Framing the wall: The Palestinian resistance against the occupation in Five Broken Cameras (2011)

Enquadrando o muro: A resistência Palestina contra a ocupação em Cinco Câmeras Quebradas (2011)

DIEGO GRANJA DO AMARAL
Universidade Federal Fluminense/ Universidade de Tübingen. Doutor em comunicação pela Universidade Federal Fluminense em cotutela com a universidade de Tübingen. É membro do do Laboratório de Experimentação e Pesquisa de Narrativas da Mídia (LAN/UFF). Pesquisa temas como: cultura visual, memória, temporalidade e Sul Global.

ABSTRACT
This paper looks at the documentary *Five Broken Cameras* (Palestine, Israel, France, Netherlands, 2011) to discuss the temporal implications of a quotidian under occupation. More specifically, the investigation casts light over the peaceful resistance against the Israeli wall in the Palestinian village of Bil'in portrayed by the lenses of Emad Burnat, a Palestinian villager who becomes the village´s filmmaker after the acquisition of his first camera. Upon the analysis, I claim that in the context of the Palestinian struggle, cinema is both an integral part of the resistance and an instrument to structure the experience of time in an area fragmented by the occupation.

Key-words: Temporality. Palestine. Documentary film.

RESUMO
Este artigo analisa o documentário Five Broken Cameras (Palestina, Israel, França, Holanda, 2011) para discutir as implicações temporais de um cotidiano sob ocupação. Mais especificamente, a investigação lança luz sobre a resistência pacífica contra o muro israelense na vila palestina de Bil'in, retratada pelas lentes de Emad, um morador palestino que se torna o cineasta da vila após a aquisição de sua primeira câmera. A partir da análise, o artigo desenvolve o argumento de que o cinema, no contexto Palestino, é tanto uma forma de resistência quanto uma forma de estruturar a experiência de tempo em uma área fragmentada pela ocupação.

Palavras-chave: Temporalidade. Palestina. Documentário.

1. ON THE NECESSITY TO NARRATE

A shaking camera records a series of blurred images. The movement and sounds suggest a complete lack of control from the part of the person shooting the images. Contrasting with the scenes, a male voice calmly talks to the audience: "I've lived through so many experiences" the voice declares. His feelings resonate on the screen where the protests appear. The man continues stating that his feelings "burn […] like a hot flame. Pain and joy, *fears and hope* are all mixed up together" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011).

The scenes described above are part of *Five Broken Cameras'* opening sequence. As suggested by Elsaesser and Buckland (2002) a film´s opening scene functions as a declaration of intentions of sorts, providing a hint on the content, form and style. Confronting the first images of *Five Broken Cameras,* the spectator is invited to a fragmented and, at times, discomforting narrative.

Minutes later, the spectator is introduced to Emad Burnat, a Palestinian villager who decided to document his life events with the camera he bought to film his new-born son Gibreel, in 2005. As the episode suggests, Emad becomes a filmmaker by a combination of chance and circumstances. Were Emad not in Palestine, he probably would not have been pulled into the role of filmmaker. It is precisely this intuitive approach of a common man under pressure that makes the documentary appealing. Emad is not involved with politics on an institutional level and seems to be sceptical when it comes to party politics. He also does not claim to be an artist, on the contrary, he admits that his interest in filming was casual at first, and afterwards became a therapy of sorts. In his own words, he is just trying to "keep track" of his life.

The result of this experience is the award-winning documentary film *Five Broken Cameras* (Palestine, Israel, France, Netherlands 2011), co-directed with the Israeli filmmaker Guy Davidi. The narrative is developed around Emad's routine during the demonstrations against the Separation Wall in the village of Bil' in (Palestine). Commenting on the filming process Emad admits to "mix everything — the filmmaking and the mind and the head and the blood — everything to work and to be there" (NPR, 2013).

As the opening sequence suggests, the film is narrated from the Emad's perspective, which, in its turn, is often disturbed by the circumstances. In this vein, the narrative presents an interesting combination between Emad's declared intentions and the contingent developments of his endeavour. Bearing that in mind, this work shall discuss the hypothesis that the documentary *Five Broken Cameras* is a symptom of a larger trend in the Palestinian culture: the narrative is as a tool in the political struggle and a form of healing amidst an intense conflict. More specifically, this work tackles the large issues of the Israeli occupation of the West-Bank and the collective trauma caused by the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland (Al-Nakba) through the

point-of-view of a villager who becomes a filmmaker to narrate the sorrows of the occupation. In Emad´s story, a few characteristics of the Palestinian experience cross paths: the peasant who becomes an icon, the individual history of suffering that represents an entire population, the endurance and tenderness despite the harsh circumstances, and finally, and perhaps the most emblematic in the film, the becoming of a narrator forged by the circumstances.

Structured around the life-spam of the cameras, the film is a visual diary[1] of a villager´s quotidian during the construction of the wall and corresponds to what Bill Nichols describes as a performative documentary (NICHOLS, 2011). For Nichols, this kind of film "emphasizes the subjective or expressive aspect of the filmmaker's involvement with a subject; it strives to heighten the audience's responsiveness to this involvement"(NICHOLS, 2011, p.32). In Emad's narrative, this involvement serves the double purpose of engaging the audience in his struggle and in the collective fight for the Palestinian liberation.

Hence, the documentary is suggestive from its very foundations. Firstly, it is one of many films portraying the Separation Wall, which cuts through much of the Palestinian territory. The wall not only imposes a brutal separation between Israel and the West-Bank but, more importantly, cuts much of the Palestinian territory. Secondly, the film discusses the problems of narration and testimony in Palestine. Echoing Said's (1984) emblematic piece *Permission to narrate*, the documentary bears the implicit question on whether Palestinians are *allowed* to narrate their struggle or not.

As the opening monologue suggests, Emad's account of his motivations to shoot the documentary is an outburst of a man living under pressure. A tension that is visible in the precariousness of the shooting in the sequence, an indistinguishable series of dizzying and discomforting images (Fig 1). In this sense, the opening monologue functions as a manifesto of sorts. A somewhat improvised yet meaningful riot against the occupation through the eyes of a villager and its cameras. Emad, similarly to Suleiman, films from a first-person POV, with a camera that is almost never static and reflects the unsettling environment. In the fragility of the cameras, the narrative seems to be hanging by a thread.

FIGURE 1: Five Broken Cameras (Film still, 00:00:48s)

Reacting to overwhelming circumstances of the life under occupation, aggravated by the construction of the separation wall, Emad reports a natural feeling of anguish and confusion. These emotions, he admits, are all "mixed up together" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011). Such confusion is illustrated by unintentional camera movement in the shot above (Fig. 1). Despite not being planned, the camera captures Emad´s hassle amidst a confrontation with the army.

Admitting that he is "losing track", Emad claims that filming is his way of coping with the intensity of the life under occupation. Recording the events becomes Emad's way of keeping track of time and structure his life. According to him "the old wounds don't have time to heal, new wounds cover them up", and he films to "hold onto [...his] memories" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011). Showing the cameras used in the project, he explains that each of them is "an episode" in his life.

Given that the cameras are not broken due to obsolescence or lack of care, it is symptomatic that they represent episodes in Emad's life. Each of them holds a testimony on violence and a process of silencing. In a brutal materialization of the dynamics in the region and of the film's message, one of the cameras was shot while Emad filmed the action. The camera served as a shield and protected the filmmaker from a shot in the eye. Such an event is emblematic of the hybridism between man and camera, which, throughout the film become increasingly closer. As Emad becomes a filmmaker, his attachment to the cameras increases. An indication of that is the

fact that the first camera was used to film Gibreel and shows parties and community events in the camera, whereas latter in the chronological time, under arrest, Emad is turning the camera to himself as a mix of mirror and diary, as if he were holding his consciousness. The film is, especially in this case, a form of prosthetic memory (LANDSBERG, 2004).

From a political standpoint, the shift between a teleological interpretation of the future and a radical present is crucial for a pragmatic approach towards the challenges presented by social reality. Replacing the Jewish/Cristian eschatological notion that pervades Modern time, this radical present focuses on experiences resistance in daily life. In a more general sense, Emad´s words are symptomatic of part of the contemporary Palestinian culture and its visual productions.

Trying to keep track of his life, to elaborate on his "pain and joy" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011) he did not simply shoot a film on the quotidian of his family life. At this point, Davidi´s participation seems to have a crucial role. If Emad is the central character around whom the images are constructed, Davidi played an essential role in editing process of the film. The Israeli co-director functioned as a storyteller for Emad´s narrative, going as far as suggesting Emad to focus on his personal life to structure the narrative. Arising from that decision, the film blurs the boundaries between Emad´s personal life, his subjective perception of time and the events around him. It is precisely in this opaque zone between one´s private life and the social struggles that the notion of resistance as a mode of being in time is perceived.

Moreover, it is also symptomatic that in the film's opening scene, Emad and Davidi decide for the shooting of men taking measures of the land to build the separation wall and a bulldozer uprooting a tree. The uprooting is their didactic way of presenting the struggle to be portrayed in the film. In doing so, the film echoes one of the most typical clichés of Palestinian visual culture. Nevertheless, the repetition of such a scene in the documentary is revealing of a long-term pattern: the Israeli ongoing colonial occupation of Palestine. In these terms, a question that shall be posed is whether the film is repeating a cliché, a trait of lack of creativity, or if the reality of that landscape is trapped in a temporal loop of sorts.

In this paper, I shall discuss Emad´s trajectory as a filmmaker as a quintessentially political one. Firstly, because it curves a filmmaker with international impact out of a Palestinian villager. With the film, Emad publicized the struggle of the Bil´in village to the world and made its way to political, academic and artistic debates with the endorsement of an Academy Award Nomination for "best documentary film". Secondly, the film itself became an element of connection among the villagers (Fig 6), as discussed ahead (topic 4).

It is in this spirit that I argue that the act of narrating became a matter of survival. The notion of a narrative as a survival tool has a twofold significance in this argument: a. it is a way of raising attention to the illegal detentions, land grabbing and other forms of physical and psy-

chological violence, as portrayed by the film; b. In the making of the film, Emad, his family and neighbours find comfort and relief from a tense quotidian.

2. THE OCCUPATION THROUGH PALESTINIAN LENSES

Transcending the condition of objects, the cameras are a strategic element to the film´s narration. Beyond the function of recording instruments, they become milestones for the temporal passage in the film and actants of the narrative, as they appear on the film screen bearing testimony to the events filmed.

In this vein, the cameras have a twofold importance. Firstly, they establish the temporal limits of the film, since each chapter in the film ends with the destruction of a camera. Secondly, the cameras depict Emad´s lack of control over many of the situations in his life. An example of this lack of control is the number of broken cameras in the title. In the overlap of these two points lies the fact that these cameras are really an extension of Emad's body, which functions more like a cyborg (HARAWAY, 1985) instead of working through a human-object logic. The camera's, thus, are Emad's body, and he depends on them to structure the reality around him. Due to Emad's vulnerability, the cameras are broken, touched and turned by soldiers off along the film.

In this regard, a comparison with another film within a similar context is illustrative. The film in question is *Avenge but one of my two eyes* (Israel, France, 2005), shot by the Jewish Israeli director Avi Mograbi. In Mograbi´s documentary, he is also reproached by a soldier for filming the army in a zone under the IDF´s control. The scene starts with the soldier walking in Mograbi´s direction and asking him to stop shooting (Fig. 2). As the filmmaker refuses to obey and keeps shooting, the soldier approaches him and places his hand in front of the camera, yet, he keeps a slight distance from it.

FIGURE 2: Avenge but one of my two eyes (Film still, 1:19:57s)

Defying the soldier, the director commands him to remove his hands from the equipment and a discussion on who has the right to film or to order the filming to stop takes place. Under pressure, the soldier calls his superiors and, apparently, receives orders to retreat. As the convoy leaves, Mograbi teases them yelling that they don´t know the word "sorry".

The entire scene lasts for roughly three minutes, which is already indicative of the difference in the treatment received by Mograbi and Emad. More important, however, is that Mograbi´s camera was barely touched, and the soldier was not only reproached by the filmmaker but also had to leave with his colleagues due to superior orders. The entire negotiation, however, only happened due to Mograbi´s filiation. As a Jewish citizen, he is free to narrate, even if his goal is to criticize his home country. Emad, on the other hand, had his cameras broken and went to jail for shooting his documentary during a protest.

In an analogous situation as that described before, now with Emad as a protagonist, the outcome is somewhat different. At some point in Emad´s film, soldiers enter his *home* and order him to stop filming. Responding to the filmmaker´s refusal to lower the camera, the soldier covers the screen with his hand and forces Emad to move the camera. The whole process is recorded and appears in the film, in a demonstration not only of the invasive attitude but also of a stylistic choice in favour of the camera´s autonomy to create images. At times, these images, as already demonstrated by the opening sequence (Fig. 1) reflect the director´s lack of control over his circumstances. The third element to be considered is the level of investment the project receives, and Emad´s maturing from peasant to filmmaker.

A look at the five (broken) cameras (Fig. 5), gives a clear notion of the evolution of the documentary from homemade footage to a more professional endeavour. In this sense, the cameras display the temporal experience also in the quality of the images they produce. In the contrast between Emad and Mograbi´s experiences lie some cues on the different positions from which the conflict is narrated. Unlike Mograbi´s film, in Emad´s story, time is urgent, conditions are precarious, and there is a permanent sense of insecurity. This uneven relationship can be illustrated by the shot below.

Filmed from below, the scene shows the moment when a military Jeep arrives in a camp where Emad is filming. As soon as the soldier opens the car´s door, he yells at Emad "why are you filming me?!", to which he responds "You just arrived here, I was already here. Did I ever film in your house?". The soldier insists "who cares…" and makes an ultimatum: "if you ever point that camera at me again, it will bust it, ok?". Naturally, Emad responds with the only logical answer: "ok". That is the end of the sequence, which lasted less than 30 seconds.

FIGURE 3: Five Broken Cameras (Film Still. 00:31:50s)

The contrast with Mograbi's scene is revealing. The uneven relation is materialised in the perspective from which it is shot and in the soundscape, which reveals a soldier who speaks much louder than the filmmaker. If Emad starts the scene trying to keep his position claiming that he was "already here", a recurrent and innocuous statement, the sequence ends with "ok", in the acceptance of the impossibility of the situation. Furthermore, in the second sample, aware of his privileged position, the soldier displays an authoritarian attitude without any hesitation. In the

conversation with Mograbi, on the other hand, the dialogue is symmetric and the soldier seems challenged to balance an imperative tone and the caution demanded in the relationship with a Jewish citizen in possession of a camera.

In Mograbi´s narrative, the temporal dimension is radically different from Emad´s. In Mograbi, despite the inherent tension to such confrontations, there is a sense of predictability in the director's behaviour. The confident attitude, the claim that the soldier is the one who needs to present documents for him to stop shooting or the comment that the soldier is a "public servant" are all distinctive of a citizen in a democratic country. This predictability culminates with the conclusion of the scene when the convoy leaves and Mograbi states that they should apologise. From a filmic point of view, all this is evident in the careful distance the soldier takes from the camera, even when placing his hand in front of it. The camera is relatively steady in Mograbi´s firm hands. In that relationship, there is a distance and a respect characteristic of a civil relation.

Now, contrasting with this scenario, most of the scenes of confrontation in Five Broken Cameras show a moving camera, as if the equipment were under imminent danger. A danger that is not only perceptible in the images but demonstrated by the fact that so many cameras ended up broken. With that in mind, the research will move onto the field of politics of representation and performance within the realm of the documentary film.

3. POLITICS AND PERFORMATIVITY IN THE IMAGES

Throughout this paper, I defended the idea that the production of images and discourses of the conflict by Palestinians are part of a large discursive endeavour to raise the visibility and to provide a counter-narrative against the Zionist version on the problem of the occupation. In this regard, the film analysed here is of special importance due to its capacity to conjugate an individual performance (Emad´s) and the collective discourse (the village, the demonstrations etc). In his project of filming his life and the demonstrations, Emad, along with Davidi, manages to provide a face, and a body, to the Palestinian experience. In providing proper names (Bil´in, Emad, Gibreel…) and embodying Palestine, they manage to play a strategic role in the political life. As Laclau observes, "the *essentially performative* character of naming is the precondition for all hegemony and politics" (LACLAU 1989, p. XIV, *my emphasis*).

Echoing Lacan, Laclau stresses the importance of naming to open-up flanks of political action. He argues that the very notions of hegemony and politics are bound with the symbolic order.

This is precisely the value of *Five Broken Cameras* as a narrative. To understand that the political struggle, in this case, primarily against the construction of the wall, goes beyond the material elements such as the ground, the fences and the machineguns.

Returning to Laclau, it is relevant to notice the emphasis on the notion of performativity. To name is not to define, on the contrary. It is an open process, which happens through time and, consequently, is at once intentional and contingent. It is both an act of creation in the sense that it establishes a new order, for it requires the acceptance of another to be rendered socially valid. To name, thus, is an utterly political gesture, an act that creates, and/or challenges, the conditions for political life.

In this sense, Emad´s trajectory is emblematic. He buys a camera to keep a record of his son´s growth and ends up dragged by the surrounding conflict, which turns him into a filmmaker and a political figure. The key moments of this process were not, and could not be planned. The construction of the wall happened regardless of Emad´s desires, and his process of becoming a filmmaker was both a product of his doings as well as a product of the surrounding circumstances. Performativity, thus, is the condition of possibility for the film production. The filmmaker appears along with the film and is trimmed by the conflict and its circumstances.

On the bright side, the apparent spontaneity of these scenes does not only present violent images. The frame below shows a moment when Gibreel hands an olive branch to an Israeli soldier while they wait for the soldiers to open a gate they need to cross. In the child´s apparently spontaneous gesture, tacitly accepted by the soldier, the film operates one of many cuts in the series of unsettling sequences to register a moment of kind cohabitation in a landscape marked by machine guns.

Once again, the repetition of a symbolic sign appears. The olive tree, which appears to exhaustion in Palestinian visual culture, emerges as an almost incidental element in Gibreel gesture. The brief scene, however, holds immense expressive value. In the brief period of an instant, when the child handed the uprooted branch, an entire history of uprooting takes place. In the figure of both agents, two people´s marked by collective uprooting are framed. In the background, the landscape where the uprooting of Jewish and Palestinian peoples took place, lays its quiet horizon.

Adding symbolic value to the shot (Fig.4), every element in the frame seems to point at the scene. On the bottom left of the viewer, a Palestinian kid observes the scene while, on the opposite side, another young soldier observes. Moreover, the scene takes place in the middle of a crossroads, as if the scenario were suggesting the multiple roads of history. From a rhetorical standpoint, the image is also emblematic. Among its formal elements, we have the height difference between the child and the adult, the contrast between a civilian and a soldier and the fact that it is the child who takes the initiative of approaching the adult with a gesture of kindness. A

closer look at the frame also reveals that another child witnesses the scene, while in the opposite side an armed soldier looks at Gibreel.

FIGURE 4: Five Broken Cameras (Film still, 00:36:09)

In a way or the other, Emad´s work became a vector linking the small village of Bil'in, its inhabitants and the rest of Palestine and the world. After all, the cinematographic discourse plays the role of bridging concrete reality and the realm of representation. This exercise resonates Derrida´s claim that "the movement of signification adds something, which results in the fact that there is always more, but this addition is a floating one because it comes to perform a vicarious function, to supplement a lack on the part of the signified" (DERRIDA, 1993, p. 237). Following this logic, the repetition of the image of an uprooted olive tree is not a repetitive gesture as it is an innovation.

If, on the one hand, the image has been exhausted by several narratives throughout seven decades, on the other hand, every time the image is evoked it supplements the original reference. For instance, in the case in hand, it fills the screen with the very decades throughout which it has been represented. In other words, the image is not a simple repetition, it is a re-inscription of the signifier in time. The image here, more than representation is a deviation of form, it appears as to install a new regime. This regime can be illustrated by Emad´s relationship with the cameras. They materialize his life´s episodes and give him a sense of movement through time.

Each new camera means a new phase, and therefore, contributes to order the temporal experience of a man who was "losing track".

Furthermore, deciding to document the struggles of his village, and his personal one´s, Emad articulates his confusion in the form of an intrinsically political narrative. In this sense, *Five Broken Cameras*, is a reaction, to the occupation and the wall, but it is also a gesture of creation. In the encounter of these two elements in the realm of politics – that of the symbolic – the documentary establishes itself as a work of resistance. In this vein, Emad´s case is paradigmatic. The way he elaborated his feelings into a practice (filming) illustrates how the resistance to the occupation can be effective, especially in pacific endeavours. Emad´s film produces forms of looking at the conflict and speaks to the Palestinian capacity to elaborate political interventions out of the oppression.

From a theoretical standpoint, these activities correspond to what Butler describes as strategies to reorder power relations not only from the economic dimension but also in the symbolic order. In a dialogue with Derrida's *Structure, Sign, Play* (1993) and Laclau and Mouffe´s work on hegemony, Butler questions the single focus on capital, and structures as fixed entities, in order to point at the necessity of social and political theories capable of embracing contingency and the strategies that allow a "re-articulation of power" (1997, p.13). In her own words, which form an especially convoluted yet insightful argument,

> The move from a structuralist account in which capital is understood to structure social relations in relatively homologous ways to a view of hegemony in which power relations are subject to repetition, convergence, and rearticulation brought the question of temporality into the thinking of structure and marked a shift from a form of Althusserian theory that takes structural totalities as theoretical objects to one in which the insights into the contingent possibility of structure inaugurate a renewed conception of hegemony as *bound up with the contingent sites and strategies of the rearticulation of power* (Butler 1997, p.13)

At this point, Butler´s argument overlaps with the Warburguian approach. If Warburg (2009; 1912) suggests that the arts leave prints of a certain historical period, potentially re-inscribed in different epochs, Butler advocates for the importance of aesthetics in the making of political innovations. It is in this spirit that Laclau and Mouffe, argue that "a notion of the *social conceived as a discursive space* - that is, making possible relations of representation strictly unthinkable within a physicalist or naturalistic paradigm - becomes of paramount importance" (2001, p. X, *my emphasis*). In the level of the discourse, as constitutive of the very social space, Palestinian aesthetic production operates.

Along these lines, the very title of the film is a lead on the repression of narratives. In this way, the cameras are evidence of systematic repression of the look. They are also a measure of

time, of material losses, and of the capacity to endure violence. After all, despite the pressures, Emad keeps registering the violence, one camera after the other.

Throughout a total of six cameras, the resistance against the separation wall and the life of a child are narrated. In this process, the cameras destroyed are markers of frequent losses. The thread connecting the destruction of each camera points at a network of rising violence in Emad's village. His first camera was broken by a gas grenade; The second was smashed by an Israeli settler; the third camera was shot by a sniper; the fourth broke in a car accident, and the fifth was shot by an M16 assault rifle[2].

Beyond the marks of violence, the cameras provide different registers of Emad´s memory. As the quality of the images improves, the spectator witnesses Emad´s growth as an activist, filmmaker and, ultimately as a narrator of his own life. In this sense, the change in the cameras also represent changes in Emad´s gaze and, in a collective sense, a hint on the fact that after decades of struggle Palestinians learned to perform and report their lives in order to grasp the world´s attention.

Another element pointing at the Emad´s maturing process is the growth of Gibreel, his later son. Gibreel symbolizes that even the harshest stories have their tokens of joy. Despite witnessing several violent moments, the boy remains as a reminder of the existence of hope and tenderness amidst the conflict (Fig. 4). Not coincidentally, Gibreel´s birth coincides with the acquisition of Emad´s first camera. The camera was acquired to film Gibreel and ends up as a tool to document the conflict, which is inseparable from Gibreel´s childhood. The four years of shooting are the first four years of the boy´s development, from his first words to his first world cup and reactions to the military repression.

FIGURE 5: Five Broken Cameras (Film Still, 00:01:38s)

In the identification between the imbricated lines connecting the life of a Palestinian child, and perhaps that of every Palestinian child since the Nakba, and the conflict, lies a story of resistance. As any other kid raised amidst an armed conflict, Gibreel becomes used to violence and death. He is also familiar with the hostile presence of soldiers around him.

The absurdity of the environment is highlighted in the sequence of a conversation between Gibreel and his mother. Following images of a protest, with the sound of a boy coughing, the scene starts with the boy telling his mother about a confrontation between protesters and the army. Confident, he reports that "the soldiers came. They were everywhere. *But I wasn't afraid*. They were in front of daddy´s car". Listening carefully, the mother asks "and you weren't afraid? Weren't you afraid that they'd take you? Weren't you afraid Gibreel?" the mother insists playfully. Bowing his head down he admits "yes, I was [afraid]". Smiling, the mother condescends: "if there was tear gas, just smell an onion… You´re a hero". Gibreel replies with a dry "No!". Yet, the mother insists: "a hero".

What could be an ordinary family reunion in the kitchen, is a portrait of the environment in which many Palestinians are forced to grow-up in. The change of having to smell tear gas, when less than five years old, is banal. From an early age, the boy needs to understand how to cope with violence and abuse. In other words, more than having to grow up, or mature, they need to learn how to resist. The necessity to fight does not acknowledge Gibreel´s age. He is part of a territory where a child can be tortured, arrested or shot dead in the same way an adult would. In this sense, his life as a kid is not too different from his father´s. Nor is it different from the life he will probably have in the future and to which he has been prepared.

Gibreel lives in the now-time, and therefore he does not have the luxury of waiting to adulthood. In this temporal spectrum, what must be done, must be done immediately, the circumstances require immediate action. In this vein, the kid will not be able to afford the luxury of revolution, a future-oriented concern. What he does have is a heritage, a father and neighbours who fight and a community doing its best to live as well as possible. Similarly to many of the inhabitants of the Global South, this child and his neighbours share a temporality based on the present, on a horizon that does not indulge long term planning.

Immersed in a chain of violent acts, Emad and his family learn about the assassination of another villager by the IDF. The assassination took place in a neighbouring village but revolted with his death the people from Bil'in deciding to go to the streets. As expected, the protest is repressed by force in a sequence of events that include the surrounding of the village by snipers and a man arbitrarily shot in the leg by a soldier, apparently as a form of punishment for protesting.

The brutal scene is recorded by Emad and left unexplained in the documentary, which leaves the spectator with the impression that it is simply part of the quotidian state of affairs.

In the banality of the violence suffered by Emad, his family and fellow neighbours lie one of the film's greatest strengths. Instead of problematizing each inherently problematic situation, Emad lives through the film, he records the events as trivial situations. The film edition, however, which had more intense participation of the filmmaker Guy Davidi, turns these pieces into suffocating scenes interrupted by little moments of celebration and joy.

The film continues with an 11-years-old boy shot dead and, after the funeral, a 17-years-old was also killed. Narrating these tragic episodes, while filming scenes of post-demonstrations destruction, Emad confesses that "these images bring back old memories" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011), memories that he would rather keep from his children. In the statement, which is followed by the acknowledgement that his son will have to become "a strong man" to endure life it becomes clear that the narrator does not expect life to improve in this realm. On the contrary, his "old memories" will, at some point, hunt his son albeit on different clothing.

Such a sequence of scenes is illustrative of the film´s dynamic. Despite being interrupted by heart-warming scenes, such as the celebration for a court decision to dismantle a section of the barrier, the temporality is marked by the systematic attacks on the villagers and consequent losses, illustrated in each of the chapters by a broken camera. In other words, the temporal progression is measured by deaths and destruction, in an articulation that pushes the characters and the spectator towards a sense of urgency that challenges any teleological idea of "revolutionary action". Such pieces of evidence by the film underline the need for a different temporal approach towards the problem of time and are valid for much of the Global South, formerly third world, countries.

In the documentary, the loop of losses is broken by a moment when the filmic narrative meets its reception by the villagers. In a metalinguistic exercise, the film shows the villager´s watching a preview of the film´s footage. According to the filmmaker, it was an attempt to boost the morale of his neighbours after a long series of defeats. Although it is not clear whether the film contributed to a change in the morale or not, the following scene points at the spread the resistance against the Israeli wall through other Palestinian villages. From a political and aesthetical point of view, the screening is also an emblematic milestone. It is the rupture between the formal distancing from film and audience, and consequently, between a projected, fabulated reality, and the present struggle. It is relevant to observe that, although Emad has been physically involved with the resistance, placing his body in the front, up until the exhibition, the film itself has been encapsulated in the symbolic realm.

FIGURE 6: Five Broken Cameras (Film still, 1:34:21s)

Even if the strategy of screening the film in the village had not had a practical effect in that environment, this gesture illustrates the iterative relationship between the realm of the aesthetic discourse and the quotidian (political) struggle. In this specific case, the film displayed to the villagers a sense of their own resistance, articulated and represented on the screen. It was a meeting and rupture point, between the footage as a mediated version of reality and immediate reality as perceived by each villager. According to Emad, the film allowed the villagers "to gain some distance from the events" (5 Broken Cameras, 2011). Interestingly, they gained distance from the events through an immersion on a different dimension of those very events captured by the camera.

In this sense, the scene is emblematic for at least two reasons. Firstly because, in terms of temporality, it is the one situation when the immediate present is not a priority for the villagers. During the screening, they can indulge a relationship with the past, and perhaps the future of their movement. Secondly, it was an opportunity for self-reflection as well as a moment when they could realize that despite what they might feel, they are part of a larger movement.

The importance of works such as this one lies in the fact that it not only raises visibility on the Palestinian resistance, but it contributes to articulate it. It renders visible the image of a small boy confronting his fears and of a father who protests and risks his safety for his family while exposing this very family. In the process of witnessing the events unfolded by the riots, the film goes beyond a simple capture of images of the present. In fact, it inscribes images in the present

supplementing the very idea of resistance undertaken by the villagers. The footage reorganizes the grammar of the demonstrations, expanding the reach of the local struggle and reshaping the ontology of the conflict.

In this vein, Emad´s child occupies the statute not only of a Palestinian kid but also that of a child in the conflict. This duplicity, achieved by the representation of the child in the film, is crucial for the politicisation of the struggle. Gibreel is, simultaneously, a paradigmatic and a specific child. The universality of his condition, portrayed locally, is the epitome of politics of representation and of Palestinian resistance in the realm of cinema.

CONCLUSION

The most emblematic allegory for the conflict narrated in *Five Broken cameras* comes from Emad, as a first-person narrator and co-director. He claims that one of his cameras was broken by a shot and, by blocking the bullet, the camera saved him from blindness or even death. In both cases, the erasure of his eyesight was avoided. Along with the cameras, Emad acquired the possibility of narrating the struggles he went through during the protests and became a critical voice against the occupation.

Narrating the story from a first-person POV, Emad invites the spectator to take his side in the experience of these disturbing events. In doing so, he also organized his feelings and aspirations in a coherent form, something he admitted being struggling within the opening scenes. Furthermore, he unveiled the political dimension of the quotidian life, a task facilitated by the tension in that region.

In this vein, the idea of the filmmaker, who had his life saved by a camera, offers a hint on the Palestinian drama, or at least the one depicted in the documentary. If on the one hand, Emad was a greater target for rebelling and documenting the injustices, on the other hand, he was saved because he was narrating. Following the dynamics of narration and representation of a political and personal struggle, Emad and Davidi, contribute to the humanization of a struggle often framed as ancient, unsolvable and too complex to be fully grasped.

Beyond the village of Bil'in and the occupied Palestinian territory, *Five Broken Cameras* finds resonance due to its capacity to present the inevitable connection between macropolitics and subjectivities. Naturally, the documentary can be interpreted as a pro-Palestine propagandistic film. It presents an elaborated grassroots perspective on a long-term conflict relying on Emad´s

charisma and authority as a victim of the occupation. Nevertheless, this potential criticism only underlines the sophistication not only of this specific narrative but that of the Palestinian resistance in general. As a people living through a neo-colonial ruling since the foundation of the Israeli state in 1947, the Palestinians, managed to articulate their claims in a myriad of visual forms. In this context, Five Broken Cameras is a major example of this capacity to articulate and propagate a grassroots agenda towards justice.

REFERENCES

Mograbi, Avi., Lalou, Serge. (Producers) & Avi Mograbi (Director). (2005). *Avenge but one of my two eyes* [Motion Picture]. Israel.

Butler, J. *Further reflections on conversations of our time*. Diacritics, 27(1), pp.13-15, 1997.

Derrida, Jacques. Structure, sign, and play in the discourse of the human sciences. *A postmodern reader*, pp. 223-242, 1993.

Buckland, Warren., & Elsaesser, Thomas. *Studying contemporary American film: a guide to movie analysis. London: Arnold*, 2002.

Burnat, E. Davidi, G. Camdessus, C. Gordey, S. (Producers) & Emad Burnat, Guy Davidi (Directors). (2012). *Five Broken Cameras* [Motion Picture]. Israel

Laclau, E., Mouffe, C., & Zizek, S. *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. Verso Books, 1989.

Landsberg, Alison. *Prosthetic memory: The transformation of American remembrance in the age of mass culture*. New York: Columbia University Press, 2004.

Nichols, Bill. *Introduction to documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011.

NPR. *The Story Of A West Bank Village Told With '5 Broken Cameras*. 2013. Available at: https://www.npr.org/2013/02/07/171303326/the-story-of-a-west-bank-village-told-through-5-broken-cameras

Sela, Rona. (Producer), & Sela, Rona. (Director). (2007). *Looted and Hidden* [Motion Picture]. Israel.

Said, Edward. *Permission to narrate*. Journal of Palestine Studies, 13(3), 27-48, 1994.

Warburg, Aby. (1912). *Italian Art and International Astrology in the Palazzo Schifanoia, Ferrara*. The Renewal of Pagan Antiquity: Contributions to the Cultural History of the European Renaissance, 563-91.

Warburg, Aby, & Rampley, M. *The Absorption of the expressive values of the past. Art in Translation*, *1*(2), 273-283, 2009.

[1] Emad claims that he films to "hold onto" his "memories" (Five Broken Cameras, 2011).

[2] An infographic connecting the rise of violent events and the destruction of the cameras can be found here: https://visualizingpalestine.org/visuals/5-broken-cameras#&gid=1&pid=1.