

**The Architecture of Virility and the Necropolitics of Dispossession: Zionist Masculinity, Benjamin Netanyahu, and the Cinematic Witness of *The Voice of Hind Rajab***

---

**Dr. Syed Azeem Ali**

Assistant Professor, Department of English, ACE Engineering College, Hyderabad,  
Telangana. India.

---

**Article Received:** 04/06/2026

**Article Accepted:**05/07/2026

**Published Online:**06/07/2026

**DOI:**10.47311/IJOES.2026.8.07.124

---

**Abstract:**

This article uses the interrelated frameworks of settler colonialism, necropolitics, and visual culture to analyse the historical development and modern expressions of Zionist masculinity. The research follows the evolution of Zionist masculinity from a goal of bodily regeneration to a state-centered ideology of military sovereignty, starting with Max Nordau's development of *Muskeljudentum* (Muscular Judaism) in the late nineteenth century. The article, which draws on the writings of Achille Mbembe, Judith Butler, Patrick Wolfe, Giorgio Agamben, and R. W. Connell, contends that Benjamin Netanyahu's modern Israeli state power is the pinnacle of a hegemonic masculine ideal that combines territorial expansion, security discourse, and the sovereign right to execute.

The study also looks at how cinematic representation challenges this political reasoning. The study examines how visual witnessing, documentary reconstruction, and aural testimony subvert state-controlled narratives and reveal the human costs of necropolitical rule, with a focus on Kaouther Ben Hania's *The Voice of Hind Rajab* (2025). The video undermines the abstraction of civilian suffering and establishes an alternative archive of memory and resistance by focusing on the recorded voice of a Palestinian child murdered amid military aggression. In the conclusion, this study argues that modern cinema serves as an important counter-hegemonic venue where vulnerable bodies that have been erased by state power calculations may resurface as historical subjects.

**Keywords:** Settler Colonialism; Necropolitics; Zionist Masculinity; The Voice of Hind Rajab; Documentary Cinema

**Introduction**

In the twenty-first century, militarized nationalism, hypermasculine political performance, and the extension of state sovereignty through technologies of conflict, surveillance, and territorial control have all come closer together. Modern leaders have

---

developed political identities based on concepts of power, decisiveness, and security in a variety of geopolitical circumstances. These performances sometimes rely on gendered narratives that depict the state as a weak entity in need of defense against outside dangers. In this framework, masculinity serves as a political tool that organizes national belonging, defines the limits of citizenship, and justifies violence in addition to being a cultural identity. Since the rise of political Zionism in the late nineteenth century, issues of masculinity have taken center stage in Israel-Palestine. Anti-Semitic stereotypes that portrayed Jewish males as weak, submissive, and feminized were challenged by early Zionist intellectuals. In response, thinkers like Max Nordau promoted the idea of a "New Jew" who would be physically powerful, capable of waging war, and ready to recover national sovereignty through territorial settlement. A concept of citizenship based on military duty, territorial expansion, and masculine power was eventually produced as a result of this project of bodily regeneration becoming intricately entwined with the larger objectives of Zionist nation-building.

As the Israeli state changed over time, so did the ideological underpinnings of Zionist masculinity. The technologically advanced soldier, intelligence agent, and security specialist rapidly replaced the agricultural pioneer of early Zionist legend. This process reached a particularly important point under Benjamin Netanyahu. A focus on existential threat, pre-emptive aggression, and ongoing security mobilization has defined Netanyahu's political career. His leadership style blends militaristic nationalism with neoliberal managerialism, creating a paradigm of governance where appeals to national survival are constantly used to justify state power.

Achille Mbembe's theoretical framework of necropolitics offers an essential prism through which to view this change. Mbembe contends that modern sovereignty is ultimately defined by the ability to decide who may live and who must die, building on Michel Foucault's concept of biopower. Because colonial and settler-colonial regimes depend on the ongoing creation of populations whose lives are made expendable, they are especially extreme examples of this power. In these circumstances, violence ceases to be an extraordinary occurrence and instead becomes a standard administrative procedure.

Settler colonialism has been used more and more to analyse the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. In his well-known argument that settler colonialism is "a structure, not an event," Patrick Wolfe emphasizes that the eradication of Indigenous populations is still a process rather than a finished historical event (388). According to this approach, acquiring territory necessitates ongoing native population management, relocation, and confinement. Everyday legal procedures, administrative frameworks, and security procedures all incorporate violence.

---

This paper examines the convergence of settler-colonial governance, necropolitical sovereignty, and Zionist masculinity in modern-day Israel under Benjamin Netanyahu. It makes the case that hegemonic masculinity serves as an ideological process that justifies necropolitical violence. The piece also looks at how this paradigm is challenged through cinematic witnessing in Kaouther Ben Hania's *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. The documentary challenges prevailing security narratives and establishes a different archive of memory by emphasizing auditory testimony and vulnerable embodiment.

### **Masculinity and Nation Formation**

Cultural and political thought has traditionally placed a strong emphasis on the connection between nationhood and masculinity. According to George Mosse, the development of normative masculine ideas that prioritize physical prowess, self-control, and discipline coincided with the rise of modern nationalism. The ideal citizen was seen as a warrior who could defend the country by serving in the armed forces and making sacrifices. The masculine physique became a symbol of national energy as a result of these gendered expectations.

A particularly helpful framework for comprehending this process is provided by R. W. Connell's concept of hegemonic masculinity. Connell defines hegemonic masculinity as the culturally dominant masculinity that ensures the subjection of other masculinities and validates patriarchal power (77). Hegemonic masculinity serves as an aspirational ideal that influences institutions and social behaviours rather than reflecting the behaviour of all men. Hegemonic masculinity arose in Zionist rhetoric in reaction to anti-Semitic portrayals of Jewish males in Europe. Jewish masculinity was traditionally linked to intellectualism, spirituality, and academic success rather than military strength, as Daniel Boyarin shows. Although these traits were highly regarded in Jewish traditions, European nationalists often saw them as feminization and weakness (Boyarin 12). In response, Zionist intellectuals embraced military discipline and physical culture as means of revitalizing the country. According to Todd Presner, Nordau's idea of *Muskeljudentum* was an attempt to establish a contemporary Jewish organization that could engage with European nationalist culture. Zionism aimed to change Jewish identity from one connected with exile to one rooted in territorial sovereignty through sports, agricultural labour, and military training (Presner 34).

### **Settler Colonialism and Elimination**

Patrick Wolfe's foundational work on settler colonialism remains essential for understanding the structural dimensions of Zionist state formation. Unlike classical colonialism, which primarily seeks to exploit Indigenous labour, settler colonialism aims to replace Indigenous populations through territorial occupation and demographic transformation (Wolfe 388). Lorenzo Veracini goes on to say that settler colonial cultures marginalize Indigenous claims while constructing narratives of legitimacy by portraying themselves as the region's natural occupants. These stories frequently rely on myths about the advancement, modernization, and safety of society. Scholars like Oren Yiftachel and Ilan Pappé have studied how state structures in Israel enable territorial expansion through

---

military, administrative, and judicial means. These analyses highlight the fact that dispossession occurs through bureaucratic processes that control mobility, property ownership, and political engagement in addition to direct acts of violence.

### **Necropolitics and Sovereignty**

Achille Mbembe's theory of necropolitics expands Michel Foucault's concept of biopower by emphasizing the centrality of death in modern governance. While biopower concerns the management of life, necropolitics focuses on the sovereign capacity to expose populations to death (Mbembe 66). Mbembe contends that because colonial occupations create distinct human regimes, they are paradigmatic necropolitical places. While some lives are fostered and safeguarded, others are left permanently at risk of harm. Military force, judicial exceptionalism, and ideological narratives that demean targeted groups are used to uphold these distinctions. Mbembe's analysis is enhanced by Giorgio Agamben's notion of the condition of exception. According to Agamben, emergency measures that suspend legal rules in the name of security are increasingly used by modern nations to control (Agamben 2). Extraordinary acts of violence are made possible by the gradual normalization of the exception.

### **Grievability and the Politics of Representation**

Another crucial framework for comprehending modern conflicts is provided by Judith Butler's idea of grievability. Butler contends that political institutions dictate which lives are visible and which are deemed deserving of public sorrow (Butler 38). The unequal distribution of sadness is a reflection of larger power and inequality structures. This realization is especially pertinent to how conflict is portrayed in the media. According to Susan Sontag, pictures of suffering frequently distance themselves from the people they represent, turning human agony into an impersonal spectacle. Instead of fostering ethical engagement, repetition may cause emotional detachment (Sontag 102). By highlighting photography's ability to foster civic engagement across political divides, Ariella Azoulay opposes this trend. Images have the potential to act as alternative archives that both challenge official narratives and preserve minority perspectives. In light of Palestine, where conflicting visual regimes aim to define what violence, victimhood, and historical memory imply, these discussions have grown in importance.

### **The Genealogy of the Muscular Jew: From Diaspora to Settler Colonialism**

The nineteenth-century confluence of European nationalism, colonial expansion, and anti-Semitic rhetoric gives rise to the intellectual foundations of Zionist masculinity. Jewish communities were left out of prevailing ideas of national belonging as nation-states increasingly associated citizenship with military service and physical fitness. Jewish males were often depicted in anti-Semitic stereotypes as weak, cerebral, and incapable of fighting bravely. In an attempt to refute these depictions, Max Nordau developed *Muskeljudentum* during the Second Zionist Congress in 1898. For Nordau, living in the diaspora for ages had caused physical deterioration that could only be undone by physical discipline and territorial settlement. The Jewish organization turned into a political endeavour.

In the end, this change helped create the idealized native-born Israeli known as the Sabra, who is praised for their toughness, independence, and military preparedness. The Sabra, which represents the union of manhood, citizenship, and territorial belonging, emerged as a key emblem of national identity, according to Anita Shapira. However, other identities had to be marginalized in order to build the Sabra. Zionist claims to indigenism and territorial legitimacy were hampered by the Palestinian presence. As a result, discourses of national revitalization became entwined with dispossession and exclusionary behaviours. "The New Jew" is seen through the prism of settler-colonial theory as the agent of a larger political purpose rather than just as a regenerated person. The development of territorial sovereignty was inextricably linked to the transformation of Jewish masculinity. Israeli political culture is still shaped by the convergence of military might, agricultural labour, and a sense of national identity.

#### **From the Pioneer to the Warrior-Executive**

Benjamin Netanyahu is the most obvious example of how Zionist masculinity has evolved from the rural Sabra to the modern security executive. Netanyahu embodies a very neoliberal form of masculine power, in contrast to early Zionist leaders like David Ben-Gurion who fostered ideals of communal sacrifice, agricultural labour, and socialist nation-building. His political identity is based on security competence, technological dominance, and strategic management rather than the kibbutz's community spirit. Netanyahu's political power, sophisticated education, and military credentials all work together to meticulously craft his public persona. His schooling at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology places him in the context of global capitalism and technocratic rule, while his membership in the elite Sayeret Matkal special forces unit serves as the symbolic basis of his legitimacy. The warrior and the executive are two interrelated male identities that Netanyahu can play at the same time thanks to this mix.

Gendered presentations of strength are often used by modern populist politicians to establish authority, as political scholars have increasingly pointed out. According to Michael Kimmel, concerns about masculine insecurity and the country's downfall are frequently exploited by contemporary right-wing populism. Leaders portray themselves as powerful dads who can uphold traditional values, safeguard borders, and restore order. Political authority is transformed into a display of masculine skill by such acts (Kimmel 34). Netanyahu is a prime example of this inclination. He has continuously presented himself as the only leader who can defend Israel against existential dangers throughout his political career. Netanyahu presents security as the key to the country's survival, regardless of the topic at hand Iran's nuclear program, Palestinian resistance activities, or geopolitical instability in the neighbourhood. Within this worldview, being vigilant, determined, and eager to use force are all considered characteristics of masculinity. In contrast to previous Zionist leaders who prioritized teamwork, Netanyahu's masculinity is highly individualistic. His reputation is based on his command, strategic knowledge, and expertise. The ideal citizen

is now the security expert defending the country with superior technology and military might rather than the farmer reclaiming the land.

### **Populist Masculinity and Global Strongman Politics**

A larger worldwide trend toward populist masculinity can also be used to contextualize Netanyahu's political performance. Leaders like Donald Trump, Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, and Jair Bolsonaro have a lot in common, according to academics. These individuals rely on gendered narratives of national restoration, albeit operating in different political situations. Because hegemonic masculinity promises stability through authority and hierarchy, Raewyn Connell observes that it often arises during times of societal unpredictability (Connell 83). By portraying themselves as symbols of national power, populist leaders take advantage of this dynamic. They present compromise as a sign of surrender and characterize political resistance as weakness.

These subjects are frequently mentioned in Netanyahu's discourse. It is common to characterize political conversations as risky compromises. International criticism is presented as proof of prejudice against Israel. Military restraint is portrayed as naive idealism that is unable to deal with dangers in the actual world. Security is turned into a moral category by this discourse. Violence is justified as an ethical duty as well as a strategic necessity. Instead of being seen as an act of aggression, the state's readiness to use overwhelming force is seen as a sign of competent leadership. Traditionally masculine traits like toughness, power, and emotional control are valued in the resulting political culture. Alternative strategies that prioritize mutual acknowledgment, diplomacy, or reconciliation are sometimes dismissed as dangerously idealistic or impractical.

### **The Iron Wall and the Logic of Permanent Emergency**

Ze'ev Jabotinsky's seminal article "The Iron Wall" (1923) serves as the conceptual basis for Netanyahu's security philosophy. Jabotinsky maintained that a Jewish state could only be founded by overwhelming military dominance and that Arab resistance to Zionism was unavoidable. Only if Arab opposition had been rendered ineffective would peace be conceivable. Even though it was written in a very different historical setting, the Iron Wall nevertheless influences Israeli politics today. Netanyahu has emphasized military readiness, strategic superiority, and deterrence on several occasions. A helpful foundation for comprehending this occurrence is provided by Giorgio Agamben's concept of the state of exception. Agamben claims that emergency measures that suspend regular legal rights in the name of security are becoming more common in contemporary states (Agamben 23). Exceptional powers eventually become ingrained in governance. In the Israeli setting, extreme measures such as military operations, surveillance programs, travel restrictions, and increased presidential authority are often justified by security concerns. Although these actions are portrayed as short-term reactions to pressing dangers, they frequently develop into long-lasting elements of the political system.

---

**Necropolitics and the Management of Palestinian Life**

Mbembe's theory of necropolitics is particularly relevant to contemporary Palestine because it highlights the relationship between sovereignty and differential vulnerability. Populations are classified as either disposable or protected in necropolitical regimes. There has been a growing analysis of the Palestinian territories as areas where these disparities are evident. A highly differentiated landscape of rights and mobility is created by military zones, checkpoints, permit systems, monitoring technologies, and movement limitations. These systems control life itself, not just territory.

This conversation is extended by Jasbir Puar's notion of "the right to maim." According to Puar, state aggression in the modern era frequently results in lasting vulnerability and debility in addition to murder (Puar 17). The goal is often population control through harm, limitation, and incapacitation rather than eradication. Understanding the wider effects of military occupation is made easier with the help of this framework. Violence is a phenomenon that permeates daily life and is not just an isolated incident. Healthcare, education, employment, and mobility are all subject to control mechanisms that perpetuate inequality. By portraying Palestinian suffering only through the prism of counterterrorism, Netanyahu's security narrative often obscures these structural realities. A narrative of essential defense incorporates humanitarian crises, infrastructure destruction, and civilian losses. Political decisions are translated into technical requirements by the language of security. Such discourses determine whose deaths are politically invisible and whose lives are publicly grievable, according to Judith Butler (Butler 38). The ability to identify weakness is a type of strength in and of itself.

**Patriarchal Governance and the Politics of Exclusion**

Beyond military strategy, Netanyahu's leadership has hyper-masculine aspects. His political connections to religious nationalist groups demonstrate how gender functions in several spheres of state authority. Both institutionally and symbolically, patriarchal authority operates. Conservative religious frameworks frequently influence discussions of family law, gender roles, sexuality, and citizenship in domestic politics. While portraying them as manifestations of cultural authenticity, these structures uphold conventional hierarchies. For a long time, feminist scholars have noted that patriarchal socioeconomic structures are often the foundation of military nationalism. According to Cynthia Enloe, nationalist initiatives frequently rely on gendered labour divides, where women are given supportive responsibilities within the national community while men are linked to leadership and defense (Enloe 52). These processes are especially important in settler-colonial settings because reproduction takes on political significance. Family dynamics become tools of state strategy as demography and territorial sovereignty become entwined. How these issues relate to more general issues of state identity is demonstrated by Netanyahu's coalition politics. As components of a broader ideological framework, security, religion, territory, and masculinity all reinforce one another.

**The Armoured Body and the Performance of Sovereignty**

The idea of the armoured body is arguably the most potent emblem in Netanyahu's political imagery. Netanyahu represents a masculinity of control, protection, and surveillance in contrast to the early Sabra's agricultural masculinity. The armoured body is a symbol of more than just military readiness. It represents the state's desire to be invulnerable. Surveillance networks, intelligence infrastructures, missile defense systems, and physical barriers all help to create an imagined national body that is safe from harm. However, there are significant ethical ramifications to this quest for invulnerability. According to philosopher Emmanuel Levinas, being open and vulnerable to the Other is how ethical duty develops. In contrast, the armoured person wants complete shielding against relational exposure. Therefore, the security state runs the risk of turning political life into an ongoing military endeavour. The language of threat is used to interpret every interaction. Every obstacle is presented as a possible threat to the survival of the country.

Maintaining this perception is crucial to Netanyahu's political success. He emphasizes the need for strong leadership, military readiness, and extraordinary state power by repeatedly bringing up existential peril. By doing this, he is the pinnacle of a historical trajectory that started with Nordau's advocacy for muscle regeneration. The regenerated body has become the fortified state, and the New Jew has developed into the security executive. What started out as a reaction to vulnerability has evolved into a political structure centered on controlling others' vulnerability. This development offers the essential background for comprehending *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Kaouther Ben Hania. The movie does more than just record a terrible incident. It challenges the conceptual underpinnings of a political system based on necropolitical sovereignty and military masculinity. The movie challenges the prevailing notion of security by focusing on a vulnerable child rather than an armoured state, forcing viewers to consider the human costs of power.

**The Witness Film in a Time of Stunning Violence**

The portrayal of suffering in a time when images abound is one of the defining problems of modern visual culture. Photographs, films, livestreams, and digital documentation from conflict areas have been circulating at a rate never seen before in the twenty-first century. Public access to knowledge has increased as a result of this multiplication, but it has also given rise to new types of desensitization. Repetition makes violence routine, and human suffering runs the risk of becoming a commodity. This paradox is noted by Susan Sontag in *Regarding the Pain of Others*. While visuals can elicit empathy, repeated exposure can also reduce emotional reactivity. As viewers grow used to seeing devastation from a safe distance, tragedy ceases to be an urgent ethical confrontation and instead becomes a familiar visual category (Sontag 105). Increasingly, modern warfare takes place in this paradoxical environment where accountability does not always follow from visibility.

This situation is best illustrated by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Through international media networks, images of bombed neighbourhoods, military incursions, relocation, and civilian casualties are constantly circulating. However, the overwhelming amount of visual evidence frequently has the odd consequence of normalizing suffering via repetition. The spectacular turns into the commonplace. *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Kaouther Ben Hania holds a unique place in this environment. The film uses audio testimony to reconstruct an event rather than adding another visual depiction of combat. Ben Hania radically changes the audience-suffering interaction by emphasizing sound over spectacle. The audience is encouraged to listen to violence as it happens in real time rather than just watch it. One of the movie's most important political interventions is this transition from visual consumption to auditory witnessing.

### **The Ethics of Listening and Acoustic Testimony**

*The Voice of Hind Rajab's* reliance on real emergency recordings saved by the Palestine Red Crescent Society is its most remarkable aspect. The story of the movie centers on six-year-old Hind Rajab's last messages to emergency personnel as she was stranded inside a car full of her relatives' corpses. Ben Hania emphasizes the voice itself, in contrast to traditional war documentaries that mostly rely on historical video, professional commentary, or journalistic narration. The youngster is made to feel present through sound rather than just visual depiction.

This method is consistent with the research of trauma theorists. Dori Laub and Shoshana Felman contend that testimony entails more than just sharing facts. A relationship between the speaker and the listener is established through testimony. The witness seeks recognition from another awareness that is able to receive the account, rather than merely recounting the experience (Felman and Laub 57). Thus, Hind's voice serves as more than just written proof. It turns into an ethical plea to the audience outside of the movie as well as the dispatchers inside. The act of witnessing turns the listener into a participant. It is impossible to overestimate the significance of this change. Civilian casualties are often reduced to statistical abstractions in military rhetoric. Reports translate unique lives into quantitative facts by describing casualties in numerical terms. By substituting abstract concepts for specific stories, such language promotes emotional detachment.

This procedure is reversed by Ben Hania. The viewer sees breathing rather than statistics. They hear dread, uncertainty, and vulnerability instead of casualty figures. The sonic architecture of the movie rejects abstraction. The speaker's unbreakable humanity is maintained by the trembling pauses, broken words, and quiet intervals. Because Hind's voice consistently reaffirms her uniqueness, she cannot be reduced to a demographic category or strategic calculation. Political regimes frequently decide which lives are publicly acknowledged as fully human and which are removed from common concern, as Judith Butler contends in *Frames of War* (Butler 24). By requesting acknowledgment, the voice in

Ben Hania's movie challenges these restrictions. The audience is forced to hear what official narratives frequently try to hide.

### **Trauma, Temporality, and Catastrophe Repetition**

Another crucial foundation for comprehending the structure of the movie is provided by trauma studies. Because trauma is perceived as a rupture of normal temporality, Cathy Caruth contends that it defies simple representation. Instead of coherent storytelling, traumatic events frequently recur through memory, repetition, and delayed recognition (Caruth 11). *The Voice of Hind Rajab* reflects this temporal complexity through its reconstruction of the emergency calls. The audience knows the outcome before the narrative reaches its conclusion. Historical knowledge transforms the viewing experience into a process of anticipatory grief. This creates a unique form of dramatic tension. The suspense does not emerge from uncertainty regarding what happened. Instead, it arises from the audience's awareness that disaster is approaching while the participants continue struggling against it. Every conversation between Hind and the dispatchers becomes haunted by the inevitability of loss. The result is a cinematic structure that mirrors the logic of trauma itself. The event unfolds repeatedly through memory, reconstruction, and testimony. Time becomes suspended between hope and catastrophe.

In this case, Marianne Hirsch's theory of post memory is very pertinent. According to Hirsch, traumatic histories frequently endure through mediated forms of transmission, giving subsequent generations access to experiences they were not present for (Hirsch 5). This is exactly how Ben Hania's film operates. It turns a particular historical event into a shared memory that transcends national and geographic borders. The duty of remembering is passed on to the audience.

### **The Politics of Authenticity and Documentary Reconstruction**

Combining dramatic reconstruction with documentary is an important part of Ben Hania's artistic work. In her critically acclaimed film *Four Daughters* (2023), actors and real participants worked together to investigate tragic family history using similar tactics. Reconstruction has a different function in *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. The replicated dispatch center does more than just depict historical occurrences. It makes the bureaucratic processes by which power is exercised dramatic. The dispatchers work in an environment characterized by institutional constraints, uncertainty, and frustration. They are aware of the child's vulnerability, but they don't have the power to change things. These dynamic highlights a significant aspect of modern power. A direct confrontation between the offender and the victim is a common perception of violence. However, protocols, delays, approvals, and administrative obstacles are often how modern political systems function. Bureaucracy turns as a tool for violence.

In this sense, Hannah Arendt's study of bureaucratic authority is still useful. By dividing up decision-making among several entities, administrative systems often complicate accountability. Organizational arrangements that disperse accountability are more likely to

do harm than individual cruelty. This behaviour is frequently highlighted in Ben Hania's film. While a child waits for help, the dispatchers must negotiate procedures, permissions, and communication channels. Both military force and administrative delays contribute to the disaster. As a result, institutional power is severely criticized.

### **The Child as Counter-Narrative**

In political discourse, the child figure holds a special place. Children are often used as representations of fragility, innocence, and the future. Their misery frequently has a moral force that transcends traditional political classifications. According to Lee Edelman, contemporary political systems often revolve on the child as a symbol of the community's idealized future (Edelman 2). Therefore, the validity of the social order itself is called into question when children are harmed. The child becomes a potent counter-narrative to the military state discourse in *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. Abstractions like national defense, deterrence, strategic necessity, and sovereignty are frequently used in security discourse. Collective identity is the level at which these ideas function. The state's preservation is their top priority. By adding a unique personal presence that is difficult to include into geopolitical tales, Hind's voice disrupts this framework. The language of strategy is not spoken by the child. She uses the language of terror. She requests assistance. She holds out. The stark disparity between military might and everyday life is revealed by her weakness. As a result, the movie questions a fundamental tenet of hegemonic masculinity: that authority is justified by strength. Rather, Ben Hania contends that acknowledging vulnerability is the first step toward true ethical responsibility.

### **Sound in opposition to the Sovereign Gaze**

The film's challenge to the sovereign gaze is arguably its most daring intervention. Visual technologies are often used by colonial and military regimes for population management, monitoring, and classification. Intelligence databases, targeting software, aerial imagery, and surveillance technologies turn people into objects of observation. The work of Eyal Weizman on forensic architecture shows how visual technologies that turn terrain into data are becoming more and more important in modern warfare (Weizman 15). Measurement and computation take place on the battlefield. Visibility serves power in these kinds of systems. In response, Ben Hania emphasizes sound. Many of the distancing techniques used in visual surveillance are resisted by sound. It is difficult to limit a voice to demographic groups or coordinates. It has emotional undertones that are beyond categorization.

Thus, listening takes the place of gazing in the movie. There are significant political ramifications to this change. Instead of dominance, listening demands openness. Instead of control, it involves openness. Acoustic testimony requires ethical consideration when the sovereign gaze pursues mastery. The audience is now accountable for reacting to another person rather than for watching an object. *The Voice of Hind Rajab* thus poses a potent threat to necropolitical sovereignty. Vulnerable life is not allowed to vanish into statistical abstraction in the movie. It gives people who political systems try to obliterate their existence

back through voice, memory, and witness. Ben Hania produces more than just a documentary by keeping Hind's voice intact. She builds a permanent archive of witnesses that can withstand the amnesia that frequently underlies governmental brutality.

### **The Strength and Vulnerability Dialectic**

*The Voice of Hind Rajab* examines a primary conflict that goes beyond a straightforward military fight. It is a conflict between drastically different embodiment forms. The armoured state is on one side. The susceptible body is on the other side. The ability of the state to use institutions, weaponry, bureaucracies, and legal frameworks to project force is the source of its power. It seems to have enormous, impersonal, and technological power. The opposing state is represented by the child's body. It is mortal, vulnerable, exposed, and reliant. What Emmanuel Levinas refers to as the ethical relevance of vulnerability is revealed by the interaction between these two modes of existence. According to Levinas, ethics starts with responsibility toward the face of the Other rather than power. The vulnerability of the Other is precisely what gives rise to human obligation. This link is reversed in necropolitical systems. Instead of taking responsibility for vulnerability, they use it into an excuse for dominance. The fragile body only becomes apparent as an issue that needs to be handled.

Mbembe's understanding of colonial power revolves around this inversion. Colonial governments often portray entire communities as dangers while also making them susceptible to violence. The colonized person is in a contradictory situation where they are portrayed as dangerous in political discourse but are actually helpless. In modern security discourses, the Palestinian body often has this conflicting position. Despite being structurally inferior to military might, it is frequently portrayed as an existential threat that calls for drastic containment measures. This reasoning is undermined by Ben Hania's film, which brings vulnerability's tangible actuality back into focus. Hind Rajab's voice rejects abstraction. It reintroduces flesh to a strategy-dominated debate.

### **Necropolitical Accounting and Human Life Reduction**

The use of statistical thinking in modern warfare is one of its distinguishing features. In reports, assessments, and strategic evaluations, civilian casualties are converted into numerical data and categorized. This procedure produces what could be referred to as a necropolitical ledger. Human lives are entered into mathematical systems. Deaths are quantified, contrasted, rationalized, and handled administratively.

According to Judith Butler, these frames establish which deaths are politically inconsequential and whose lives are deemed publically grievable (Butler 22). The distribution of grief itself becomes uneven. This situation is best illustrated by the terminology of collateral harm. The phrase turns moral dilemmas into technical ones by portraying civilian deaths as accidental results of justifiable military goals. Bureaucratic jargon spreads responsibility. The person vanishes. The category is still in place. This abstraction process is directly contested in *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. The movie rejects the

use of statistics. Rather, it emphasizes singularity. Instead of a demographic group, the audience is presented with a single youngster. One voice instead of a casualty figure, a single experience as opposed to a complete. Because depersonalization is essential to necropolitical institutions, this emphasis on individuality has significant political implications. When victims are viewed as a group rather than as individuals, it is easier to justify violence. Ben Hania disrupts the administrative logic of disposability by reinstating singularity.

### **Recollection Against Erasure**

One of the most significant aspects of contemporary political conflict is the struggle over memory. States have enormous influence over how history is told. Governments have an impact on how people remember and interpret events through public commemorations, official archives, media outlets, and educational institutions. According to Pierre Nora, in order to maintain specific interpretations of the past, contemporary cultures are depending more and more on institutional locations of memory. These websites serve as means for creating collective identity in addition to being information repositories (Nora 12).

The politics of memory is therefore inseparable from the politics of power. Those who control historical narratives often influence contemporary understandings of legitimacy, responsibility, and justice. In contexts of war and occupation, this struggle becomes especially intense. Competing narratives seek to define victims, perpetrators, causes, and consequences. Ben Hania's film intervenes directly within this contest. By preserving acoustic testimony, the film creates an alternative archive that resists official erasure. The recording survives. The voice remains. The event cannot be entirely absorbed into bureaucratic language or political rhetoric. Cinema thus becomes a form of historical preservation. Not merely recording facts, but preserving experiences. Not merely documenting events, but safeguarding memory.

Thus, the politics of power and the politics of memory are inextricably linked. Contemporary conceptions of justice, accountability, and legitimacy are frequently influenced by those in charge of historical narratives. This fight intensifies during times of occupation and conflict. Conflicting narratives aim to characterize victims, offenders, causes, and outcomes. This competition is directly impacted by Ben Hania's film. The video establishes an alternative archive that is resistant to official erasure by conserving aural testimony. The tape has survived. The voice is still there. Political discourse or bureaucratic terminology cannot fully capture the incident. As a result, film becomes a tool for preserving the past, maintaining experiences rather than just documenting facts, preserving memories rather than just recording occurrences.

### **Conclusion: Film, Observation, and Counter-Hegemonic Memory's Future**

The intricate relationship between violence, sovereignty, and masculinity in the Israeli-Palestinian setting is made clear by the historical trajectory this paper explores. Zionist masculinity arose as a project of bodily regeneration intended to overcome the perceived vulnerabilities of Jewish life in the European diaspora, starting with Max Nordau's

conception of *Muskeljudentum* in the late nineteenth century. This initiative eventually developed into a more comprehensive political framework that connected national identity, territorial sovereignty, and military might. The Sabra, who represents the values of resilience, independence, and selflessness, emerged as a key emblem of Israeli nation-building. These customs were converted under Benjamin Netanyahu into a modern security politics marked by advanced technology, constant watchfulness, and existential threat rhetoric. It is possible to comprehend how modern state power functions not only through geographical control but also through the unequal distribution of vulnerability by using the theoretical frameworks of hegemonic masculinity, settler colonialism, and necropolitics. The ability of the sovereign state to preserve certain lives while subjecting others to situations of instability, dispossession, and death is how it establishes its legitimacy.

Achille Mbembe's concept of necropolitics illuminates this process by demonstrating how sovereignty ultimately rests upon the authority to determine who may live and who may die. Within such systems, violence becomes normalized as an administrative practice, and civilian suffering is frequently transformed into an acceptable consequence of strategic necessity. *The Voice of Hind Rajab* by Kaouther Ben Hania aims to refute this same premise. The movie shifts focus back to the lived reality of vulnerability while rejecting the abstractions of military discourse. Ben Hania constructs an alternative archive that may withstand political forgetfulness using acoustic testimony, documentary reconstruction, and cinematic witnessing. Hind Rajab's voice serves as a potent disruption of official narratives. It reveals the personal costs hidden behind security rhetoric. It gives people who have been rendered invisible by bureaucratic systems their personality back. It turns onlookers into witnesses.

Most significantly, the movie shows that film is still one of the few cultural mediums that may oppose state institutions' monopoly on memory. In a time of conflicting truth claims, algorithmic spying, and information warfare, independent film is an essential medium for preserving experiences that mainstream narratives aim to destroy. Thus, *The Voice of Hind Rajab's* importance goes beyond the particular incident it chronicles. The movie depicts a larger conflict about how communal memory is formed, who has the right to tell history, and whose suffering should be acknowledged. Ben Hania delivers the frail tenacity of a human voice in opposition to the security state's armoured assurance. She provides witness against the abstractions of necropolitical power. She offers recollection in opposition to forgetting. By accomplishing this, *The Voice of Hind Rajab* shows that art's persistent ability to maintain human presence in the face of political erasure may be a more potent deterrent to sovereign aggression than armed resistance alone.

### Works Cited

Agamben, Giorgio. *State of Exception*. Translated by Kevin Attell, U of Chicago P, 2005.

- 
- Arendt, Hannah. *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*. Penguin Books, 2006.
- Ben Hania, Kaouther, director. *The Voice of Hind Rajab*. Performances by Saja Kilani and Motaz Malhees, Tanit Films, Jour2Fête, and Mime Films, 2025.
- Boyarin, Daniel. *Unheroic Conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man*. U of California P, 1997.
- Butler, Judith. *Frames of War: When Is Life Grievable?* Verso, 2009.
- Butler, Judith. *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*. Verso, 2004.
- Caruth, Cathy. *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*. Johns Hopkins UP, 1996.
- Connell, R. W. *Masculinities*. 2nd ed., U of California P, 2005.
- Edelman, Lee. *No Future: Queer Theory and the Death Drive*. Duke UP, 2004.
- Enloe, Cynthia. *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*. U of California P, 2000.
- Felman, Shoshana, and Dori Laub. *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History*. Routledge, 1992.
- Halper, Jeff. *War Against the People: Israel, the Palestinians and Global Pacification*. Pluto Press, 2015.
- Hirsch, Marianne. *The Generation of Postmemory: Writing and Visual Culture After the Holocaust*. Columbia UP, 2012.
- Jabotinsky, Ze'ev. "The Iron Wall." 1923. Jewish Virtual Library.
- Khalidi, Rashid. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Resistance, 1917–2017*. Metropolitan Books, 2020.
- Mbembe, Achille. *Necropolitics*. Translated by Steven Corcoran, Duke UP, 2019.
- Mosse, George L. *The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity*. Oxford UP, 1996.
- Neuman, Gdalit. "Dancing Between Old Worlds and New: Max Nordau's New Jew Idea and Its Manifestation in Pre-State Israeli Folk Dance." *Performance Matters*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2016, pp. 110–22.
- Nordau, Max. "Speech at the Second Zionist Congress." *The Zionist Ideology*, edited by Gideon Shimoni, Brandeis UP, 1995, pp. 88–94.
- Nora, Pierre. *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*. Columbia UP, 1996.
- Pappé, Ilan. *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*. Oneworld Publications, 2006.
- Presner, Todd Samuel. *Muscular Judaism: The Jewish Body and the Politics of Regeneration*. Routledge, 2007.
- Puar, Jasbir K. *The Right to Maim: Debility, Capacity, Disability*. Duke UP, 2017.
- Ryan, Caitlin. "Gendering Palestinian Dispossession: Evaluating Land Loss in the West Bank." *Antipode*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2017, pp. 477–98.
- Said, Edward W. *Orientalism*. Vintage Books, 1979.
- Shapira, Anita. *Israel: A History*. Brandeis UP, 2012.
- Shohat, Ella. *Israeli Cinema: East/West and the Politics of Representation*. I.B. Tauris, 2010.
-

- Sontag, Susan. Regarding the Pain of Others. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003.
- Veracini, Lorenzo. Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview. Palgrave Macmillan, 2010.
- Weizman, Eyal. Forensic Architecture: Violence at the Threshold of Detectability. Zone Books, 2017.
- Wolfe, Patrick. "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native." Journal of Genocide Research, vol. 8, no. 4, 2006, pp. 387–409.
- Yiftachel, Oren. "'Creeping Apartheid' in Israel-Palestine." Middle East Report, vol. 39, no. 4, 2009, pp. 2–15.
- Žižek, Slavoj. Violence: Six Sideways Reflections. Picador, 2008.
- Adams, Sam. "The Cinema of Witness: Truth and Re-Creation in Ben Hania's Latest Work." Slate, Dec. 2025.
- Loader, R. M. "Documenting the Rights of the Vulnerable: Children in Armed Conflict." Journal of Media and Rights, vol. 2, no. 1, 2025, pp. 78–92.
- Renov, Michael. The Subject of Documentary. U of Minnesota P, 2004.
- Zelizer, Barbie. Remembering to Forget: Holocaust Memory Through the Camera's Eye. U of Chicago P, 1998.