Edited by Nadia Yaqub

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Cover art: Basma Alsharif, *Ouroboros* (film still), 2017.
Courtesy of the artist and Galerie Imane Farès.

To Christof, Emma, and Thea

Contents

Note on Transliteration

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

For personal names, we follow the spelling in Latin characters that individuals and organizations have chosen for themselves. For well-known figures we follow the most common spellings in American English.

Place-names are written as they most commonly appear in American English if they have an established spelling in English. Otherwise, they are transliterated according to the Library of Congress system.

Terms in spoken (dialectal) rather than modern standard Arabic are transliterated as closely as possible to the Library of Congress system without diacritics except for ʿayn and hamza while reflecting the dialectal pronunciation.

Film titles and film characters' names are translated and/or transliterated as they appear in the films themselves if such translations exist.

Acknowledgments

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

Gaza on Screen was written over the first years of the COVID-19 pandemic. I thank all the contributors who worked tirelessly on the volume during the extraordinarily difficult conditions the pandemic created. Par-

not always recognized how rare and special such a supportive workplace is but take this opportunity to do so now.

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Introduction

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

A Brief History of Gazan Filmmaking

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Refusal, Recognition, and the Humanitarian Image

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Opacity, Relation, and the Potential of Screens

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

An Image Archive of Steadfastness

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

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

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

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

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

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

Notes

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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