

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

PALESTINE THROUGH EXILIC *KINO-EYE*:
RECLAIMING SPACE IN PALESTINIAN FICTION FILM

by
SAMIRA MOHAMMAD MAKKI

A thesis
submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
to the Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies
of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences
at the American University of Beirut

Beirut, Lebanon
December 2016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

Palestine through Exilic *Kino-Eye*: Reclaiming Space in Palestinian
Fiction Film

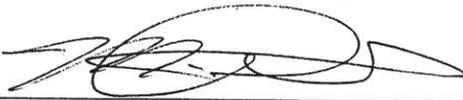
by
SAMIRA MOHAMMAD MAKKI

Approved by:



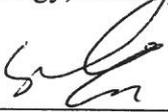
Dr. Greg Burris, Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies

Advisor



Dr. May Farah, Assistant Professor
Department of Sociology, Anthropology and Media Studies

Member of Committee



Dr. Hassan Choubassi, Assistant Professor
Department of Fine Arts and Design at the Lebanese International University

Member of Committee

Date of thesis defense, December 13, 2016

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THESIS, DISSERTATION, PROJECT RELEASE FORM

Student Name: MaKKi Samira Mohammad
Last First Middle

Master's Thesis Master's Project Doctoral Dissertation

I authorize the American University of Beirut to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of my thesis, dissertation, or project; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes.

I authorize the American University of Beirut, to: (a) reproduce hard or electronic copies of it; (b) include such copies in the archives and digital repositories of the University; and (c) make freely available such copies to third parties for research or educational purposes after : **One --- year from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.**
Two --- years from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.
Three --- years from the date of submission of my thesis, dissertation, or project.

 12/11/2017
Signature Date

This form is signed when submitting the thesis, dissertation, or project to the University Libraries

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First and foremost, I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my thesis advisor Dr. Greg Burris, who has helped me tremendously and whose comments were extremely informative to shaping the way this came together. I would also like to thank Dr. May Farah, whose class inspired the writing of this thesis. I am gratefully indebted for her valuable comments.

I extend my gratitude also to Dr. Hassan Choubassi, who introduced me to the films of Elia Suleiman. His continuous support means a lot. Finally, I thank my parents, my sisters, my nephews and nieces, and my friends, all of whom provided me with continuous encouragement through the process of researching and writing this thesis.

To the souls of Khalil and Youssef.

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Samira Mohammad Makki for Master of Arts
Major: Media Studies

Title: Palestine through Exilic *Kino-Eye*: Reclaiming Space in Palestinian Fiction Film

In my research, I focus on exilic fiction film as the medium through which Palestine can be individualized and told through personal tales. By approaching Palestine through post-colonialism, I show how Elia Suleiman, an exilic filmmaker, grapples with an occupied space, within and beyond territorial boundaries of land. The re-articulation of filmic space depicted through formal film analysis and textual analysis, is perceived in the context of this study as a disruption of meta-narratives, both the Palestinian nationalist and the Zionist.

Hence, the aim of the study is to highlight the role of fiction film in the emergence of an alternative spatial conception of Palestine. By so doing, fiction film becomes an opportunity through which filmmakers open up possibilities for Palestine to be told through fragments of chronicles and multiple narrations situated within the liminalities of reality and imagination.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	v
ABSTRACT.....	vi
Chapter	
I. INTRODUCTION.....	1
II. LITERATURE AND THEORY.....	5
III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND METHODOLOGY.....	31
A. Research Questions.....	31
B. Methodology.....	32
IV. ANAYLISIS.....	37
A. Filming Techniques.....	37
B. Patterns.....	41
1.Time.....	42
2.Gender.....	64
3.Home.....	72
V. CONCLUSION.....	81
REFERENCES.....	86
Appendix	
I. FIGURES.....	92

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

“It's sort of the fate of Palestinians, not to end up where they started, but somewhere unexpected and far away”. These were the words Edward Said uttered in the opening scene of the documentary *In Search of Palestine* made by the BBC in 1998, on Said's return to Jerusalem, the place where his eyes first saw the light of day, the place where he was eager to call home. Edward Said was among the prominent Palestinian figures in exile, who contributed through his literary work to the question of Palestine. Just as Said made Palestine the topic of many of his books and articles, a number of exilic filmmakers are also depicting their land through diverse approaches, thus adding to the manifold mediums through which Palestine is narrated.

This begs the question of how such individual endeavors are contending with the subject of Palestine through a multitude of interpretations and a variety of means, and why it becomes important to shed light on such portrayals. What would Palestine symbolize if it were pierced and surrounded by a harsh architecture of an entrenched occupation and a predominant national narrative that dismisses singularity? How does the concept of belonging fluctuate between maintaining the intimacy and sacredness of homeland and confronting what has become a claustrophobic space?

This research attempts to tackle these questions by employing film as the medium through which Palestine is interpreted via the *Kino-eye* of exilic filmmakers, specifically that of Elia Suleiman. Although Dziga Vertov's infamous term *Kino-eye* is more likely to be associated with documentary films seen as an extension of reality, I

argue that Palestine can and is being documented through fiction, since fiction here, as I demonstrate, is not a dismissal of reality but rather an alternative version of it.

Before delving specifically into the importance of fiction film as a form of narration, I should first address why film as a medium is employed in this study. Film first emerged out of an obsession and fascination with reality. For André Bazin, French film critic and theorist, film is “objective in time” and unlike other forms of art, it serves “our obsession with realism” as it carries out a manifestation of truth seen as an art of the real (1958, p. 14). Hence, film sprung up as an apparatus that visually, and later audibly, allowed the recording of fragments of reality, an apparatus that lays bare the truth set in motion. As Robert Stam claims, this obsession with the real fueled first and foremost national imaginaries and later on allowed colonial regimes to find yet another medium to employ as a hegemonic tool (2000).

Dziga Vertov was among the first Soviet filmmakers to introduce the term *Kino-eye* or “the visual linkage of people throughout the entire world based on the continuous exchange of visible fact [...]” (Vertov, 1935, p. 8). In 1929, Vertov made a silent film titled *Man With a Movie Camera*, which in his words, was intended “for the workers and the peasants of the Soviet Union” (1935). Through film, he sought to expose a form of the real, since for him, sensory vision alone is not sufficient (Vertov, 1935). Yet, what I tend to explore here is how film as a medium that initially emerged to fill collective endeavors clinging to the element of the real, has become an alternative individual experience. Hence, the use of the term *Kino-eye* informs this study, as it refers to the depiction of a form of the real through the eye of the camera. Simply put, *Kino-eye* is employed here as a Soviet expression that is not confined to documenting the struggle, but rather allows the filmmaker to capture their own perspective of the real on the reel.

Film might not necessarily be the first tool that comes to mind when we think about media, but it shouldn't be dismissed as culturally and historically non-pertinent. Film can be more than just documentation; like other media, it is a communicative tool that has the ability to manifest alternative versions of reality. It is a vivid medium that pertains and creates histories and stories for our eyes and ears to perceive; it has the ability to combine different forms of media such as works of music, literature and performance art via images and sounds.

Palestine has been the subject matter of many media texts; from poetry, to novels and short stories, performance and theatrical plays, ballet and hip-hop, newspapers and social media. Palestine seems to be entrenched in a myriad of apparatuses. Yet, film is one essential medium through which I seek to show how the image and sound of Palestine can transgress borders both physically and symbolically, as the fictitious lens of an exilic filmmaker depicts “the fantasy and the imaginary [...] resistance and subversion, particularly through the prisms of micropolitics and aesthetics” (Ponazesi, Waller, 2012, p. 9).

For this study, I focus specifically on the films of Elia Suleiman whose films are emblematic of the ways in which exilic filmmakers reconfigure Palestine as a spatial entity and by so doing, allow its re-narration. Here, narration is not confined to master narratives, but rather breaks out of the hegemony imposed by official discourses and is examined as multi-layered interpretations that defy both the Palestinian nationalist and Zionist chronicles.

In what follows, I introduce two main components that shape the way this study is constructed. First, I look at Palestine through the lens of post-colonialism seen as both a

discourse and as a potential palpable condition. Post-colonialism is employed here as a framework that disrupts meta-narratives through fragmentation and hybridity, to later pave the way for examining fiction as a form of narration, where film is the apparatus through which the latter is tackled. I then deal specifically with Palestine as both a tangible and filmic space that shifts between the brutal reality of being subjugated to both Zionist and Palestinian nationalist narratives, and exilic fiction films as an opportunity that allows the creation of hyperspaces that disrupt the harshness of the real. By so doing, the lens of Elia Suleiman becomes the tool that re-invents Palestine as a whole and allows its re-imagination. This creates alternative spaces, hence alternative narratives that are not denying or escaping reality, but rather resisting it by way of a filmic re-interpretation.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE AND THEORY

A. Deconstructing Palestine

1. Situating Palestine in Post-colonialism

To situate Palestine in post-colonialism as a discourse is a task that can be fraught with ambiguities since, it goes without saying, the Israeli colonization of Palestine is nothing but encompassing. I am aware of the controversy of having to locate an occupied land in the context of post-colonialism. Hence, this is not meant to undermine the reality of the colonization, but rather to acknowledge the abundance of voices that have emerged as a result of it, to “reroute” in Patrick Williams’ words, the conversation of post-colonialism for it to include the Palestinian body of cultural production within the nuances of what is discussed in post-colonial debates (2010). Even if Palestine’s current situation undeniably provokes an anti-colonial or an anti-neo-colonial critique, we should not perceive Palestine as a stumbling block to the post-colonial as a discipline. Rather, one can examine the possibilities and fragments of the acts of resistance and agency that emerge out of an oppressing situation through a critical employment of the post-colonial, through a lens that allows us to “explore various facets of the Palestinian narrative” (Ball, Williams, 2014).

Anna McClintock and Ella Shohat have delineated the limitations of the post-colonial as a categorized “theory” and proposed a re-articulation of the term itself. McClintock (1992) sheds light on how problematic the term’s usage is, as it implies a progressive shift from pre-colonial to colonial to post-colonial through a one dimensional development of time, rooted in a Euro-centric linearity of passing from the colonial to

the post-colonial. For her, there is an inherent binarism in the post-colonial that seems to be stuck between the colonial past and the post-colonial present/future that renders post-colonialism as a monolithic phenomenon, notwithstanding the distinction between the different countries and their colonial experiences.

Yet, focusing on the singularity of the term itself runs the risk of reducing the post-colonial to its signifier, i.e the term itself, disregarding the multiplicity that arises out of the connotations underlying the post-colonial as a discourse and not just as an achieved concrete/historical condition. And while the term itself can be dubious, one can make up for this vagueness by raising the question of its political agency in a specific spatio-temporal context, which is what both McClintock (1992) and Shohat (1992) advocate.

Shohat (1992) aims to situate the post-colonial in a relational context with other controversial categories. The post-colonial, according to Shohat (1992), was the result of the collapse of an older paradigm, that of the “Third World”. “Third World Theory” mainly stood for the nationalist/anti-colonial movements that were taking place from the fifties all the way through the seventies and became highly articulated in political and academic apparatuses. Yet, while the three worlds theory has proven to be inadequate since it “flattens heterogeneities, masks contradictions, and elides differences”, post-colonialism came to replace the former, introducing a discourse that seeks to bring to the surface issues that emerge out of (ex) colonized contexts (Shohat, 1992, p. 101).

Interestingly enough, Shohat (1992) differentiates between the post-colonial that marks a shift from one period in history to another, and post-colonialism that refers

to moving beyond “outmoded philosophical, aesthetic and political theories” (p. 101).

Therefore, to locate Palestine in “post-colonialism” is not a chronological assumption of moving beyond an ongoing colonization, but rather a shift to a new disciplinary teleology that needs to be speculated.

Here, Shohat (1992) proposes a re-articulation of the term “post-colonial” that is worth quoting at length:

The term "post-colonial" would be more precise, therefore, if articulated as "post-First/Third Worlds theory," or "post-anti-colonial critique," as a movement beyond a relatively binaristic, fixed and stable mapping of power relations between "colonizer/colonized" and "center/periphery." Such re-articulations suggest a more nuanced discourse, which allows for movement, mobility and fluidity. Here, the prefix "post" would make sense less as "after" than as following, going beyond and commenting upon a certain intellectual movement - third worldist anti-colonial critique - rather than beyond a certain point in history - colonialism; for here "neo-colonialism" would be a less passive form of addressing the situation of neo-colonized countries, and a politically more active mode of engagement. (p.108)

One could raise the question of why not place Palestine within the context of neo-colonialism in its imperial/global stance adopted by First World power structures with which Israel is aligned. In the case of Palestine, the withdrawal of the British mandate did not bring an end to actual colonization, and Palestine did not gain its independence like other countries—countries that were under the mandate system based on the 1916 Sykes-Picot agreement— as Palestine was almost immediately put under another form of control, that of settler-colonialism. Hence, this is not solely a neo-colonial agenda where colonialist ideals are affecting geopolitical and economic decisions from afar, but rather a physically blatant and undeniable colonization of a land and a people, where Palestinians are repressed on all levels, including their confinement in specific geographic areas with “restrictions over movement, detention without trial,

emergency laws, the demolition of housing, the assassination of political leaders and militants, the control of borders, skies, seas, underground water, trade, and supplies of fuel and electricity, and outright largescale military onslaughts [...]” (Hilal, 2015, p. 354).

Therefore, to frame Palestine within post-colonialism is more about the experience of displacement and fragmentation and less about the overarching historical denotation of the term itself. In other words, the “beyond” which post-colonialism implies would be more accurately addressed if it were understood not simply as what comes after colonialism as a historical condition but rather a discursive commentary negotiated vis-a-vis Palestinian nationalist and Zionist discourses, as well as a contextualization of the hybridity that emerges out of deterritorialization and its relation to the multiplicity that unfolds within the process.

On the subject of hybridity, there seems to be an underlying trope of celebration that both McClintock (1992) and Shohat (1992) highlight in the undertones of the post-colonial, and which needs to be addressed. The hybridity and diversity that emanate out of post-colonialism should be tackled, in the words of Shohat (1992), in relation to “hegemony and neo-colonial power relations” (p. 109) for it not to hinder “the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power” (McClintock, 1992, p. 108). Therefore, to speak of the fragmented voices that stem from Palestinian deterritorialization should not be addressed without taking into consideration both the circumstances that caused displacement, as well as the current position from which these voices are emanating, which, in the case of this study, is referred to as exile.

On the other hand, I fully agree with McClintock (1992) when she engages in disrupting the vagueness of the terminology that seems to dwell when one refers to the

post-colonial through a monolithic lens of what comes after colonial rule, where universalizing hybridity as a notion runs the risk of entailing an acceptance of the violence that colonialism has brought about. Therefore, the postcolonial should not be used as a universal paradigm that eradicates geopolitical distinctions between the various countries that are perceived to have achieved the postcolonial as a historical period but rather, “the concept of the ‘post-colonial’ must be interrogated and contextualized historically, geopolitically, and culturally” (Shohat, 1992, p. 111).

In this way, situating Palestine in post-colonialism is not devoid of either colonial or neo-colonial attributions since, as Anna Ball (2012) shows, the Israeli occupation is clearly a form of European colonialism as well as settler colonialism whose aim is to exploit the resources of the land and its people and to impose apartheid and/or ethnic cleansing. Yet, post-colonialism remains a discursive framework through which Palestine can be depicted in light of the cultural production that emerges out of a nuanced body of creative expression, reflecting the complexity and fragmentation of Palestinian identity, where the latter can no longer be referred to as simply complying with or defying master narratives, but rather exists in the liminalities of a yet to be accomplished condition of the post-colonial as a historical event, which meanwhile, can be articulated as an anticipatory discourse “formed by years of suffering, adapting to altered historical circumstances, but still working determinedly towards the utopian horizon of the postcolonial future” (Ball, Williams, 2014).

2. Postcolonial Cinema

For the aim of this research, I refer to exilic fiction film as a postcolonial tool that paves the way for the hybridity and fragmentation emerging out of Palestinian

contexts. Employing the postcolonial in film signals a shift from colonial frames of knowledge production to individual and subjective interpretations that have escaped the totality of dominant narratives.

According to Sandra Ponzanesi and Marguerite Waller, postcolonial cinema unfolds in a “conceptual space” that seeks to manifest narratives that are often hindered by both national and colonial paradigms (2012, p. 2). For them, postcolonial cinema questions the likelihood of opposition to fall into the trap of the binaries, which is why using the postcolonial as a filmic framework ensures the departure from a totalitarian duality into a hybrid disruption of dominant representations. Therefore, postcolonial cinema sheds light on the “specificity of individuals”, where the status of protagonists stems out of sites such as marginalization, displacement and deterritorialization, ensuring a shift from “multi-dimensional figures” that we might expect in other cinematic genres such as that of Hollywood (Ponzanesi, Waller, 2012, p. 7).

In other words, postcolonial cinema steps away from depicting master-narratives, and by so doing, disrupts the hegemony of dominant ideologies, which in the case of Palestine are both the colonial and the national. In this sense, subjectivities make their way into a liminal space that exists between national and (neo) colonial layers of identification and pave the way for a vacillating conception of history and geography to emerge. This oscillation is referred to by Ponzanesi and Waller (2012) as a “temporal and spatial malleability”, one that leads to an interruption of “imperial paradigms of central conflict, isomorphic identity, and linear history, offering instead shifting perspectives and changing subjectivities” (p. 9). Hence, postcolonial cinema employs alternative versions of narration and visualization that question the very notions of memory, history and identity, shaping the way subjectivities are formed.

This is what Laura Marks (2000) has highlighted in her book *The Skin of the Film*, where she referred to this kind of cinema as “intercultural”, one that intersects with the notion of postcolonial film. For Marks (2000), this kind of cinema depicts the experience of those who occupy spaces that lie in between “two or more cultural regimes of knowledge” (p. 1). As a result of diasporic experiences of displacement, exile and immigration, intercultural cinema interrupts normative conceptions of space and time and paves the way for an “experimental form” to develop, one that is expressed interstitially rather than through binaries (p. 10). The aim of this cinema is not to reveal the truth underlying historical events, but rather to question official records of history and memory through a discursive representation that seeks to escape totality as a whole.

Along these lines, Gilles Deleuze (1989) has offered a rather insightful account on the impossibility of wholeness, in what he termed “the time-image” that emerged out of the ruins of World War II. Although his approach is Euro-centric, we cannot deny the pertinence of his concepts when it comes to (post) colonial cinematic contexts. For Deleuze (1989), an experience can never be fully grasped or represented entirely, but should rather be depicted in light of the partial which, in the context of this study, resonates with the personal and the subjective rather than the absolute or the totalitarian: Film is regarded as a tool that connects the visual with the audible “without forming a whole, without offering the least whole” (p. 256). In the analysis section, I dwell on Deleuze’s time-image, one that escapes linearity and is found in fragments, between present and past, reality and fantasy. For now, I will simply focus on Deleuze’s key concept which, in this study, is considered as a link between cinema and the postcolonial.

Generally speaking, Deleuze’s *Cinema II* offers a liminal space in which the image, by way of its ambivalence, offers a subjective stance which in this context, is

inseparable from the postcolonial in its disruption of dominant narratives. Since time is essential to the conception of linear history, *Cinema II* interrupts the totality of dominant ideologies. As *Cinema II* breaks away from dominant European models of visualization deemed linear and totalitarian, Deleuze's image finds an alternative conception of the audio-visual image where, time could no longer be conceived through pure successions of past-present-future, but is rather depicted in fragments: "It is, for example, a coexistence of distinct durations, or of levels of duration; a single event can belong to several levels: the sheets of past coexist in a non-chronological order" (p. xii).

Therefore, I look at Palestinian exilic cinema through the frame of the postcolonial as it breaks away from dominant discourses to question time in its linearity and space in its borderlines. Palestinian exilic cinema as a postcolonial visual text has the ability "to sculpt time and to shape space", to dismantle conventional narratives and create alternative histories, through an individual and subjective lens rather than an overarching totalitarian discourse (Ponzanesi, Waller, 2012, p. 61).

Anna Ball (2012) has emphasized the importance of employing the postcolonial as a framework when reading contemporary Palestinian works of film and literature. For her, these emerging narratives allow a re-narration of Palestine and seek to unfold multi-layered interpretations. Her approach is not only postcolonial but also feminist as she seeks to examine Palestinian creative expressions in their disruption of both the colonial and the gendered paradigms seeking to "interrogate both colonial and gendered power structures in order to imagine emancipating alternatives to its current realities" (p. 2).

For Ball, the creation of a postcolonial discursive space allows resistance to prevail, both against colonial and gendered oppression. As she makes clear throughout the

book, the works examined are incoherent in their conception of Palestine, which highlights the fragmentation of filmic and literary narratives stemming out of multiple sites of narration. Through her analysis, Ball shows how works such as those of Michel Khleifi, Liana Badr, Tawfiq Abu Wael, Elia Suleiman, Fadwa Touqan and many others, have managed to contest colonial and gendered representations of Palestine, offering polyphonic perspectives that arise as an alternative to binary and reductive narratives that emanate from both the colonial and the patriarchal.

3. Limitation of the Postcolonial

The decolonization of the imagination in a yet-to-be postcolonial space is undoubtedly problematic. Palestine is still under a blatant physical occupation and a thriving patriarchal nationalist narrative. Yet, exilic films, in their fracturing of master-narratives and employment of subjectivity, pave the way for the postcolonial as a discourse to spring up, and this should not go unnoticed. Using the postcolonial as a discursive framework is essential to the possibility of historical recognition of Palestinian land as postcolonial, where the symbolic will inevitably pave the way for the physical to become patent. Moreover, Palestinian exilic cinema is seen in the light of the postcolonial without disregarding the element of specificity in terms of location, cultural and historical contexts which is what both Shohat (1992) and McClintock (1992) have emphasized as mentioned earlier. Many of the attacks on the postcolonial have been for its Eurocentricity and the persistent rhetoric of self/other that continues to dwell on the binaries, as well as eradicates specificity in favor of universalism (San Juan Jr., 1995).

This brings us to the question of what can be identified as Palestinian cinema. In his essay “A No Theory Theory of Contemporary Black Cinema”, Tommy L.Lott (1991)

has questioned the nature of black cinema. Knowing that many “non-black” filmmakers have engaged in the making of films about the black struggle, he argued that forming a theory on black cinema is complex and not based on mere aesthetics. The only way to label a film as a black film, is if it addresses “the political struggle of black people” as well as if it fosters “a plurality of aesthetic values” that go hand in hand with the project of social equality on which the black struggle is established (Lott, 1991, p. 232).

Similarly, Palestinian cinema is and should not be limited to a certain body of theory. Many non-Palestinians have made documentary and feature films about Palestine, such as Jean-Luc Godard’s *Here and Elsewhere*, Mike Hoolboom’s *Lacan Palestine*, Costa Gavras’ *Hanna K* and many others. Furthermore, we need to differentiate between a film *about Palestine* and a *Palestinian film*. In other words, as long as the film voices the Palestinian cause and struggle, and as long as Palestine serves not as a mere backdrop but rather the essence, it is a Palestinian film. But is it a postcolonial Palestinian film? Does it work within the Western paradigms of knowledge or outside of them?

Hence, for the aim of this study, I refer to Palestinian cinema as strictly the films written and directed by Palestinian filmmakers, and specifically those in exile. I tend to shed light not on external interpretations that have made Palestine their subject matter, but rather on native Palestinian voices that grapple and engage with Palestine through individual encounters, thus creating postcolonial discursive frameworks in the aim of representing themselves rather than being represented by others. This is what Shaobo Xie (1997) alluded to when he attempted to rethink the problem of the postcolonial project. For him, the postcolonial urges the intellects of (neo) colonized countries to question the imperialist modes of knowledge production entrenched “in their own political and cultural

unconscious as well as inscribed in Western representations of the non-Western” (Xie, 1997, p. 4).

Yet, as long as there is an awareness of the singularity of Palestine and a debunking of the Universalist approach contaminating contemporary texts, I do not see a reason why Palestine should be omitted from discursive debates when it comes to the postcolonial. In other words, provided that we see the postcolonial as a subversive discourse outside the Eurocentric approach rather than within it, we can overthrow the colonial and patriarchal discourse by employing counter-hegemonic tools, such as exilic cinema, that works within the liminalities rather than through the binaries. Here, I have no intention of loosely using the term “counter-hegemonic”. Yet, in the context of Palestine, counter-narratives of both the colonial and the nationalist are constantly emanating, of which exilic cinema is one apparatus that disrupts the hegemony of dominant narratives.

4. Fragments of Palestinian Narrative

The concept of the nation is the root problem of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, made tangible through opposing narratives that translate into a material conflict over the land, and a symbolic conflict over identity. Central to the subject of this research, the nation as a master-narrative needs to be addressed in order to understand how it can be fragmented. In broad terms, a national narrative lies at the heart of master-narratives, one that buries individualities and embodies the essence of a national identity of a group of people. There is no question that national narratives are holistic, where, according to Yehudith Auerbach and Hila Lowenstein (2011), they include moral and ideological stances on which the nation is founded, and thus provide a legitimacy and a justification for a nation’s establishment. Of course, this definition translates to include the materiality

that makes up the nation, which is essentially the land and its territories, and a discourse perpetuated through a linear history that reaffirms the authority of the nation and narrates it authentically.

Yet, as Edward Said shows, the Israeli occupation of Palestine curbed the narration of the nation as it began to lose its voice. In “Permission to Narrate”, Edward Said (1984) depicts the one dimensional coverage on the Palestinian question, specifically during the events of the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the Palestinian experience of having to live under siege in Beirut. He uses this event to further problematize the broader conception of the Palestinian telling of the struggle within an ever-growing Zionist narrative, one that seeks to omit Palestinian versions of history by deeply pushing it into the margins of narration. Such acts were supported by Western media that contributed to hindering the brutality and justifying the presence of the Zionist project. As Said explains:

I recall during the siege of Beirut obsessively telling friends and family there, over the phone, that they ought to record, write down their experiences; it seemed crucial as a starting-point to furnish the world some narrative evidence, over and above atomized and reified TV clips, of what it was like to be at the receiving end of Israeli "anti- terrorism," also known as "Peace for Galilee." Naturally, they were all far too busy surviving to take seriously the unclear theoretical imperatives being urged on them intermittently by a distant son, brother or friend. (p.38)

Like Said’s friends and relatives, many Palestinians can barely survive the violence permeating their daily lives, let alone have the time or chance to document it. This absence of voices that Said points to is very much hindered and replaced by what he argues to be a Western and Zionist creation and dissemination of what they believe to be facts and figures. In this context, he advocates for a commitment towards addressing “ideological structures” in relation to “concrete historical and geographical

circumstances” that need to be backed up by a collective consensus to preserve the concept of national identity rather than dismiss it as “so much non-factual ideology” (Said, 1984, p. 47). Although, according to Said (1984), “Palestinian nationalism has had, and will continue to have, an integral reality of its own” (p. 45), it is not to be reduced to one paradigm or the other and can certainly take on different forms of expression, other than solely an armed struggle. This is where narration as multiplicity comes to light.

To break out of meta-narratives is to allow those who are perceived as subaltern to re-narrate their experiences through the lens of the subjective. In the case of Palestinian fiction film, this polyphonic narration is not to be situated strictly within the binaries of colonizer/colonized or power/subjugation, but rather exists between the liminalities of these categories, both literally and metaphorically. In the context of this research, Palestine as narration exists within what Bhabha (1990) refers to as “third space” that disrupts the two histories that are perceived to constitute it — which in this case are the national and the colonial, to create a hybrid body of expression that complicates and questions homogeneity and is located in the interstitiality of meaning. Again, this hybridity is not to be mistaken as celebratory but rather should be acknowledged in the context from which it unfolded: exile.

In *DissemiNation: Time, Narrative and the Margins of the Modern Nation*, Bhabha (1994) problematizes Anderson’s conception of “imagined communities” as a unified, shared image of collective belonging which for him reinforces “the homogenizing myth of cultural anonymity” (p. 311). In this context, nationalism and national identity are re-articulated not as holistic entities but rather as a production of “other spaces of subaltern signification” which escape the official realm of the nation through its totalizing

discourse and becomes narrated through “substitution, displacement and projection” (p. 313). The notion of the postcolonial is embedded in Bhabha’s conception of the nation as a master-narrative and his attempt to fracture its totality. Bhabha (1994) shifted the conversation from the binaries of colonizer/colonized to the necessity of dwelling on the emerging ambivalent third space that disrupts “the cultural and discursive continuity” of both the native past and the colonial present (Xie, 1997, p. 17). In this context, these snippets of Palestine as multiple narratives are situated in the words of Bhabha (1994) in “the place of the meanwhile”, providing a platform that interrupts totalizing discourses of both the national and colonial, in the aim of speaking “both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent” (p. 309).

The liminal spaces from which Palestinian voices are surfacing, do not only defy the official narrative of the nation but also that of the colonial. As stated earlier, Edward Said (1984) has delineated the way in which Palestinian voices have often been silenced and dismissed to the margins by imperial and colonial powers. Golda Meir’s 1969 infamous statement that “it was not as though there was a Palestinian people in Palestine and we came and threw them out and took their country away from them: they did not exist”¹, is one of the many examples that shed light on resorting to the effacement of Palestine as a people, a land and therefore, a narrative.

The deconstruction of Palestine as a monolithic entity becomes a defiance of the invisibility that Said highlights, and allows the emergence of a myriad of narratives that can be viewed through post-colonialism as “a discursive space that resists hegemonic colonial narratives by shifting the marginalized voices of the colonized from the

¹ Quoted in Ardi Imseis, *Speaking Truth to Power, Edward Said: A Legacy of Emancipation and Representation* (2010) p. 254

peripheries to the center of cultural consciousness” (Ball, 2012, p. 3). This is where film as a cultural medium can be seen as an alternative narration to both national and colonial discourses, through individualized fictitious tales, where fiction becomes as Jaques Ranciere argued, not a dismissal of reality but rather a re-interpretation of the latter through a reconfiguration of the visible and the spoken, “what is done and what can be done” (Rancière, 2004, p. 36).

In *The Distribution of the Sensible*, Rancière (2004) offers a re-articulation of ways of perception and participation in sensible apparatuses. The aesthetic regime breaks the hierarchy in the arts that become fragmented into different modes and genres, where singularity as an experience of art could be traced. For Rancière, there is a centrality occupied by the arts in the politics, allowed by the (re)distribution of the sensible, on which social and political structures are established. Rancière offers an interesting account of fiction and the (re)writing of history, where he differentiates between the concept of fiction and that of fallacies. With the advent of the aesthetic age, the lines have become blurred between “the logic of facts and the logic of fiction” (p. 38) where the latter is arranged through a system of signs that is constructed and decoded by its distribution between “the potential of meaning inherent in everything silent and the proliferation of modes of speech and levels of meaning” (p. 37).

Hence, fiction is not perceived as a distortion of truth, but rather the fictitious ordering of narration becomes “indistinct from the arrangements used in the description and interpretation of the phenomena of the social and historical world” (p. 37). Therefore, Palestine narrated through fiction is not a denial of its occupied reality. Rather, the reality of occupation is fictionalized “in order to be thought” since, in Rancièrian terms,

“writing history and writing stories come under the same regime of truth” (Ranicere, 2004).

Therefore, to adopt fiction film as the medium through which Palestine is re-interpreted allows an alternative version of reality to be depicted in defiance of the hegemonic real imposed by both the colonial and the national. This appropriation of Palestine through fragmented fictions can reroute the conception of the struggle, allowing for an individualized narration of both the occupation and nationalism from the position of exilic filmmakers and their re-articulation of space, which will be explored in the next section, in contrast with the actual architecture of the occupation – that patently influences national history – shaping and permeating Palestinian daily lives.

B. Palestinian Space between the Real and the Reel

1. The Occupied Real

To depict how space is (re)imagined in fiction films, one needs first to understand how Palestine, as a spatial entity, is permeated by a Zionist conception of space, influencing de facto the national arrangement of the latter that becomes incorporated within the backdrop of a colonial spatial configuration. By understanding the occupation through architecture, we can depict how Palestinian space becomes imbued with not only blatant signifiers of the occupation such as checkpoints, roadblocks, walls or killing zones, but also the way in which existing spaces have become segregated, eradicated, or completely altered.

In general terms, Zionist ideology agrees on “a geographic concentration” of those who are “spatially dispersed” (Eisenzweig, 1981), and hence, informs the Israeli conception of space. In “An Imaginary Territory: The Problematic of Space in Zionist

Discourse”, Uri Eisenzweig provides an insightful account on the inception of Zionist space, paving the way for the foundation of an ethnocentric ideology, made concrete by colonial manoeuvre. According to Eisenzweig (1981), the early Zionist project was to an extent territorially indifferent, and it wasn’t until after Herzl’s death that Palestine was decided upon as the land where Jews would take refuge. Hence, this indetermination of space all the while insisting on territoriality was essential to fueling the necessity of land as a solution for the diasporic condition, regardless of where this land might be, as long as it was possible to render it as virginal, to (re)build it anew.

Through deciphering early Zionist texts, Eisenzweig (1981) highlights the depiction of Palestine by the Zionist discourse as an empty land, “a natural space devoid of otherness well before it is visited by the Zionists” (p. 282). By framing ideology in Althusserian terms, the former must be materialized in order to be thought. Hence, the Zionist ideology becomes palpable through its interpellation of Palestinian space, in the words of Althusser (1971), as “always-already” empty, legitimizing the illusion of creating an imaginary space devoid of (other) human existence, and has always been naturally there.

One of the reports written by Herzl in 1898 after his visit to Palestine is exemplary of the negation of the other and the way it is rooted in the ideological materialization of space, highlighting the dismissal of any reference to human existence; Palestine is replaced by a description of the land as bare, wild and waiting for human intervention (Eisenzweig, 1981). This denial of the human-other as well as the conception of space solely through natural referents are at the heart of the Zionist ideology, where “the vision of natural space, of landscape, is a correlative of the absence of otherness” and where demolishing and displacing otherness become essential to

conceiving the Zionist space politically, geographically and discursively (Eisenzweig, 1981, p. 281).

The Zionist project has been deeply influenced by Western ideals where, as Joseph Massad (2006) shows, European Jews have regarded themselves as bearers of civilization, engaging in colonial endeavors to establish a modern nation at the heart of a surrounding scape of Arab backwardness. The Zionist colonialist conquest has altered the status of European Jews from refugees to that of settler colonials, and has, as a result, affected the configuration of Palestine as a space that has been (re)shaped to fit within the Zionist ideology that perceived the land as theirs to return to, rendering the discursive dreamed-of space into a material one.

Hence, it is important to shed light on the racist implications that infuse the Zionist ideology for they are essential to comprehend the colonial spatial arrangement of Palestine. Again, the postcolonial doesn't mark the demise of colonialism as a historical condition; it rather employs a subversive discourse that interrogates colonial structures through subjective interpretations of apparatuses contaminated by coloniality (Xie, 1997). Therefore, once we understand the inherent colonial trait in the project of Zionism—where space is a key element—we can focus on how exilic filmmakers use their visual texts as a postcolonial tool through which such a master-narrative is disrupted by way of a re-articulation of filmic space.

Massad (2006) draws a relational connection between Zionism as a settler-colonial conquest and European colonial endeavors, where they both exert supremacy over the “natives”. The racist undertones depicted in the Zionist project through a self-

proclaimed supremacy enacted by the state of Israel, were, and still are, an essential contributor for:

the expulsion of a majority of Palestinians from their lands and homes, the prevention of their return, and the subsequent confiscation of their property for the exclusive use of Jews; imposing a military apartheid system on those Palestinians who remained in Israel from 1948 until 1966, which since then has been relaxed to a civilian Jewish supremacist system of discrimination; and the military occupation and apartheid system imposed on the West Bank and the Gaza Strip and their population for the last thirty-five years as well as continued colonization of these occupied territories. (p.134)

This understanding of the Zionist ideology as racist helps us get to the core of a more tangible manifestation performed and imposed by the Zionist project in Palestine, through focusing specifically on spatial organization. Eyal Weizman's insight on the topic is very helpful to unpack the spatial aspect of the occupation, specifically after the 1995 Oslo accords.

In his introduction to *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*, Weizman (2007) delineates the elasticity of the Israeli envisioning of space, where the geography of the land on which Palestinians reside is "unpredictably and continuously refashioned and tightening around them like a noose" (p.5). This reflects the flexibility that Israel employs in its articulation of space through "dynamic, constantly shifting, ebbing and flowing" spatiality that renders the apprehension of frontiers as constantly on the move, transformed and rearranged in relevance to political decisions that unquestionably impact the arrangement of space (Weizman, 2006).

Moreover, these spatial mechanisms adopted by Israel are means of control as well as tools of separation, depicted through the fragmentation of Palestine, as a land and a people. This shattering of space, through the various endeavors that sought to partition Palestine, has rendered the latter as a "hollow land" and as a result, "Palestinians had

been forced into a territorial patchwork of sealed islands around their cities, towns and villages, within a larger space controlled by Israel” (Weizman. 2006, p. 12)

This distortion of Palestinian space is not only depicted through flagrant physical sites that signal the occupation, but also through more symbolic signifiers such as road signs. Bronstein (2005) depicts the pervasion of Zionism and its control over spatial arrangement not only through the confiscation and/or destruction of Palestinian land, but also through wiping out original Arabic names of towns and villages and replacing them with Hebrew signs to add to the “Judaisation of the landscape” (p. 218)

This symbolic alteration is very essential to comprehending the manifestation of Zionism in space since it eliminates a certain history of a certain people carrying certain memories. Palestinians are no longer part of the scenery; Arabic names that come to signify a sense of national identity are obliterated, depicting the expulsion of Palestinians from their land, both literally and symbolically.

This section provided an overview of the impact of the Zionist ideology in the conception and development of the actual space both physically and symbolically and is essential to delineate the way in which alternative spaces are portrayed in fiction films which will be explored below.

2. The Occupied Reel

As stated earlier, I adopt fragmented narratives of Palestinian history, where, for the aim of this research, Palestine is not only seen through fragments but also through fiction. The aim of this study is not to undermine the harshness of the occupation by choosing to focus on fiction rather than documentary films, but to allow the re-imagination of Palestinian space through what Bhabha (1990) refers to as a “third

space”, one that exists within the liminalities of the imagined “reel as a projection on screen” and the occupied “real as a filmed landscape” (Dixon, Grimes, 2004, p. 266), allowing the re-writing of Palestine through personal narratives rather than master ones.

Although I focus solely on fiction films, a brief history of Palestinian cinema is essential to comprehend the shift from documentary to fiction and how this paves the way for talking specifically about exilic filmmakers in their post-colonial approach to space. Cinema in Palestine saw the light in 1935 when Ibrahim Hassan Serhan directed a 20 minute-long film that documented the visit of Prince Saud to Jerusalem and Jaffa (Gertz, Khleifi, 2008). The documentation of this event through film marked the provenance of Palestinian cinema whose history, according to Gertz and Khleifi, is constituted of four phases “echoing the various stages of the national Palestinian struggle, the topic on which Palestinian cinematic creation has fed and focused” (2008, p. 11).

In their book *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma and Memory* (2008), Nurith Gertz and George Khleifi give an insightful examination of the four phases which Palestinian cinema has witnessed. The first phase (1935-1948) was marked by a major event, the *Nakba* where Palestinians were forced to flee their homeland, and no trace of the films produced remained. In this period, theater was a better medium to reach out to the masses, as cinema was not as popular. The second phase (1948-1967) minimized the chances of establishing a developed film industry due to the lack of financial support, infrastructure and professional crews as many Palestinians fled their land.

On the other hand, the third phase (1968-1982) introduced documentary making as the dominant film genre. Documentaries were referred to as “Cinema of the Palestinian revolution” and the film industry at the time adopted the ideas and causes of

the PLO (Palestine Liberation Organization), and was operating under its patronization, in addition to other institutions affiliated to it. The last and ongoing period is the fourth phase (1980-Present), which marks the emergence of individual cinema that allows more freedom and creativity. The film industry was no longer supported by Palestinian public institutions, nor by private Palestinian production companies. In this period, filmmakers sought international funding, and were interested in adopting new formats, such as those of fiction films.

Here, the use of these four phases sum up the history of the film industry in Palestine. My approach to the categorization of Palestinian film industry is based on time since, it goes without saying, the *Nakba* was the event that has made all the difference in the Palestinian cinematic realm and has led to adopting a chronological classification. More specifically, phases three and four mark the shift in genres, which is the concern of this study and where, as Gertz and Khleifi put it, “changes in modes of expression have occurred, and ideological stances, as well as means of production have evolved” (2008, p. 12). Hence, it is during these two periods of time that a shift in the visualization of life under the occupation in Palestinian films is mostly patent.

For the aim of this study, the focus will be on the fourth phase of the film industry, specifically the films of Elia Suleiman, whose work and exilic experience inform the postcolonial as a discursive tool that dismantle dominant narratives of both the Palestinian nationalist and the Zionist. It is important to state that the fourth phase of the Palestinian filmic industry started in 1980 when the Palestinian filmmaker Michel Khleifi returned from Belgium to his hometown of Nazareth, and made his first feature film *Fertile Memories* (Kennedy 2011). This 99-minute film combines fictional and documentary techniques, and tells the story of two women dealing with a double

occupation: on one hand, the Israeli occupation, and on the other, patriarchal society and its restrictions (Shafik 1998).

The fourth phase of Palestinian filmmaking shifts from solely documenting the struggle to allowing fiction to prevail as a form of narration. For this reason, the fourth phase allowed an individual telling of existence, one that is not confined to only documenting an armed struggle, but rather paves the way for subjectivity to infuse history, en-lieu of history being simply recorded by no other means than that of “the nation”.

Elia Suleiman’s films are the subject of this study for a couple of reasons. The first is that Suleiman has lived in exile for a long time, so his experience adds a lot to the postcolonial as a visual tool. Second, although Suleiman is influenced by many Western filmmakers, as will be shown in later sections, he is self-taught and never had any formal training in the field. This is important when it comes to forming his subjectivity, which was not learned but rather expressed in his own terms. Also, I choose to focus on one filmmaker only, because of a consistent patterning that I depicted in Suleiman’s films and wish to dwell upon. Moreover, Suleiman’s films are of a compelling nature both visually and symbolically, which is why studying them adds to the plethora of images that stem out of Palestine.

3. A Cinema in Exile

As mentioned earlier, Palestine is seen through the lens of postcolonial cinema as it breaks away from the binaries of self/other and allows individual narratives to prevail. Yet, this is not to say that militant cinema or what is known as Third Cinema did not serve the Palestinian struggle. Like all models, Third cinema has had its pitfalls, ones

that could not be surpassed and in result, paved the way for fiction films to emanate in the fourth phase of Palestinian cinema.

In brief, Third Cinema is an aesthetic/political movement that started in the mid 1960's by Argentinean filmmakers, Fernando Solanas and Octavio Getino, aimed at recognizing the struggle by not just a mere representation of it, but rather using film as militancy, as a tool for what could pave the way for a plausible change beyond imperial paradigms. It's safe to say that Palestinian cinema, in the epoch of documentary filmmaking, played by the rules of militant cinema. According to Gertz and Khleifi (2008), the struggle of the Palestinians in the face of the occupation was similar to models of revolution that were current in that period in countries such as Vietnam, Cuba, and elsewhere. In the period of documentary filmmaking, the PLO was influenced by such revolutionary movements to the extent that cinema became an essential part of the revolution itself, and terminologies such as "The Cinematic Movement" or "The cinema of the Palestinian revolution" were being employed to refer to Palestinian films (Gertz, Khleifi, 2008, p. 12).

Yet, this cinema viewed the nationalistic project as monolithic and this was, among many other reasons, why it failed. Therefore, as Third Cinema did not allow for individuality to manifest, fiction film paved the way for a subjective interpretation of Palestine. However, and due to the actual occupation, Palestinians such as Elia Suleiman, Anne Marie Jacir, Azza al-Hasan, Michel Khleifi and many others, reached out to their homeland, through their films, from their position in exile. The films that emerge out of exilic experiences is what Hamid Naficy refers to as "accented". For Naficy (2008), accented cinema is the cinema of those who have in common an experience of displacement and deterritorialization.

These filmmakers propagate a feeling of ambiguity and uncertainty when it comes to the “taken for granted values” of their homeland (p. 13). This is why, displaced filmmakers find themselves dwelling in a liminal space that produces a fluctuating sense of belonging. Exile is one of the encounters of deterritorialization which, according to Naficy (2008), is an experience of those who voluntarily or involuntarily left their country of origin and still carry on a vacillating relationship with previous or current places that they occupy. Exile maintains an ambivalent connection with the concept of home/homeland as it produces the latter in fantasies or longings which, according to John Durham Peters (1999), play out as a reconciliation of being physically and/or symbolically away from home.

Exile is unquestionably related to homeland and the idea of return, yet the experience is never homogenous. Naficy (1999) has illustrated the elasticity of exile and the impossibility of classifying it as a general entity since “exile discourse thrives of detail specificity and locality” (p. 4). Here, deterritorialization is essential to investigating how exilic Palestinian filmmakers, in their different degrees of exilic migrancy, “from their position as subjects inhabiting interstitial spaces and sites of struggle”, continue to visualize a space permeated by colonial and nationalist narratives that structure Palestine as a space (Naficy, 2001, p. 12).

In other words, the stylistic vocabulary of films stemming out of displacement is ultimately affected by the authorial approach of filmmakers whose perspectives unfold out of slippages of the exilic condition. This is what Laura Marks (2000) highlighted when she referred to such deterritorialized works of art as a reinvention of memories and histories that presume alternative versions of homeland “often through fiction, myth, or ritual” (Marks, 2000, p. 25). In this sense, exilic artists disrupt official

records and look for ways to reformulate narratives by way of fractured tales rather than monolithic ones. Yet, in this process silence occurs as “a moment of suspension” that is found in the liminal space between the dismantled official discourse and the one that is about to emerge (Marks, 2000, p. 25).

This liminality is also what Helga Tawil-Souri has emphasized when she delineated the phases and trends that Palestinian cinema underwent. For her, many Palestinian filmmakers have diverged from the imposed national image of what Palestine is or should be, and chose to focus on the pluralistic stance that Palestinian cinema has attained. According to Tawil-Souri (2005), Palestinian cinema will always have a political stance due to its subject matter. Yet, thanks to filmmakers such as Elia Suleiman, Palestinian films are opting for more experimentation with the visual and the oral, “with spaces of memory and spaces of borders” which allow Palestine to be represented as “a nation coming into being and a nation being lost to exile” (Tawil-Souri, 2005, p. 137).

Again, this interstitially is inescapable when it comes to Palestinian films of the fourth phase. From here, visualizing the occupied space through the lens of the exilic filmmaker allows a confrontation of monolithic representations, and enables us to move beyond the binaries of the oppressor and the oppressed, the actual and the imagined. This paves the way for a creation of a space that doesn't dismiss reality but rather allows it to be narrated through subjectivities buried under hegemonies, where fiction is not falsehood but rather a condition for what ought to be a post-colonial Palestinian present/future.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

A. Research Questions

As mentioned earlier, the aim of this study is to analyze the spatial reconfiguration in exilic Palestinian fiction films. How do Suleiman's films grapple with Palestine as a spatio-temporal unit? What are the facets through which Suleiman disrupts Zionism and Palestinian nationalism? How does exile shape the filmic experience?

To answer the questions, I study Elia Suleiman's film trilogy: *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), *Divine Intervention* (2002) and *The Time That Remains* (2009). These films belong to the fourth phase of Palestinian film industry where filmmakers emancipated Palestine from monolithic narratives and allowed the fracturing of a homogenous depiction of time and space (Gertz, Khleifi, 2008). I choose Suleiman's films simply because, I noticed an emergence of a series of interruptions that serve as a fragmentation of the traditional/national patriarchal Palestinian space as well as the Zionist confinement of the former, where Palestine is individualized and exists in the interstitial imagined space that defies both discourses and seeks an alternative reality offered through the lens of an exilic camera.

On another note, these three films all contain the elements of timely non-linearity and spatial reconfiguration. Although all of them are based on Suleiman's personal experiences, *The Time That Remains* (2009) is more chronological in its depiction of events. Yet, this doesn't take away from the ambivalence of time and space as Suleiman's depiction remains subjective and interstitial by way of escaping the totality of dominant narratives. Also, Elia Suleiman is a central character to his films,

which is another reason why I choose his films to highlight the connection between his experience as both actor and director. Through this study, Elia Suleiman's character will often be referred to as ES.

B. Methodology

I am interested in depicting both the meaning and form of messages stemming out of the film as a text. For this reason, formal film analysis and textual analysis will be employed to interpret the way in which exilic filmmakers contend with Palestine as a spatial entity, specifically through the *mise-en-scene*.

Formal film analysis generally refers to deciphering the cinematic language employed in the making of a film. Filmmakers employ techniques and strategies that are often passively perceived by the viewers, yet film, like other media texts, is never innocent; it is based on specific components that influence the way the work is produced and read. Formal film analysis seeks to analyze the form of the film through "elements as cinematography, editing, sound, and design" for these components affect the very structure and narrative of a film (Monahan, Barsam, 2009). In other words, formal analysis is the way in which visual elements are structured and arranged in a certain composition and how they function through and within it.

One facet of formal analysis is the *mise-en-scene*. Yet, because the *mise-en-scene* is not restricted solely to spatial organization, this study will focus on how Palestine becomes materialized through the re-construction of spaces, both physically and discursively, as they seek to disrupt master-narratives. A simple definition of the *mise-en-scene* is the way in which the visual elements of a film are represented on screen, organized and arranged to tell a certain story (Bordwell and Thompson, 1979). Such elements refer to the decor, spatial organization, lighting, costume design and the

relationship between actors. Analyzing the mise-en-scene allows the examination of the components within a frame, highlighting “the basic building blocks of a film—the shot and the cut—and the complexities of each that allow a film to achieve its texture and resonance” (Kolker, 1999).

Yet, I seek to go from this plain definition of analyzing visual elements into the underlying tropes of ideology that infuses the construction of these films which is where textual analysis comes to light. What I mean by that is to link post-colonialism as a discursive framework that disrupts master-narratives with the exilic fictitious lens from which the filmmakers are depicting Palestine as a spatial entity, to shed light on how Palestinian spaces, by way of their re-narration, are interrupting the totality of both the Palestinian nationalist and the Zionist ideologies.

Gavin Hogben has illustrated the importance of the relationship between physical space and film as contingent on one another, where “architecture, by its particular emptiness, spurs the motive, not as subject or object of an action but as opportunity and potential”². Hence, in the context of this study, space is not taken for granted as the backdrop of where events are taking place, but rather it is through these spaces that Palestine is given the “potential” of becoming re-imagined through film. Therefore, the filmmakers become architects, where they have the power of de/re-constructing spaces that already exist or creating new ones for the sake of re-interpreting their home/homeland. This is something that Francois Penz has illustrated in analyzing the films of French filmmaker Jaques Tati, where he drew the connection between post-war architecture and narration. For Penz, the architectural choices that Tati made in his

² Quoted in Gavin Hogben, ‘Introduction’, in *Cinema and Architecture: Melies, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia*, ed. Francois Penz and Maureen Thomas, London: British Film Institute, 1997, P.51

films reflect his background both as an artist and person who has the ability to re-interpret space, where “the film acts as a mirror for architects who can see buildings and cities re-invented on screen.”³

On the other hand, textual analysis is also a key element to this study. Textual analysis is the way in which texts (films, newspapers, advertisements and anything that we can make meaning from) are interpreted, to make sense of how their producers grapple with the reality around them. According to Alan McKee (2003), textual analysis requires the analysis of the content and function rather than simply the structure of the text. For him, these “sense-making practices” allow us to detect the possibilities and limitations of the actual text as well as our approach to it (McKee, 2003, p. 4).

For the aim of this study, interpretative textual analysis is used to scratch the surface of meaning in order to analyze the implicit messages that often pass unseen. The scenes are structured by way of semiotic patterns or, in other words, the recurrent signs and symbols detected in film as text. As Stuart Hall (1993) claims, there is no singular way of perceiving and deconstructing a text as a message is produced and disseminated through a process saturated with codes and generated within a system of signs. For Hall (1993), communication is not a linear model of transmission but rather a two-way flow that acknowledges both the encoder and the decoder in the formation of the message.

Codes determine the message and allow the latent content to manifest through denotation as meanings come to exist in their own representation: “We give things meanings by how we represent them – the words we use about them, the stories we tell

³ Quoted in Francois Penz, ‘Architecture in the Films of Jaques Tati’, in *Cinema and Architecture: Melies, Mallet-Stevens, Multimedia*, ed. Francois Penz and Maureen Thomas, London: British Film Institute, 1997, P.68

about them, the images of them we produce, the emotions we associate with them, the way we classify and conceptualize them, the values we place on them” (Hall, 1997, p. 30). The process of decoding is palpable at the site of reception, where perception shapes the decoding process which might or might not be relevant to the initial encoding of the message. In the context of this study, Palestine is continuously being encoded and decoded by filmmakers whose interpretations can never be homogeneous as their experiences fluctuate and differ since as mentioned earlier, their position in exile cannot be reduced to a monolithic stance.

Hence, ambivalence becomes an essential element to the creation and perpetuation of meanings that are constantly shifting and being re-interpreted back and forth between producers and receivers. This is when the interpretation of ideology becomes important. According to Althusser (1977), ideologies are a materialization of abstract ideas that become inserted into actions and practices. For him, an ideology is what makes imaginary narratives tangible in given apparatuses by way of rendering individuals as subjects. In this sense, individuals are “hailed” as subjects, as they are expected to fulfill the materiality of ideology through concrete practices (Althusser, 1977). Hence, studying how Palestinian nationalist and Zionist ideologies are re-interpreted in the films of Suleiman is a way of decoding the inherent messages perpetuated through dominant narratives. Fiction film is the medium through which such a totality is being fractured as it allows an un-hailing of individuals, as the “always-already” of interpellation is disrupted and paves the way for alternative subjectivities to form.

Again, it is important to stress the necessity of linking this methodology to the site from which the filmmaker is contending with space. The status of being in exile and

seeking the post-colonial —which as mentioned previously is never monolithic— is essential to the way through which these filmmakers are using film not merely as an apparatus, but rather as means to re-construct their memories, present and future experiences, through re-building space in fiction films.

Hence, using formal film analysis and textual analysis is a means to interpret the way in which visual elements, both in form and content, are re-arranged through space to pave the way for an aesthetic reconfiguration of Palestine as a spatial entity that is occupied but nonetheless seeks freedom from the national and the colonial through the lens of the exiled.

1. Methodological Limitations

The main limitation of the methodology is the inability for generalization. Although one claims and strives to be objective, there is no way to do qualitative analysis and not fall into the trap of subjectivity. Another limitation is the choice of focusing solely on the visual element in its content and form, where there are other elements such as sound, light, costume design and many other aspects in the pre and post production phases that can be analyzed in depth as they add meaning to the text. Yet, due to the scarcity of time and the format of this study, a more focused approach was essential to shaping the way the study was carried out.

Also, Elia Suleiman's films are not the only exilic films that are worth examining, as many interesting texts are equally worthy of analysis. Yet, Suleiman's unique experience made his films transnational, adding to how relatable this study is, as many people around the world have seen his films and wonder about his filmic style and techniques which I hope I contributed to interpreting, even if modestly.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS

Suleiman in all his films, seeks to question master-narratives in their construction and propagation of official discourses. Mediated through his films, Palestinian nationalism is one of the narratives he aims to disrupt since, for him, those who seek to construct national identity are “not necessarily those who are under occupation, but those who are into occupation.”⁴ Suleiman also highlights the cracks and holes in Zionism, which he seeks to depict as perturbed and unsettled, defying what the official Israeli narrative usually conveys. Suleiman does so by employing specific filming techniques through which a pattern of detaching from a fixed national narrative and interrupting the stability of Zionism is manifested, leading to a multiplicity of identifications and a fragmentation of totality, which ultimately lead to a reconfiguration of filmic space.

Before delving into a detailed analysis of the different scenes that deal with Palestinian nationalism and Zionism, an overview of Suleiman’s filming techniques is essential to comprehend the way in which he re-articulates the notion of space in his scenes, influencing the way official discourses are reshaped.

A. Filming Techniques

In all of his films, Suleiman mostly uses long, wide shots and almost all his frames are fixed with little or no movement at all. This says a lot about how he chooses to portray Palestine as a spatial entity. Suleiman uses wide shots that depict characters

⁴ See “A different kind of occupation”: An interview with Elia Suleiman
<https://electronicintifada.net/content/different-kind-occupation-interview-elia-suleiman/8654>

in relation to their surroundings and geographic location, reaffirming the importance of the space not merely as a backdrop but as an essential element. The lack of camera movements reflects the monotony of certain spaces and the way they remain static with the passing of time. Yet, the stillness of the camera can also open up possibilities of a spatial re-articulation performed by bodies on the move within the fixed frame, where the latter works as a canvas within which characters constitute, reclaim or transform the space they occupy.

Having analyzed the filming techniques of Japanese filmmaker Yasujiro Ozu's whose work has influenced Suleiman, Gilles Deleuze (1989) considers that the slow tracking shots, the few camera movements, the fixed unchanging angles and the simple cuts are what he refers to as an "optical passage or punctuation between images, working directly, sacrificing all synthetic effects" (p. 13). These techniques make room for silence and emptiness to become pertinent. Just like Ozu, Suleiman merges the mundane and the remarkable, the ordinary and the banal. Through the films of Ozu, "American ordinariness helps break down what is ordinary about Japan, a clash of two everyday realities which is even expressed in colour, when Coca-Cola red or plastic yellow violently interrupt the series of washed-out, unemphatic tones of Japanese life" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 15).

This also reflects how Suleiman chooses to portray life in Palestine. For Suleiman, Ozu's films were similar to Palestine's political situation, as well as how life unravels under the occupation⁵. In this sense, Suleiman depicts Palestine as a liminal space that witnesses the "clash of two everyday realities", the Palestinian and the Israeli,

⁵ In an interview with Elia Suleiman. See <http://www.dohafilminstitute.com/press/elia-suleiman-discusses-his-personal-journey-to-becoming-a-filmmaker-his-early-life-in-palestine-the-filmmakers-who-influenced-him-and-how-he-learnt-to-make-films>

where ES's version of Palestine is established in the interstitial rather than the whole. This influences the mise-en-scene in Elia Suleiman's films, where these wide fixed frames become the norm. Of course, this is related to the type of cinema to which films, such as those of Suleiman, belong.

Although we cannot limit Suleiman's films to one category, we can say that they are what Hamid Naficy (2001) termed as "accented". As mentioned in previous sections, accented cinema stems out of the deterritorialization of filmmakers whose experiences are counter-hegemonic. Exile as an experience of displacement infuses the filmic style employed by the filmmaker, where predominant structures are questioned and problematized aesthetically and discursively. According to Naficy (2001), the immobility of the frames and the lack of camera movement are essential to the accented style where spaces such as buses, hotel rooms and tunnels are highly discernible, which is something we can depict in all of Suleiman's films. This creates phobic structures that stem out of the exilic experience reflected in the filmic text, which is something that Suleiman himself highlights by referring to spatial Palestine as a "ghetto".⁶

This deterritorialization gives way to another element present in Suleiman's films and that is ambiguity. Ambiguity is inseparable from exile as a postcolonial experience. This continual oscillation between being and becoming informs the films of Suleiman as it infuses the way he creates his liminal version of Palestine. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000), this ambiguity is one of the characteristics that stemmed out of the postcolonial as it produced ambivalent subjects

⁶ Quoted in Suleiman, E. (2003). The Occupation (and Life) Through an Absurdist Lens. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 32(2), 63-73.

that create “a profound disturbance of the authority of colonial discourse”, dwelling on an ongoing process of repulsion/attraction that ultimately disrupts dominant discourses of the colonial and the national (p. 10).

Moreover, silence is one of the techniques that is inescapable in all of Suleiman’s films. The ‘ES avatar’ is there to witness, he interacts with other characters, yet he remains a silent narrator. Suleiman’s work is often compared with Jaques Tati and Buster Keaton, for his “poetic combination between burlesque and sobriety”, an act of dark humor reflecting on the occupation (Asfour, 2011).

Appearing as an ambiguous mute figure is a powerful tool to voice the silence; Refqa Abu Remaileh (2008) regards the emphasis on the non-verbal as a contrast to other Palestinian films where stories are mostly told by spoken words, “The oral tradition surrounding the conflict is brimming with stories waiting to be told, documented or covered” (p. 1). On the other hand, Suleiman believes that silence in his films is in fact political: “If there’s anything the authorities hate, it is poets, because of poetry’s potential for liberation. And silence is a real magnifier of poetic space”⁷. In a way, silence in Suleiman’s films emphasizes the tension which could lead to a potential outburst, an element depicted in all his films as we will see below.

Moreover, Suleiman gives credit to silence as a way for the present moment to exist more profoundly: “In my view, ‘consumption cinema’ is made up of noise and polluted spaces. They kind of slide you along and make time pass and make sure that you are not at all with any kind of meditative or self-reflective moment” (2003). Hence, silence works as trigger to increase the viewer’s awareness rather than passively

⁷ In Suleiman, E. (2003). The Occupation (and Life) Through an Absurdist Lens. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 32(2), 63-73.

consuming the filmic text with little or no interpretation. Also, as fragmented as it can get, the filmic space in ES's films maintains some sort of continuity through the element of silence; just like Robert Bresson's hand is the visual element that links the disconnected spaces that he creates in his films, silence in ES's films is what compensates for the fragmentation of the visual by way of the spoken, or lack thereof. Hence, the lack of oral communication is what makes up for the (in)continuity of the image itself.

Therefore, silence in Elia Suleiman's films is essential, poetic and allegorical, especially when it comes to the disruption of meta-narratives. Zionism and Palestinian nationalism are depicted not through documentation of direct military acts or straightforward chauvinism, but rather by semi-autobiographical explorations that introduce a new visual vocabulary, where silence plays an essential role in fracturing the structure in which these totalitarian paradigms reside.

B. Patterns

In the films of Elia Suleiman, one can detect three recurrent patterns as disrupting to both Palestinian nationalism and Zionism: Time, Gender and Home/Homeland. Of course, these elements are depicted in the context of the postcolonial as a framework that questions the totality of notions such as gender, time, race, ethnicity, class, place and language, among many other key concepts that Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (2000) have highlighted in their book on the postcolonial.

In the context of this study, the patterns identified are integrated in the wider re-articulation of space as a whole and were found as specific aspects that can be

addressed individually, in relation to the spatial re-configuration and its interruption of master-narratives.

1. Time

a. Elia Suleiman and the Time-Image

The time-image is what Gilles Deleuze (1989) calls the modern image, one that emerged in the period that followed WWII and ultimately disrupted the notion of classical cinema that adopted the concept of the movement-image. The movement-image is depicted in the linear conception of time, in which continuity constructs the image. Yet, the post-war period fractured this linearity and introduced “false movements” where images “are no longer linked by rational cuts and continuity, but are relinked by means of false continuity and irrational cuts” which ultimately leads to a disintegration of the totalitarian image (Deleuze, 1989). (p. 12)

Having been influenced by filmmakers such as Jean-Luc Godard, Wim Wenders and Yasujiro Ozu, Elia Suleiman identified with their filmmaking techniques that are seen to employ the time-image as the basis of their work. The time-image disrupts totality, and confronts the “outside” with the “inside”, leading to what Deleuze (1989) calls the “incommensurability” of the modern image. The time image allows the subjectivity of images to unravel through memories, fantasies and dreams, paving the way for what Deleuze (1989) refers to as “the indiscernible”, where we can no longer determine the difference between imagination and reality, the physical and the mental, the banal and the extreme.

In *Deleuze, Cinema and National Identity*, David Martin-Jones provides an insightful interpretation of Deleuze’s conception of cinema by relating it to the

construction of national identity. Unlike the movement-image, the time-image disrupts the linearity of time, which in result, allows for a hybrid construction of so-called national identity that feeds of the continuity of history. In Elia Suleiman's films, time is not conceived in the classical way. The narrative doesn't conserve a coherent depiction of time through a character's movement through space. Rather, the emphasis is placed on the movement of time itself, where "the protagonist can only visually record time's passing" (Martin-Jones, 2006). (p. 20). According to Martin-Jones, the time-image adopts time as labyrinth, as a multiplicity of pasts that "fluctuate in and out of existence depending on how they are re-aligned in the present" (2006, p. 24).

There is no question that time is essential in Elia Suleiman's work, manifested in the titles he chooses for his films. Yet, time for Suleiman is not singular or linear, which is why in all his films, fragmentation and liminality are the dominant forms. In Deleuzian terms, Elia Suleiman's time-image begins with the present moment and aims to pursue a path that fluctuates between different pasts and multiple presents. This reflects several histories, and by so doing, questions the construction of national identity, which is inseparable from the notion of time.

As mentioned in previous sections, national identity is seen here as narrated in Bhabha's terms in a double time. Bhabha (1990) questioned the construction of national identity as pedagogical, one that adopts a dominant view of national history, by a constant repetition of a linear past. For him, this repetition insures a fixed depiction of official history as the one and only truth. Yet, from a post-colonial perspective, Bhabha's depiction of national identity in a double time can be reflected here in the time-image that defies the linearity of time, and allows national identity to be re-narrated to disrupt continuity regarded as an illusion.

The notion of double time intersects with Deleuze's time-image as they both break away from homogeneity. No longer can the nation be narrated through the singularity of the dominant narrative; an alternative discourse is emerging as a result to the (post)colonial experience. According to Bhabha (1990), individuals as subjects can no longer be simply represented in a fixed nation space. The linear history of the nation is confronted by another narrative, that of the people who are anything but homogenous. Therefore, Elia Suleiman's depiction of Palestine is the alternative, incoherent version of narration that disturbs the holism of history.

National identity as a narrative is not alone in being disrupted. According to Martin Jones (2006), the time-image disrupts dominant ideologies, the national being one of them while here, the colonial is the other. Zionism as a dominant colonial ideology is also being fractured in Elia Suleiman's films, highlighting the way in which the time-image is employed to grapple with master-narratives and introducing liminal interpretations that exist in the interstitial conception of both time and space. Therefore, Suleiman's films are hybrid in their conception of time, influencing de-facto the construction of Palestinian national and Zionist identity through a multiple narration that ultimately leads to a filmic spatial reconfiguration of Palestine.

Due to the inseparability of time and space in film, the above explanation of the conception of time in Suleiman's films becomes essential to the re-articulation of spatial entities in Palestine and how in turn, this affects national and colonial narratives. According to Deleuze (1989), the time-image not only affects the way in which time is disrupted but also spaces. Just like Ozu's filmic techniques, Suleiman does employ shots of empty spaces, be it abandoned interiors or vacant exteriors. Yet, there exists in Suleiman's films spaces that lie in the interstitial realm of the empty and the suffused,

one that Abu Remaileh (2008) refers to as a “negative space” what remains at the border of representation rather than the core of it. For her, Suleiman depicts Palestine as a spatial entity “through the cracks” that is inevitably linked to the concept of time where a sense of “monumental history” is absent (p. 10).

By focusing on these negative spaces, narratives oscillate between periphery and center, paving the way for what Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari have termed “rhizomatic”. According to Deleuze and Guattari (1980) “a rhizome has no beginning or end; it is always in the middle, between things, interbeing, *intermezzo*.” (p. 46) (emphasis in original). Here, the rhizomatic nature of time in ES’s films works as an “assemblage”, where multiplicity, heterogeneity and rupture are the essence of the rhizome (Deleuze, Gauattari, 1980). Hence, time in ES’s films moves through fragments, resisting chronology and opposing hierarchy, which leads to disrupting the linear narration and replacing it with a rhizomatic interpretation of time, which ultimately influences master-narratives that rely on the linear path of events.

In Europe, this interruption of linear time is a consequence of the post-war period and created what Deleuze (1989) refers to as “any-spaces-whatevers” (p. 8). Yet, these spaces are not only found in European countries and Western metropolises but also in the (post)colonial, where spaces oscillate between demolition and reconstruction, desertion and dwelling, life and death, occupation and liberation. Just like time exists in the liminal, space also becomes interstitial. As in European post-modernism, Deleuze’s “any-spaces-whatevers” exist in the post-colonial, where, according to Laura Marks (1999), cultural memories emerging out of postcolonial contexts, work as a disruptor of national and colonial histories.

Since there is no linearity or a fixed trajectory of time, the latter is found in Elia Suleiman's films through fragments and repetition:

- Fragments

In ES' films, there is a series of vignettes known as scenes that are only depicted once as a sketch and do not necessarily integrate as part of the plot; yet they remain essential to giving an impression about an idea, a setting or character in the film. The use of vignettes is evocative, as it disrupts the linearity of the narrative and packs visual texts with symbolic connotations that at first sight might seem distant from forming an additional meaning. According to Suleiman, however, the use of vignettes comes from his own desire to randomly "compose an image for cinema", where he aims to record a certain chaos by adding an aesthetic dimension that becomes part of the larger tableau⁸. Hence, these fragments depicted in Suleiman's films seek to avoid falling into the trap of a totalitarian representation of the national and the colonial, where the vignettes interrupt the flow of master narratives, as they are imbued with underlying tones of interruption and fracturing that need further exploration.

- Repetition

In all the films of Elia Suleiman, repetition is inescapable. According to Deleuze (1989), in order for the time-image to unfold, it has to "repeat itself, take itself up again, fork, contradict itself" (p. 273). The time-image by way of its repetition gives birth to its own liminality, where time "is constantly recommending its dividing in two without completing it, since the indiscernible exchange is always renewed and reproduced" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 275).

⁸ In an interview with Elia Suleiman. See https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/suleiman_5_1_11/

Repetition in Suleiman's films is capable of reaffirming the idea of images without a center, an interstitial site in which incidents are recurrent but not replicated, in a space that continues to be the core of this repetition. Therefore, repetition in the time-image of Suleiman's films is a projection of the tension that carries the burden of a confused present, one that is entrenched in the past yet has not completely dismissed the idea of a possible future. The repetitive scenes highlight the undertones of a tension that might erupt at any given moment in a space called Palestine.

Also, this repetition asserts the non-linearity of the time-image since time is not extending in a fixed static line of events, but rather fluctuates within an alternative cycle opposed to its classic form. According to Abu-Remaileh (2011), this repetition marks what she refers to as a "deterioration" of the scenes in which the concept of return (*Al Awda*) becomes "suspended in time, just as time itself seems to have become suspended in an ongoing present" (p. 13).

Below is a detailed analysis of how the time-image in its fragmentation and repetition is manifested in the trilogy of Elia Suleiman's films.

b. Films

i. Chronicle of a Disappearance

- Vignettes

In these vignettes, Suleiman employs fragments of narrations that might or might not add up to the larger scheme of the film. In one of the scenes, ES is present at a conference where he is asked to speak about his experience in exile as a filmmaker. While the Palestinian flag hangs in the backdrop, ES approaches the mic to speak, yet a continuous feedback keeps denying his voice to be heard, despite the continuous attempts of the soundman to fix it (Appendix A). The space in which Suleiman were to

express his subjectivity is turned into one that disables his voice, both as a filmmaker and as a Palestinian. Due to external factors such as babies crying, phones ringing, people talking out loud, others leaving, a space that is supposed to open up possibilities of expression is turned into one of restriction and inhibition.

Hence, while Suleiman is asked to speak from the perspective of being a Palestinian in exile, all conditions turn against him: He is indirectly denied the right to speak up, in a conference room emblematic of his own homeland as it gathers people from different backgrounds, ages and gender. This brings to mind the words of Edward Said who, in “Permission to Narrate”, shed light on the controversy imbuing the Palestinian narrative, let alone the exilic one: “to speak of Palestinians outside the occupied territories was to challenge the collective Arab narrative and, in the words of a young Arab Third Secretary, to view history in too ‘liberal and Western’ a way” (Said, 1984, p. 33). Therefore, the normative adherence to nationalism is shattered, and the unity of voices that is supposed to stem out of a fixed national frame is fractured in the context of a conference room that prohibited a man from expressing his thoughts, primarily since he lived in exile and his thoughts might have been contaminated by “liberal and Western” ideals.

Said’s notion of “Orientalism” is visualized in a scene set in a cafe, labeled as “the American colony” where two French men in suits discuss the Arab-Israeli conflict. They do so in a space that supposedly preserves the authenticity of old Jerusalem, through maintaining the aura of ancient architecture (Appendix B). This composition depicts Jerusalem as a space that is a hub for Westerners to discuss the instability of the region and peace options that are never to be fulfilled. The two men set the tone for the conflict that arises in other scenes, where Westerners ensure the impossibility of peace

that the land has been witnessing for as long as these two French men recall. This resonates with Said's notion of "orientalizing" the Orient, where knowledge on Palestine specifically and the Arab world generally, is being produced and disseminated by Westerners who are engaged in othering Palestinians and the Arabs by considering them a static entity devoid of difference.

Hence, these stereotypical interpretations of the West with which Israel identifies, is embedded in the conversation of these two men trying to comprehend Palestine as part of the Orient where they see Palestine and the Arab world as simply a warzone, disregarding cultural and social differences. By so doing, we get a glimpse of the one-dimensional narrative perpetuated by two Western men, reminding us about the issue of representation that Palestinians struggle with where their voice is constantly being hindered.

In another scene set as an interview, Suleiman portrays a priest who dismantles the romantic image of Nazareth, shedding light on how this space has been both materially and symbolically altered. In a medium close up, with the sea and church as a backdrop, a priest is narrating how Nazareth, where Jesus was said to have walked over water, has become what he refers to as a "gastronomic sewer" (Appendix C). This alters the known image of Nazareth from holiness to that of impurity. While the priest's voice over recounts how the space has changed, a series of long shots feature the hotels, the boats, the lake, the kibbutzes and the tourists.

The initial scenery has been shifted and replaced by one that is no longer holy, and in which faith can no longer be found. A sacred place has turned into another consumerist city run by capital instead of faith. This disrupts the holiness that the

Zionist ideology initially perpetuated. According to Uri Eisenzweig (1981), the Zionist vision could no longer correspond to the religious imperative that was the primary reason for why Jews sought Palestine as their land. This is exactly what we see in this scene: The priest fractures the flow of historical continuity, which ultimately disrupts notions of unity and belonging. The priest doesn't fulfill our expectation of what a man of religion would have to say about Nazareth. The lack of holiness that Suleiman has set in previous scenes, becomes very clear here: Zionism that started off as a religious project has turned into a settler-colonial one and related to imperialist ideals. As the priest shows, the city no longer belongs to pious ideals, let alone nationalistic ones. Since historical continuity is essential to any nationalistic ideology, this scene depicts the cracks in Zionism by showing how Nazareth has been turned into a plastic city, one that has been stripped from its history.

- Repeated Scenes

In *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, the first space that interrupts the normative conception of nationalism is depicted in the fish shop scene. In a wide fixed frame, the fish shop is one of the spaces that are used more than once and is turned into a site of conflict, of men who pull over, step out of their vehicles and for no apparent reason, get into a fight right in front of the fish shop (Appendix D). The repetitive image of male figures fighting –two male friends, a father and his son– emphasizes the tension in Palestine, especially within Palestinian manhood. National manhood is in crisis and it is always man who happens to be the savior. In this scene, the owner of the fish shop and whoever is around – who are also men – are those who interfere to end the unexplained fight. This repetition of conflict sheds light on how imbued tension has become in daily Palestinian life, especially between men. This scene is an obvious signifier of how

gender infuses nationalism and how the nation is masculine. Although this scene also fits in the gender section, it is a repeated scene. Hence, the element of repetition plays an important role in reaffirming the disruption of heteronormative nationalism. In other words, this conflict that Suleiman depicts disrupts the nationalist call for unity and questions the shared male identity that has long been adopted as tradition. Thus, he delineates the way in which conflict has been internalized within its Palestinian subjects, particularly male subjects, rather than erupting in the face of colonial rule.

The souvenir shop scenes are also essential to the interruption of national identity. The Holy Land is ES' friend's tourist shop where Suleiman is repeatedly depicted as spending time there, silently with his friend, right outside the shop in a wide fixed frame that depicts the two men and their surroundings (Appendix E). They are portrayed as dully observing passers-by and tourists, indifferently spotting death announcements. In this repetitive scene, the postcard rack placed outside the shop features the many cultural symbols that Israelis have appropriated into their own culture, like Falafel and the camel, as well as other Palestinian Christian-ritualistic ones. This reflects the multi-fold identity that Nazareth as a space has assumed and becomes emblematic of Bhabha's notion of "double narration", where Suleiman shows how Palestine as a space is associated with opposing signifiers, that each claim their belonging to the land.

Even though the weather is always sunny and no sign of wind is detected, this rack continuously rotates. This continuous whirling is caused by the void that fills the place, one that is supposed to be touristic and ritualistic but has turned the Holy land, both symbolically and physically, into an empty space that has become incorporated into everyday monotony. This repetition seeks to highlight the dreary reality of

Nazareth, hometown of Jesus, which has become a soulless city. It allows the depiction of Palestine as a space that lacks a sense of community and belonging, and how as days pass, Nazareth continues to fall into the trap of repetition and dullness, where nationalism is no longer an option for redemption, since both Zionism and Palestinian nationalism are nothing but souvenir cards of a whirling rack.

ii. Divine Intervention

- Vignettes

The opening scene of this film sets the tone for the perpetuated crisis of ES's Palestine. A man dressed as Santa Claus runs away from a group of children who throw rocks at him, ungrateful and furious for his existence (Appendix F). In an open green space, Santa Claus climbs the steep hill while the colorful gifts in the bag he's carrying are slipping and falling behind for the kids to step on. When Santa reaches the hilltop, he gets stabbed in his chest and is left to die in front of the church. This opening scene reflects the violence stemming out of Nazareth, birthplace of Jesus, and where Santa is supposed to symbolize peace and unity, yet is loathed by those who are normally perceived to like him most: children.

This peaceful space turns into a hostile one. The wide shot of Nazareth is permeated by violence and irrationality. Nazareth has become a brutal space in which one of the most innocent things has been distorted: childhood. These kids, who happen to be all boys, are running after a man whose outfit seems to have signaled their irritation. The stone-throwing is being performed onto a man who figuratively is there to give, rather than being aimed at the face of other men in a different kind of uniform, one that gave them the audacity to steal land from its people. Hence, resistance as a

national duty is being questioned here, in a scene that appears distant and vague, as opposed to opening scenes that in conventional filmmaking set out to introduce one of the main characters.

In the scene that follows, ES's father indifferently smokes his cigarette while he drives through the neighborhood in Nazareth. People wave at him, he waves back while he mutters cuss words (Appendix G). This inner tension of one individual is being projected onto other inhabitants of Nazareth, where common livelihood seems at stake, and where the vision of national solidarity is negated. This is also related to the following scene in which we see from the point of view of ES's father, still in his car, how greetings have come to represent apathy instead of eagerness. The shot is very slow, the cars drive in languor, almost still, and everyone seems to live in slow motion. In the point of view of ES's father, people in Nazareth are living as if everything is normal, disregarding the symbolic Jewish existence that imbues the space with different signs that infuse the backdrop. People seem to carry out their daily lives normally, yet the tension that ES's father portrays is what all these people are choosing not to see.

For him, life is passing by at a very slow pace, where each minute feels like an eternity. This slowness is one of the traits carried out by the time-image, where the shot "is extended by a quite long silence or emptiness" (Deleuze, 1989, p. 14). The image seems to lag behind while motion and emotion seem to be curbed. Ira Jaffe (2014) has highlighted the shrinking of emotional expression in such films, where the muteness of emotion brings about a stillness and a sense of immobility onto the image. In this sense, this image reflects the agony of having to live in Nazareth, where one experiences the passivity and detachment from one's own surroundings. This space that has come to represent indifference is also a disruption of common notions of fraternity and unity that

seem no more than a daily masquerade. Hence, the slowness of the image paves the way for what Deleuze and Guattari referred to as “dead-time”. This scene is emblematic of how time by way of its passing seems not to pass at all: “it is where nothing takes place, an infinite awaiting that is already infinitely past, awaiting and reserve: (Deleuze, Guattari, 1994, p. 158)

Another scene situates ES at a red light, looking at a huge billboard that reads “Come Shoot If You’re Ready” in Hebrew (Appendix H). The billboard features a woman with puncturing eyes as the rest of her face is covered in a *keffeyeh*. As ES turns away from the billboard, his eye catches the sight of a Jewish man in the car next to his. In recurrent medium shots, they both exchange looks. ES subtly puts on his black sun glasses and plays “I Put a Spell on You” while staring at the Israeli man who chooses to look away. The billboard that’s sitting in the backdrop is emblematic of the conflicting ideologies of the two men. Here, traditional nationalism broke from its symbolic order first by using a woman’s face instead of a man’s, and by using Hebrew to address a Palestinian call for resistance. By so doing, Suleiman disrupts Zionism as well; even though the billboard merges with the other banners written in Hebrew, it stands out as the *keffeyeh* overlays the woman’s face. According to Stuart Hall (1997), language is essential to the production of a meaning in a specific context. By emphasizing the role of language in its expression of culture, Hall (1997) claims that meaning is continuously being produced, incorporated and appropriated in everyday practices through cultural circuits that form and regulate identities. Hence, when a Palestinian symbol, such as the *keffeyeh*, was attached to a text in Hebrew, both broke from their initial symbolic order and entered the realm of a hybrid connotation in which a new meaning was produced. As ideologies are established in representational systems of connotations, through

which language and images are mediums (Hall, 1997), the woman fighter who's calling for resistance in Hebrew not only disrupted Palestinian national and Zionist ideologies, but also reclaimed the space from which she was doing so.

- Repeated scenes

In one of the scenes. ES waits in his car behind the watchtower of Al-Ram checkpoint, to meet with his girlfriend who's denied from crossing the border from Ramallah to Jerusalem. The scene is repeated at different times of the day: at night, dusk and dawn. In a medium close-up, ES and his girlfriend hold hands and stare into each other's eyes without uttering a word. While the shots depict intimacy, the watchtower sits in the backdrop, reminding us of the harshness of the space. Yet, for Suleiman, the checkpoint has become a spot where he gets to spend time with his lover. Hence, he managed to flip the symbolic imagery of the checkpoint from a ruthless controlling space to that of a romantic one. While in the backdrop, Israeli soldiers continue to commit injustices, at the forefront, two lovers are caressing each other's hands. The intimacy of the scene overpowers the inherited inhumanity of the checkpoint.

At their fourth meeting, and while Suleiman gazes admiringly at his girlfriend, he inflates a red balloon displaying Arafat's grinning portrait and releases it. The balloon hovers above the Israeli soldiers who become alert of the possibility of a potential danger (Appendix I). As the balloon makes its way passed the borders, the soldiers are no longer concerned with questioning and searching the passing cars but are rather unsettled by the presence of a mysterious floating balloon. ES slowly drives his way out of the checkpoint parking lot and manages to get through the checkpoint with

his girlfriend next to him without being noticed by the soldiers, who are still busy identifying the source of the balloon. In this scene, ES turned a cruel space into a site of affection. He used Arafat's face as a mediator to escape borders in the name of love. As the soldiers debate whether or not to shoot the balloon down, it floats all the way to Jerusalem, in open wide shots that depict the scenery from a high angle and finally sets on the Dome of the Rock. This serves as an example of how Suleiman uses humor to disrupt nationalism in terms of armed resistance. One interpretation of why Suleiman used Arafat's face is that the latter, as a hot air balloon, has managed to transgress a militarized space while he failed to do so as the head of the PLO. What is also remarkable in this scene is the camera movement that is normally lacking in ES's films. The tracking of the balloon sheds light on the possibility of transgression: Not only did the balloon act as a mediator for border-crossing, but it was also used to reclaim the space which it floated above. By so doing, ES disrupted the colonial order by transgressing the border as well as reclaiming the occupied Palestinian space.

Another repeated scene depicts a foreign tourist asking an Israeli policeman for directions. As he's not sure how to help her, he pulls a blindfolded, handcuffed Palestinian from the back of the van, to provide the necessary information. Even though the Palestinian cannot see, he manages to successfully guide the tourist and is sent to the back of the van again once his job is done. When the tourist is lost again, the policeman checks the back of the van for a detainee to help. As the back of the van is empty, the policeman rushes into his van willing to arrest any Palestinian since, unlike settlers, they know their way around the city by heart. In this repeated scene, ES shows us how flawed the Zionist order is. No matter how many years they spend, or how hard they try, Zionists will never know Palestine by heart like Palestinians do. Israelis might have

changed the original names of Palestinian cities and might have demolished and reshaped whole towns but the engraved imagery of Palestine in the memory of its people is stronger than any distortions that the Zionist have done to space both physically and symbolically. Hence, Palestine as a spatial entity is reclaimed through the memory of its natives, by way of a blindfolded, handcuffed man who managed to recuperate his homeland symbolically.

iii. The Time That Remains

- Vignettes

In the opening scene, ES gets picked up by a taxi driver from the Ben Gurion international airport. As the driver places ES's luggage in the trunk, a wide shot depicts two posters that sit in the backdrop of a landscape. They read "Eretz Achiret", Hebrew for "A Different Land". This scene prepares us for the spatial (re)conception of Palestine that accompanies the narrative as it oscillates between past and present.

As ES sits in the backseat, the driver makes his way out of the parking lot onto the vast highways of Tel Aviv. Just as ES's journey begins in a cab late at night, a rainstorm starts. While ES seems indifferent by the sudden weather change, the driver laments the old Israel by expressing how estranged the scenery has become. As the wide shots depict the urban setting of Tel Aviv, the driver still expresses his astonishment with what the space has turned into. "Where are the kibbutzes, the collective farms? He asks. As the rain falls heavily, the driver becomes more confused and gets completely lost; he pulls over as his panic increases. While ES sits in the back silently, appearing as a ghost in the shadows, the driver asks himself: "WHAT IS THIS PLACE" – "Where do I go now? How do I get home? Where am I?" (Appendix J).

The last question is repeated as it slowly becomes existential to the driver who stares into the void with weary eyes. These questions reflect the irrelevance that haunts the conception of space on which the Zionist ideology has been built in relation to the current spatial organization of land. The changing of the initial scenery made the driver skeptical of his own existence, as his identity is highly tied to the ideology made tangible through space. Modernity and urbanization have altered the indigenous configuration of land and, and as a result have led to the out-of-place sentiment that has taken over the driver. According to Joseph Massaad (2005), Zionists have turned Palestinian spaces into “European Jewish locales” where the land of “ancient Hebrews [...] would then be repackaged as the land of modern and future Jews” (p 171).

Through this scene, ES disrupts the Zionist ideology depicted as unstable by way of a confused colonizer who’s no longer familiar with a land that appears alien to the ideology from which it originally stemmed. Hence, Home here is not simply the physical shelter of the taxi driver. It is symbolic of the concept of homeland that the Zionist have promised yet could not fulfill. Therefore, since the concept of homeland imbued in the Zionist ideology doesn’t go along with the current conception of space, the driver – an allegory of settler colonialism – is lost.

In a wide shot, in a room in a huge emptied fortress, a group of Israeli officials are gathered along with Palestinian dignitaries, who occupy the opposite side of the room. The mayor of Galilee sits in the middle of the room, his back turned to his fellow Palestinians as he faces the Israeli officials who demand his signature on the agreement that states that his city unconditionally surrendered to the Israeli army on July 16, 1948. As the mayor signs the agreement, Palestinian figures such as the priest and *sheikh* are silently witnessing the submission of Nazareth to Israeli forces. To document the

historic moment, the mayor is asked to join the Israeli officials for a picture. In a wide shot, the mayor is surrounded by Israelis as their flag placed on the edge of the table reminds him of what his signature has led to. The photographer shoves his rear in the faces of the Palestinian figures as he bends over to take the photograph. Palestinian figures are left out of the frame, as the photographer's behind pushes them back to the margins of history (Appendix K). In this scene, both Palestinian nationalism and Zionism are being disrupted. By choosing to turn his camera onto Palestinian authoritarians, Suleiman shows how these figures have silently agreed to give in to those who captured their Nazareth, reflecting the larger image how Palestine as a spatial entity was also sold with the absence of a nationalist conscience. However, as the camera doesn't depict Israelis, a subtle sense of resistance is confirmed as Suleiman refuses to let the photograph be a documentation of a contaminated history.

This sense of lost resistance gets reaffirmed by demeaning it as a nationalist behavior in a different scene. As the Israeli forces continue to invade and capture Palestinian cities as well as ask resistance fighters to drop their weapons and surrender, one fighter reads a 1937 poem by Abdel Rahim Mahmoud titled "Shaheed" or "Martyr" as an Israeli soldier gazes down on him from a higher spot. As the camera is positioned at a high fixed angle, the resistant fighter recites the poem and ends it by shooting himself in the head. We might think that is the fighter decided to take his own life rather than surrender, but the way in which the camera is positioned reminds us that the subject is being belittled by way of the high angle that looks down onto the subject depicted as vulnerable and the low angle from which the Israeli soldier is depicted in a position of power. Again, this portrayal of the resistant fighter in relation to Israelis

reflects the period that ES depicts as a defeat to nationalism, where the space in which the resistant fighter took his own life is a place of subjugation rather than victory.

During these events, Fouad, introduced as ES's father, peeks from behind a wall at Israeli soldiers looting an emptied house. The wide shot emphasizes the distance from which Fouad makes sure to keep. The shots split between close ups of Fouad's face glancing at the soldiers in contrast with the wide shots depicting the objects being plundered. As one of the soldiers turns the looted phonograph on, an Arabic song by Asmahan plays. The movement of Israeli soldiers becomes synchronized with the music, as though their looting act has been rehearsed and is being performed for Fouad as the only audience member. The camera's fluctuating positions between wide shots and close-ups reminds us that the hideous act did not go unnoticed, that there was a witness who documented the robbery.

The witness becomes the evidence that fractures the totality of the Zionist order. Also, ES tends to portray Israelis' acts as always choreographed so that whenever an error occurs, the performance becomes flawed, leading to disrupting the Zionist ideals of totality. Hence, the presence of Fouad during the act of looting serves as a reclamation of the space that has been despoiled. On the other hand, the space in which the looting occurred will be carved in the memory of Fouad as a failure of nationalism, as some Palestinians abandoned their houses and left them wide open for the enemy to rob. Hence, witnessing this incident works as both a reclamation of space, and a disturbance to nationalism, where the presence of Fouad serves as an interruption to both national and Zionist narratives.

Fast forward to ES as a teenager who sits with his friends outside the souvenir shop “The Holy Land”, as a man who sells newspapers yells their titles out loud: “The Nation for one Shekel and All the Arabs for free”. As one of ES’s friends asks for “The Nation” paper, the man exclaims that there is no “Nation” left but he can always have “The Arabs” as it exists in abundance. In this scene, ES employed an insightful metaphor on the political situation during which Palestine was sold while the Arabs stood still and were inefficient in defending the Palestinian cause. Hence, while the “Holy Land” exists as a souvenir shop, it ceases to exist as a “Nation”. This, of course, fractures Palestinian nationalism on a large scale, and indirectly questions traditional nationhood as it doubts its efficiency and loyalty. This scene serves as a reminder of Homi Bhabha’s negation of the nation as an “imagined community”. As Bhabha shows, “historical necessity of the idea of the nation conflicts with the contingent and arbitrary signs and symbols that signify the affective life of the national” and as this scene shows, no longer can we view the nation from the holistic lens attributed to it by authors such as Benedict Anderson, as the totality of the nation is fractured symbolically (Bhabha, 1989, p. 211).

In another scene, a man steps out of his house in Jerusalem to take out the trash, as an Israeli tank blocking the street follows him, pointing its cannon at him. He doesn’t acknowledge its presence and goes back and forth talking on his phone and making plans with a friend, turning a blind eye to the potential danger that might arise. In the next scene, an Israeli patrol announces curfew in front of a nightclub in Ramallah, yet no one seems bothered by the call as everyone continues to dance the night away; even the Israeli soldier inside the jeep shakes his head to the sound of music. Here, Zionism becomes an illusion that Palestinians are no longer threatened by as they

choose to ignore its material existence, and by so doing, they strip it of its symbolism. Based on Althusser's notion of ideology, the latter must be to be materialized in order to be thought. Hence, the spaces infused by Zionism are reclaimed through the refusal to take notice of the tangibility of Israeli presence, and by so doing, they negate the reification of the Zionist ideology through the tangibility it sought to impose.

Towards the end of the film, a scene depicts Suleiman as an adult, silently gazing at the separation wall. A few seconds pass before he attempts and succeeds in crossing over to the other side, using a long pole (Appendix L). Here, the separation wall becomes a pole vault as ES becomes the athlete who manages to transgress the barrier separating him from his own land. This acrobatic act defies the core of the occupation and serves as dismantling the symbolic imagery of the wall as impossible to leap over. Even though the wall was not physically torn down, it was crossable. This scene, although doesn't add to the plot, is highly symbolic of a fantastical resistance that traverses the concreteness of the wall.

Suleiman is not the only one who reversed the meaning of physical obstructions. In Hany Abu-Assad's *Omar*, the protagonist climbs over the separation wall daily to meet with his lover living at the other side of the West Bank. In Anne Marie Jacir's *When I Saw You*, frontiers for the child protagonist could easily be hacked as the borderline that separates him from his homeland is crossable once the Israeli police patrol is no longer at sight. According to Anna Ball (2011), "the site of the border" represents the fantasy of resistance that occupies the Palestinian psyche in Suleiman's films (p. 19). In the words of Tawil-Souri (2014), walls are an ironic palpability of the separation between Palestine and Israel. Yet, in Palestinian films, walls are made to be transgressed. They are part of the every-day scenery yet they are

not absolute separators, but rather temporary barriers that make the journey all the more worthwhile.

- Repeated scenes

Fouad, ES's father, is depicted in the post-1967 period married with Elia as the fruit of this marriage. Fouad is continuously featured with his elderly neighbor who both sip on a glass of Arak while coming up with irrational scenarios on how to defeat Israel, or devastatingly drunk that he threatens to set himself on fire (Appendix M). Obviously, this man has witnessed and survived the 1948 Nakba. Yet, these repetitive scenes show how this event has affected the being of many Palestinians and deteriorated their sense of resistance, where an old man drinks to drown his nationalist sorrows. In wide shots, the front porch becomes a place where a person spills kerosine on himself to escape a brutal reality, and the backyard a site of an illogical conspiracy against the enemy. Yet, these spaces never fulfil the violence they promise, as Fouad is always there to curb the actualization of a potential nationalist eruption.

Another repeated scene is one in which Fouad and his friend are fishing at night. In a wide frame, their backs against the camera as they face the sea, Fouad and his friend are interrupted by a police patrol asking for ID cards. As this act becomes a ritual, the patrol silently flashes its light at the two men who choose not to utter a word, as gazes are exchanged between them and the security forces. This scene is a silent recuperation of the sea, the site from which many Palestinians are denied and dream of seeing. This awe has been shared by different exilic filmmakers, such as Anne Marie Jacir whose film *Salt of This Sea* opens with an archival scene of Palestinians fleeing their land in the 1948 Nakba through the port of Jaffa. In her film, the sea is a space in

which the protagonist swims, loves and dreams. The sea is a recurrent theme in Palestinian fiction films as many Palestinians are physically forbidden to visit and where films are the only medium through which they can virtually see the sea. Hence, the use of the sea as a space is a symbolic reclamation of it, ultimately linked to the right of return where the same water that carried Palestinians from their land will one day be the one that brings them back to where they belong.

Therefore, repetition in these scenes is used in a liminal sense, where it serves as a reminder of a potential eruption yet doesn't evade the option of reconciliation. In the eyes of Suleiman, to belong is not to adhere to totality, but rather to find oneself in the interstitial space that emerged as result of abandoning master-narratives and searching for individuality in repeated fragments instead of whole moments.

2. Gender

In the films of Elia Suleiman, gender is another aspect that works as a disruptor of dominant ideologies and becomes de-facto a contributor to the rearrangement of the filmic space. Patriarchal power and nationhood are closely tied as gender oppression becomes lodged in the totalitarian project of nationalism. This is what Anna Ball (2008) has shed light on, where representations of nationhood are constructed through sexualized and gendered paradigms, and notions of masculinity and patriarchy are deeply embedded in the discourse of the nation. ES's films have managed to question the former in its conception of masculinity and resistance where according to Ball (2008), the films of Elia Suleiman dismantle the traditional notions of unity and pave the way for a "fragmented, destabilized, and hybrid vision of Palestine" (p. 3).

Based on Judith Butler's interpretation of the performativity of gender, both Palestinian and Zionist nationalist ideologies are produced within heteronormative categories. For Butler (1988), heterosexual gender roles, by way of their repetition, gain legitimacy: "gender is an act which has been rehearsed, much as a script survives the particular actors who make use of it, but which requires individual actors in order to be actualized and reproduced as reality once again." The same can be said about nationalism, where compulsory roles are practiced time and time again until they become entrenched in the ideology that hosts them. Zionism and Palestinian nationalism become nothing but a reproduction of standardized roles whose validity is ensured through a repeated performance that work within heteronormative paradigms. Inseparable from nationhood is the concept of resistance which continues to be linked to manhood. According to Joseph Massad (2008), the project of nationhood is dependent on gendered subjects. For him, nationalist agency is masculine-centric by way of its definition of the Palestinian nationalist movement. The masculine discourse embedded in the project of nationhood is also adopted by Benedict Anderson (1991) whose work in *Imagined Communities* is disrupted through ES's films, as a totalizing paradigm in which the nation becomes a static entity, and where nationalism has "a special affinity for male society and together with the concept of respectability legitimized the dominance of men over women" (p. 7). Yet, in the films of Suleiman, this vision is subverted. Women are not weak, nor dependent on men, and not all men are necessarily that macho after all. The way in which men and women are portrayed in ES's films throws into flux traditional gendered roles and paves the way for an alternative depiction.

These men and women are an interruption of both national and colonial paradigms, where nationalist agency escapes the realm of the regulatory practices and takes on liminal forms that do not adhere to neither the Palestinian nationalist nor the Zionist narratives. Through them, Suleiman elicits a postcolonial discourse that overthrows the static relationship between the center and the periphery: “In the case of Palestine, my challenge is to avoid a centralized, unified image that allows only a single narrative perspective and, on the contrary, to produce a kind of decentralization of viewpoint, perception, and narration”⁹ (p. 97).

In other words, Elia Suleiman offers alternative interpretations of his gendered subjects. Generally speaking, women in ES’s films possess a subversive power, while men are not depicted as fighters nor part of an armed resistance- and even when they are, the latter is framed in a way that negates the totality of the nationalist discourse. Fiction has allowed Suleiman to form a liminal space in which men and women are able to disavow their traditional roles and attain uncommon ones, to say the least. Therefore, the films of ES question homogeneity by introducing alternative realities that grapple with conventional gender roles and ultimately influence the configuration of filmic space by deconstructing national and colonial narratives. Below is the analysis of Gender relations in Suleiman’s films.

a. Films

i. Chronicle of a Disappearance

Adan is the only woman character that is essential to the plot of *Chronicle of a Disappearance*. She is depicted as a strong independent Arab Israeli woman who is

⁹ In Elia Suleiman, “A Cinema of Nowhere”, *Journal of Palestinian Studies*, 2000

firstly portrayed in the film in a real-estate office looking for an apartment to rent in East Jerusalem. In an over the shoulder shot, Adan is depicted as listening to a man who tries to convince her in ditching the idea of living alone and counting on herself when she can easily stick to the normative roles of a woman which require her to get married, have kids and “be protected” as all Arab women eventually ought to do (Appendix N). Through her facial expressions that appear only for a few seconds in this scene, Adan is angry, obviously in disdain of what a traditional man has to say about her personal choices.

Adan chooses to defy the norms of a traditional society and resorts to the payphone as she continues to look for an apartment to rent. Although she speaks perfect Hebrew, none of her attempts worked as whoever she called would ask her about the origin of her name and her subtle accent. In the eyes of ES, Jerusalem is a place that fluctuates between traditional norms in the Arab context and racism when it comes to common livelihood in the Jewish context. Adan seeks her refuge between the liminalities of these two master narratives, in a theater-like place that she finds, hiding in the suburbs of East Jerusalem.

This place is filled with posters of theatrical plays, Palestinian artists, poets and caricatures. A chair made of leather embellished with the Palestinian flag sits in the middle of the theater. A TV plays one of Duraid Laham’s songs on grief and lamenting homeland while a mannequin dressed in traditional Palestinian female costume is continuously turning in circles (Appendix N). This place turns into a private cultural hub where Adan is determined to avenge the Israeli system as well as the nationalistic conception of resistance. In her small studio room, she is depicted in different scenes confusing the Israeli police by sending mixed signals and orders to different places

around Jerusalem, through a walkie-talkie that she found after an Israeli officer accidentally left it behind in a previous scene (Appendix N).

Adan finally leads them to her own place, while singing the Israeli national anthem played as voice over onto the image of the men in Duraid Laham's performance on homeland. Homeland becomes a duality, identities oscillate and roles are flipped. When the police finally reaches her place, they fail to arrest Adan as they get distracted by the fireworks that she managed to set in a previous scene so that they would be mistaken for a bomb and Adan would be replaced by the mannequin.

This parallel depiction sheds light on how resistance can be planned and executed by one individual who managed to find the cracks and holes in the Israeli order. Adan is an interruption to the Zionist narrative that perceives Palestinians as terrorists, especially men. Yet, this also disrupts the national narrative, as Adan is a woman who succeeded in playing the Israeli police, not through armed resistance, but with fireworks and fake grenades and guns that turn out to be cigarette lighters. While the Israelis used weapons to fight an act of a non-violent resistance, Adan used her imagination to avenge both the Zionist and the Palestinian nationalist conceptions of opposition. East Jerusalem is taken back by a woman in a small deserted space that turns out to be a site of resistance. Adan manages to escape the Israeli police and the Arab traditions, where she creates her own existence in the interstices of belonging, subverting both nationalism and gendered expectations.

ii. Divine Intervention

At Al-Ram checkpoint, Israeli soldiers deny Palestinians from crossing the border from Jerusalem to Ramallah. Amidst all the traffic and beeping cars, one car

doesn't move. This is one of the rare scenes in which camera movement is employed. A crane shot is employed as high as the watchtower and descends slowly to become ground level as it pans to show a woman's legs stepping out of her car. This woman, who happens to be ES's nameless girlfriend, fearlessly walks towards the checkpoint as if walking down a runway, in a tight dress, high heels and a pair of sunglasses that cover her eyes from the beaming sun. While the camera is still tracking her in a wide shot, she takes off her sunglasses to make eye contact with the soldiers who lower their weapons as she passes by as though bowing to her fearlessness. ES's girlfriend succeeds in crossing the border of the checkpoint, and as she does so, the watchtower miraculously comes crashing down (Appendix O). According to Hagar Katef and Merav Amir (2015), the checkpoint as a technology of control creates what they refer to as "imaginary lines" that allow Israeli soldiers to symbolically control a given space, one that is bound to be transgressed. (p. 58).

Even though this scene still worked within the paradigm of standard femininity, Elia Suleiman used the latter to transgress the "imaginary line" made visible by way of Israeli soldiers and a watchtower. This femininity was employed to disrupt the colonial structure and denied Israeli soldiers from re-acting to this transgression. This femininity should not be read as simply employed to fulfill the male gaze. There is no question that the soldiers' male gaze was apparent in the first half of the scene, where the woman was perceived as a sexualized subject due to her feminine attire. Yet, as soon as the soldiers became aware of the woman as a racialized subject, the male gaze got interrupted. The woman is no longer a female other, but rather a territorial threat. When the woman takes off her sunglasses, she confronts the male gaze of the Israeli soldiers who become aware of her as a possible menace. This female figure

fluctuates between being an object of desire and of danger to both the male and the military authority. Hence, the falling of the watchtower is a symbolic indication of the failure of both the phallic and the colonial order to consummate. Therefore, this nameless woman resisted Israeli spatial confinement and reclaimed the space from which she was denied to cross. She is also depicted as symbol of resistance, which is linked in the nationalist discourse to manhood rather than femininity. Hence, this woman doesn't solely cross the physical border, but makes a leap out of both the patriarchal and Zionist order.

In another scene, the same woman becomes a clearer symbol of resistance. In what seems like a deserted space, five Israeli soldiers fire at archetypal cut-outs of Palestinian fighters. Their movements are so choreographed that they seem part of a dancing routine, almost as robotic, as though simply following the orders they have been taught. From behind the last cardboard appears a woman fighter dressed in black with a *keffeyeh* covering her face, her eyes the only feature visible.

From her dark piercing eyes, we recognize her as ES's girlfriend. She makes her way towards the soldiers after the smoke resides. She has no guns yet manages to fight every soldier by dodging the bullets with her own body. As all five soldiers aim at her, she hovers above them while the bullets form a crown of thorns around her head (Appendix P). As seconds pass, she gets back on the ground and begins to fight with modest weapons: slingshots, rocks and grenades. A Palestinian flag figuratively gets rooted in the soil creating a border around the only soldier still alive (Appendix Q). As he takes his Kalashnikov to fire at her, she uses an iron shield in the shape of pre-1948 Palestine to dodge the bullets. Finally, the *keffeyeh* on her face unravels as she uses it to pull away

the weapon from the hands of the last remaining soldier, as the shield blows up the Israeli helicopter that came to the rescue.

In this context, what is regarded as a traditional symbol of nationalism is being used to counter the totality of both national and colonial rule. This is something that Ashcroft (2007) has alluded to when he referred to such symbolic features as a postcolonial “allegory” that fractures notions of national and imperial discourses (p. 7). This Ninja woman becomes a symbol for resistance as she defies both the national and the colonial. Just like Adan in *Chronicle of a Disappearance*, this nameless woman takes on different guises and becomes a symbol of an alternative national agency. She is neither passive nor remaining in the domestic realm as all Arab women are perceived to be. She is rather a nationalistic figure who uses her femininity to resist master-narratives as she intervenes to save emasculated spaces and occupied places from the Zionist plague and the nationalistic illusion.

iii. The Time That Remains

In this film, there is no central character that interrupts the normative approach to heterosexuality, yet there are characters that appear in one or a couple of scenes that remind us of ES’s outlook on gender that he introduced in previous films.

In one of the scenes, ES appears as an adult peeking from his hotel room in Jerusalem at a clash between Israeli soldiers and Palestinian protestors. In a wide fixed frame, the hostility is interrupted by a woman pushing a stroller to cross to the other side of the street. As she moves in poise and composure, Israeli soldiers point their guns at her and ask her to “Go Home”. The woman fearlessly talks back urging the soldier himself to “Go Home” and walks away undaunted by the guns still directed at her and

her child. The expression “Go Home” is emblematic of the Palestinian Israeli conflict where Home becomes the land itself. Hence, the woman’s words symbolically reclaim Homeland as they disrupt Zionism by reminding the Israeli soldiers of the absence of Home imbued in their ideology. The woman is already Home whereas the soldier is trapped in his illusion of Home that his ideology has promised him. The woman not only interrupted hostility, but also resisted the Israeli order by discursively recuperating her land.

In another scene, a man is shown in ES’s parent’s house in Nazareth helping the health-care woman take care of ES’s old mother (Appendix R). In different scenes, the man in uniform whose handcuffs and gun are attached to his hips is depicted mopping the floor, doing the dishes, wearing pink gloves as he flushes the toilet and looking extra emotional as he listens to the caretaker sing “My Heart Will Go On”. This man defies the norms of Arabic manhood, as he is depicted doing tasks that are usually performed by women. Yet, Suleiman disrupts this balance, showing how the guy with the gun can also do domestic chores without feeling that his masculinity has been menaced.

3. *Home*

“I said, what is a homeland? I was asking myself that question a moment ago. Naturally. What is a homeland? Is it these two chairs that remained in this room for twenty years? The table? Peacock feathers? The picture of Jerusalem on the wall? The copper lock? The oak tree? The balcony? What is a homeland? Khaldun? Our illusions of him? Fathers? Their sons? What is a homeland? Is it the picture of his brother hanging on the wall? I’m only asking.”

Ghassan Kanafani, *Returning To Haifa* (1969)

From this excerpt, questioning the idea of Home/Homeland becomes essential, especially in the case of exilic filmmakers. Elia Suleiman's portrayal of Home is always dialectical and never stable. Here, I specifically refer to Home as the physical shelter of ES, whether it is his parent's house or his rented apartments or hotel rooms. Yet, Home as a physical entity is not bound to stay in the tangible realm but rather goes further to gain a symbolic meaning.

Through the eye of an exilic filmmaker, Home as a physical entity continuously fluctuates between domesticity and alienation. According to Hamid Naficy (1999), Home is a portable entity, "it can be built, rebuilt, and carried in memory and by acts of imagination". Since Palestine is imbued with political violence both on the national and colonial level, private spaces are always threatened by intrusion that leads to a spatial insecurity. This ambivalence is detected in the films of Suleiman in his depiction of an oscillating concept of Home. Unlike some of the portrayals of Home in documentary films, we never see Home as a physically demolished space in Suleiman's films. Home could be intruded, robbed, disturbed, but never destroyed. Here, Home as the physical private space reflects on the larger image of Homeland. Homeland can be invaded, symbolically and physically altered, but never reduced to ruins. In a way, the fictionality of the image protects this domestic trait of Home that will always be there in the eyes of ES.

According to Margaret Morse (1999), Home might be "taken away or shrivel into an empty shell" but it always be hidden in confidential places that can be somehow recuperated, at least parts of them. This is what ES does; he simultaneously exposes Home yet protects it. The physical space of Home is emblematic of the symbolic Homeland which is occupied yet somehow shielded, even if it is only manifested in

memories or fantasies. Home can also be an alien experience, where to the familiarity of Home can turn into a strange experience that renders Home as a physical and symbolic space into a foreign one. This is where Home can become a Freudian uncanny, where the subject encounters the unfamiliarity that paves the way for the feelings of unhomeliness to creep in.

Dwayne Avery (2014) relates the Freudian uncanny to the concept of unhomeliness through exploring the semantic facets of Home as a symbolic space. For him, the uncanniness of the unhomely is a liminal experience that blurs the line between inside and outside: “the unhomely is a hybrid experience, the feeling of never being able to find a pure sense of identity or location” (Avery, 2014, p. 15). Suleiman gives us a glimpse of the unhomely as he goes back and forth in his memories and fantasies that makes Home as a hazy space that can never be fully attained. Of course, the unhomely here is tied to Suleiman’s experience in exile. Exile shapes the (un)homely experience which is a hybrid, dwelling space that emerges out the interstitial location that the filmmaker occupies. Suleiman’s approach to Home is similar to that of Andrei Tarkovsky who was in exile himself and struggled to manifest a stable representation of Home. Tarkovsky also depicted Home through memories, dreams and fantasies, none of which are linear in their conception of time or stable in their depiction of the spatiality of Home.

Hence, exile shapes the way Home is seen in the eyes of its beholder. According to Laura Marks (1999), the violent deterritorialization is incapable of offering “the sensuous experience of the homeland on a plate”, which is why Home is a multifold experience depicted within the intimate and the harsh, the present and the past, can be carried within the space of memories and that of fantasies. (p. 232). In this

context, the films of Suleiman operate as a safeguard to the domesticity of Home without taking away the element of infringement. Disturbing intimacy consistently occurs yet can never fully dismantle Home, even if it symbolized an unhomey spatial phenomenon, where subjects inhabiting Home sway between “agoraphobia and claustrophobia, between feeling secure and feeling trapped” (Naficy, 2001, p. 189).

In other words, Home for the exilic is an open-ended experience, one that embraces hybridity and ambivalence. The physical Home is the material symbol of Homeland manifested as a post-colonial experience which, in the words of Bhabha (1997), “has a resonance that can be heard distinctly, if erratically, in fictions that negotiate the powers of cultural difference in a range of historical conditions and social contradictions.” (p. 142). Below is the analysis of Home in Suleiman’s film trilogy.

a. Films

i. Chronicle of a Disappearance

Suleiman opens the film with a domestic space that is his parent’s house in Nazareth. A woman introduced as ES’s aunt is sitting on the couch set in the center of the frame of a wide shot. The woman sits there alone, facing the camera and unleashes her gossip session while no one is listening since no one is there. Rather than engaging us with stories about the occupation, resistance, pre and post-1948 tales, ES’s aunt is the source of the gossip in town. This woman embodies a resistance of traditional storytelling and transforms the space of domesticity to that of subtle verbal hostility.

In all the scenes that take place at ES’s parents’ house, the shots are distant, long, wide and in fixed frames. Also, in these scenes, the camera is placed in a way that makes us, as viewers, feel as though we’re peeking into a personal space that is

supposed to stay private (Appendix S). We only get to see glimpses of his parent's bodies obscured by the structure of home, through walls, doors and windows. We often see them but rarely hear them speak. The parents are rarely depicted in the same indoor space together. The mother is seen with her neighbors and relatives peeling onions and gossiping in the kitchen while the father talks to a bird trapped inside the cage and plays with a dog behind a fence. Communication seems to be done through borders, and even when it happens, it is perceived as an additional effort to make, one that becomes harder as days go by. Hence, this space, fluctuates between domesticity and entrapment, communication and concealment.

On the other hand, ES is portrayed in different apartments, that of his parents and the rented one in Jerusalem. In his parent's apartment, ES is depicted often looking through a series of photographs, of himself, his friends and parents. This space is a sacred one, and nostalgia is a safe haven manifesting as an exilic postcolonial experience, one that paves the way for individual memories to be expressed rather than dwelling on official records of history (Tawil-Souri, 2005).

As mentioned earlier, ambiguity is an essential element that structures all Suleiman's films. In contrast with his parent's house in Nazareth, ES is depicted in the Jerusalem apartment as distant both physically and symbolically. In one scene, an Israeli SWAT team pulls over outside the apartment and breaks in. ES stands there silently and in confusion, later following them from a room to another in his pajamas and slippers (Appendix T). Yet, for them, ES remains as though secondary to the property itself. The police are more concerned with the possessions and belongings in the apartment rather than ES himself. This reflects the status of "present-absentees", an Israeli law which, according to Wakim Wakim (2003), regards Palestinians as citizens

in certain aspects of the law but absent in other, which labels them as “internally displaced” (p .33)

This scene is emblematic of the law in which individuals might be present physically but symbolically devoid of action. ES makes this visible through the dismissal of the SWAT team of his presence, where they mention in their report via a walkie-talkie all the objects spotted in the apartment, and where ES ranks last in this list as “the guy in pajamas”. In this space individuality is hindered rather than revealed. A human is present by way of his belongings. Humanity is replaced by materiality, which reflects the Zionist conception of “present absentees” that ES has managed in this scene to portray as an absurd recording of an absent present.

ii. Divine Intervention

All of the scenes set at ES’s parent’s house are static shots, medium or wide. There is no camera movement and the angles are eye-leveled. This motionless indoor space reflects the difficulty and/or lack of communication just like in *Chronicle of a Disappearance*.

The father is always portrayed in the kitchen, drinking coffee and smoking cigarettes as he flips through his mail while the breakfast remains untouched. In a medium shot, the father sits silently in his pajamas, with no facial expressions whatsoever. What broke the routine of this daily ritual is when the father, while he was trying to get up from his chair, collapsed on the kitchen floor. Home becomes a claustrophobic space that signals sickness and lack of motion. While the father sits in the hospital, we see ES at his parent’s house posting sticky notes on walls and re-arranging his life events depicted in the film, playing with the concept of linearity or

lack thereof. Hence, Home for ES is a place where he more or less plots his own life through non-chronological sequences in which reality and imagination merge into the realm of the liminal, becoming a yellow sticky note whose position can be changed from one wall to another as ES plays with the concept of time. Helga Tawil-Souri has highlighted the element of non-linearity in Suleiman's films by regarding it as a "challenge to the linearity of the 'chronicle' of Palestine" (Tawil- Souri, 2005, p. 136). Hence, disrupting history in its linearity and replacing it with haphazard incidents becomes essential to the portrayal of Palestine through the lens of the displaced.

In the last scene of the film, a wide shot depicts a pressure cooker that is about to blow up. The shot cuts to the other side of the kitchen where ES sits with his mother as she expresses her worry while her son continues to stare at the pressure cooker. The steam emphatically arises from the pressure cooker, yet no one comes to the rescue (Appendix U). Both nationalism and Zionism are the cause of this tension that represents a form of repression which, in this pressure cooker allegory, is destined to eventually explode. This reflects the inner tension and deep frustration that has come to imbue Palestinian space which can no longer contain all the pressure internalized by its subjects, and in the eyes of Elia Suleiman will have to eventually blow off its steam.

On the other hand, Home is also where tears are shed. Whether it was the onions or his father's death, the reason why ES is crying in the kitchen is left for the viewer to interpret. Through these fragments of instances, Home fluctuates between being a domestic space and a harsh one; it exists in the liminal and is always in transition, as it occupies both the past and the present, the internal and the external.

iii. The Time That Remains

As in all Suleiman's films, Home is not one thing. In the different scenes that take place at home as a physical shelter, throughout the different periods, Home can be a site of intimacy and also that of intrusion. In the 1970's period, Home is where ES would go back every day from school and throws away aunt's Olga's lentils dish. Home is where his mother writes letters to their relatives as she sits on the balcony gazing at the vast scenery of Nazareth. Home is also when Fouad gets arrested for his old days as a resistance fighter and later on, Home becomes where ES himself gets a warning urging him to leave the country for his suspicious communist acts.

In the following years, and as ES becomes the adult that he is, Home becomes more intimate, as ES would sit on a couch and silently tease his mother. It is the place where ES plays his mother's favorite music, and where they gaze together at the fireworks lighting up the sky of Nazareth (Appendix V). Home is where karaoke nights happen, where the Christmas tree adorns the living room as it is the only source of light that guides ES's mother to the kitchen to fulfil her late night ice-cream cravings.

Hence, the physical Home and the symbolic Home are at once a duality and an interchangeable entity. ES's Home is a mixture of the mundane and the exciting, the elusive coldness and the subtle intimacy. This dichotomy infusing Home/Homeland, Nazareth/Palestine, is emblematic of Home as a space that is always in transition. Home in this film is the same as Home in all of Suleiman's visual texts. Home is constantly on the move; its fullness is unachievable. Home/Homeland oscillate between reality and fantasy, present and past, here and there. Home becomes what Marianne Hirsch (1996) calls a "postmemory", one that "characterizes the experience of those who grow up

dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that can be neither fully understood nor recreated” (p. 659).

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

The present study has attempted to shed light on the multiplicity of ways through which Palestine continues to exist and be told, to defy the normative approach carried out by other media. To choose fiction film as a form of defying the Palestinian nationalist and the Zionist discourses becomes essential to contributing to the body of the creative discourse depicting Palestine.

Because of the pattern noticed in the way the filmic space is arranged, space becomes the visual element that I focus on. Hence, the chosen fiction films allow their narrator to re-arrange Palestine as a space physically and symbolically, stemming from his position as exilic as well as seeking the post-colonial first as a discourse and ultimately as a historical/physical state. In this context, film as a medium is an opportunity for Palestine to be redefined, where according to Helga Tawil-Souri, “the real and the cinematic Palestine is multi-fold and multi-situated”, allowing this negotiation of Palestinian spatiality through the “disappeared past/places, and the shrinking contemporary reality of the Territories, and the pan-territorialized experience of exile, and an uncertain future, and more” (Tawil-Souri, 2014, p. 172).

This research aimed at studying Palestinian fiction films through the eyes of an exilic filmmaker whose work falls into the realm of postcolonial aesthetics. By that I mean that the filmic techniques employed by Suleiman challenge dominant narratives, allowing a fragmented version of the struggle to prevail. When we talk about the postcolonial, the deconstruction of totality becomes a necessity. According to Bill Aschcroft (2014), the postcolonial aesthetic “refers to a mutually transformative *affective*

space that may accompany or be interwoven with the meaning event” (p. 411). The postcolonial aesthetic engages with the colonial discourse, which de-facto influences the nationalist one, by way of appropriation and transformation. Hence, films that employ the postcolonial aesthetics, such as those of Suleiman, create spaces of negotiation between the original meanings, which in this case are those produced by the colonial and the nationalist, and the new connotations provided by the filmmaker himself.

Although Suleiman’s films revolve around a space that is permeated by colonialism, his approach is nonetheless post-colonial. His vision of Palestine in relation to the aspects mentioned earlier pave the way for deciphering structures of colonialism and nationalism through a reconfiguration of spatial entities. Hence, the above analysis shows how the films of Elia Suleiman grapple with Palestine as a physical and symbolic space employing fragments rather than wholes. Time, gender and home/homeland are the dominant facets detected in Suleiman’s trilogy in the way they disrupt master narratives and create hybrid versions of Palestine.

This hybridity stems from the exilic position that Suleiman inhabits. According to Anna Ball (2012), the exilic experience plays an important role in the fragmentation of national identity as it paves the way for breaking away from traditional models of nationhood, allowing for more hybrid versions of identifications to emerge. This hybridity is linked to the subjective stance that Suleiman employs in his depiction of Palestine. The postcolonial as a discursive tool in relation to the exilic as a physical and

symbolic state allow Suleiman to paint his own vision of Palestine as a spatial entity going through what he refers to as a “post-colonial occupation”¹⁰.

In this “post-colonial occupation”, time is fragmented and non-linear, gender roles are questioned, and the concept of home/homeland is ambivalent. Through vignettes and repetition, Suleiman managed to flip the standard framing of colonial and nationalist narratives by rearticulating the spaces in which they function. Hence, sites of transition are rendered as meeting points that are embedded in the ambivalent space between surveillance and fear. We might think of spaces such as checkpoints, airports, hospitals, and hotels as “non-places” in the words of Marc Auge (1995), as these spaces are not linked to history or identity. Yet, for Palestinians, some of these spaces are part of their everyday life, which is why relational links emanate and inevitably become part of their fragmented reality. Fiction film has the ability to transform the initial practical and/or symbolic denotation of these spaces and other ones.

The checkpoint which “operates by spatial, ideological and linguistic means” (Zanger, 2005), takes on different filmic forms. Yet, checkpoints through fiction film, gain the ability to flip the symbolic order, where they become either a romantic meeting point or a runway, a demolished site taken back by a woman in a dress and heels as she disrupts the mechanism of surveillance exerted by men. In these films, walls are transgressed and cars become sites of confession and confrontation.

Hence, the postcolonial image is fragmented both in time and space. It escapes the linear narratives of the Palestinian nationalist and colonial order and seeks refuge in the interstitial third space of the time-image. Palestine becomes a messy tale that doesn't

¹⁰ In an interview with Elia Suleiman. See <https://www.alaraby.co.uk/english/artsandculture/2015/10/13/elia-suleiman-pure-cinema-is-spontaneous>

confine to either geographical or timely manners. According to Suleiman, the spaces he grapples with are not “reproduced” but rather “reinvented” and the representation of time escaping linearity allows the discourse forming to challenge the notion of a total truth¹¹.

In short, this research sheds light on Suleiman’s voice, as one of the many individual voices that stem out of Palestine, both physically and symbolically. By so doing, I attempted to highlight the subjectivity of one filmmaker whose techniques, both in form and content, are worth examining. This study is important as it seeks to break free from holistic narrations in order to emphasize the plethora of individualities contending with Palestine as their subject matter. Hence, I attempted to study one way through which Palestine is still alive in the discursive realm, through film as text. This shows how resistance is not to be reduced only to an armed struggle, rather it is undeniably a cultural product.

While this thesis dealt with the post-colonial image of Elia Suleiman’s films, there are other elements in his films that are worthy of exploring not only in terms of content, but also in the pre-production stage such as his collaboration with Israeli actors as well as his transnational funding that were beyond the scope of this study.

Also, further research could employ a more gender-centric approach as there are many Palestinian women directors who produce great work in the cinematic realm and deserve to be studied such as Anne-Marie Jacir, Azza al- Hassan, Mai Masri among others, who have managed to demonstrate a new perspective on what it means to be a Palestinian woman protagonist. Such an approach could add to the feminist literature

¹¹ In Suleiman, E. (2000). A Cinema of Nowhere. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29(2), 95-101.

being produced on Palestinian creative work. In addition, Palestinian short films or video works can also be an interesting site of investigation since such content can be found not only in local art houses but also on virtual platforms that offer easy access. Larissa Sansour, Sameh Zoabi, Sharif Waked are among the Palestinian artists who produce video content that might not necessarily be displayed in large theatres, but is worth a closer examination.

Finally, this analysis sought to depict one version of Palestine, through the *Kino-eye* of Elia Suleiman, and allowed a rerouting of post-colonialism as a discourse. In the meantime, shedding light on the cultural content that is emerging from of Palestine, whether locally or internationally, is one thing we can do to keep Palestine alive in the discursive realm, in the hopes of achieving a tangible post-colonial Palestine one day.

REFERENCES

- Abu-Remaileh, R. (2008). Palestinian anti-narratives in the films of Elia Suleiman. *Arab Media & Society*, 1-29.
- Althusser, L. (1977). Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses. *Media and Cultural Studies*, 79-87.
- Anderson, B. R. (1991). *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London: Verso.
- Asfour, N. (2011). The Time That Remains and Zindeeq (Web Exclusive). Retrieved from <https://www.cineaste.com/articles/emthe-time-that-remainsem-and-emzindeeqem>
- Ashcroft, B. (2015). Towards a postcolonial aesthetics. *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 51(4), 410-421.
- Auerbach, Y., & Lowenstein, H. (2011). The Role of National Narratives in Reconciliation: The Case of Mohammad al-Dura. *International Journal of Press/Politics*, 210-233.
- Augé, M. (2008). From Places to Non-Places. In *Non-places*. Verso. 75-115
- Avery, D. (2014). *Unhomely cinema: Home and place in global cinema*. Anthem Press.
- Ball, A. (2008). Between a Postcolonial Nation and Fantasies of the Feminine: The Contested Visions of Palestinian Cinema. *Camera Obscura: Feminism, Culture, and Media Studies*, 23(3 69), 1-33.
- Ball, A. (2012). *Palestinian literature and film in postcolonial feminist perspective*. New York: Routledge.

- Ball, A., & Williams, P. (2014). Where is Palestine? *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 50(2), 127-133.
- Barsam, R. M., & Monahan, D. (2010). Looking at movies: An introduction to film. New York: W.W. Norton &.
- Bazin, A. (2007). The Ontology of The photographic Image. *Film Quartely*, 13, 4-10.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1990). DissemiNation. In *The Location of Culture*. Newyork.
- Bhabha, H. K. (1992). The World and The Home. *Third World and Post-Colonial Issues*, 142-153.
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, K. (1979). Introduction. In *Film Art*.
- Butler, J. (1988). Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory. *Theatre Journal*, 40(4), 519-531.
- Deleuze, G. (1989). *Cinema 2: The Time image*. London: Athlone.
- Deleuze, G., & Guattari, F. (1987). *A Thousand Plateaus* (Vol. 2). University of Minnesota Press.
- Dixon, D., & Grimes, J. (2004). Capitalism, masculinity and whiteness in the dialectical landscape: The case of Tarzan and the Tycoon. *GeoJournal*, 59(4), 265-275. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/41147851>
- Eisenzweig, U. (1981). An imaginary territory: The problematic of space in Zionist discourse. *Dialectical Anthropology Dialect Anthropol*, 5(4).
- Gertz, N., & Khleifi, G. (2008). *Palestinian Cinema: Landscape, Trauma, and Memory*. Edinburgh University Press.

Haider, S. (2010). "A different kind of occupation": An interview with Elia Suleiman. Retrieved from <https://electronicintifada.net/content/different-kind-occupation-interview-elia-suleiman/8654>

Hall, S. (1993). The Television Discourse: Encoding and Decoding. In *The Cultural Studies Reader* (pp. 302-308).

Hall, S. (1997). Introduction. In *Representation: Cultural Representation and Signifying Practices* (pp. 1-29).

Handal, N. (2011). The Other Face of Silence. Retrieved from https://www.guernicamag.com/interviews/suleiman_5_1_11/

Hilal, J. (2015). Rethinking Palestine: Settler-colonialism, neoliberalism and individualism in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 8(3), 351-362.

Jaffe, I. (2014). *Slow Movies: Countering the Cinema of Action*. New York: Wallflower Press.

Kennedy, T. (2011, December 1). Michel Khleifi. Retrieved from <http://sensesofcinema.com/2011/great-directors/michel-khleifi/>

Kolker, R. (1999). Mise En scene. Retrieved from <http://www.filmreference.com/encyclopedia/Independent-Film-Road-Movies/Mise-en-sc-ne.html>

Kotef, H., & Amir, M. (2011). Between Imaginary Lines. *Theory, Culture & Society*, 55-80.

Lott, T. L. (1991). A No-Theory Theory of Contemporary Black Cinema. *Black American Literature Forum*, 25(2), 221-236.

Marks, L. U. (2000). *The skin of the film: Intercultural cinema, embodiment, and the senses*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Martin-Jones, D. (2006). *Deleuze, cinema and national identity: Narrative time in national contexts*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Massad, J. A. (2006). *The persistence of the Palestinian question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians*. New York, NY: Routledge.

McClintock, A. (1992). The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term "Post-Colonialism" *Social Text*, (31/32), 84-98.

McKee, A. (2003). *Textual Analysis : A Beginner's Guide*. SAGE Publications.

Naficy, H. (1998). *Home, Exile, Homeland: Film, Media, and the Politics of Place*. Taylor & Francis.

Naficy, H. (2001). *An Accented Cinema: Exilic and Diasporic Filmmaking*. Princeton University Press.

Penz, F., & Thomas, M. (1997). *Cinema & architecture: Méliès, Mallet-Stevens, multimedia*. London: British Film Institute.

Ponzanesi, S., & Waller, M. R. (2012). *Postcolonial cinema studies*. London: Routledge.

Ranciere, J. (2004). Is history a form of fiction? In *The Politics of Aesthetics: The Distribution of the Sensible*. Continuum.

Rutherford, J. (1990). The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha. In *Identity: Community, culture, difference*. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Said, E. (1984). Permission to Narrate. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 13(3), 27-48.

Said, E. W. (1979). *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books.

San Juan, E., Jr. (1995). On the Limits of "Postcolonial" Theory: Trespassing Letters from the "Third World" *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature*, 26(3).

Shafik, V. (2007). History in Cinema. In *Arab Cinema: History and Cultural Identity* (pp. 181-182).

Shohat, E. (2006). Notes on the "Post-Colonial". *Taboo Memories, Diasporic Voices*, 233-249.

Solanas, F., & Getino, O. (1969). *Towards a Third Cinema*. Retrieved from <https://ufsinfronteradotcom.files.wordpress.com/2011/05/tercer-cine-getino-solanas-19691.pdf> Ashcroft, B., Griffiths, G., & Tiffin, H. (2000). *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. London: Routledge.

Sousa, C., Kemp, S., & El-Zuhairi, M. (2014). Dwelling within political violence: Palestinian women's narratives of home, mental health, and resilience. *Health & Place*, 205-214.

Stam, R. (2009). *Film Theory: An Introduction* (pp. 9-92). Massachusetts

Suleiman, E. (2000). A Cinema of Nowhere. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 29(2), 95-101.

Suleiman, E. (2003). The Occupation (and Life) Through an Absurdist Lens. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 32(2), 63-73.

Tawil-Souri, H. (2005). Coming Into Being and Flowing Into Exile: History and Trends in Palestinian Film-Making. *Nebula*, 113-140.

Tawil-Souri, H. (2014). Cinema as the Space to Transgress Palestine's Territorial Trap. *Middle East Journal of Culture and Communication*, 7(2), 169-189.

Ball, A. (2012). *Palestinian literature and film in postcolonial feminist perspective*. New York: Routledge.

Vertov, D. (1984). Introduction. In *Kino Eye: The Writing of Dziga Vertov*. University of California Press.

Wakim, W. (2001). The "Internally Displaced": Seeking Return within One's Own Land. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 31(1), 32-38. doi:10.1525/jps.2001.31.1.32

Weizman, E. (2007). Introduction: Frontier Architecture. In *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation*. The University of Michigan. 1-16.

Williams, P. (2010). "‘Outlines of a Better world’: Rerouting Postcolonialism." In *Rerouting the postcolonial: New directions for the new millennium*. (J. Wilson, C. Sandru, & S. Welsh, Eds.) London: Routledge.

Xie, S. (1997). Rethinking the Problem of Postcolonialism. *New Literary History*, 28(1), 7-19.

Zanger, A. (2005). Blind Space: Roadblock Movies in the Contemporary Israeli Film. *Shofar: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Jewish Studies*, 24(1), 37-48.

Hirsch, M. (1996). Past Lives: Postmemories in Exile. *Poetics Today*, 17(4), 659.

APPENDIX

Appendix A



Appendix B



Appendix C



Appendix D



Appendix E



Appendix F



Appendix G



Appendix H



Appendix I



Appendix J



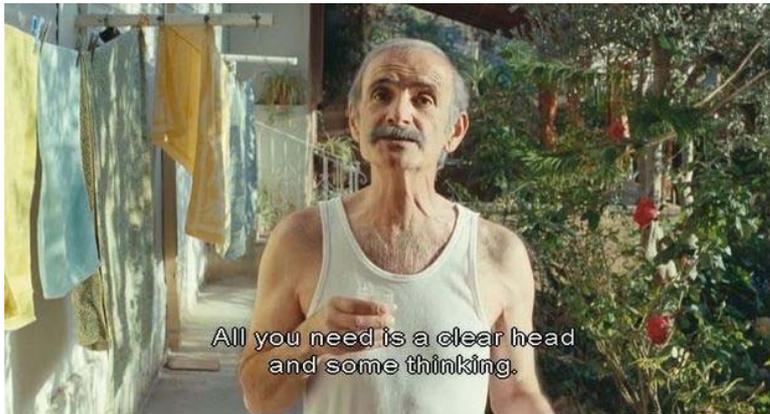
Appendix K



Appendix L



Appendix M



Appendix N



Appendix O



Appendix P



Appendix Q



Appendix R



Appendix S



Appendix T



Appendix U



Appendix V

