


Chapter 14

Diasporic Perspectives on Borders in the Palestinian Films *Salt of This Sea* (2008) and *Bye Bye Tiberias* (2023)

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ABSTRACT

*This chapter examines the navigating of borders in two films by Palestinians raised abroad which powerfully articulate the lived realities of occupation, displacement, and exile: Annemarie Jacir's feature film *Salt of this Sea* (*Milh Hadha al-Bahr*) (2008) and Lina Soualem's documentary *Bye Bye Tiberias* (*Bye Bye Tibériade*) (2023). Focusing on diasporic Palestinian women returning to their ancestral homeland, these films underscore how borders—geographical, political, physical, and psychological—serve as instruments of ongoing dispossession. By foregrounding the experiences of women facing these barriers, these films reveal the profound impact of exile on personal and familial histories. Tracing their diasporic ties to the land and culture of Palestine, the films aim to reinforce the bonds constantly threatened by the policies and practices of the Israeli state.*

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INTRODUCTION

This essay examines the navigation of borders in two films by Palestinians raised abroad which powerfully articulate the lived realities of occupation, displacement, and exile: Annemarie Jacir's feature film *Salt of This Sea* (*Milh Hadha al-Bahr*) (2008) and Lina Soualem's documentary *Bye Bye Tiberias* (*Bye Bye Tibériade*) (2023). Focusing on diasporic Palestinian women returning to their ancestral homeland, these films underscore how borders—geographical, political, physical, and psychological—serve as instruments of ongoing dispossession. By foregrounding the experiences of women facing these barriers, these films reveal the profound impact of exile on personal and familial histories. Tracing their diasporic ties to the land and culture of Palestine, the films aim to reinforce the bonds constantly threatened by the policies and practices of the Israeli state.

Palestinians have been contending with the confiscation and fracturing of territory for many decades, from the United Nations Partition of Mandatory Palestine in 1948 and the Green Line in 1949 to the 2002 Wall to the blockade of the Gaza strip. Israeli land policies have increasingly isolated Palestinian communities from each other and opened the way for further Israeli settlements on the Occupied Territories (Antari and Thawaba, 2024; Middle East Monitor, 2025). Barriers also hinder future generations from returning to their ancestral land, and the “Right of Return” is granted or refused based on ethno-religious identity, that is, granted to Jews and refused to Palestinians.¹

British-Israeli architecture scholar Eyal Weizman characterizes the Occupied Palestinian Territories as a “frontier zone” with “deep, shifting, fragmented and elastic territories” that are “marked by makeshift boundaries” (Weizman, 2024, p. 5). According to Weizman,

The frontiers of the Occupied Territories are not rigid and fixed at all; rather, they are elastic, and in constant transformation. The linear border, a cartographic imaginary inherited from the military and political spatiality of the nation state has splintered into a multitude of temporary, transportable, deployable and removable border-synonyms – ‘separation walls’, ‘barriers’, ‘blockades’, ‘closures’, ‘road blocks’, ‘checkpoints’, ‘sterile areas’, ‘special security zones’, ‘close military areas’ and ‘killing zones’ – that shrink and expand the territory at will. These borders are dynamic, constantly shifting, ebbing and flowing; they creep along, stealthily surrounding Palestinian villages and roads. They may even erupt into Palestinian living rooms, bursting in through the house walls. The anarchic geography of the frontier is an evolving image of transformation, which is remade and rearranged with every political development or decision. Outposts and settlements might be evacuated and removed, yet new ones are founded and expand. The location of military checkpoints is constantly chang-

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