land to cultures other than his own. Such a conclusion could well stand on its own if the scene ended with the police officer’s ignorance. However the addition of the “blind” prisoner reveals another layer.

The prisoner that solves the tourist’s dilemma does so without any difficulty. At no point does the prisoner remove the blindfold to determine their current position in relation to the requested destination. The prisoner’s knowledge of the territorial layout of the city seems innate, rather than learned. The spectator may thus assume that this knowledge further substantiates the historical claim by Palestinians to the land. Furthermore, the soldier himself is aware that the prisoner in his custody has abilities which he does not. This is acknowledged when the soldier turns to the prisoner *first*, rather than asking his superiors (with whom he was earlier shown conversing on the police radio). While the viewer has no previous information regarding why the prisoner is being held, the fact that he is returned to the holding area after his helpfulness may indicate that his crime is simply his Palestinian-ness, which gives him an intrinsic territorial superiority to his captor. As such, he represents a threat to Zionist historical claims that the land was uninhabited and thus open for colonization.

In turning back to Ortner, we can demarcate the various elements of this scene within their larger narratives. The prisoner and the officer are both conceptually

elaborating symbols, or root metaphors. The Palestinian, within the dominant Zionist narrative, represents the foil to the colonizing spirit of the mythology. His existence alone serves to undermine the idea that the land was uninhabited. The officer represents the “legitimate” caretaker of the land, the officiating power that emerges from colonial expansion. In this particular scene, these metaphors maintain their meaning. It is in their use, however, that their function changes.

The role of an officer of the law is rarely questioned in official narratives – they are extensions of the governing power and thus have legal rights to exert their authority. The divergence here emerges from that particular power’s inability to *effectively* act as a representative of the colonial power. While the enabling agent of the dominant narrative is present, so too is the undermining element (the Palestinian) and thus the myth of an uninhabited land is compromised.

A later scene in *Divine Intervention* involves the flight of a red balloon, adorned with a caricature of the late Palestinian Authority leader Yasser Arafat’s face. The scene begins at an Israeli military checkpoint between Ramallah and Jerusalem. The red balloon emerges from the sunroof of one of the cars parked in the lot next to the checkpoint. The balloon slowly drifts towards the checkpoint where young Israeli Defense Force soldiers are busy checking the identification of passing motorists. One of the soldiers notices the balloon and notifies one of his fellow servicemen. The second soldier, using a pair of binoculars, obtains a closer look at the balloon, with the stylized image of Arafat smirking directly at him as it floats by. A third soldier, also using binoculars, acquires an even closer look at the same image. Feeling mocked, he reaches for his rifle in an effort to shoot down the balloon. At this point, the second soldier radios

their headquarters to ask what they should do about the balloon that is “trying to get through.” While all this is happening, E.S., who was responsible for dispatching the balloon, speeds through the checkpoint with his girlfriend, without having to show their ID cards.⁸⁵ The balloon continues its flight through the checkpoint, over olive groves, towards the old wall of Jerusalem, descending in front of the mosaic of the Church of all Nations, and finally coming to rest on the apex of the Dome of the Rock.

For those with knowledge of earlier French cinema, this scene will undoubtedly draw comparison to Albert Lamorisse’s film *Le Ballon Rouge* (*The Red Balloon*, 1956). In the film, a young Parisian boy finds a red balloon which seems to have a life of its own as it follows him throughout the city, to school, and his home before finally being destroyed by a group of bullies. The end of the film features all the balloons in Paris coming to the rescue of their “fallen brother” in a finale which features the balloons lifting the young boy high above Paris in a fanciful flight. While Suleiman does not deny the influence of European cinema on that of his own, he does insist that the initial inspiration for the red balloon came during a period in which there were “numerous gadgets produced with Palestinian symbols” on them.⁸⁶ At this time, he purchased a balloon with Arafat’s face on it. Whether or not Suleiman borrowed, or was influenced by *Le Ballon Rouge*, the sequence in *Divine Intervention* retains some fundamental differences from Lamorisse’s film. It is in these differences that we discover the political motivation of the scene.

Suleiman’s balloon, while acquiring a life of its own, is originally launched by E.S., who intends to use it as a distraction so that he and his lover can safely cross the

⁸⁵ While the main character is simply listed as E.S., his girlfriend (played by Manal Khader) is only listed as “The Woman” in the credits.

⁸⁶ Wood.

checkpoint. The fact that the balloon contains the unmistakable image of Arafat on it places it within the symbolic – it is codified and therefore assumes a function within the scene at large. This function is representative; that is to say that the balloon “stands for” something other than a balloon. In Lamorisse’s film, the plain red balloon can be read in numerous ways – a lonely child’s imaginary friend for instance – while the inclusion of the Arafat visage on Suleiman’s balloon serves to narrow the interpretation.

In addition to the physical properties of the balloon, its movement within the scene also serves to determine its function as a symbol. The balloon first crosses a checkpoint, and then looks back at the soldiers, as if to acknowledge its unlawful transgression. It then travels towards the Dome of the Rock, but not before Suleiman points out the various landmarks the balloon overlooks en route. It passes over groves of olive trees, which are often found in Palestinian poetry as symbols of Palestinian “connectedness” to the land.⁸⁷ The shadow it casts over the grove is quite large and dominating in relation to the balloon itself. As it makes its way towards the walls of the Old City, Suleiman cuts to a closer shot of the wall and we clearly see the balloon cross it. Its descent in front of the mural of the Church of All Nations further connects Arafat (and by extension Palestine and the Palestinians) to Christian traditions.⁸⁸ As such, the journey of the balloon almost seems equally significant to the location of its final resting place.

The flight of the balloon is perhaps the segment of the scene that bears most resemblance to Lamorisse’s film. The concluding scene in *Le Ballon Rouge*, as mentioned earlier, involves dozens of balloons lifting the young boy over the Paris

⁸⁷ Hanan Mikhail Ashrawi, “The Contemporary Palestinian Poetry of Occupation,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 7, no. 3 (Spring 1978): 91.

⁸⁸ It should also be noted that Arafat’s widow, Suha, is Christian.

rooftops. While the entire film contains fantastical elements, this one in particular stands out as being more likely sourced in the boy's imagination. Likewise, the flight of the balloon in *Divine Intervention* can also be seen as fantastic in nature. The first part of its voyage (from the car to just beyond the checkpoint) is witnessed by both E.S. and the soldiers – it transpires in the diegetic world of the film, with actions that are causally related to it. The second half, however, may simply represent the dream of Palestinians to eventually reclaim the land that they recognize as being taken from them. The dreamlike voyage is without witnesses, without corresponding causal repercussions, and therefore, without diagetic affirmation. As such, it may very well indicate that this half of the flight is simply a dream. Suleiman is perhaps attempting to represent the peace process that, to many Palestinians, has become nothing more than a fantasy.

The climactic sequence in *Divine Intervention* is also heavily laden with symbolic references. The sequence begins with a shot of seven shooting range targets, although these targets feature pictures of Palestinian women fighters as opposed to the traditional faceless target. Five soldiers are then seen preparing to fire upon the cardboard cutouts at the outdoor training ground. What follows is a highly choreographed routine involving the soldiers shooting their guns and performing absurdly unmilitaristic motions as they approach their targets. While the soldiers are not wearing specific military markings (we do not know if they are military or simply police officers), we are aware of their allegiance to Israel, as an official state flag flies on a pole nearby.

At the conclusion of their routine, a single target remains standing, from behind which emerges a real woman fighter, clad in identical clothes to those pictured on the targets. As she moves away from the artificial targets, the commanding officer instructs

his men to fire. The woman deflects the rain of bullets by spinning herself at high speeds and flying skyward. She comes to a rest in a crucifixion-style position, arms outspread and a “crown” of bullets surrounding her head. She then quickly dispatches two of the men with crescent-adorned darts and another in a hail of stones. The two others are vanquished with some strategically thrown grenades, leaving only the commanding officer standing.

The officer opens fire on the woman who uses a bronze shield, shaped like a geographic map of historic Palestine, to deflect the bullets. Her *kaffiyeh*, which until now has been obscuring her face, unravels to reveal E.S.’s girlfriend. It wraps itself around the officer’s machine gun and disarms him. A long shot reveals the woman on the edge of a cliff, while an Apache helicopter can be seen rising behind her. She throws her metal shield, which now acts like a boomerang, and destroys the airborne threat. She then returns to behind the target from where she emerged, leaving the officer standing amongst the bodies of his deceased men.

This scene contains a wealth of Palestinian imagery, which is used in contrast against various symbols that, especially for Palestinians, have come to represent the Israeli state. The first pair of Palestinian symbols is found in the cardboard target. The image of the woman fighter, her head wrapped in a *kaffiyeh*, resembles as much a Palestinian martyr as she does a “ninja”. The image of the martyr is one that has been glorified in Palestinian culture and equally demonized within Israeli culture. Yet the image of the woman martyr is less common than that of the male. Both the cardboard images and the actual woman wear body-hugging tunics that lead the viewer to the unmistakable conclusion that the figure under the clothing is female. This gendering of

the enemy bears some importance as well – there is regular discussion within Israeli politics of the fear of the growing Palestinian population, which would demographically threaten the balance between Israelis and Palestinians in the future. Thus the fighter here symbolizes not only a combative threat, but also a symbolic threat – the female as mother figure. The mother-figure, in this case, is not only a threat due to her connection to the land and memory, but she is also a threat because of her potential fertility and its ability to shift the Israeli demographic.

The fact that her head is wrapped in a *kaffiyeh* reveals her national allegiance. The *kaffiyeh*, likewise, places her allegiance not only with Palestine, but with the revolutionary fighters who popularized the headdress throughout history. In combining the feminine threat, the political threat, and the obvious link between the Palestinian martyr and violence, Suleiman creates a figure that becomes a pastiche amalgam of the sources of Israeli fear.

The pastiche is further augmented in both the setting and camerawork that precedes the hostilities. At the point when there is only one target remaining, and before the real “ninja” appears, the commanding officer engages in a Sergio Leone Western-style showdown. He is framed in a medium close-up, facing the camera, in a shot where he removes his glasses. The object of his gaze is confirmed in the ensuing shot, which is a similarly framed medium close-up of the target, which unwittingly returns “her” gaze (as suggested by the camera placement). This entirely one-sided showdown ends with the officer opening fire on the cutout. The result, shown in the subsequent shot, is that the cutout has been severely damaged, yet her “eyes” remain untouched, her adversarial gaze left intact. This seems to signal that the showdown has not concluded.

The officer instructs his men to assume their earlier positions, almost confirming that the target remains a threat. At this point, a billowing wind blows sand across the target range, again echoing the Spaghetti Western film. This provides the cover needed for the “ninja” to emerge from behind the cutout and, coupled with further shot-reverse-shots between the officer and the target, supports the link between this sequence and Leone’s film. While Suleiman is aware of the similarities, he gives little explanation for why he chose this particular genre to spoof.⁸⁹ One possible explanation is that the target of his pastiche efforts is *not* the Leone films, but rather the international media which often sensationalizes news stories for dramatic effect. In an interview with Drake Stutesman, Suleiman acknowledges his intent to spoof television commercials in the film, therefore one might be safe in assuming that his attention could also be focused on mainstream news services as objects of ridicule as well.

The notion of satirical commentary is not only confined to international media. His use of choreography for the soldier’s training tactics also falls into the realm of absurdity. The movements employed by them, as mentioned earlier, bear little resemblance to traditional military training procedures. Rather, they appear as rhythmic dance numbers coupled with machismo posturing. This contrast seems to reflect the notion that the occupying army, while vastly superior to the Palestinians in both training and arms, remains vulnerable due to what is often perceived as an absurd moral and political position – that a heavily armed occupation army is needed to subdue and control an impoverished people who somehow threaten the existence of the most militarized state in the Middle East.

⁸⁹ Drake Stutesman, “Elia Suleiman interview,” *Framework* 45, No. 1 (Spring 2004): 85-94.

Suleiman's portrayal of Israeli soldiers in other scenes of *Divine Intervention* is similar to what is seen here. The soldiers seem to fall into two categories: bumbling, absurd subordinates, or harsh and vindictive commanding officers. This follows a similar pattern to that found in *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, in which the state authorities are easily confused and manipulated. The colonial power's administrators are rarely viewed in a positive light in his cinema. This seems to indicate a certain disdain not for the average citizen of the Israeli state, but rather for those members of the state apparatus who are responsible for its continued colonial presence. The figure of the "ninja", therefore, stands for everything which threatens that presence. The fight between her and the soldiers contains various symbols, all of which either represent an aspect of Palestinian culture, or of the Palestinian struggle against colonization. Either group of these symbols represents a threat towards the dominant Zionist narrative, for a number of reasons. As we mentioned earlier, the very existence of a Palestinian culture that predates the establishment of the state of Israel is necessarily a threat to the notion that the land was uninhabited or, at best, inhabited by nomads who had no permanent link to the land. The continued struggle by this people continues to attract international attention to their plight, therefore drawing further exploration of the roots of the conflict, which only increases the chances that the dominant narrative's validity will be threatened.

In addition to the "ninja's" femininity, as mentioned above, her *kaffiyeh* head covering visually aligns her with the Palestinian freedom fighter. The *kaffiyeh*, in the battle with the commanding officer, serves two purposes. The first is as a weapon – it unravels itself and "lassos" the officer's machine gun from his hands. Here the threat of a *kaffiyeh*-wearer is moved out of the realm of "perceived threat" (as someone who at the

very least sympathizes with the Palestinian cause) and into the sphere of “physical threat” (it is materially used for violence). The second use is as a means of identification, not only as a freedom fighter or Palestinian sympathizer but, in unraveling itself to become a weapon, it reveals the “ninja” to be E.S.’s partner, who earlier left him. While *Divine Intervention*’s narrative is loosely held together, the viewer is now able to make the connection between the departure of E.S.’s girlfriend earlier in the film and her choice to become a freedom fighter. As she leaves E.S.’s apartment, she passes his neighbour, a Palestinian man who is collaborating with Israelis against his own people. She is critical of the man and his actions, as is evidenced by her gaze towards him as she passes by. The idea that this moment is the turning point in her role as observer to one of active, albeit violent, participant indicates that the efforts of the colonial power in turning the native population against itself will only have disastrous results.

The second visual motif, also directly related to the notion of the Palestinian fighter, is that of the stone-thrower. The image of the stone-throwing Palestinian was popularized during the First Intifada, when images of youths armed with stones and slingshots saturated international media. Here the motif is referenced, with the stone thrower being overly exaggerated – her single sling is able to produce a barrage of stones in a single throw, easily incapacitating the machine gun carrying soldier. The image is further distorted in that the stone-thrower is female, a shift from the traditionally masculine figure of the Intifada. Here, Suleiman’s use of a popular resistance motif, one specifically related to the disenfranchised, seems to serve as a reminder to the viewer that while the colonizer is modern, mechanical and well armed, the colonized is organic, connected to the land, and unwilling to be subservient.

Suleiman also manages to incorporate visuals related to Palestinian religion. The darts thrown by the “ninja” are adorned with the Muslim crescent, a symbol that is common in the Arab world and the Muslim world at large. It is a symbol that is widespread and recognizable in Palestine: it adorns the top of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem, as well as other mosques; it is on the side of all Red Crescent ambulances (used by the Red Cross in predominantly Muslim countries); and it was, in the late twenties, an emblem that was discussed in the public discourse surrounding the creation of an official Palestinian flag.⁹⁰ Its appearance here is perhaps to reaffirm the link between Islam and Palestinian culture.

Suleiman, however, is also aware of the heterogeneity in Palestinian society – within the Occupied Territories, approximately three percent of the population is Christian while in Israel proper, the Christian Palestinian population is closer to nine percent. Suleiman’s positioning of the “ninja” in a crucified Christ-like pose, complete with “crown” of bullets replacing the biblical era thorns, is a clear reference to the link between the history of the land and the Palestinian Christians who claim their roots there. The Christ motif can also be read as a symbolic reference to the suffering of the Palestinian people, who are being crucified for resisting the colonial powers, much as earlier Christian converts were persecuted by the Roman colonizers in the same region.

In terms of being a reactionary move against the dominant narrative, the exposition of the heterogeneity of Palestinian society directly attacks the idea that the struggle for the Holy Land is one being waged as a result of religious differences. Suleiman’s inclusion of Christian motifs in relation to the Palestinian character of the

⁹⁰ For more on this discourse, see Tamir Sorek’s “The orange and the ‘Cross in the Crescent’: imagining Palestine in 1929.” in *Nations and Nationalism* 10, no. 3 (July 2004): 269-291.

“ninja” complicates the widely accepted notion that Islamic fundamentalism is one of the main causes of the conflict. The amalgamation of both Islamic and Christian motifs, alongside traditional revolutionary imagery, further complicates the often simplistic cause-effect relationship within the dominant narrative.

This amalgam is further augmented with the inclusion of the “ninja’s” shield. The shield is in the shape of the geographic boundaries of historic Palestine. It is therefore a symbol which has direct correlation to the land and the necessary discourses which surround it. The fact that the shield is in the shape of historic Palestine, as opposed to the modern boundaries as defined by the occupation, suggests the “ninja” is fighting to reclaim *all* of the land that was divided by the various colonizing powers. The historic boundaries are contentious, most notably because they also represent the boundaries of the land claimed by the dominant Zionist narrative. In aligning these boundaries with the “ninja”, Suleiman is placing “possession” of the land in the hands of the colonized rather than with the colonizer. By further having the boundaries used as a shield, the statement could be made that the Palestinian claim to the historic land is evidence enough to refute the assertions and violent efforts by colonial powers to remove them from it.

The shield, like the *kaffiyeh*, is also transformed into a weapon. The Apache helicopter, a modern trope of the Israeli occupation, is downed by the “ninja” when she throws the shield at it. Again the assertion that rightful possession of the land, as the Palestinians see it, means an end to the oppressive practices of the colonizer, specifically the occupation as represented by its methods of intimidation and destruction – its military and their arsenal.

Suleiman's vignettes are highly coded. Their imagery is heavily coded and their diffusion across a loosely held narrative force the viewer to react both intellectually and emotionally. The fact that they are often self-contained, as opposed to narratively motivated, leaves the spectator in a position where interpretation becomes highly subjective. Rather than specifically assign traits to the characters in the film, Suleiman imbues his scenes with symbols that, at times, take on a life of their own. How spectators receive them is often highly contingent on their knowledge of the symbols and their relation to Palestinian society. That is to say that an intimate knowledge of Palestinian culture may lead to one of many particular readings, while a cursory knowledge of the culture would produce a different reading. In either regard, some symbols will bear a certain level of understanding while others may not. While Suleiman's true motives may never be known, we can be sure that the use of symbols serves to challenge viewers, regardless of their awareness or position on the conflict. Suleiman's approach, however, is in contrast to Hany Abu Assad's *Paradise Now*, which employs a much more didactic approach in conveying his political message to international audiences.

CHAPTER TWO – PARADISE NOW

Paradise Now, which was shot primarily in Nablus, a city under Palestinian Authority control in the West Bank, is the story of two young men, longtime friends, who are chosen to carry out a suicide attack in Tel Aviv. The film then follows what is supposed to be the final twenty-four hours of their lives. Abu-Assad's film contains a number of different characters, each representing an aspect of Palestine on a microcosmic level: Khaled (Ali Suliman), who is eager to carry out his mission as a hero; Said (Kais Nashif), the more reluctant of the two; Suha (Lubna Azabal), the moderate outsider who returns to the territories and develops a romance with Said; and various other minor characters who augment the arguments made in the film. In examining the roles of these characters, particularly in scenes where the ideological message is transparent, we recognize not only the differences in the dissemination of information from Suleiman's films, but we also become aware of the way in which the politics of *Paradise Now* serves to counter the dominant Zionist narrative. The latter part of this chapter will focus on the consequences that result from openly defying the dominant narrative in a new visual and international manner, as I examine the discourse surrounding the film's nomination for an Oscar.

The climate in which *Paradise Now* was produced is one that was marked by major uprising, daily violence, and constant media attention. The Second Intifada, launched in September of 2000, began a new cycle of violence, with each side blaming the other on a daily basis. With the continued media attention, both sides were eager to have their stories told in a manner which benefited them. In returning to the quote by Joseph Massad, we come to understand that this media attention often favoured the Israeli

perspective, and thus the Palestinian story was often relegated to either the alternative press (at best) or the sidelines (the norm).

Films like *Divine Intervention* and *Paradise Now* would emerge as a natural reaction to a silenced community. Artists often use their medium to comment on events or political situations which are happening in society. Abu-Assad's film is one attempt to present an alternative discourse to that which is regularly found in mainstream cinema, particularly regarding the image of the suicide bomber. As he states in an interview, "my film is about destroying those prevailing perceptions, those images, to build a new perception."⁹¹ In addressing the issue of suicide bombers, Abu-Assad opens a wider discourse dealing with the occupation and the many effects of it on both the Palestinian psyche and society in general.

The current myths propagated by the dominant Zionist narrative, particularly those related to the current cycle of violence, suggest that the Palestinians are unwilling to live peacefully with the Israeli state. Arguments abound concerning the recent election of the Islamic party Hamas, which has claimed responsibility for numerous attacks on Israel, as well as the notion that Palestinians are "taught" to hate as early as childhood. These arguments are devoid of any discussion of the daily living conditions under the occupation and the practices of the colonial army in administering that occupation. While Abu-Assad's film avoids showing these daily hardships, he deals with the consequences of life under occupation, particularly as seen through the eyes of those who willingly undertake an extreme revolutionary stance to counter it.

⁹¹ Dan Georgakas, "This film you should see twice: an interview with Hany Abu-Assad," *Cineaste* 31, no. 1 (Winter 2005): 16.

Before addressing the didactic scenes in which the politics of the film are most evident, we should first examine the opening scene. This scene acts a signifier of the hardships that are hidden for the remainder of the film. It involves Suha at a checkpoint, having her identification and belongings inspected. The scene begins with a long shot of Suha, carrying a suitcase, looking off camera into the foreground. The following shot reveals the object of her gaze – a military checkpoint. She approaches the checkpoint and stops in front of a well-armed Israeli soldier. We cut to a medium close up of her handing her bag to the soldier, yet in the background, albeit out of focus, is a fellow soldier with his rifle trained intently on Suha. She hands her ID card to the first soldier, who then proceeds to open her bag without shifting his gaze off of the woman. It is interesting to note that the clothing that is visible in this scene comprises articles of red, green, white, and black, the colours of the Palestinian flag, all shown in medium close-up. This is perhaps used to reinforce her nationality as Palestinian – the particular use of the colours of the Palestinian flag exist in sharp contrast to the blue and white of the Israeli flag. The inspection ends and, as Suha proceeds through the checkpoint, the second soldier releases his aim on her and lowers his rifle.

This scene contains a number of elements that represent the daily hardship and humiliation faced by Palestinians. The first is that a native population is required to pass through military checkpoints, constructed by a colonial power, in order to travel from city to city. This configuration, while obviously cumbersome from a practical perspective, bears deeper significance to the Palestinian psyche. The dynamic between soldier and native is, as mentioned earlier, one of colonizer and colonized. The checkpoint reinforces not only the control over movement that the colonizer has implemented, it places the

colonizer in a position where he becomes responsible for validating the identity of the colonized. Suha is only permitted to pass once the guard has inspected her ID card, and motions to her that she has been deemed legitimate by the colonizing power. This control over identity, which the dominant narrative itself has sought to alter, is one example of what Abu-Assad refers to as the occupation “driving you crazy.”⁹²

The second aspect of the scene is only evident to the viewer once we learn more about Suha’s history. It deals directly with the issue of the diasporic Palestinian returning home. Suha, as we learn later, has lived all of her life outside of the territories. Her father is a martyr of the struggle and is considered by many to be a hero. Her return to the territories symbolizes the returning diasporic Palestinian, who has first or second generation roots to the land. At the checkpoint, we have a situation in which this generation of Palestinians, in addition to those who are already living there, asking a colonizing power permission to return to their homeland. Suha’s first encounter upon her return is with the colonizing power, as represented by the soldier. She is forced to not only validate her Palestinian identity, as mentioned above, but also request access to areas of her homeland which are now under foreign control. This opening sequence lays out the dynamic between colonized and colonizer, victim and victimizer, in a visually arresting manner. The lack of dialogue seems to suggest a lack of effective communication on the part of either party, and the tense glances between Suha and the soldier underline the suspicions and fears that each party harbors for the other. Abu-Assad shifts form in the later scenes, particularly those which require the main characters to justify their actions. The first scene involves the preparation of Khaled’s martyr video,

⁹² Ibid., 17.

while the second comprises an interview with Said in which he explains why he must be allowed to carry out his mission.

The suicide bomber's video, made before his or her operation is carried out, has become a cultural piece of interest. International news outlets, particularly Al-Jazeera, replay parts of these videos after a suicide attack. The video serves to not only identify the bomber (who is often then regaled as a hero) but also to propagate the reasons and politics behind his actions. *Paradise Now* refers to these videos in a number of sequences: once in a shop where consumers can rent or buy the videos, and again when Khaled and Said are recording their own. Abu-Assad presents the recording scene in a manner which both comments on martyr videos and also presents a political statement on the conflict itself. The scene begins with Khaled positioning himself between a large Palestinian emblem, which hangs on a wall, and a cameraman who is using a handheld video camera to record the speech. He is wearing a *kaffiyeh* and is carrying an AK-47 machine gun, often associated with the Palestinian guerrilla fighter. In his other hand he carries a script from which he reads a lengthy political statement.⁹³ Once he is finished reading, he looks to the cameraman and onlookers for approval. The cameraman informs him that there was a technical issue and therefore the recording failed. Khaled is forced to restart the speech, again only to be interrupted for a number of reasons.

The political speech given by Khaled here is of interest insofar as it is an opportunity for one aspect of the Palestinian argument to be made. Yet before delving into the significance of this we should first briefly look at the other aspect of this scene –

⁹³ For a complete transcript of this speech, see appendix.

Abu-Assad's comment on the performative nature of martyrdom.⁹⁴ The fact that Khaled is willing to commit an act of self-sacrificing violence attests to the desperation and hopelessness in his life. Yet by having Khaled express a political statement from a script suggests that there is a hierarchy involved in the expression of political views. That is to say that while Khaled, an average Palestinian, has political grievances, only those within the upper levels of the organization that has recruited him (the "officials" of the resistance) are permitted to engage in myth making, or in this case, counter-myth making. As this thesis is primarily interested in the exposition of counter ideologies, I will avoid devoting too much time to Abu-Assad's commentary on the performance of martyrdom. While it is quite apparent that this is what he is in part engaging in, my interest lies in the particular choice of political arguments presented in the script from which Khaled reads.

The arguments made in this speech are important in particular for what they say, as well as for what they omit. In having his characters subscribe to a particular ideology, Abu-Assad locates them within the *moderate* political sphere of Palestinian thought, even though they are planning an extremist-related act of violence. This is evident when Khaled states, "Israel views partnership and equality for the Palestinian under the same democratic system as suicide for the Jewish state. Nor will they accept a two-state compromise." Here Khaled is aligning himself, and subsequently the organization which has recruited him, as proponents first and foremost of a secular, democratic one-state solution. They seem to suggest that this solution, while originally acceptable to them, is not even a remote possibility for the Israelis. This is in direct conflict with the popular Zionist myth that states that Palestinians seek to rid the land of Jews. It exposes the

⁹⁴ B. Ruby Rich., "Bomb Culture," *Sight and Sound* 26, no. 4 (April 2006): 30.

semantic deception through which this myth is propagated: that one state, with Israelis and Palestinians living secularly side by side, would indeed be a just solution, but it would also spell the “end” of the Jewish state as it currently exists. In this sense, Zionists can honestly claim that Palestinians seek to “destroy” the Jewish state, yet they rarely claim that this action would be based upon a *just* and *democratic* solution, rather than a violent one.

The second myth that is exposed in this speech is related to the occupation. Current media strategies, employed by what Massad refers to as the Zionist-friendly media, seek to convince viewers that the apparatus of the occupation is necessary in favour of security for the Israeli state. What is omitted from this often-repeated line of thinking is that many practices of the occupation have little to do with security, and more to do with collective punishment and humiliation.⁹⁵ When Khaled states that, “Israel continues to build settlements, confiscate land, Judaize Jerusalem and carry out ethnic cleansing,” he is referring to those elements of the occupation that are rarely covered by the mainstream media.

The specific practices of the occupation that Khaled mentions, among others, do little to enhance security: uprooting trees for future settlements, roadblocks within Palestinian villages and towns, checkpoints between neighboring Palestinian cities, collective punishment, house demolitions, and the use of torture. While Khaled does not directly list those practices here, viewers that are informed can make the connections between those he mentions and those that are inferred. For the uninformed viewer, they

⁹⁵ For an interesting stance on these practices, see the open letter by members of the IDF who have refused to serve in the Occupied Territories based on the implementation of these practices. The full text is available at Courage to Refuse – Combatants Letter; (January 2002) available from http://www.seruv.org.il/english/combatants_letter.asp

will be hearing claims that they have likely not heard before and may seek out their authenticity. Upon doing so, they will find the connection between Khaled's claim of building settlements, and the uprooting of trees and the Judaizing of Jerusalem. His claim of ethnic cleansing would lead a viewer to a more accessible discourse on house demolitions. In all, the viewer is inclined to discover what many Palestinians already believe, that the occupation itself is a lead cause of security concerns, rather than a solution to them.

The second speech made by one of the lead protagonists occurs towards the end of the film when Said and Khaled, having deserted their mission due to complications, are being tested to see if they have been compromised. Said is told that he has become a liability and that he should go home and abandon the mission. In his defense, and in order to demonstrate his willingness to resume the mission, he explains to Abu-Karem, the resistance leader in charge of the operation, why it is important for him to be a martyr.⁹⁶ His speech deals with both life under occupation, and with the international perception of the conflict. His approach to confronting the dominant narrative as it pertains to the occupation differs, however, from the rhetoric which appears in Khaled's speech.

Khaled's speech, having been written by revolutionaries, is laced with their "official" counter arguments. It is more general and thus lends itself more closely to the realm of myth. That is to say that it presents a certain perspective that is meant to represent a "collective" Palestinian thinking, much as the dominant Zionist narrative has come to stand for the official narrative of the state of Israel. Said's speech is one that is

⁹⁶ Said's speech can be found in the appendix, on page 94.

made at a moment of emotional vulnerability. It is made to appear less official than the martyr video speech, yet its dynamic remains the same: a would-be martyr exposes his political thinking for the world (in Said's case, the audience) to see and to contemplate. This similar dynamic works to personalize the rhetoric presented earlier in Khaled's speech, as we see how the occupation has come to affect a specific person.

Said's father, as he mentions in his speech, was a collaborator. The Israeli army and secret service regularly employ Palestinians as "double agents," often blackmailing them into providing information about other Palestinians. Said blames the occupation for having turned his father into a traitor, saying that the occupation makes men "weak." This reinforces the earlier statements by Khaled that the occupation is detrimental rather than productive. By forcing men to become traitors, they essentially strip them of their dignity and, according to Said's speech, "A life without dignity is worthless."

Said also attests to a claim that is made other times in the film – that life in the territories is "hell." He states that being in the Occupied Territories is like "life imprisonment." Khaled makes a similar claim when he and Suha are driving to find Said. This notion, while not explicitly explored visually or narratively in the film, remains an underlying current to the decisions made by the main characters. As Abu-Assad states:

We already know these humiliation stories. . . .We have seen lots of images of what the Occupation does to people. What we don't know is the experience of the last twenty-four hours before people blow themselves up. So I wanted to light up that place. I was not interested in lighting places I already know. I didn't want to repeat all those images of how Israelis enter houses and destroy everything. . . .If we do a film that will show these images again, I will be telling a story you already know and it will be a boring film...I

wanted to know before the explosions, not after the explosions.⁹⁷

While this statement may hold, considering that Abu-Assad does refrain from showing those events which he lists, he inevitably gives the viewer a glimpse at this life from the insider's perspective. This is evident in the Suha checkpoint scene discussed earlier, and two scenes later in the film which also show Palestinians having to adjust their lives due to the presence of occupation forces. In both cases, the characters in the film must create a new path of travel in order to circumnavigate roadblocks set up by the IDF. Therefore, while Abu-Assad refrains from showing overly explicit instances of aggressive IDF actions, there are instances littered throughout the film which lend credence to the claims made in Said's speech.

Where Abu-Assad's film truly becomes contentious, however, and where it demarcates itself as belonging to a new trend of Palestinian cinema, is in its treatment of its subject matter – the suicide bomber. A common myth within the current manifestation of the dominant narrative is that the suicide bomber is merely a religious "automaton". In the Israeli right-wing media, as well as many non-Israeli rightist medias, the common perception of the Palestinian suicide bomber is someone who was brainwashed into hating Jews from a young age, by a dictatorial education system, and whose Muslim teachings dictate that the reward for his martyrdom will be seventy-two virgins in heaven. We are thus to believe that these individuals grow up knowing nothing but hatred for Jews, fundamental religious ideology, and anger at democracy. Yet as Manuel Hassassian states, "it is a political and intellectual blunder to incorporate the just cause of the Palestinians and their conflict against occupation into the 'ideological' conflict

⁹⁷ Georgakas, 16.

between terrorism and the Western values of freedom and democracy.”⁹⁸ This is to say that the Zionist narrative disregards the *cause* of suicide bombing, which is a means to an end, in favor of perpetuating a vision of Palestinians in relation to accepted Western archetypes. By ignoring the root causes of terrorism, namely the living conditions under the occupation, the myth allows the religious stereotype of the violent Muslim to perpetuate under the narrative.

In addition to this, the myth’s propagation of the Palestinian as full of hatred is also permitted to spread unchallenged. While the media portrays angry Palestinians protesting the occupation, it does little to document the daily lives of ordinary, non-political members of society. *Paradise Now* attempts to “maintain a balanced political perspective given the one-sided views of these all-too-human terrorists.”⁹⁹ As we have seen thus far, the film’s fictional portrayal of two young men living under the occupation is infused with the political messages that serve to challenge this particular notion, and it does so in two ways: the first is to provide some form of causality to the actions of the two bombers, and the second is to defend the tactic of suicide bombing, at least in their eyes.

The first approach involves various points in the film in which the characters recount stories of crimes perpetrated by the occupying forces: Said’s father (collaboration), Khaled’s father (beaten by soldiers), and a protest against Israeli employment practices. In his conversation with Said, Jamal puts forward the notion that “death is better than inferiority [and that] whoever fights for freedom can also die for

⁹⁸ Manuel Hassassian, “Historical Dynamics Shaping Palestinian National Identity,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics & Culture* 8/9, no. 4/1 (2002): 60.

⁹⁹ Stephen Holden, “Terrorists Facing Their Moment of Truth,” *New York Times* 28 October 2005: E13.

it.”¹⁰⁰ At no point is religious doctrine given as a reason for the actions; only as a backdrop for the carrying out of the attack (the ritual preparation beforehand). In avoiding the religious and educational aspect, and only foregrounding the political reasons, the film attempts to counter one aspect of the myth.

The second method, which attempts to defend the tactic of suicide bombing, involves arguments made by various characters throughout the film in regards to the nature of resistance. Khaled first states that, “if we had airplanes, we wouldn’t need martyrs” and Said says that he attempted to deliver his message (to the Israelis) but he “couldn’t find another way.”¹⁰¹ Both of these instances are attempts to support the notion that suicide bombing is the last resort in what has been decades of alternative forms of resistance, all of which have proved futile. In his martyr video, Said states, “our bodies are all we have left to fight with against the neverending occupation.” This echoes the “ninja” sequence in *Divine Intervention*, in which the woman is left to fight the soldiers through any means available to her (stone throwing, using her *kaffiyeh*). While the “ninja” sequence in *Divine Intervention* can be viewed as fantastical, as much of the movements seem exaggerated and unrealistic, the overall message remains not unlike that of *Paradise Now*: that under certain circumstances, there are individuals who will not capitulate to the oppression around them.

Both films present the actions and circumstances which act as catalysts for individuals turning to violence. The two films also present these circumstances as being in direct contrast to those presented by the dominant Zionist narrative. Their war of images and rhetoric is presented in a manner that is far more explicit than in films made

¹⁰⁰ See Jamal’s conversation with Said in the appendix, on page 95.

¹⁰¹ I can only assume that this is in reference to either a protest he discussed earlier or his hesitation in boarding an Israeli bus full of civilians.

by Palestinians in the years both before Oslo and, more importantly, than those films made before the Second Intifada. Yet *Paradise Now* employs a rhetoric that heavily favours the Palestinian perspective in order to present a narrative that is seldom heard through numerous media sources. Whereas many reviews for *Divine Intervention* considered the film balanced, there was far less talk of balance in relation to *Paradise Now*. While some reviewers would consider this a positive step in the advancement of the Palestinian narrative, others would antagonize the film for the very same reason. I will explore this criticism of the film, particularly in relation to how it affected the film's recognition at the Academy Awards. I will demonstrate that by providing a single-sided argument, *Paradise Now* attracted the vilification of those who seek to perpetuate and protect the Zionist narrative.

One of the early critical reports of the film appeared in *The Jerusalem Report* in April 2005. Frimet Roth's article, "Showcases for Terror" examines *Paradise Now* in relation to then recent art exhibits which portrayed suicide bombings or their aftermaths. Roth's assumption is that Israel has little representation in the artistic world whereas art which favours the Palestinian perspective is abundant. To this extent, he believes that "art consumers are being fed a steady diet of concentrated anti-Israel fare."¹⁰² Roth also criticizes the European backers of *Paradise Now* as well as the judges at the Berlin Film Festival, where the film was awarded the Blue Angel for Best European Film.¹⁰³ He suggests that they may be lacking ethics for recognizing a film which portrays "mass murderers in this light," meaning individuals who are not simply brainwashed

¹⁰² Frimet Roth, "Showcases for Terror," *The Jerusalem Report* 4 April 2005: 46.

¹⁰³ It is interesting to note here that the film was recognized as being European, most likely due to the funding for the production, which originated primarily in the Netherlands and Germany, and received additional funding from other European agencies.

automatons.¹⁰⁴ This criticism, the humanization of the mass murdering suicide bomber, becomes a recurring theme within many negative reviews of the film.

Yossi Zur, whose son was a victim of suicide bombing, would be the catalyst for a petition to revoke the film's nomination for Best Foreign Film at the 78th Academy Awards (or the "Oscars"). In his open letter, Zur states that suicide bombers are not humans and are not "as deserving of sympathy as [their] victims."¹⁰⁵ Cal Thomas, writing in *The Washington Times*, refers to the characters as "those who wish to exterminate the Jewish people,"¹⁰⁶ clearly echoing Irit Linor, who refers to *Paradise Now* as a "quality Nazi film."¹⁰⁷ In each of these cases, the notion put forth is that there is no justification for the actions of suicide bombers. Rather than offer a true critical examination of the characters in the film, the reviewers restate rhetoric that is common to the dominant Zionist narrative, namely that suicide bombers are the result of "a distorted mentality of honor, an anti-Semitic education, [and] Islamic radicalism."¹⁰⁸ These factors negate other issues, such as being "trapped in a harsh world of military occupation, poverty and deprivation."¹⁰⁹ Yet in exploring exactly these issues, *Paradise Now* succeeds in countering the myths propagated by not only the dominant narrative, but also the reviewers of the film who support it. Any attempt to humanize the bomber, thus

¹⁰⁴ Roth, 46.

¹⁰⁵ Yossi Zur, "An Award for Terror," The Israel Project; (Jan 18, 2006) available from <http://www.theisraelproject.org/site/apps/nl/content2.asp?c=hsJP0PIjP&b=689705&ct=1797311>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹⁰⁶ Cal Thomas, "And the Losers Are... - Commentary" *The Washington Times* [database on-line]; (3 March 2006) available from <http://www.washingtontimes.com/commentary/20060302-092215-8590r.htm>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹⁰⁷ Irit Linor, "Anti-Semitism Now," Ynetnews; (7 February 2006) available from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3212503,00.html>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid. As well, Linor's review lacks any reference to the emotional conflict that the central characters undergo.

¹⁰⁹ Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 284.

creating a human character who is susceptible to the effects of a military occupation, is seen as a threat to the myth that such characters are, according to the dominant narrative, brainwashed automatons responding to base instinct. *Paradise Now*, according to Abu-Assad, is a film that is “disturbing...the established perceptions.”¹¹⁰

The critical discourse surrounding *Paradise Now*, particularly after its festival achievements, is perhaps evidence of its success at fostering, at the very least, debate about the validity of the dominant narrative. In examining the specific language used by critics, and contrasting it with the film itself, we see that the campaign against the film is not only severe in its attack, but that it falsifies aspects of the film’s narrative in order to augment the case against it.

This campaign would begin in earnest, as mentioned earlier, with an open letter by Yossi Zur. The letter was written as a response to *Paradise Now*’s Golden Globe award for “Best Foreign Language Film” on January 16th, 2006. It would be adopted by “an ad-hoc group known as Decent People World Wide (DPWW).”¹¹¹ Using the public website “Petition Online,” which hosts petitions and allows members of the public to “sign” them electronically, DPWW and writer Joan Gatewood would post a petition protesting *Paradise Now*’s nomination.¹¹² In addition to voicing their regret at the recognition of a film that “legitimizes this type of mass-murder & portrays the murderers themselves as victims,” the petition asks the Academy to withdraw the nomination.¹¹³ In addition to the petition, a non-profit group “devoted to educating the media and public

¹¹⁰ Georgakas, 16.

¹¹¹ Alec Magnet, “Petition To Oust Paradise Now’ From Oscars Gathers Steam,” *New York Sun* [database on-line]; (23 February 2006) available from <http://www.nysun.com/article/28036>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹¹² Joan Gatewood, “Revoke the ‘Paradise Now’ Oscar Nomination Petition”; (no date) available from <http://www.petitiononline.com/060201/petition.html>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹¹³ Ibid.

about Israel”¹¹⁴ (The Israel Project) would stage two demonstrations protesting the film – one in Jerusalem (March 1st, 2006) and the other in Los Angeles (March 3rd, 2006). The focus of this campaign centered around the accusation that *Paradise Now* legitimizes suicide bombing and perhaps even “encourages” it.¹¹⁵

In many reviews, this notion of “encouraging” suicide bombing becomes a recurring motif. A review by Shea Hecht states that the film “promotes murderers” and “glorifies them as heroes.”¹¹⁶ Cal Thomas sees the film as a “justification”¹¹⁷ for suicide bombers; and Zur, in his letter, states that “awarding a movie such as *Paradise Now*. . . implicates the Hollywood Foreign Press Association in the evil chain of terror.”¹¹⁸ What is negated in these conclusions about the film’s message is the existence of characters and events in the film which function as counter-balances to any glorification of the act of committing a suicide attack. Suha’s conversation with Said fails to dissuade him but its mere inclusion in the film serves to present the “moderate” Palestinian perspective in the face of the more “fanatical” message that is read by the film’s detractors. Suha is also responsible for convincing Khaled to rethink his mission, and in the end he attempts to influence Said in the same manner. This would suggest that the film’s message, in relation to the tactic of suicide bombing, is that more moderate lines of action are required to quell the extreme approach taken by a small minority of the population. The critics of the film, however, in keeping in line with the dominant narrative, avoid

¹¹⁴ Rachel Silverman, “Petition seeks to revoke ‘Paradise Now’ nomination”; The Jewish Standard (3 February 2006) available from <http://www.jstandard.com/articles/709/1/Petition-seeks-to-revoke-'Paradise-Now'-nomination>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹¹⁵ Gatewood.

¹¹⁶ Shea Hecht, “Academy of Fools”; The Jewish Magazine (March 2006) available from <http://www.jewishmag.com/100mag/paradisenow/paradisnow.htm>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹¹⁷ Thomas.

¹¹⁸ Zur.

recognition of this counterbalance. Zur, in his letter, asks whether the suicide bomber has any doubts and then answers his own question – “no.”¹¹⁹ This is simply one example of the failure to recognize, or indicate, the existence of opposition to the singular, fanatic line of thinking. Indeed, to do so would be to negate the Zionist narrative itself, for if a moderate voice exists, as portrayed by Suha, as well as Said’s mother, then it would severely damage the Zionist claim that the Palestinian education system is responsible for inciting hatred of Israelis. That is to say that moderate voices among the Palestinian population are a risk to the Zionist-propagated images of an anti-Semitic society whose leaders (and by extension, people) want to rid the region of Jews. Suha’s function as such a moderate voice is often ignored in critical reviews of the film and the abandonment of the mission by Khaled is almost nowhere to be found.

The detracting reviews also fail to consider that the Academy has recognized other films which can also be accused of inciting violence or justifying mass murder: Stanley Kubrick’s *A Clockwork Orange* (1971), *Downfall* (Oliver Hirschbiegel, 2004), and more recently, *The Last King of Scotland* (Kevin Macdonald, 2006). Kubrick’s film could have been seen as sensationalizing youthful violence, while both *Downfall* and *The Last King of Scotland* could have been accused of overly “humanizing” two of history’s most brutal dictators (Adolf Hitler and Idi Amin, respectively). While a certain level of criticism accompanied these films, there is little evidence of a campaign as concentrated as that launched by DPWW to withdraw their nominations from the Academy Awards.

Another consistent tactic used by many of the critical reviews aimed at discrediting the film is the adoption of language aimed at tying the Palestinian suicide

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

bombings to the worldwide campaign of terrorism aimed at American interests. In doing so, the writers attempt to link Palestinian resistance with fundamentalist Islam, thereby not only delegitimizing the Palestinian cause, but fanaticizing it in the process. Their actions also negate the existence of Christian Arab resistance which, obviously, is not a product of Islamic fundamentalist teaching. For example, Shea Hecht's review references terrorist attacks in "England and Bali and Turkey and the violence in France."¹²⁰ Zur's letter asks:

Are the Israelis to blame for the Twin Towers in New York, the night club in Indonesia, the hotel in Egypt, the shop in Turkey, the restaurant in Morocco or in Tunis, the hotel in Jordan, the underground in London, the train in Spain?¹²¹

His question is meant to challenge the characters in the film who blame the Israeli occupation for their actions. His question, however, is problematic since the film is specifically dealing with the Israeli occupation while the actions of the terrorists involved in the attacks he mentions are responding to American and other colonial interests in the regions in which those attacks occurred. The assumption that they are all linked through Islamic fundamentalism is used as a polarizing tactic that can be traced back to Zionist efforts to discredit the Palestinian resistance. In his article "Israel, Terrorism, and the PLO," Amnon Kapeliouk discusses the terminology used by Israeli officials in their quest to negate the PLO's position as political representatives of the Palestinian people. He states:

Israeli terminology concerning terrorism makes fine distinctions. Thus, the PLO is solely a terrorist organization and not the politico-military organization it is

¹²⁰ Hecht.

¹²¹ Zur.

recognized to be throughout the world...[while] the Nicaraguan "contras"...are never called terrorists; they are "guerrillas."¹²²

As well, Edward Said notes that Israel, by the end of the 1970s, had "stirred up latent Judeo-Christian sentiments against Islam."¹²³ Zur and Hecht continue to propagate the link between Islam and terrorism by linking the Palestinian resistance to worldwide Islamic fundamentalism, as represented by groups such as Al-Qaeda. The pattern is further revealed to be part of a concerted effort when, at the demonstration against *Paradise Now* in Los Angeles, an advocate for The Israel Project, Nonie Darwish, gives a speech containing the following quote: "How do they (the filmmakers) explain their silence when innocent people are murdered in a Bali nightclub, hotels in Amman, a shop in Turkey, a restaurant in Morocco, underground stations in London, trains in Spain?"¹²⁴ The speech, at an event sponsored by the same group who assisted in Yossi Zur's campaign against the film, employs references to precisely the same tragic events that Zur refers to in his letter, to much the same effect – linking the would-be suicide bombers in the film to real-life fundamentalists in other parts of the world. These tactics continue to negate the fact that terrorism committed globally in the name of radical Islam bears a significant difference from the conflict in Palestine; international terrorism's goals are not aimed at freeing their territory from Israeli occupation, a struggle that predates the first suicide bombing in the Middle East, which occurred in Lebanon in 1982 with the

¹²² Amnon Kapeliouk, "Israel, Terrorism, and the PLO," *Journal of Palestine Studies* 16, no.1 (Autumn 1986): 190.

¹²³ Edward W. Said, "The Essential Terrorist," in *Blaming the Victims: Spurious Scholarship and the Palestinian Question*, eds. Edward Said and Christopher Hitchens (London: Verso, 1998) 153.

¹²⁴ Nonie Darwish, "Peace Now....Not Paradise Now," Los Angeles Press Conference Remarks (March 3, 2006) available from http://www.theisraelproject.org/site/c.hsJPK0PIJpH/b.1462493/k.952E/Nonie_Darwishes_Speech_in_LA.htm; accessed 19 September 2006.

bombing of an American barracks.¹²⁵ Rather, the image of the martyr as Islamic fundamentalist continues primarily due to the propagation of this image in the media. This image, according to Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, has shifted:

[T]he act of martyrdom in Palestine has gradually undergone a metamorphosis into a heroic act of resistance that breeds its own secular ethics, the martyr has become progressively consecrated. The current fight is to lead the Palestinian nation into independence. It is not an issue of gaining Paradise.¹²⁶

Yet, as mentioned earlier, Linor's review also refers to "Islamic radicalism" as one of the root causes for suicide bombing, and in the same review considers the occupation to be a "ritual cleansing bath for every Palestinian moral blight."¹²⁷ In attacking one of the political statements in the film, namely that the occupation creates an unlivable situation in the Occupied Territories, the review undermines the Palestinian cause, as it appears in the film, and reinforces a myth of the dominant Zionist narrative – that Palestinian resistance is not only terrorism, it is illegitimate.

Once *Paradise Now* was awarded a nomination for an Oscar, the campaign to discredit it accelerated. As mentioned above, two demonstrations were held the week before the awards ceremony to protest the film. Yet another aspect to the campaign emerged – critics of the film attempted to have the academy change the name of the submitting country. The issue at hand was that the Academy had listed, on its website, that *Paradise Now* originated in "Palestine," much in the same way as it had been

¹²⁵ Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 275.

¹²⁶ Mahmoud Abu Hashhash, "On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine," *Third Text* 20, No. 3-4 (May/July 2006): 392.

¹²⁷ Linor.

presented at the Golden Globes that same year.¹²⁸ The campaign shifted its focus to changing the originating country of the film because, according to members of the Israeli consulate in Los Angeles, “the Palestinian Authority has yet to be announced a state.”¹²⁹ The effort here is one that not only discredits the film, but also the legitimacy of the Palestinian nation. In effect, advocates for the state of Israel are effacing the existence of a place named “Palestine” in the public sphere. Both the Consul General and the Consul for Media and Public Affairs “managed to extract a guarantee” from the Academy that the film would not be announced as representing “Palestine.”¹³⁰ A similar issue arose during the nomination process for *Divine Intervention* a number of years earlier. The film, as reported, was denied Oscar consideration due to the fact that “Palestine” was not considered a state by the United Nations.¹³¹ However, other films from officially unrecognized territories (Taiwan, Puerto Rico, Wales) were previously permitted to compete. In this case, however, the co-president of the film’s distributing company Avatar, claimed that he “was told in no uncertain terms by the official from the academy that the film could not be accepted.”¹³² As with *Paradise Now*, the issue concerning the film’s national identity was being questioned.

This repression of a nation’s identity is, as I have demonstrated, not only a political goal of Zionism, but also a cultural one. To deny Palestine a position in the American sphere of entertainment is to deny access to those who are repeatedly being

¹²⁸ “Nominees and winners | 78th Annual Academy Awards | Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences”; (no date) available from <http://www.oscars.org/78academyawards/nomswins.html>; accessed 9 April 2007.

¹²⁹ “Israel vs. *Paradise Now*,” Ynetnews; (Feb. 12, 2006) available from <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3214866,00.html>; accessed 19 September 2006.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ “Palestinian film not included,” *USA Today* February 5 2003: D6.

¹³² Phinjo Gombu, “Oscar escapes Mideast dispute,” *Toronto Star* December 10 2002: D1.

influenced by a single narrative which has become dominant. This dominance has been won through coordinated campaigns of criticism and delegitimization, and through the repeated reinforcement of the myths that are integral to the continued dominance of the Zionist narrative.

CHAPTER THREE – *PRIVATE*

The film *Private* is one that interests this study for a number of reasons. The first is that its narrative conforms to the notions presented in the previous chapters; the film explores and presents arguments that disrupt the dominant Zionist narrative. The film also utilizes a number of techniques which are consistent with the filmmaking practices of Elia Suleiman and Hany Abu Assad. Finally, the film's release provoked an interesting discourse in relation to the film's position as an Italian film vying for Oscar recognition. I shall examine the ensuing controversy in relation to that brought on by both *Divine Intervention* and *Paradise Now*.

Private tells the story of a Palestinian family, led by patriarch Mohammed B. (Mohammed Bakri), whose home is occupied by IDF troops. The home is divided into three sections with the family's movement being controlled by the troops living among them. The film explores the relationship between the various family members under siege, as well as their interaction with the soldiers, who await further instructions from their superiors. The film concludes with the departure of the original soldiers and the arrival of a new unit.

At first glance, the film operates as a microcosm of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict as a whole. The soldiers represent the occupation, the house represents the land, and the family acts as a symbol for the entire Palestinian population. While it is important to explore this symbolism, we must understand that there are further layers to the film that are of greater interest, notably the issue of borders and roadblocks, the tension between the public and the private, and the exploration of martyrdom.

Before turning to these further layers, I will first look at certain scenes in the film which directly challenge the dominant Zionist narrative. These scenes are perhaps less ambiguous in nature than those seen in *Divine Intervention*, thus bearing a closer relationship to the didactic messages found in *Paradise Now*. The scenes I will explore are the arrival of the soldiers, the rebuilding of the greenhouse, and the confrontation between Mohammed and his daughter, Mariam B. (Hend Ayoub). These three scenes contain verbal and visual cues that relate directly to the opposition of the dominant Zionist narrative.

The arrival of the soldiers is preceded by the abruptly staged introduction of the family and their circumstances. Within the first fifteen minutes, the viewer is introduced to not only all the family members, but also a family friend, Zana, whose conversation with the mother, Samia B. (Areen Omari) addresses the immediate state of the conflict. According to their conversation, there was gunfire the previous night between Israeli soldiers and Palestinians. The viewer is made to understand that the family lives near a Zionist settlement, and that the soldiers claimed they were defending it. The strategic positioning of the family's home serves as the reasoning behind the soldiers' arrival.

The soldiers enter the house forcefully in the middle of the night, searching the bedrooms and relocating the family members into the living room. Meanwhile, the father is taken outside and the surprised family members scream and beg for an explanation, receiving only orders to remain silent. After a gunshot is heard, and the family reacts in shock, the commanding officer Ofer (Lior Miller) returns the father, unharmed, to the living room. Without any other information, the soldiers close the living room door and imprison the family inside.

This sequence marks the first moment when the family (and the viewer) is introduced to the soldiers. The initial reaction, by both parties, is one of chaos and confusion. Neither the viewer nor the family members are provided with any explanation as to what is happening, and the shaky handheld camera shots increase the unease and instability which permeate the entire sequence. The end of the sequence provides little in the way of answers. Not until the following morning, when the soldiers explain the situation to the father, are viewers and family members made aware of the circumstances of the invasion. It is this moment in particular when the film begins to stand as an allegory for the Israeli/Palestinian conflict.

Ofer asks the father if he is willing to leave his house. The father refuses and Ofer informs him that the home is now the property of the Israeli army. Furthermore, the house will be divided into three sections: A (the living room), B (the main floor), and C (the upper floor). Section B is only accessible with the permission of the soldiers, and Section C is completely off limits to the family. This division initially seems to reflect the divisions of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip made during the 1993 Oslo Accords. These territories were similarly divided into three distinct areas: A, B, and C. Area A was to be under limited Palestinian control, Area B was reserved for Palestinian civil control and Israeli *security* control, and Area C was restricted solely to Israeli control.¹³³ Based on this comparison, one could easily map the Oslo Accords onto the film for comparative purposes. Yet I believe that the more obvious, and perhaps more interesting, analogy positions the divisions on a wider scale: Section A, the living room, represents a

¹³³ See Appendix C, pg. 110 for the Map of Oslo II, which delineates these areas.

typical Palestinian home in the Occupied Territories; Section B, the main floor, the territories themselves; and Section C, the upper floor, as a stand-in for the State of Israel.

This analogy likewise shifts the dynamics of the invasion: it is then less about the failed Oslo Peace Process and more about the history of the conflict as a whole – a foreign invader, more significantly armed, invades a territory and relocates the original inhabitants. The invading army then assumes control of the area and limits the rights and movement of the native population. The situation soon becomes a revolving cycle of senseless violence and rhetoric. Within this simplistic overview of the conflict, we find more intricate connections among the various players and thus the film's further examination of various issues.

This perspective on the allegory is further enhanced by a number of details. The first is that Ofer informs the family that the living room is their new “home.” Furthermore, they must return there every night and remain there until morning, echoing the common IDF practice of imposing curfews in the Occupied Territories. These internal curfews would rarely be placed on widespread areas; more often on homes and villages. As such, the analogy between the living room and “home” is more likely than that between the living room and entire Palestinian territory.

The main floor, in relation to the living room, would then represent the Occupied Territories themselves. This becomes more evident in later scenes, specifically when a neighbour visits and is greeted by a checkpoint, and when we realize that the family’s movement in the main floor is always under the watchful eyes of the soldiers. The upper floor, therefore, is Israel, and as we witness later in the film, Mariam’s transgression of the border between the two territories provides her with a perspective not generally

available to the population of the Occupied Territories. It is here that she witnesses the human side of the soldiers as well as their divisions. I shall return to her discoveries further in, but it is important to note that the arrival of the soldiers and the subsequent division of the house further polarizes the characters in the film, Palestinian and Israeli. This shift in character attitudes becomes apparent as the film progresses, and I will return to it throughout my analysis.

As mentioned earlier, this sequence serves to challenge the dominant Zionist narrative. It does so in numerous ways. If we follow my allegorical reading of the house's division, then we accept that the home and its surrounding lot represent historic Palestine. The invasion of the soldiers, read as the arrival of colonial Europeans, is a markedly different image than that presented by the dominant narrative. In the Israeli account, the Zionist colonists fought a war of independence against a much larger, more powerful alliance of Arab armies. The narrative states that Israel proclaimed its independence and, within a day, was attacked by the armies of Egypt, Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Iraq; these armies were defeated by "the newly formed, poorly equipped Israel Defense Forces."¹³⁴ The military invasion in *Private* is, on the contrary, very well planned and executed. The soldiers enter the residence, quickly segregate the family members, and isolate the father. This mirrors the reality of the 1948 war in which the "quickly formed" IDF actually mobilized along earlier devised plans; among them, strategies for taking over recently deserted British military and civilian installations and maps of Palestinian villages destined for destruction, as well as the support of Eastern bloc countries which continued to supply the Zionist forces with arms, despite UN orders

¹³⁴ Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, "History: The State of Israel"; (1 October 2006) available from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Facts+About+Israel/History/HISTORY+-The+State+of+Israel.htm>; accessed 10 March 2007.

against them.¹³⁵ While the sequence in *Private* lends itself to a possible comparison to the regular home invasions carried out by IDF soldiers, the implication of this invasion, as evidenced by the resulting division, suggests a much more historical and deeper analogy.

Having established that the house and its property represent historic Palestine, we can now turn our attention to the greenhouse. Situated close to the home, the greenhouse appears numerous times in the film, particularly in scenes involving Mohammed and his eldest son Jamal (Marco Alsaying). We are first introduced to the greenhouse after the soldiers have destroyed it, and Jamal and his father are rebuilding it. Jamal informs his father that the soldiers will pay a price if they damage it again. Mohammed's reply is simple: if they destroy it again, he and Jamal will rebuild it again and continue to do so until the soldiers tire of tearing it down.

The greenhouse itself is never explored in great detail. We are never told what is being grown in it or if any crops are ever cultivated from it. The few glimpses of the interior of the makeshift structure reveal dry, almost barren soil, and a few small plants connected to an irrigation system that is also undergoing repair during the film. The greenhouse serves mainly as the location in which Jamal lays a trap for the soldiers at the end of the film, and as an allegory for the land itself. While its symbolic association to the actual territory, in which the native population lives, may seem highly allegorical, the way in which the characters both discuss and navigate it allows for the following reading of it.

¹³⁵ Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 129-33.

The immediate allegory is that of fertility – the greenhouse represents both the fertility of the land, and of the Palestinian population. A major fear among Israeli politicians, dating back to the early days of the state and Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, is the return of the displaced Palestinian refugees (and subsequently their numerous descendants) and what such an action would mean to the demographics of the Jewish population.¹³⁶ This fear is manifested in the destruction of the greenhouse, insomuch as it represents a fertile and rapidly growing population whose rising birth rate endangers the colonial presence. The rebuilding of the greenhouse and more specifically Mohammed's persistent attitude towards it represent the reclaiming of lost territory. This can be read as the reclaiming of land annexed in earlier wars, or simply as the immobility of a population that has seen generations past removed from their territory. His defiance suggests that, while previous generations fled in fear, he will not be intimidated into abandoning his home (and homeland). This is an attitude manifested by Mohammed not only in relation to the greenhouse, but throughout the film itself. In a later scene, Mohammed tells Samia that leaving “would be the worst mistake of our lives. Our kids will never forgive us.” He seems to be suggesting that he is not only acting for his descendants, but also forgiving his ancestors for their desire to flee. This echoes his explanation to Jamal that if they remain persistent, they will eventually outlast their oppressors, as opposed to fleeing and forfeiting their children’s inheritance. The rootedness of the Palestinian people is essentially their best defense against colonialism, as is their knowledge of the land, which is also represented by Jamal’s relationship to the greenhouse.

¹³⁶ Pappe, *A History of Modern Palestine*, 161.

Jamal chooses the greenhouse as the location for a grenade-laden trap aimed at the soldiers. He discovers the grenade in one of the bedrooms of the house when the soldiers are absent. Hiding the weapon from his family, he attempts to set his trap in secrecy. The obvious parallels are that of the young suicide bomber, working in secret, using weapons smuggled from outside the territories. While I will explore the notion of martyrdom in *Private* below, my focus here remains on Jamal and the greenhouse. Jamal is the only son seen working on the greenhouse with Mohammed. As the eldest son, he is the heir to both the family estate and the family name. This positions Jamal as a signifier of a new generation of Palestinians. While Mohammed represents the generation that witnessed/survived the Nakba, Jamal represents the generation that ‘must never forget’ its injustices. Mohammed’s instruction in the ways of the greenhouse signifies the passing on of historical knowledge (as specifically related to the land and all that it signifies) from one generation to the next. This knowledge is twofold: firstly, it is the knowledge of one’s historical attachment to the land. The greenhouse is where one cultivates crops; where one’s sustenance can be found. It represents one’s ability to live off the land. It also affirms one’s rootedness insofar as the vegetation of the greenhouse is rooted in the land. The regular destruction of the greenhouse is an attempt to *uproot* the family and, subsequently, the Palestinian people. As mentioned above, Mohammed instructs Jamal, as the first-born, on the importance of reaffirming those roots and never allowing one to be uprooted.

The second form of knowledge found in the greenhouse is that of the native population’s direct relationship and grasp of the terrain. Jamal chooses the greenhouse as the location for his trap with an understanding that he, as a native Palestinian,

understands and knows the terrain more than his colonial oppressor. He is able to navigate the land using it to his advantage against the soldiers. The greenhouse is outside the home therefore the risk to the family is minimized.¹³⁷ By using the land to his advantage, Jamal demonstrates his mastery of the land over that of the well-armed colonist. While we are not shown the final outcome of his efforts (the film ends with two soldiers running towards the greenhouse), his ability to predict both the motives (destruction, uprooting) and location (the greenhouse) of the soldiers' forthcoming actions reflects his grasp of the knowledge passed on from his father's generation.

The greenhouse also serves to counter an element of the dominant Zionist narrative. A common myth is that the Zionist colonizers arrived in a land of deserts and were able to make it fertile. According to the former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres, "the country was mostly an empty desert. . .and Israel's cultivable land today was indeed redeemed from swamp and wilderness."¹³⁸ According to this line of thought, one might assume that the Palestinian people were a nomadic people, wandering in a vast, deserted wilderness. The myth attempts to both validate the "reclaiming" of the land, and demonstrate the superiority of the colonizer over the primitive, underdeveloped natives. In perpetuating this myth, the colonizer assumes the position of "benefactor" over the land; their role is to rescue the land from its unfortunate circumstance and to accomplish what those who otherwise claim the land could not.

The reality, however, is that the land was neither desert nor swamp. While the Negev region to the south is a desert and it does represent the least fertile areas of

¹³⁷ It should be noted, however, that at one point in the film, Jamal must prevent his father from entering the greenhouse while the trap is armed. While this may or may not have allegorical significance (with the father representing the possibility of Palestinian collateral damage in martyr operations) it may simply exist as a narrative device to create tension in the film.

¹³⁸ Shimon Peres, *David's Sling: The Arming of Israel*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1970) 249.

Palestine, the areas to the north of it are extremely fertile and cultivable. Yet the need to perpetuate the myth was rooted in the fear that world opinion would turn against the Zionists; therefore “they attempted to convince [the world] that the country was a virtually uninhabited desert. . .in which Jewish immigrants could settle without prejudice to anybody's interests.”¹³⁹ This myth ignores the fact that one of the largest Palestinian exports, as early as 1911, was Jaffa oranges: “Jaffa’s citrus industry was shipping 870,000 cases of oranges abroad. . .the oranges were famous abroad and gradually grew to be part of the external image of the country.”¹⁴⁰ To continue to perpetuate this myth is to deny an aspect of Palestinian heritage while also positioning an entire people as being inept and incapable of acquiring expertise over their own territory. It also negates the fact that much of the “cultivable” land mentioned by Peres was not redeemed from desert but rather expropriated from refugee farmers once they were forced to flee from their homeland.¹⁴¹ Costanzo employs both the greenhouse and the family’s mastery over it as a means of reaffirming the reality obscured behind the myth.

The sequence involving Mariam and her father arguing about the nature of resistance is a scene in which a political message is communicated verbally, mirroring the didactic nature of *Paradise Now*. During the same moment in the film as that of Jamal’s grenade discovery, Mariam confronts her father, asking him why they cannot simply stay in their own rooms. He explains to her that the soldiers would return at any moment. She then suggests that they fight back, and he replies that his persistence in staying is a form of fighting back. Her response implies that simply remaining is not resistance and

¹³⁹ Alan George, “Making the Desert Bloom: A Myth Examined,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 8, no. 2 (Winter 1979): 88.

¹⁴⁰ Sorek, 279.

¹⁴¹ George, 99.

that physical confrontation is needed. Mohammed tells her that violence and coercion are used by cowards who know no other way and who thirst for blood.

This scene serves a number of purposes. It demonstrates the differing viewpoints, in relation to resistance within Palestinian society. At the same time, it works as a criticism against the occupation forces and those who govern them. Costanzo manages to infuse the film with Palestinian self-criticism through the presentation of different-minded characters who are nevertheless unified in the common goal of shedding the yoke of their oppressor. Yet he equally allows for a certain level of ambiguity which permits the dialogue to carry a double meaning; the “cowards” Mohammed refers to could be both those Palestinians who employ violence as a means of resistance, as well as the soldiers who have imprisoned the family. This didactic approach, similar in style to scenes in *Paradise Now* in which Suha and Khaled argue, provides the viewer with a clear understanding of the politics that are at play within the film. While ambiguity is permitted, or rather excusable, it may be only because in certain cases, the rhetoric allows for multiple readings, some of which are critical of the Other. In most cases, however, these didactic scenes are devoid of ambiguity in favour of unequivocal rhetoric meant to support a certain viewpoint in the face of another.

As mentioned, there are other issues that *Private* deals with, namely checkpoints and roadblocks, the tension between the public and private, and martyrdom. While the previously discussed scenes directly deal with the dominant Zionist narrative, the following scenes present recognizable issues yet deal with them in a less didactic manner, opting instead for an illustrative approach. That is to say that rather than have one or more characters explain their viewpoint, as is done in earlier described scenes or in

Paradise Now, these particular issues are simply played out by the characters, leaving the viewer open to judge the scenarios on their own. Nevertheless, by including these particular issues, which are often distorted by the dominant narrative, the film raises questions which beg, at the very least, a cursory re-examination of the Zionist rhetoric.

The first of these issues is that of roadblocks and checkpoints. Roadblocks are essentially any number of obstructions, erected by the IDF, which hinder movement within and around Palestinian towns. Used as a form of collective punishment, these structures can include gates, ditches, or simply bulldozed rubble left in the middle of a street. Palestinians are often forced to reroute themselves around these obstructions, which often leads to delayed travel time and limited movement. Checkpoints are IDF manned outposts, also located within and around towns and villages, where Palestinians must present identification to cross. According to an IDF spokesperson, “[these crossings] are used by the IDF in order to prevent terrorists from reaching their goals and carrying out attacks against Israelis.”¹⁴² Perhaps for reasons of collective punishment, however, checkpoints between Palestinian cities can often be closed for days at a time, preventing the occupied population from reaching work or schooling. In both cases, it is evident that Palestinian movement is often controlled by the Israeli army.

When discussing the issue of Palestinian identity, we must not ignore the importance of physical movement and its effect on the formation of a shared experience. In his book on Palestinian identity, Rashid Khalidi states:

The quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity,

¹⁴² Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, “Improvements at the security crossings and roadblocks in the West Bank”; (14 June 2005) available from <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/Government/Communiques/2005/Improvements+at+security+crossings+and+roadblocks+in+the+West+Bank+14-Jun-2005.htm>; accessed 12 March 2007.

takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint: in short, at any of those many modern barriers where identities are checked and verified. What happens to these Palestinians at these crossing points brings home to them how much they share in common as a people. For it is at these borders and barriers that the six million Palestinians are singled out for ‘special treatment,’ and are forcefully reminded of their identity: of who they are, and of why they are different from others.¹⁴³

Palestinians, according to Khalidi, are constantly reminded of their identity as a displaced population through the validation of documents, which demarcate their existence. For those living outside of the Occupied Territories, passports and special permits are needed to enter and exit the West Bank and Gaza. These documents are issued by Israel, which further complicates the notions of identity often associated with one’s “papers.” Checkpoints in the territories are an example of one such border crossing where Palestinians must face their reality as a people who are permitted literally to hold some form of identification, whether personal or collective.

Private raises this issue immediately upon the arrival of the soldiers. With the division of the house, the family is confined to a single room, and their movement in the rest of the house is not only limited, it is controlled by the army. There can be no freedom of movement; it is contingent upon the whims of the Israeli army/occupation. This dynamic further complicates the issue of Palestinian identity:

The borders have become emblematic of Palestinian space and identity, which are either dispersed in Israel itself, in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, in other countries in the Middle East, and all over the rest of the world, or imprisoned within refugee camps and beyond fences and

¹⁴³ Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997) 1.

watchtowers, and further divided by numerous Israeli settlements and pass roads.¹⁴⁴

According to Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, it is not only Palestinian identity which is dispersed, it is space as well. In other words the territory in which Palestinians live, whether in historic Palestine or in the diaspora, lacks interconnectivity due to these limits on movement.

The film serves to demonstrate this interconnectivity, particularly in the scene in which Samia's neighbor attempts to visit the family once the house is under siege. She is approached by two soldiers who question her at the foot of the upper level stairs. After requesting her identification they ask her numerous questions about who she is and what she wants. The soldiers also search the bags of clothing that she is bringing to Samia. What was once a routine visit has become an exercise in humiliation and frustration. It is obvious that Samia's friend is not a threat to security yet the soldiers nevertheless inform her that she must leave the occupied house and never return.

The scene conflates issues of myth vs. reality, space and identity, and more interestingly, public vs. private. The myth of the checkpoints as an effective security apparatus is dispelled through the demonstration that even the most benign character is turned away – the absurdity of the scene borders on the obscene as the soldiers seem to be engaged in a policy of exclusion against every outsider. The space of the house is divided and controlled, to the extent that one must identify themselves (in this case to no avail) in order to move about freely. Yet the segregated household calls into question the issue of public and private spaces/identities. In discussing the contrast between the public and the private, certain clarifications must be made. First, what exactly is being

¹⁴⁴ Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi, "Palestinian Roadblock Movies," *Geopolitics* 10, no. 2 (Summer 2005): 320.

referred to when using those terms. In the case of this particular film, the terms rely on the analogy proposed at the outset of this chapter: that is that the living room represents the average Palestinian home in the territories; the main floor is the Occupied Territories themselves; and the upper floor represents Israel. The private in this case involves itself with the interior dynamics of the family, as well as those of the soldiers. It is what occurs within, and is generally limited to, the confines of a particular area/nation. Therefore, the internal strife that occurs between the members of the family belong to the private Palestinian space, while the discord among the soldiers belongs to the private Israeli space.

The public space, on the other hand, is that which is located outside of the private domain. It is within the public sphere that outward manifestations of national identity appear and interact with those of other nations. In fact, it is within the public sphere that the dominant Zionist narrative and the Palestinian narrative conflict, each vying to proclaim itself as the “true” narrative. If we are to simplify the contrast, we can say that the private is the domain of the individual, while the public belongs to the collective. *Private* not only recognizes this dynamic, but it also explores it by having the public and the private collide, often with one spilling over into the other.

In the film, the private domain is well represented; the viewer is permitted access to the two parties when they are separated from each other, thereby seeing them as individuals, rather than as representatives of their collective camps. Access to the family comes through the omniscient camera, while the soldiers are often seen through Mariam’s perspective, after she sneaks upstairs and hides in the wardrobe. Her transgression of the “border” between floors is important not only to expose the

individuality of the soldiers, it also suggests that the Palestinian perspective of Israeli society is limited in scope. The camera never fully reveals the soldiers in a full shot; it is obscured in order to mimic the crack of the door through which Mariam observes in secret. In other words, while the events that transpire in the rest of the house are shown in an open manner, the viewpoint of the soldiers is limited. The image is manipulated in such a way that only a portion of the events in front of the camera are visible, through a vertical opening in the lens that represents perhaps one eighth of the entire image. This opening moves along the horizontal access, mimicking Mariam's position in the wardrobe as she changes viewpoints in order to follow the soldiers. While this movement provides the viewer with access to other parts of the floor that were previously obscured, it subsequently hides other areas as it shifts from one side of the screen to the other.

What *Private* reveals within both the Israeli and Palestinian private domains is that each society is truly heterogeneous. The Palestinians are divided in their approach to the Israelis, and the Israeli soldiers are not unified in their approach or viewpoint of their mission. This heterogeneity is becoming more commonplace in recent films dealing with Palestine: in *Divine Intervention* we witness a collaborator, *Paradise Now* provides Suha as an opposing force to Khaled, and *Private*'s characters represent multiple facets of Palestinian society. Yet despite the appearance of multiple viewpoints, the overall unity of the Palestinian cause remains intact. This delicate balance seems to contradict the viewpoint of Frantz Fanon who claims that, in the process of a nation's formation of a national identity, "individualism is the first to disappear."¹⁴⁵ In this case, however, the

¹⁴⁵ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, (New York: Grove Press, 1963) 47.

exposition of this individualism does not come at the expense of the political goal – the entire family is determined to rid themselves of the soldiers and their occupation, yet each individual maintains a separate opinion on how to accomplish that goal. In a sense, the film suggests that the political goals of the Palestinians supercedes that of the individual. By the end, however, it becomes apparent that the cycle of violence will continue regardless of which approach is taken due to the fact that the collective identity continues to determine the course of action.¹⁴⁶

Mariam's transgression of the border between the Palestinian private sphere and the Israeli public sphere also functions, as mentioned above, as a revelatory experience. Mariam, as well as the viewer, are given access to the private Israeli sphere; the soldiers are not aware of Mariam's presence and hence their attitudes remain rooted within the realm of individuality. That is to say, they express themselves as individual members of Israeli society, with differing viewpoints, as opposed to a unified collective with similar political aspirations. Without the presence of the Other (or at least knowledge of its presence) there is less threat of appearing divided as a group. What is revealed in these scenes of Israeli discord also works to contradict the dominant Zionist narrative. Where the narrative suggests that Israel serves to unite the Jewish population from around the world, and thereby suggesting that all Israelis are committed to serving and protecting Israel, the film suggests that there are limits to these commitments. Certain soldiers are uncomfortable with the duties assigned to them in their mandatory service to the state. As such, the film is perhaps acknowledging the “*Refusenik*” movement in Israel – soldiers who have openly defied their nation's laws and refused to serve in the Occupied

¹⁴⁶ While some of the soldiers object to Ofer's severe treatment of the Palestinians, and object to the occupation in general, their presence is simply replaced by other soldiers who we assume are acting in the name of the collective Zionist mission.

Territories.¹⁴⁷ This movement challenges that notion that all Israelis are unified in supporting the country's military and strategic tactics for defense.

Furthermore, when one of the soldiers discovers Mariam's presence, he distracts his superior in order to protect her. In doing so, his actions suggest that not only are there soldiers that are unwilling to participate in actions against the Palestinian population, there are some who are willing to adopt a proactive stance and protect the Palestinians from harmful acts committed by their nation. Unfortunately, this perspective is only visible to Mariam (a fraction of the Palestinian population), who does not immediately convey it to her fellow family members (the remaining members of society), leading to the transformation of Jamal (another fraction) into a resistance fighter. While this term can also be used to describe Khaled and Said in *Paradise Now*, Jamal's character differs in that he is not martyred. The image of the martyr, however, is important in motivating his transformation, and its presence in *Private* should be examined.

During one of the nights in which the family's home is occupied, we see Jamal awake to the glowing light of the television set. He approaches it only to see static in place of an image. The flickering static snow is replaced by an image of a masked Palestinian fighter, which is consequently replaced by images of many masked fighters marching. The image momentarily returns to static, after which an image of Jamal, carrying a machine gun and wearing a *kaffiyeh*, appears onscreen. There is a short series of shot-reverse-shots between the real Jamal and his distorted mirror image before the image again returns to static. The following image is of the aftermath of a suicide bombing. The blue tint of the television screen, which was reflected on Jamal in earlier

¹⁴⁷ Courage to Refuse – Combatants Letter.

shots, has now turned red, reflecting the red tint of the aftermath sequence. Without a static-laden transition, the image now shifts to the funeral of a Palestinian martyr. The camera then cuts to Jamal, who is seen awakening in his bed, revealing that entire sequence was simply a dream.

This sequence involves the use of multiple images, each functioning according to certain pre-established notions. Images of Palestinian martyrs are prevalent within Palestinian society, and media coverage of the aftermath of suicide attacks in Israel is common.¹⁴⁸ As Mahmoud Abu Hashhash suggests in his article, “On the Visual Representation of Martyrdom in Palestine”, martyrdom is “a frequent visual motif in Palestinian art, media and life.”¹⁴⁹ As such, the appearance of the martyr (or at the very least, potential martyr) in *Divine Intervention*, *Paradise Now*, and *Private*, is in keeping with traditions already established across various Palestinian art and media forms. That the martyr image should manifest itself in *Private*, a film produced outside of Palestine, is testament to how pervasive this imagery has become.¹⁵⁰ As previously mentioned, Costanzo’s use of the imagery in this sequence functions along various lines. The images of the masked Palestinian fighters is one that serves to shift the collective representation of Palestinians from victims to courageous heroes. Abu Hashhash regards this shift as occurring after the Palestinian people lost hope of “gaining any further international support” following the failure of the peace process.¹⁵¹ While I might agree that the image

¹⁴⁸ Raphael Cohen-Almagor, “Media Coverage of Acts of Terrorism: Troubling Episodes and Suggested Guidelines,” *Canadian Journal of Communication* 30, no. 3 (Summer 2005): 393.

¹⁴⁹ Abu Hashhash, 391.

¹⁵⁰ The dissemination of this imagery outside of Palestinian culture, in foreign medias, is a topic of discussion that could fill volumes. As such, I will only be addressing the representation of the Palestinian martyr as envisioned by those seeking to reclaim that image from the grasp of international medias which seek to manipulate according to their own agendas.

¹⁵¹ Abu Hashhash, 393.

of the suicide bomber permeated following this failed process, I would argue that the image of the Palestinian fighter can be traced back much further than mid 1990s. At the very least, we can look to the early films produced by the PLO which showed guerrilla fighters staging operations against IDF forces, not to mention the existence of early resistance poetry dating back the early days of Zionist expansion in the region.¹⁵² In either case, Abu Hashhash succeeds in his suggestion that the Palestinian identity does in fact shift from one of victim to that of heroic fighter, regardless of his faulty dating. This shift is currently able to manifest itself globally with the advent of modern technologies, whereas earlier efforts were impeded by limited distribution across mass medias. Again, control of these images as forwarded by Palestinians themselves is the subject of an entirely different discourse.

The 1960s films, produced by the PLO, were instrumental in creating a shift in this image of the Palestinian resistance fighter.¹⁵³ As opposed to the current media representations of martyrs as religious fanatics, earlier images functioned to promote the individual as a revolutionary soldier fighting an illegal occupation. It is perhaps in relation to these earlier films that current martyr videos, like those reproduced in *Paradise Now*, utilize the Kalashnikov machine gun (a favorite of guerrilla fighters) while the martyrs attack generally relies on explosives. In both cases, the images of these fighters seek to “cultivate . . . national inspiration to revolutionary action.”¹⁵⁴ In *Private*, Jamal’s dream seems to function along similar lines.

¹⁵² For more on this, see Kamal Abdel-Malek’s *The Rhetoric of Violence: Arab-Jewish Encounters in Contemporary Palestinian Literature and Film*, (New York: Palgrave, 2005), specifically the section on Ibrahim Tuqan, a poet in the 1930s, located on page 25.

¹⁵³ Massad, 33.

¹⁵⁴ Abu Hashhash, 395.

Jamal's perception of himself holding a machine gun and wearing a *kaffiyeh* reflects the martyrs' envisioning of themselves as they will be remembered after death. The martyr video is the tangible artifact that remains long after the ritualized funeral, and the multitude of posters that are often covered by images of later martyrs. The video is the most "realistic" index of the "heroic" actions taken by the individual. As such, it carries a certain cultural collateral within Palestinian society. So too does the martyr funeral, itself highly ritualized. It functions to bring together "mixed feelings of anger, sadness, pride, loss and nationalist determination."¹⁵⁵ Jamal's imagining of himself within this collective identity of fighters who have immortalized themselves suggests that he has accepted that path and that he views this idolization of revolutionary action as a positive.

Costanzo, perhaps conversely, utilizes the imagery of the aftermath of the attack to balance this perspective. Whereas *Paradise Now* and *Divine Intervention* fail to portray the outcome of Palestinian resistance (*Divine Intervention*'s *ninja* sequence portrays death with little realism), *Private* addresses it explicitly. The red tinted imagery only accentuates the images of the destroyed restaurant and the bodies strewn about the scene. The red glow, reflected on Jamal's body as he watches the footage, further implicates him in the carnage portrayed onscreen. By portraying the victims of suicide bombing, Costanzo continues to humanize the colonizer, which is something the occupation fails to do.

By including this footage, Costanzo continues to provide a small amount of balance to his film, suggesting that revolutionary action is not without consequence,

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

particularly at a cost to civilians. This balance, while evident in *Private*, is not as apparent in *Paradise Now*, which is perhaps why the discourse surrounding their release was so diametrically opposite. Whereas *Private* would be nominated, and win, numerous awards with little fanfare, *Paradise Now*, as we saw in the preceding chapter, faced much opposition in its bid for international recognition. This opposition, mounted primarily by groups which sympathize with the Israeli state, was not prominent in the discourse surrounding *Private*. In fact, Sheldon Kirshner's review in the *Canadian Jewish News* stated that the film's "scenes of a shared humanity are what elevate *Private* to a higher artistic level" and that 'hope springing eternal' is the film's "enduring and hopeful message."¹⁵⁶ While *Private* received similar international acclaim, its application for nomination at the Oscars was denied for controversial reasons.

The film, submitted by Italy for consideration, was rejected on the grounds that there was no Italian spoken in the film. According to John Pavlik, the Academy's spokesman, "it has to be in one of the official languages of the country."¹⁵⁷ *Private*, which was filmed in Italy, written by Italians, produced by Italian film companies, failed to be accepted as the official entry from Italy due to the languages spoken in the film. The Academy's official rules state:

The recording of the original dialogue track as well as the completed film must be predominantly in an official language of the country submitting the film except when the story mandates that an additional non-English language be predominant.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁶ Sheldon Kirshner, "Private: Film Review," *Canadian Jewish News* 15 September 2004: 57.

¹⁵⁷ "Oscar bans Italian foreign film entry," *Agence France Presse*, 14 October 2005.

¹⁵⁸ "Rule 14 | 78th Academy Awards Rules | Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences"; (no date) available from <http://www.oscars.org/78academyawards/rules/rule14.html>; accessed 9 April 2007.

This rule clearly states that the reasons for denying *Private's* bid for nomination are indeed valid. Yet other films in the history of the Academy Awards have been accepted notwithstanding this rule. Among them, *The Battle of Algiers* (Gillo Pontecorvo, 1966) which has an Italian director and co-writer, as well as production company, yet the spoken language is not Italian; *Z* (Costa-Gavras, 1969) which was submitted by Algeria and is in French, a language which is spoken in Algeria, but is not an official language; and *La Strada Lunga un Anno* (The Year Long Road, Giuseppe De Santis, 1958) which was submitted by Yugoslavia, produced by a Yugoslavian production company, and yet written, directed and performed in Italian. According to Robert A. Osborne's *75 Years of the Oscar: The Official History of the Academy Awards*, there is no evidence suggesting that this rule has changed since the nomination of these films. The question that arises, yet which has no concrete answer, is whether or not, in light of the controversies surrounding *Divine Intervention*, *Paradise Now*, and now *Private*, there is a different set of rules for films that present the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in a new light.

CONCLUSION

Palestinian cinema, in the context of international cinemas, stands as a complex project that cannot be simplified or categorized with ease. My research has shown that, in the films dealing with Palestine in recent years, a common theme is one of a nation in conflict. Of course, given the history of Palestine, films dealing with it cannot avoid the theme of a nation in conflict. That these films were internationally recognized is testament to the power of the struggle for nationhood in the face of a powerful system which has denied that struggle for generations. Elia Suleiman, Hany Abu-Assad, and Saverio Costanzo have taken upon them the mantle of dealing with the question of Palestine through artistic means, yet the political foundations of each of their respective works is undeniable. Palestine can hardly be read through any lens without some reference to the political conflict which has defined its existence, or rather, the lack of its recognition.

What has been demonstrated explicitly here is that, in these particular films, there exists a political argument. This argument is structured around two competing historical narratives: one that defines itself at the expense of the other, while the other struggles for international recognition. It is evident in a film such as *Paradise Now* that the notion of terrorism and the motivations behind it are far more complicated than various media outlets would have us believe. While little attention is generally given to the actual families and friends of those individuals who resort to extreme forms of resistance, this film actively explores just that. Yet in order to maintain the argument that these individuals are simply religious fanatics waging a holy war, various Zionist-friendly

groups and individuals launched a campaign of misinformation in an effort to protect certain myths.

Paradise Now also presents viewers with a representation of the various viewpoints that exist within Palestinian society. While Khaled and Said both had reasons for their actions, those views were offset by the character of Suha, who served as a reminder that not all Palestinians are committed to suicidal terror. Costanzo's *Private* follows in kind with its multi-faceted representation of Palestinian society. In reducing the conflict to the level of the household, the film was able to both serve as an argument against certain Zionist myths, as well as introduce viewers to the hardships of the occupation. The motivations of various characters, particularly Mariam and Jamal, therefore become evident in the context of their daily struggles. Like *Paradise Now*, *Private* suggests that there is more to the notion of martyrdom than simply religious fanaticism.

Private also explores the issue of roadblocks and checkpoints, topics which are seldom covered within the sphere of the Zionist-friendly media. The limitations produced by these aspects of the occupation may lead viewers to a new awareness of issues that remain a major part of the conflict. In the case of *Divine Intervention*, these issues are explored in relation to the absurd, yet the effect is very much the same. Viewers become aware that there are certain facts regarding these obstacles to peace that have yet to be fully revealed by many international media outlets.

Where *Divine Intervention* also succeeds in countering the dominant Zionist narrative is in its use of symbols. By foregrounding many Palestinian symbols, the film stands as a reminder of another culture that is seeking to both expose and legitimize its

existence. Through these symbols, viewers are introduced to the multifaceted nature of Palestinian society (in terms of religious communities) as well as to the political struggle of an entire people for their land (as represented by the map and the flag). Suleiman's film also demonstrates that this political struggle can be expressed within the bounds of high art.

In all three cases examined, the films spoke towards a greater understanding of the Palestinian narrative. While each explored it in a slightly different manner, all three films share in common a certain artistic quality which has given them a certain international cachet. As such, they were able to confront the dominant Zionist narrative on an international level, in a sphere of equal accessibility.

There are numerous other recent films, also dealing with the conflict, that have failed to reach global audiences. To ignore them is akin to ignoring the crisis that currently plagues the people of Palestine. Their hopes and dreams, concerns and fears, their very livelihood is prominent in their cinema. While I would have liked to explore other recent films, there proved to be a recurring issue with these three particular films – criticism which bordered on censorship. As I have demonstrated, criticism of the dominant Zionist narrative will not go unanswered. The freedom of expression that the Palestinian people have achieved is tempered by ongoing campaigns to ensure that their voices cannot speak their own language or history. In the case of Saverio Costanzo, an Italian filmmaker whose film employs Palestinian actors, we see that the challenge has been adopted by those who have chosen to speak out in solidarity with a politically marginalized people.

The competing narratives that I have explored are both considered legitimate by the people who adhere to them. Yet a question that I did not explicitly explore is why one narrative has gained international recognition over the other. There is clearly an imbalance in regards to the exposure and acceptability of both narratives on a global scale, as well as in the efforts to neutralize this imbalance. Cultural forms of production are simply one tool which nations utilize to speak their narratives. This study explores only one such form of production, which indicates that there is still much research to be done. Perhaps academic research into this area will further the cause of the Palestinian people; perhaps the world of academia will succeed where the media have failed. As long as artists continue to speak truth to power, those with access to power should actively listen. As academics, we have a responsibility to not only investigate certain issues, but to relate our findings to others.

With a culture steeped in a history that is, arguably, three thousand years old, Palestine stands as an historic artifact that should be both remembered and protected. The people have long been silenced and denied their voices globally. As this study has shown, their voices are emerging today stronger than ever before. While silencing them is still the goal of a few, the many are now being granted access to a story whose telling has been prohibited for decades. As an issue of national or transnational cinema, Palestinian films speak to the curious – yet as an issue of national recognition, they speak to anyone who will listen.

As mentioned in my introduction, this study is primarily aimed at exploring the images involved in the conflict between two competing narratives. I structured this study solely from the perspective of Palestinian cinema, a topic which is greatly

underrepresented in today's academic writing in the Western world. A much larger study could have encompassed a review of the specific images forwarded by the "Zionist-friendly media," as stated by Joseph Massad. Yet examination of these images and the system which supports them is vast and, as of the last two decades, rather topical. To include those images in an exploration of Palestinian cinema would distract from the essential purpose: to examine how a nation benefits from the use of its own images in both telling and defending its national (hi)story.

A broader study, one that I may undertake at perhaps the doctoral level, would further explore the wealth of imagery that constitutes Palestinian culture and society. While my current study provided an introductory look at a number of these images, it did so with the intent of contrasting these images with the myths propagated by a competing national narrative. I understood the limited nature of my task would raise questions about heterogeneity in Palestinian society, especially in relation to imagery, yet I felt that this was a topic that could only be adequately explored through more stringent, and hence more time and space consuming, research.

My study was also limited to those films which had received international attention, particularly on the festival circuit. As I stated earlier, my reasoning was that these films had attracted not only international acclaim, but also raised controversy in Hollywood – a difficult task for any minor international cinema. Yet there are many other films that deal with this conflict in far more interesting and non-conventional ways.¹⁵⁹ The vast number of documentaries that seek to explore Israeli-Palestinian issues, and a proper examination of them, could be an interesting topic to explore. The

¹⁵⁹ Examples of these include those mentioned in the introduction (Khleifi and Sivan's *Route 181* and Nesrallah's *Gate of the Sun*) as well as *Encounter Point* (Ronit Avni and Julia Bacha, 2007) which deals with grassroots peace movements.

many other genres that exist within the scope of cinemas that deal with this conflict also beg further investigation.

Another area of research that I found myself greatly interested in pursuing, was a study of film reception. While it is clear that the films I have examined serve to educate, or at least encourage further thinking, about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, it has yet to be seen precisely how these films are received by various audiences. This type of study would require far more time and financial resources; research would have to be conducted in the Middle East, as well as other parts of North America, specifically within various ethnic communities. Collecting critical opinion of these films was nearly effortless in relation to gathering popular opinion about the same topic.

In listing all of these possible topics, it is evident that there is still much to be written on Palestinian cinema. I have chosen but one of these topics as my current focus, yet in doing so, I opened up the doors to many other areas which were previously unbeknownst to me. I hope to continue study in this field, as both a way of exposing Western minds to a fascinating facet of human existence and as a way of continuing the cause of the Palestinian project.

APPENDIX A – DIALOGUE

This dialogue is reprinted according to the subtitle translation provided by the Warner Brothers' North American DVD release of *Paradise Now*. (Warner Bros. Item Code 73679)

Khaled's martyr speech:

"In the name of God the merciful...in his holy book, God says: 'If you receive a wound, the people have received a similar one. Times like these come to pass so that God can recognize...the believers and choose martyrs. God does not love the unjust.' God speaks the truth. As an answer to the injustice, the occupation and its crimes...and in order to further the resistance...I have decided to carry out a martyr operation. We have no other way to fight. Israel views partnership and equality for the Palestinians...under the same democratic system...as suicide for the Jewish state. Nor will they accept a two-state compromise...even though that is not fair to the Palestinians. We are either to accept the occupation forever or disappear. We've tried with all possible means to end the occupation...with political and peaceful means. Despite it all, Israel continues to build settlements ...confiscate land, Judaize Jerusalem and carry out ethnic cleansing. They use their war machine and their political and economical might...to force us to accept their solution: That either we accept inferiority, or we will be killed. As a martyr, I am not afraid of death. This is how I will overcome their threats and emerge victorious...over their military and political force. Let me die as a martyr. Dear Mother, dear Father...I apologize for saying goodbye in this way...but we will soon be reunited. I bid you farewell. This is my testimony: there is only one God, and Mohammed is his prophet. God speaks the truth."

Said's speech before returning to his mission:

"I was born in a refugee camp. I was allowed to leave the West Bank only once. I was 6 at the time and needed surgery. Just that one time. Life here is like life imprisonment. The crimes of the occupation are countless. The worst crime of all is to exploit the people's weaknesses and turn them into collaborators. By doing that, they not only kill

the resistance they also ruin families, ruin their dignity and ruin an entire people. When my father was executed, I was 10 years old. He was a good person. But he grew weak. For that, I hold the occupation responsible. They must understand that if they recruit collaborators, they must pay the price for it. A life without dignity is worthless. Especially when it reminds you, day after day, of humiliation and weakness. And the world watches cowardly, indifferently. If you're all alone, faced with this oppression, you have to find a way to stop the injustice. They must understand that if there's no security for us, there'll be none for them either. It's not about power. Their power doesn't help them. I tried to deliver this message to them but I couldn't find another way. Even worse, they've convinced the world, and themselves, that they are the victims. How can that be? How can the occupier be the victim? If they take on the role of oppressor and victim, then I have no other choice but to also be a victim and a murderer as well. I don't know how you'll decide, but I will not return to the refugee camp."

Jamal's conversation with Said:

Jamal: "What can you do when there is no justice or freedom? The individual has to fight for it. If we give in to the law, that the strong devours the weak, then we reduce ourselves to the level of animals. That's intolerable. Death is better than inferiority. Whoever fights for freedom, can also die for it. You are the one who will change things."

APPENDIX B – CHRONOLOGIES

This section offers a condensed version of the timelines provided by the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs. I have omitted some events which, for this study, were not specifically relevant. For the complete timeline, see:

<http://www.israel-mfa.gov.il/MFA/History/Modern+History/Centenary+of+Zionism/ZIONISM+-+Timeline+-+Events.htm>.

I. Zionism – Timeline of Events

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1870-1896 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Forerunners of Zionism |
| 1870s-80s | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hovevei Zion (lovers of Zion) societies in Russia and Romania promote agricultural settlement in the Land of Israel |
| 1882-1903 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Aliya (large-scale immigration), mainly from Russia, including many members of Hovevei Zion |
| 1882 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leon Pinsker's Autoemancipation, calling for the establishment of Jewish national center, is published • Members of the Bilu movement, which called for the revival of the Jewish people through settlement in the Land of Israel, begin to arrive, becoming the first organized group of pioneers |
| 1890 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Hebrew Language Committee is founded by Eliezer Ben Yehuda, "father of the Hebrew language" as part of his struggle towards the rebirth of Hebrew as a modern language |
| 1891 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ahad Ha'am visits Palestine (as the Land of Israel was then called) and calls for the creation of a Jewish cultural center |
| 1896 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theodor Herzl, father of political Zionism, writes The Jewish State, asserting that the problem of antisemitism can be resolved only by a Jewish state |
| 1897-1997 | |
| The Years of Challenge and Achievement | |
| 1897 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First Zionist Congress is convened (29 August); adoption of the Basle program, calling for the establishment of a national home for the Jews in the Land of Israel; Theodor Herzl, the congress' initiator, writes in his journal: "In Basle I founded the Jewish State... In ... fifty years, everyone will realize it." |
| Zionist Organization is founded; Theodor Herzl is elected president | |

- 1898 • Second Zionist Congress; foundations laid for the formation of the Jewish Colonial Trust, later the Anglo-Palestine Bank
- 1899 • Third Zionist Congress adopts a complete constitution
- 1900 • Fourth Zionist Congress; persecution of Romanian Jewry and the problems of Jewish workers in Palestine are discussed
- 1901 • Fifth Zionist Congress; the Jewish National Fund (Keren Kayemet LeIsrael) is founded by the Zionist Organization for the purpose of purchasing land in the Land of Israel to be the "eternal possession of the Jewish people"
- 1902 • Sixth Zionist Congress; discussion of the British government's offer of a territory in Uganda for Jewish settlement; the offer causes a major split in the movement, and while approved by a majority of delegates is later abandoned
- 1903 • Anglo-Palestine Bank (now Bank Leumi) is established, becoming the principal financial institution of the yishuv (Jewish community in Palestine)
- 1904-14 • Second Aliya immigrants, mainly from Russia and Poland, begin to arrive, after repeated pogroms and impoverishment; a number of new agricultural settlements are founded by the immigrants
- 1904 • Theodor Herzl, father of political Zionism, dies
- 1905 • Seventh Zionist Congress; David Wolffsohn elected president of the Zionist Organization
- 1907 • Eighth Zionist Congress; decision is made to proceed with political Zionism (international efforts to obtain a charter for the Jews in Palestine) and practical Zionism (settlement); it is acknowledged that both are necessary and together form a whole
- 1908 • Hatzvi, first Hebrew daily, is published in Jerusalem
• Office of Zionist Organization is opened in Jaffa
- 1909 • Hashomer organization is founded, taking over responsibility for the security of Jewish settlements
• Ninth Zionist Congress; representatives of Jewish workers in Palestine participate for the first time
• Tel Aviv, first all-Jewish city in modern times, is founded near Jaffa
• First kibbutz, Degania, is founded by young Jewish pioneers on the shores of Lake Kinneret (Sea of Galilee), combining agricultural

settlement with a collective way of life

- 1914-18 • World War I
- 1915-17 • NILI, secret Jewish organization spying for the British, is active until its members are captured by the Ottoman authorities
- 1917 • 400 years of Ottoman rule are ended by British conquest; British General Allenby enters Jerusalem
 • Balfour Declaration is issued, pledging the British government's support for the establishment of a Jewish National Home in Palestine (2 November)
- 1918 • The Jewish Legion, a military unit of Jewish volunteers in the British army fighting for the liberation of Eretz Israel from Turkish rule, is formed, mainly through the efforts of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky
 • First meeting of Chaim Weizmann (head of the Zionist Commission, sent by Britain to Palestine and later first president of Israel) with the Emir Feisal, head of the Arab nationalist movement
- 1919 • Weizmann and the Emir Feisal sign an agreement for close collaboration between their respective national movements; agreement is later repudiated by Arab nationalists
- 1919-23 • Third Aliya, comprised mostly of young people from Russia with strong Zionist and socialist convictions
- 1920 • Defenders of Tel Hai, led by Yosef Trumpeldor, make a heroic stand against Arab attackers, becoming a symbol of Jewish defense
 • Supreme Council of San Remo Peace Conference resolves that the Mandate for Palestine be conferred on Great Britain
 • Haganah, clandestine Jewish defense organization, is founded
 • Sir Herbert Samuel is appointed first British High Commissioner
 • Chaim Weizmann is elected president of the Zionist Organization
 • Keren Hayesod, the financial arm of the World Zionist Organization, is founded, collecting contributions worldwide
 • Hebrew becomes the official language of the country
- 1921 • Arab anti-Jewish riots - outbreaks of violence in Jaffa, Rehovot, Petah Tikva, Hadera and other places leave 47 Jews dead and many wounded
 • Twelfth Zionist Congress; a representative of the workers for Palestine is elected to the executive for the first time
- 1922 • League of Nations confirms British Mandate for Palestine, citing the Balfour Declaration in the preamble of the Mandate
 • The Council of the League of Nations and Great Britain decide that

- the provisions for a Jewish National Home would not apply to the area east of the Jordan River - three-fourths of the territory included in the Mandate, which eventually becomes the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan
- Palestine Electric Company is founded on the initiative of Pinchas Rutenberg
 - Churchill White Paper is published, giving a restrictive interpretation to the Balfour Declaration and limiting immigration
 - The Palestine Order in Council (in effect a constitution) is promulgated by the British Mandatory authorities
- 1924-32
- Fourth Aliya, comprised of middle-class people, mainly from Poland, who settle in the cities
- 1929
- Sixteenth Zionist Congress; a Jewish Agency is constituted, as stipulated in the Mandate, to represent the Jewish community in Palestine vis-a-vis the British authorities, foreign governments and international organizations (from 1923 these tasks had been partly filled by the Zionist Organization in Palestine)
 - Widespread Arab riots; in Hebron, 70 Jews are massacred; in Jerusalem, Tel Aviv and Haifa, Arab attacks are thwarted by the Haganah
- 1931
- Etzel, underground defense and resistance organization, consisting mainly of right-wing and Revisionist elements, is founded
 - Seventeenth Zionist Congress; dissent over the level of cooperation with the British government leads to rift between Revisionists and other parties in the Zionist organization; Nahum Sokolow elected president of the Zionist Organization
- 1933-39
- Fifth Aliya, mainly from Germany, including many academics and professionals, who settled in towns and cities, and accompanied by a large influx of capital
- 1933
- Hitler comes to power in Germany
 - Eighteenth Zionist Congress; conflict between labor and revisionists continues
- 1935
- Nineteenth Zionist Congress; Chaim Weizmann is reelected president of the Zionist Organization
- 1936-39
- A three-year period of disorder and violence known as the Arab Revolt (against Jewish immigration and land purchase by Jews), during which hundreds of Jews are murdered
 - Tel Aviv port is built, in answer to closure of Jaffa port during Arab general strike

- 1936
 - Some 50 new settlements are established in outlying areas, set up in one day and ready to defend by nightfall, known as the "stockade and watchtower settlements"
- 1937
 - Peel Commission recommends partitioning Palestine into two states, one Jewish and one Arab, with an area including Jerusalem and a corridor to the sea to remain under British administration
 - Twentieth Zionist Congress; it is resolved to negotiate a more favorable partition of Palestine with the British government
- 1938
 - Aliya B, "illegal immigration" of Jews from Europe, begins; by 1948 almost 100,000 illegal immigrants will arrive
 - Charles Orde Wingate helps establish Jewish "special night squads" incorporated into British army units to fight attacking Arab bands
 - Etzel member (Shlomo ben Yosef) is hanged by the British for his part in an abortive attack on an Arab bus
- 1939
 - 1939 White Paper is published, restricting immigration and the sale of land to Jews
 - Twenty-first Zionist Congress; strong opposition to the White Paper and support for illegal immigration are expressed
 - World War II breaks out (1 September); a master plan to liquidate the Jewish community in Europe is put into motion by Nazi Germany; some six million Jews, including 1.5 million children, are murdered by the Nazis between 1939 and 1945 (the Shoah - Holocaust)
- 1940
 - The Lehi underground resistance organization, led by Avraham "Yair" Stern, breaks away from Etzel
- 1941
 - Palmach, the Haganah's strike force, is formed
 - The Patria, carrying illegal immigrants about to be deported to Mauritius, is sabotaged by the Haganah to prevent its sailing; it sinks in Haifa harbor with 250 aboard
- 1942
 - The Struma, returning to Europe after British insistence that it would not be allowed into port in Palestine, founders in the Black Sea and all 770 persons aboard perish
- 1944
 - The Jewish Brigade, composed of Jews from Palestine, is incorporated into the British army
 - A group of paratroopers, sent by the Haganah to organize Jewish resistance and rescue Allied prisoners of war, parachutes into Nazi-occupied Europe; two of its members, Hanna Szenes and Perez Goldstein, are captured, tortured and executed
- 1945
 - World War II ends (8 May)
 - General Sir Alan Cunningham is appointed last High Commissioner
 - Two Lehi members (Eliyahu Hakim and Eliyahu Bet Tzuri) are hanged by the British in Egypt for the assassination of Lord Moyne,

the British Minister of State for the Middle East, in Cairo

- 1946
 - Jewish defense organizations (Haganah, Etzel and Lehi) join together to carry out actions blowing up road and railway bridges which link Palestine with neighboring states
 - Black Saturday (29 June) - Mandatory government arrests many Jews, including members of the Jewish Agency Executive, exiling many to Cyprus, conducts searches for Palmach members and arms caches, and intensifies policy against illegal immigration
 - South wing of King David Hotel, the seat of the Mandate government and the British army, is blown up by Etzel; 80 killed
 - The Arab economic boycott is first applied by the Arab League against the Jewish community in Palestine (subsequently against the State of Israel)
 - Twenty-second Zionist Congress, the first after the war, meets in Basle
- 1947
 - 4500 refugees who left Europe on the Exodus are not allowed to disembark in Palestine and are sent back to Europe
 - Seven Etzel and Lehi members are hanged by British for attacks on the British military; two commit suicide in their prison cell
 - Etzel hangs two kidnapped British sergeants in retaliation
 - UN decides on establishment of Jewish and Arab states in Palestine, by a vote of 33 to 13 with 10 abstentions; Arab riots against yishuv begin (29 November)
- 1948
 - State of Israel is proclaimed (5 Iyar - 14 May) by David Ben-Gurion, hours before the British Mandate is due to end (15 May)
 - War of Independence begins (15 May) as the armies of Egypt, Syria, Jordan and Lebanon and a contingent from Iraq attack the new state; in 15 months of intermittent fighting, all invaders are repulsed
 - Israel Defense Forces (IDF) is founded, incorporating all the pre-state defense organizations
 - First census finds a population of 872,700 in Israel - 716,700 Jews and 156,000 non-Jews
- 1949
 - Armistice agreements are signed with Egypt, Jordan, Syria and Lebanon
 - Jerusalem is divided between Israel and Jordan, with Jordan holding the Old City and east Jerusalem, and Israel retaining the western and southern parts of the city
 - First elections (25 January); David Ben-Gurion heads Labor-led coalition government
 - Chaim Weizmann is elected first president
 - First Knesset meets in Jerusalem (Tu BeShvat)
 - Mass immigration begins, from Arab countries of Middle East and

- North Africa and displaced persons from Europe
 - Jerusalem is declared capital of Israel by the Knesset
 - Israel becomes 59th member of UN
 - Operation Magic Carpet - aliyah of Jews from Yemen – begins
- 1950
- Government ministries are moved to Jerusalem
 - First ma'abara - temporary camp for new immigrants - is established
- 1951
- Elections for Second Knesset
 - Twenty-third Zionist Congress, the first to meet in Jerusalem; adoption of the Jerusalem program, resolving to work towards the consolidation of the State of Israel, the ingathering of the exiles in Eretz Israel and the unity of the Jewish people
- 1953
- Yad Vashem is established to perpetuate the memory of the six million Jews who perished in the Nazi Holocaust
- 1954
- Egypt stops Israeli freighter, Bat Galim, from passing through the Suez Canal, contravening the cease-fire agreement
 - Israeli intelligence fiasco in Egypt causes a scandal (Esek Bish) which continues for nearly a decade and forces Israel's Minister of Defense, Pinchas Lavon, to resign
 - Moshe Sharett becomes prime minister, after resignation of Ben-Gurion
- 1955
- Elections for Third Knesset; David Ben-Gurion again becomes prime minister
- 1956
- Sinai Campaign is launched by Israel, Great Britain and France after terrorist incursions, an Egyptian blockade of the Straits of Tiran and the signing of a tripartite military alliance by Egypt, Jordan and Syria; in the course of the fighting, Israel captures the Gaza Strip and the entire Sinai peninsula
 - Twenty-fourth Zionist Congress; Nahum Goldman assumes presidency of the Zionist Organization after the post has been vacant for ten years
- 1957
- Israel withdraws from the Gaza Strip and the Sinai Peninsula, is assured free passage of its shipping through the Suez Canal
 - Hula swamp is drained, providing arable land and preventing malaria
 - Dimona nuclear reactor is constructed with French assistance
- 1960
- Twenty-fifth Zionist Congress; a constitution is adopted introducing far-reaching reforms and decentralization; the Zionist Organization's name is changed to the World Zionist Organization
- 1965
- Eli Cohen - Israeli intelligence agent in Damascus - is hanged by Syria

- Diplomatic relations are established with Germany, despite vehement opposition and public debate
 - Twenty-sixth Zionist Congress; debate centers on assistance to the State of Israel and the survival of the Jewish nation in the Diaspora
- 1966 • Permanent Knesset building inaugurated in Jerusalem
- 1967 • Six-Day War (6-11 June)
 - Jerusalem is liberated
 - The Golan Heights are taken by Israel after fierce fighting against attacking Syrian forces
 - Judea, Samaria, Gaza, and Sinai peninsula come under Israeli control
 - Jerusalem officially reunited, and its municipal boundaries expanded
 - UN resolution 242 adopted, providing an agreed framework for settling the Arab-Israel dispute (22 November)
 - Military government is established in administered areas
- 1968 • First television broadcasts
 - Twenty-seventh Zionist Congress, the first to meet in reunited Jerusalem, adopts additions to the Jerusalem program relating to Jewish unity, centrality of Israel, aliyah and Jewish education abroad
- 1969 • Prime Minister Levi Eshkol dies in office; Golda Meir becomes prime minister
 - Five French-built torpedo boats, purchased and paid for by Israel, are successfully brought from Cherbourg port to Haifa, despite French arms embargo
 - Elections for Seventh Knesset; Golda Meir remains prime minister
- 1969-70 • War of Attrition, sporadic military actions by Egypt along the Suez Canal, escalate into full-scale localized fighting until a renewed cease-fire is achieved
- 1970s • Black Panthers - a radical protest movement of Israelis of mid-eastern and north African background is active for some time; some of its members later enter mainstream politics
- 1972 • Twenty-eighth Zionist Congress; social problems in Israel, the struggle of Soviet Jewry for aliyah, and the promotion of aliyah from Western countries are discussed
- 1973 • Yom Kippur War - on the Day of Atonement, the holiest day of the Jewish year, Egypt and Syria launch a coordinated surprise attack, repulsed by Israel after unprecedented fierce fighting and heavy losses
 - David Ben-Gurion, first prime minister, regarded as the father of the State of Israel, dies
 - Anti-government protests lead to resignation of Prime Minister Golda Meir

- 1974
 - Yitzhak Rabin becomes prime minister
 - Separation-of-forces agreement is signed with Egypt
 - Gush Emunim, a movement dedicated to Jewish sovereignty over historical Israel (advocating settling Judea and Samaria) becomes active
- 1975
 - UN passes resolution equating Zionism with racism
 - Disengagement agreement is signed with Syria
- 1977
 - Elections for Ninth Knesset - Likud party wins elections, ending 29 years of Labor party rule; Menachem Begin becomes prime minister
 - Egyptian President Sadat visits Jerusalem, breaking the cycle of Arab rejection of Israel
- 1978
 - Camp David Accords, constituting a basis for peace between Israel and Egypt, as well as a basis for solving the Palestinian issue, are signed by Israel and Egypt
 - Operation Litani - in response to attacks on civilians in northern Israel, Israel takes action against terrorist strongholds in southern Lebanon
 - Twenty-ninth Zionist Congress; religious pluralism in Israel is a major subject of debate
- 1979
 - Peace Treaty with Egypt is signed, marking the end of 31 years of hostility and five costly wars
 - Prime Minister Begin and President Sadat are awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- 1980
 - Basic Law: "Jerusalem, Capital of Israel" is passed by Knesset
- 1981
 - Memorandum of Understanding is signed with USA, forming the basis for civilian and military cooperation
 - Iraqi nuclear reactor is destroyed by Israel Air Force, weeks before it is due to go critical and pose a grave threat to Israel and the rest of the world
 - The Golan Heights Law is passed by the Knesset
 - Elections for the Tenth Knesset; Likud party forms new government
- 1982
 - Israel completes withdrawal from Sinai in accordance with the Israel-Egypt Peace Treaty
 - Operation Peace for Galilee is launched against PLO terrorist strongholds in Lebanon used for attacks against northern Israel; the IDF withdraws from Lebanon in 1985, retaining a presence in a security zone in southern Lebanon
 - Thirtieth Zionist Congress
- 1983
 - Yitzhak Shamir becomes prime minister, after resignation of Menachem Begin

- 1984
 - Operation Moses brings some 7000 Jews from the ancient Jewish community of Ethiopia to Israel
 - Elections for Eleventh Knesset; Shimon Peres becomes prime minister of national unity government
- 1985
 - Free trade agreement is signed with US
 - An emergency economic stabilization program put into effect by the government, together with the labor unions and the employers' organizations, succeeds in lowering annual inflation from 445% to 20%
- 1986
 - Yitzhak Shamir becomes prime minister, as part of the national unity government rotation agreement
- 1987
 - Thirty-first Zionist Congress; religious pluralism in Israel is a major focus of concern
 - Palestinian uprising (intifada) begins in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
- 1988
 - Memorandum of Understanding is signed with the USA, expanding cooperation between them
 - Yitzhak Shamir remains prime minister of national unity government
- 1989
 - Mass immigration of Jews from the former Soviet Union begins
- 1990
 - Labor party ministers resign from the government over lack of progress in the peace process
- 1991
 - Israel is attacked by Iraqi Scud missiles during Gulf War
 - Middle East Peace Conference convenes in Madrid, bringing together representatives of Israel, Egypt, Jordan, Syria, Lebanon and the Palestinians
 - UN Security Council rescinds the resolution equating Zionism with racism
 - Operation Solomon - most of the Jews remaining in Ethiopia, some 15,000, are brought to Israel in a massive 25-hour airlift
- 1992
 - Elections for Thirteenth Knesset; Yitzhak Rabin of the Labor party becomes prime minister
- 1993
 - Declaration of Principles on Interim Self-Government Arrangements is signed by Israel and the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people
- 1994
 - Gaza-Jericho Agreement between Israel and the PLO is signed in Cairo
 - Israel-Jordan peace treaty is signed, establishing full diplomatic relations

- Rabin, Peres and Arafat are awarded Nobel Peace Prize
- 1995
- Interim Agreement on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip is signed by Israel and the PLO, providing for broadened self-government by the Palestinians in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip
 - Treaty of Association is signed with EU, broadening trade relations between Israel and the EU
 - Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin is assassinated by a Jewish extremist at a peace rally; Shimon Peres becomes prime minister
- 1996
- IDF redeploys in the West Bank, including withdrawal from six West Bank cities, implementing the interim agreement
 - Trade representation offices are established in Oman and Qatar
 - Elections for Fourteenth Knesset and first direct elections for prime minister; Benjamin Netanyahu of the Likud party is elected prime minister
- 1997
- Protocol Concerning the Redeployment in Hebron signed between Israel and the PLO

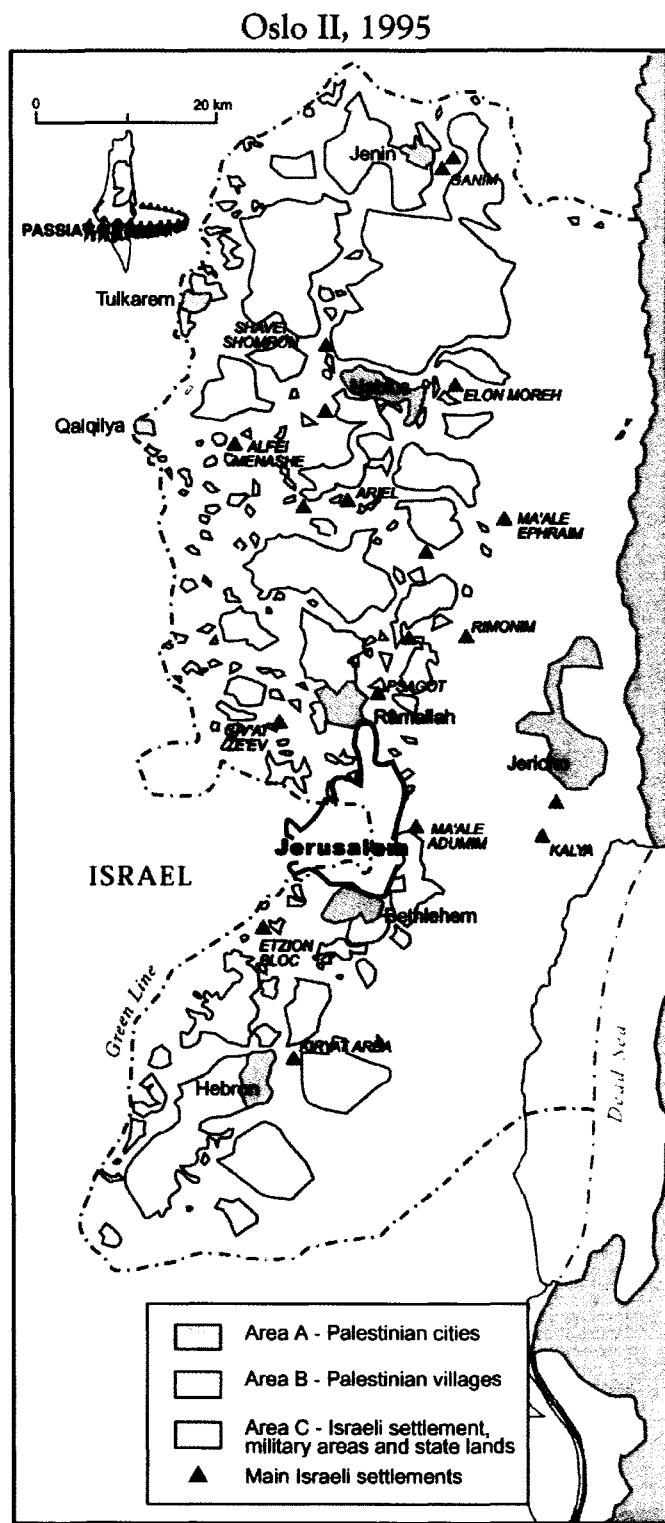
APPENDIX B – CHRONOLOGIES

II. Facts about Israel (1998-2006)

- 1998
- Israel celebrates its 50th anniversary.
 - Israel and the PLO sign the Wye River Memorandum to facilitate implementation of the Interim Agreement.
- 1999
- Ehud Barak (left-wing One Israel party) elected Prime Minister; forms coalition government.
 - Israel and the PLO sign the Sharm-el-Sheikh Memorandum.
- 2000
- Visit of Pope Paul II.
 - Israel withdraws from the Security Zone in southern Lebanon.
 - Israel admitted to UN Western European and Others Group.
 - Al-Aqsa intifada (renewed violence) breaks out.
 - Prime Minister Barak resigns.
- 2001
- Ariel Sharon (Likud) elected Prime Minister and forms broad-based unity government.
 - The Sharm-el-Sheikh Fact-Finding Committee issues a report (the Mitchell Report).
 - Palestinian-Israeli Security Implementation Work Plan (Tenet

- ceasefire plan).
 - Rechavam Ze'evy, Minister of Tourism, assassinated by Palestinian terrorists.
- 2002
- Israel launches Operation Defensive Shield in response to massive Palestinian terrorist attacks.
 - Prime Minister Sharon disperses the Knesset, calling for new elections on Jan 28, 2003.
- 2003
- Right-of-center coalition government formed by Prime Minister Ariel Sharon
 - Israel accepts the Roadmap
- 2005
- Israel carries out the Disengagement Plan which was approved by the Government and the Knesset
- 2006
- After Prime Minister Sharon suffers a stroke, Ehud Olmert becomes Acting Prime Minister
 - Elections held on 28 March
 - Prime Minister Ehud Olmert forms new government
 - Israel carries out military operations against Palestinian terrorism from the Gaza Strip and Hezbollah terrorism from southern Lebanon.

APPENDIX C – OSLO II MAP



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