

Elena Rahman
York University
Mothers of the Olive Tree

This paper explores the social and cultural resistance embedded in mothering in contemporary Palestine through a comparative analysis between Farah Nabulsi's short film *The Present* (2020), and Mai Masri's *3000 Nights* (2015). I argue that Palestinian mothering is inherently a form of feminist mothering through its politically charged defiance against the ethnic cleansing in occupied Palestine. Through a close analysis of both films, this paper determines that bell hooks' notion of homeplace can and must be used to examine mothering in war zones. Both films localize mothering in the homeplace that fosters a space of refuge and resistance for Palestinian people. This paper employs Critical Race Theory and Maternal Theory to show how and why the concept of homeplace functions as a place of resistance in these two films. In Nabulsi's *The Present* the maternal figure establishes a safe haven in the home away from the military oppression she and her Palestinian family face on a daily basis. Masri's film portrays the unconventional methods one must take as a mother to create a refuge from racial oppression in Israeli prisons. Through a comparative analysis, these safe spaces created by mother figures allow Palestinian culture to flourish despite the contentions Palestinians face outside the home. Moreover, I posit that racialized Palestinian mothers necessarily intertwine the dichotomized public, economic and political sphere with the private, family and household sphere to create a homeplace that fosters the survival of their oppressed communities.

Elena Rahman is a PhD student at York University in the Gender, Feminist, and Women's Studies program. She completed her M.A. at the University of Ottawa where she analysed intergenerational trauma in the Arab Canadian community exhibited through literature and film. This work led to her contribution to a forthcoming research study on Arab Canadian knowledge production developed by French Canadians in Quebec and her ongoing participation in the Arab Canadian Studies Research Group (ACANS). Her passion for Palestinian activism has powered much of her recent research on Palestinian mothering as cultural resistance and her upcoming doctoral research on Palestinian women represented in various modes of art.