Chapter 3

CAMERA AS MIRROR

A Mirror to Society

Cameras, such as single lens reflexes (SLRs), rely on mirrors to allow the photographer to look at the framed scene before taking a picture. The photographer looks through the camera's viewfinder and, because of the mirror, is able to see the scene as it is truly framed rather than reflected horizontally or seen from above. The camera's mirror bounces the incoming light to a viewing system or pentaprism and ultimately out to the viewfinder before lifting up and out of the way for image capture. It is the lifting and dropping of this mirror that makes the notable sound we associate with photography—so notable that smartphone cameras mimic them, foley-style, even when no mirror is needed.

Like the mirror in the SLR camera, the work of B'Tselem has often been described as holding up a mirror to Israeli society. This mirror allows society to see things as they appear, rather than distorted, flipped, misframed, mangled, or altogether absent from the visual field. The Israeli novelist Amos Oz wrote,

> B'Tselem not only reliably and meticulously documents human rights violations in the Occupied Territories, it holds up a mirror to Israeli policy, revealing the dubious guise of legality under which Israel has held sway over Palestinians for nearly fifty years, seizing their land and oppressing them.[1]

Oz's words evoke the common phrase demanding self-reflection: "Take a look in the mirror." You are told to look in the mirror to self-assess: Do you like how you look? Often this phrase goes beyond appearances and plunges into the depths of one's being, as in: Can you stand to look at yourself? This is the kind of mirror B'Tselem provides, says Oz. This is the kind of looking entailed in "taking a hard look in the mirror." For a person who is "unable to look in the mirror," a trusted friend might take on the role of mirroring. For instance, Barack Obama said that "being a friend to Israel is partly to hold up a mirror and tell the truth."[2]

The mirroring that B'Tselem provides to Israeli society keeps it grounded, realistic, and "human" as some have argued. Major General Ami Ayalon, former Israel Securities Authority head, said in a 2016 radio interview:

> These gatekeepers are the ones that still confront us with a kind of mirror of who we are—although we look very, very bad in the mirror. After all, B'Tselem or Machsom Watch or Breaking the Silence are the organizations that still enable us to maintain some kind of connection with reality …. [I]f we lose them, then I'd say that we'd truly become like animals, or any other comparison or adjective that might suit us. At the moment that isn't the situation—only because of them.[3]

Likewise, veterans testifying for Breaking the Silence have been described as "holding up a mirror, and it is our [Jewish Israelis'] obligation to look at its reflection."[4] Yet it is not easy to take in such reflections, and as a result, Breaking the Silence and B'Tselem have become increasingly demonized and cast aside as too radical by mainstream, right-leaning Jewish Israeli society. Indeed, when Israeli filmmaker Avi Mograbi was asked why he thinks Israelis despise the actions of Breaking the Silence, of which he is a board member, he theorized that it is uncommon for members of a ruling society to look toward their own actions when taking stock on, in his words, "why we are in such deep shit."[5] Mograbi said that Breaking the Silence "provides a mirror and given the situation in the Middle East, no one is looking for a mirror."[6] Instead, the search for responsibility and accountability seeks a displaced vessel of blame outside itself.

In spite of a well-documented aversion of settler-colonial societies to consider themselves accountable for ongoing conflict, can citizen-recorded media produced by an occupied population spark introspection by mirroring society?[7] In cameras, mirrors allow for clear and undistorted line of sight. They enable an enframed reality—a reality situated in its frame, its rectangular context—to be seen.[8] Many hope that the resultant footage will hold up a mirror to society, causing it to change. This is what I call the mirror hypothesis of citizen videography: it is the hypothesis that the liberatory potential of images and videos lies in their ability to provoke self-reflection, and thereafter causing a change when one doesn't like what they see in the mirror-like footage.

The mirror hypothesis is similar to the shaming hypothesis explored in the previous chapter in that both shame and mirroring can provoke self-reflection that leads to action. However, shame relies on exposure within a social context—one feels shame *in front of* an other—whereas mirroring relies solely on introspection.

In this chapter I will trace the mirror hypothesis through three critical veins: capture, meaning the use of physical mirrors to block B'Tselem videographers; reflection, tracing the use of physical mirrors in demonstrations, as well as the reflection of video footage back to those captured in it; and self-alienation, meaning the use of mirrors to cause a rupture with one's self-image. I argue that the mirror hypothesis ultimately fails because footage cannot demand self-reflection—any more than it can demand an Azoulaian active spectator as discussed in Chapter 1. However, when archives of citizen videography are captured and literally mirrored on computer servers as data, they offer potential for future change-making as they circulate in the image economy.

Capture

Mirrors are tools of enhanced visibility. They enable a clear line of sight where once there was none, as in the rear-view mirror, the side-view mirror, or even the domed security mirror in banks or corner stores. Mirrors are frequently used at Israeli checkpoints to check the undercarriage of vehicles. Like an enlarged version of a dentist's tool searching the mouth, Israeli soldiers hold a mirror secured to the end of a long rod under cars to check for explosives or contraband.[9] It's "like you're checking [the car] for breath," wrote novelist Joshua Cohen, referencing the "mirror test" in which a living, breathing person would fog a mirror held up to their mouth, thus signaling aliveness.[10] At Israeli checkpoints, these undercarriage mirrors do not probe the aliveness of Palestinians; rather, they are militarized tools for protecting the vitality of the State of Israel.

Yet just as physical mirrors enhance visibility and clarity in Israel–Palestine, they also block it. One-way mirrors line the Palestinian-controlled border terminals such as those at Allenby Bridge, the main crossing between Jordan and the West Bank. These mirrors are part of an elaborate choreographic system in which Palestinian authorities appear to control the border, while Israeli officials sit invisibilized behind one-way mirrors and make all decisions as to rights of passage.[11] These mirrors allow for a politics of deniability in which the Israeli state may claim that Palestinians control their own sovereign boundaries, when in fact they have been enrolled in a flimsy charade of control that has been required to yield to the Israeli regime. Meanwhile, the regime gazes on.

In this way the B'Tselem Camera Project, which once again reinstates the gaze to Palestinians and their lens, is a method to take back power. Palestinian lenses look on at Israelis, hoping that their cameras will mirror unjust actions back to them and to society at large through the economy of images. But before B'Tselem's citizen-recorded footage can mirror Jewish Israeli society back to itself, the footage must first accurately capture that society visually. B'Tselem distributed hundreds of video cameras to Palestinians in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza strip so that they could do just that: form a distributed panopticon to capture visual recordings of daily life under the Israeli occupation.

However in 2007, the first year of the B'Tselem Camera Project, Jewish settlers went to great lengths to obstruct Palestinian lenses in the city of Hebron. Within the B'Tselem archives are dozens of clips in which young Israeli settler children attempted to blind Palestinian cameras with mirrors and the sun (Plates 6 to 8). These children sat on steps in pairs, clutching bathroom-size mirrors and tilting them ever so slightly to catch the light. They gathered in groups and traded mirrors off between each other, as if to share the fun of their new "game" of blinding Palestinian lenses. In some clips, the children discovered that metallic covers of what appear to be take-out containers can also reflect the sun, as if with a mirror.

These mirror clips were all from 2007, the first year of B'Tselem's Camera Project. As such they represent some of the earliest citizen-filmed videos in the collection. No doubt these clips reflect an attempt to address the Palestinian camera's arrival to

the scene and the newfound visibility of the settler and state actions that comprise the suspended violence of the Israeli occupation. Even volunteers from Machsom Watch have documented at least one incident in which an Israeli soldier shined a bright light at them with "a mirror which catches the rays of the sun," presumably to blind them and to disrupt the realm of the visibility.[12]

In these video clips lies bootstrapping of sorts: an ingenious fight against the camera as an object of penetrative seeing. Israelis have countered Palestinian cameras with wet substances like spit and Coca Cola, as well as with physical obstructions like their hands, their bodies, or their own cameras held up aggressively against Palestinian lenses.[13] But mirrors cause a blindness that is aphysical: there is no literal obstruction to the lens, but rather a flood of too much light that overwhelms the sensors and forces a penetrative camera gaze into a momentary lapse. These mirrors compromise the very property of visibility itself. Moreover, because this blinding can be produced at a distance from the Palestinian videographer, it's "safely" performed by young Israeli children who may not understand the implications of their actions within the larger context of visuality and power. What these children do understand, however, is their target.

Palestinians have likewise adopted the use of mirrors to blind vision. In the 2018 protests at the Gaza border fence, a Palestinian protester used a mirror to shine a beam of light upon Israeli soldiers (Figure 3.1).[14] These light beams were intended to confuse vision, as if the mirror's rays might have a chance of contending with

Figure 3.1 A Palestinian protester uses a mirror to reflect sunlight back upon Israeli troops stationed at the Israel-Gaza fence, east of Gaza city, April 6, 2018. Photographer: Oren Ziv/ Activestills.

the extremely well-equipped Israeli army who were firing with live ammunition.[15] Such mobilizations of the mirror are reminiscent of mirror armor, a type of ancient war uniform in which mirrors were worn into battle, typically on the breastplate, and were primarily intended to spiritually protect a soldier by warding off the evil eye.[16] One must wonder, though, whether the protection provided by such mirror armor was its ability to blind the opponent, preventing a clear line of sight to a vulnerable body.

Each mirror—the Palestinian one in Gaza and the Israeli one in Hebron—sought to disrupt the other side's clear line of sight. Yet the stakes of that sight couldn't differ more. The Palestinian in Hebron aims to see in order to document and record, whereas the Israeli at Gaza aims to see in order to control and eliminate. Both the Palestinian citizen videographer and the Israeli soldier "shoot"—but one with symbolic power and the other with lethal power. For the Palestinian, however, even this symbolic power of capture of the ability to see clearly, was blocked by Israeli mirrors.

Reflection: A "Modest Witness"

At the onset of the B'Tselem Camera Project, mirrors were mobilized to prevent image capture. Yet throughout history, mirrors—along with the mirror-like quality of a camera and its resultant images—were tools for moral meditation. According to Diogenes, Socrates offered mirrors to drunkards so that they would see themselves "disfigured by wine" and feel morally compelled to grapple with their own internal failures to society.[17] Socrates also considered the mirror to be a tool for humbling human beings and helping them realize that they are not gods. As Sabine Melchoir-Bonnet wrote in her historical study of the mirror, Socrates philosophized the mirror to be "tool by which to 'know thyself,' " and he "invited man to not mistake himself for God, to avoid pride by knowing his limits, and to improve himself."[18] The moral appeal of mirrors is one in which one recognizes one's superficial and subdermal imperfections, thereby leading to self-reflection and change.

With this logic, Palestinians have repeatedly used physical mirrors in civil demonstrations. In a 2005 protest against the separation wall in the West Bank village of Bil'in, a demonstrator brought out a large mirror and placed it in front of Israeli soldiers (Figure 3.2).[19] The soldiers, who were there to "manage" the demonstration through containment or dispersal methods were instead confronted with their own image. Ariella Azoulay noted that this mirror was meant to signal to the Israelis that they must face themselves as the imperial oppressors, something that they repeatedly fail to see when they stand off against the Palestinians they oppress.[20]

Likewise, in a 2010 demonstration against house evictions, a Jewish activist stood with Palestinian residents of the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood in East Jerusalem as they faced eviction by Israeli settlers. The activist held up a concave mirror to ultranationalist counterprotesters who assembled across the street, forcing them to confront their own image as an occupying settler-colonial force that strips property

Figure 3.2 At a protest against the Separation Wall in Bil'in, a demonstrator stationed a large mirror opposite Israeli soldiers, forcing them to confront their own images, September 23, 2005. Photographer: Yotam Ronen/Activestills.

rights from those they unjustly occupy (Figure 3.3).[21] The mirror has one other effect: it places the likenesses of right-wing counterdemonstrators as if on the opposite side. Their image physically appears alongside the leftists, Palestinians, and anti-eviction activists, proposing an alternate reality in which they cast off their roles within the occupying regime and join the resistance. The mirror at once castigates with self-reflection ("Look at your actions!") and at the same time offers a glimpse of a different possible future ("See our truth and join our side!").

The use of physical mirrors in protest simplifies and extends Donna Haraway's conception of a "modest witness" in her critique of objectivity. Haraway writes,

> The modest witness is the legitimate and authorized ventriloquist for the object world, adding nothing from his mere opinions, from his biasing embodiment. And so he is endowed with the remarkable power to establish the facts. He bears witness: he is objective; *he guarantees the clarity and purity of objects*. His subjectivity is his objectivity. His narratives have a magical power—they lose all trace of their history as stories, as products of partisan projects, as contestable representations, or as constructed documents in their potent capacity to define the facts. *The narratives become clear mirrors, fully magical mirrors, without once appealing to the transcendental or the magical.*[22]

Haraway notes that, in scientific discourses, witnesses were those bodies who were empowered with the gaze—such as wealthy white men—rather than

Figure 3.3 At a protest against house evictions in Sheikh Jarrah, East Jerusalem, a demonstrator holds up a mirror to ultranationalist counterdemonstrators assembled across the street, January 1, 2010. Photographer: Oren Ziv/Activestills.

the object of the gaze—such as women and persons of color. Haraway seeks to disrupt this traditional modest witnessing and replace it with a sort of "mutated" modest witness, a feminist modest witness who engages in "seeing; attesting; standing publicly accountable for, and psychically vulnerable to, one's visions and representations."[23] Haraway's modest witness looks on and reflects back, like a mirror.

Crucially, Haraway's mutated modest witness is active in its public, vulnerable, and disruptive act of witnessing society and mirroring it back through its own vision. The role of Haraway's modest witness has been ascribed to the Jewish Israeli women who volunteer to stand watch over Israeli checkpoints for the organization Machsom (Checkpoint) Watch. These women's actions are not novel; they watch and write pragmatic and unvarnished reports of what they see, without scene-setting or prosaic flair. What is compelling in these reports has been described as their "matter-of-fact, laconic prose style, which reflects their determination to do nothing more than hold up a mirror and let Israelis see the high moral price of occupation."[24] These women demonstrate a Haraway-esque version of modest witnesses who stand publicly accountable for Israeli society as they see and report the visible. IDF soldiers generally view Machsom Watch antagonistically; but in a rare commendation one Israeli soldier stationed at Qalandia checkpoint said, "I always say to the [other] soldiers: The Machsom Watchers are your mirror. Look into it. If you like what you see, all is well with you, but if you don't like what you see, consider what it is the mirror reflects."[25]

The soldier who compared Machsom Watch to mirrors expressed a minority position. Very few Jewish Israelis consider Machsom Watch—or B'Tselem, for that matter—to possess the objectivity and pure clarity of a modest witness. It is for this reason that activists and human rights organizations alike have turned to mirrors and cameras: they are tools that bear an indexical relationship to reality and as such hold an elevated epistemic status as witnesses, and therefore might truly be considered to reflect Israeli society back to itself.

Reflection: Hall of Mirrors

What might happen if IDF soldiers were to watch B'Tselem footage of their own actions? In one astonishing set of video clips within the B'Tselem archives, a Palestinian videographer named Fayzeh Abu Shamsiyeh recorded footage of Israeli soldiers looking at recordings of themselves. This footage documents a 2015 night search of the Abu Shamsiyeh household in Hebron.[26] The recording begins with Israeli soldiers entering the house, waking up all her children, and photographing each child as if to catalogue them for future acts of violence. The soldiers search the house and subsequently find an external hard drive (Figure 3.4). "What's on here?" they ask. To answer, 'Imad Abu Shamsiyeh, Fayzeh's husband, retrieves a Toshiba laptop to display the contents. The soldiers then make 'Imad sit aside as they take control of his laptop to explore the hard drive (Figure 3.5).

What the soldiers find on the hard drive is all the material that 'Imad and Fayzeh Abu Shamsiyeh have filmed for B'Tselem recently. "I have permission" to photograph, says 'Imad Abu Shamsiyeh. Photography and videography are permitted in the West Bank, including recordings of soldiers.[27] "You'll find lots of images," Fayzeh Abu Shamsiyeh explained, "because we film for B'Tselem. Pictures of you, of us, taking pictures as usual." The soldier continues browsing the hard drive, looking at image after image of their own occupying army and its imperial regime reflected back to them and upon them.

In this recording lies the next echo, where the mirroring of cameras plunges into the endless depths and becomes an infinity mirror, a hall of mirrors. Two cameras are present already in these clips—the Palestinian and the Israeli. Also present is footage of soldiers sitting and looking at past footage of soldiers, including footage of their very own selves.[28] It is as if the world might explode in paradox at this very moment.

Notably, the Israeli soldiers felt the paradoxical tension as well. They chose to confiscate the hard disk (as well as a video camera memory card) rather than to allow these images to continually confront them and circulate.[29] They looked into the mirror and did not want their likenesses to look back at them. The hard disk was never returned to the Abu Shamsiyeh family. Instead the Abu Shamsiyehs were informed by IDF Lieutenant Yaniv Chaimovitch, acting on behalf of the Legal Advisor for Judea and Samaria, that no hard disk had been confiscated.[30] Their camera memory card was returned to them, with all of its content deleted.

Figures 3.4 and 3.5 During a night search, Israeli soldiers examine the Shamsiyeh family's hard disk and view the footage the family has taken as B'Tselem volunteers on a laptop computer. The soldiers ultimately confiscated this hard disk. Filmed by Fayzeh Abu Shamsiyeh in Hebron, March 10, 2015. © B'Tselem.

It was as if the mirror, in effect, had vanished—or instead been relocated to a zone only available to the Israeli regime.

We can likewise examine what happens when the Israeli state mirrors footage back to B'Tselem volunteer camerapersons. In a 2012 clip filmed by Muhammad Atalah a-Tamimi, Israeli soldiers raid the a-Tamimi household at night and demand that Muhammad wake his extended family—who lived in two adjacent apartments—and gather them into one room. A-Tamimi videotapes. As the soldiers

wait in the hallway for a-Tamimi's relatives to awaken, they grow impatient. The lead Israeli soldier then takes out his Samsung smartphone and plays a video clip for a-Tamimi (Plate 9).

In the video played, which a-Tamimi captures as a video-within-a-video via his B'Tselem camera, a-Tamimi is wearing a neon yellow safety vest with the word "PRESS" printed largely across its back. Like now, a-Tamimi is videotaping. A Jewish settler proceeds to assault a-Tamimi repeatedly, and as the video plays, the Israeli soldier and a-Tamimi exchange a dialogue in a mix of Hebrew and English:

Soldier: Is that you?
a-Tamimi: That is me.
Soldier: He is hitting you!
a-Tamimi: Huh?
Soldier: He is hitting you.
a-Tamimi: <unintelligible>
Soldier: Why is he hitting you?
a-Tamimi: I don't know.
Soldier: He's saying <unintelligible>.
a-Tamimi: (in broken English) He don't [sic] want me to take a picture.
Soldier: He's hitting you! He doesn't want you to be here!
a-Tamimi: Many people … they don't like that [videotaping]. He's making problems.
Soldier: This one, this person is from this village, and he don't [sic] want you here.[31]

Why does the Israeli soldier wish to replay this assault? Why mirror it back to a-Tamimi, who himself is recording? The soldier's main point seems to be that a-Tamimi is unwanted. He wishes to remind him that he is unwelcome, with the mirror-like qualities of the video footage. The soldier replays the video for didactic purposes—harkening back to the original meaning of the word "document," from the Latin, *docere*, to teach. The soldier uses the video as a document and teacher to guide a-Tamimi through a process of imposed self-reflection so that he will reach the premeditated Israeli conclusion: his Palestinian body is unwelcome, and so, too, is his Palestinian camera.

Mirrors, of course, provide the opportunity for reflection not present in many difficult situations. Often in the "accidental" killings of civilians, both in Israel–Palestine and elsewhere, police or military officials are acquitted on the basis that they were forced to make a "split second" decision and did not have the luxury of time for reflection. Under this logic, a killer cannot be held accountable for his errors in judgment without the opportunity for reflection.[32] Therefore demonstrators foist mirrors upon the opposition to spark a visual self-reflection where it has been judged to be morally absent, and Palestinian and Jewish Israelis alike mirror footage back to stake the same claim. Crucially, within the visual mirroring is an inherent judgment that the actions mirrored are morally

wrong or unjust and that the injustice is visible once one takes a hard look in the mirror. But it is always possible to look merely at the mirror's surface. Likewise, it is always possible to look and see a different story beneath reflective glass: as Gil Hochberg has taught, the conflict in Israel–Palestine has already produced a "partitioned vision" in which what one can see results from visual arrangements sustained through differentiation along ethnonationalist lines.[33] It is because of this partitioned vision—that each side looks but might not see the same visual reality—that self-reflection cannot so easily be foisted upon another. Instead the self-reflection must be interpreted for the other, as the Israeli soldier did for B'Tselem volunteer Muhammad a-Tamimi when he clearly stated that the Jewish Israeli "doesn't want you to be here!"

Reflection: Gestuatim

What about instances in which self-reflection via footage is not forced, but taken freely upon oneself? Nowhere is this clearer than in the 2014 performance, *Archive*, by Israeli choreographer and dancer Arkadi Zaides. In *Archive* Zaides takes the stage alongside footage from the B'Tselem video archives, attempting to reembody the gestures of his fellow Israelis captured by Palestinian cameras. He introduces the work by entering the stage in plain clothes, facing the audience, and announcing:

> Good evening. Thank you for coming. My name is Arkadi Zaides. I am a choreographer. I am Israeli. For the last fifteen years, I have been living in Tel Aviv. The West Bank is twenty kilometers away from Tel Aviv. The materials you are about to watch were filmed in the West Bank. All the people you will see in these clips are Israeli, like myself. The clips were selected from a video archive of an organization called B'Tselem.[34]

From this point onward, the performance is staggeringly simple in its conception: Zaides mirrors the gestures of the Israeli occupation, as seen through Palestinian lenses.[35] At first he merely watches the Palestinian-shot footage on a large projection screen behind him, with his back facing the audience (Figure 3.6). Slowly he begins to engage in the very physical act of mirroring the videos, attempting to exactly reproduce the movements of Israelis (Figure 3.7). Zaides employs a very simple handheld remote control to rewind the videos, freeze them, and skip forward. As he flicks and pauses his way through these B'Tselem videos, we see how he physically practices a gestural method of taking on the embodied actions of the Israeli occupation.

Zaides's mirroring has been dubbed "gestuatim," meaning a kind of gestural quoting of bodily comportments from elsewhere, as if the embodied version of the familiar "verbatim" or direct verbal quotation.[36] Zaides uses this mimetic choreography to ask how the body can become, in his own words, "a medium through which one can grasp and question the political situation in Israel."[37]

Figures 3.6 and 3.7 Arkadi Zaides performing *Archive*, mirroring the gestures of Israelis as captured by Palestinian recordings in B'Tselem footage.

Zaides mimics the gestures of fellow Israelis, as seen through the eye of Palestinian lenses, to reflect on the society to which he belongs and ask questions of collective responsibility for the violence of the occupation.

Zaides's mirroring is certainly a critique. Yet it is one that Israeli audiences do not particularly want to see. While *Archive* has toured very widely across Europe and the United States with upward of 100 performances, it has been presented in Israel only on very few occasions. I attended one of the rare performances of *Archive* on June 11, 2015, in Tmuna Theater, Tel Aviv, along with a left-leaning audience that was highly receptive to Zaides's polemical work. At other occasions within Israel, Zaides and his work have been the subject of intense Israeli protests, with obscenities lobbed at him such as "Haters of Israel, you trash, go to hell" and "May they rape your mother, scum."[38] The Israeli Ministry of Culture and Sport, which funded Zaides's artistic work, asked him to remove its logo from *Archive*'s list of sponsors.[39] The Ministry did not like what it saw in Zaides's work—or rather, how Israel looked as the occupying regime.

The violence of the occupation produces a look that Zaides does not like either. When I met with Zaides in Tel Aviv, he shared with me that watching footage of Israeli violence in the B'Tselem video archives leaves him with a physical feeling of nausea.[40] As a dancer and choreographer it is no wonder that Zaides reacts physically. He has noted that

> Dance in Israel is very powerful …. One might wonder where that power, that strength, comes from, and what it can mean. It's as if our society's violence had contaminated our gestures, our movements.[41]

In *Archive*, Zaides mimetically mirrors the gestures of his fellow Israelis as they commit acts of violence. His reflections and "gestuatim" have, at the very least, produced a change in himself and in how he would like to move through the world. "In the future," he said, "I would like to … free myself from gestures of violence."[42]

Self-Alienation

Thus far I have explored how mirrors—and the mirroring produced in video footage—have been leveraged as a tool to force self-reflection. But the mirror has also been theorized as a tool of separation, and even alienation. Lacan conceived of the "mirror stage," or the stage in which a child first recognizes itself in the mirror at around six months old, as a crucial stage in child development.[43] At this stage, the child looks into a mirror and, for the first time, understands "that person over there is me."[44] This realization entails a kind of objectification of the self, as the self becomes "that person." It is also a kind of self-alienating realization in that it fundamentally separates the self from itself. Lacan later ceased viewing the mirror stage as merely a developmental stage, but instead as a "permanent structure of subjectivity" with which a human being would grapple with for his or her entire life.[45] It is however the child's first experience with the mirror that

fundamentally causes this troubling separation of self from itself, and thus the mirror is the primary tool of self-alienation.

In her stunning short documentary, *Mirror Image* (2014), Israeli filmmaker Danielle Schwartz seeks to end the mirror's power to self-alienate. The film concerns a mirror that her grandparents own, which was apparently taken from the Palestinian village of Zarnuqa in 1948 in what Israelis call the War of Independence and Palestinians call the Nakba. Schwartz sits with her grandparents at their kitchen table and challenges them to address and identify with the mirror's past. Was the mirror "taken," or was it "plundered" as war spoil? As Schwartz attempts to write down a story about the mirror, her grandparents repeatedly correct her. The town of Zarnuqa was not "Palestinian," it was "Arab," they say—and they stress that this detail is important. They argue at length over what verb correctly describes how the mirror came into their possession. Schwartz claims that anything "taken" during wartime has by definition been "plundered," but the grandparents disagree. "I don't see why you need to delve into it so much," says her grandfather, adding that any version of the story using the word plunder "doesn't work for me." Her grandmother adds, "I don't want to be linked to this subject [of plundering]. Because I'm not like that." While Schwartz asks them to discuss the mirror's past openly, they ultimately settle that the mirror must have been merely "taken." This word is softer, more ambiguous, and more acceptable (Figures 3.8 and 3.9).

Moreover if the Palestinian mirror was merely "taken" rather than "plundered," Schwartz's Israeli family is able to maintain a "politics of deniability." This is a stance in which a person plausibly denies knowledge of and responsibility for an unsavory action, and one that requires a willful ignorance of Clintonian measure.[46] In *Mirror Image*, a "taken" Palestinian mirror allows Schwartz's grandparents to maintain a semblance of denial as to the mirror's history, leaving their own positive self-images intact.

As Schwartz tries to convey an honest story about the Palestinian mirror, her grandmother distances herself from its story, which bears traces of violence and domination. "That's what happened to the mirror, not to us," says the grandmother. She uses the verb "to happen" to avoid identifying a subject who actively "took" or "plundered" during war. The grandmother thus estranges herself from her own story, and the mirror becomes a symbol for the kind of self-alienation Lacan describes in the mirror stage as a psychological state that persists throughout adult life. Of course, reconciling one's history with one's own identity is an extremely difficult task. It's a task that many Jewish Israeli families face, including my own, as older generations are confronted by offspring with difficult moral questions about past Israeli actions.

What we witness in *Mirror Image* is thus what Jacques Ranciere would call "dissensus," meaning "putting two worlds into one and the same world."[47] Schwartz puts the worlds of a "taken" mirror and a "plundered" mirror into one. To Ranciere, politics is "a question of aesthetics and a matter of appearances," meaning it concerns the social redistribution of what is sensible.[48] Possibilities for social change arise only through moments of dissensus, which are moments of "dispute over what is visible as an element of a situation, over which visible

Figures 3.8 and 3.9 Film stills from *Mirror Image*, dir. Danielle Schwartz, 2014. The Israeli director Schwartz sits at the kitchen table with her grandparents and discusses the story behind a mirror they own that was "taken" from the Palestinian village of Zarnuqa in 1948; her grandfather cleans the mirror.

elements belong to what is common, over the capacity of subjects to designate this common and argue for it."[49] A dissensus is a momentary rupture in the dominant regime of the sensible, which leaves open the possibility for a new politics with a different, reconfigured distribution of sensible experience.

Dissensual moments present difficulties for a person's previously held conception of politics. One might attempt to avoid a dissensus like Schwartz's grandfather ("I don't see why you need to delve into it so much") or grandmother

("That's what happened to the mirror, not to us."). Likewise, the IDF soldiers who confiscated the hard disk full of B'Tselem footage from the Abu Shamsiyeh family were also avoiding their very own moments of dissensus: they were confronted with a mirroring of their own actions and chose to smash the mirror. Arkadi Zaides chose instead to embrace the mirroring of B'Tselem footage, to embody it. What we learn from these examples is that the mirror-like quality of B'Tselem footage offers an invitation for a social change via dissensus, but this is an invitation that one may choose to take—or to leave behind, like Schwartz's grandparents.

Conclusion

What are we to make of the mirror hypothesis of citizen videography—the conception that, simply put, images of atrocities provoke self-reflection, which in turn causes change? Many theorists are skeptical, and rightly so. Meg McLagan theorized that images and videography cannot simply act upon on their own. Instead they always require a very human kind of intervention. She writes,

> Activists often approach photographs and moving images as transparent mirrors of reality and conflate them with proof; this despite the fact that images always demand interpretation, as countless writers on documentary photography and film have pointed out.[50]

To McLagan, images that only mirror reality are not enough. This is in part because there is no single "reality" for images to mirror, anyway. Instead images urgently need to be unpacked, contextualized, humanized, and ultimately interpreted for an audience. Images, like text, cannot merely be read—they must also be explicated.

Indeed in their most simple and quotidian uses, mirrors are extremely superficial. They are most often used for personal grooming: if you see a hair out of place, you slick it down; if you have something in your teeth, you remove it; if the outfit does not match, you change it. You consider how you look without delving beyond the surface. As Samuel Butler once wrote, "Let us be grateful to the mirror for revealing to us our appearance only."[51] These mirrors reflect our surfaces, and when change results, it is only superficial. Such can also be the case for the changes caused by images and videos: they might pertain only to how things appear (to the "space of appearance," as Arendt would call it) rather than to the root causes of injustice.[52]

It is for this reason that Socrates and his pupil, Alcibiades, also expressed a certain discomfort with the mirror. The myth goes that Alcibiades was dissatisfied with the fact that mirrors produced merely replicas, without "both voice and thought."[53] Instead the true mirror was considered to be "the one presented by the lover or friend who offers his eyes and his own soul as mirrors."[54] This conception of the "living mirror" was one that offered a great deal more than mirror images could provide. Notably, we could call this kind of mirror an interpreter, akin to the

type McLagan reminds us is demanded by any photograph or video that mirrors reality.

Perhaps what photographs and moving images ask for is a kind of "affective attunement" from their viewers. Affective attunement is a term introduced by psychoanalyst Daniel Stern to refer to a kind of "matching" of emotional states between infant and caregiver, where the feeling behaviors are shared, but not behaviorally mirrored.[55] It is a very social process in which one person attempts to match the inner state of another, but since inner states are necessarily invisible, the person instead matches an outwardly visible behavior associated with the emotion. For instance, if the baby cries—a verbal behavior—the caregiver might make a sad face—a visible behavior. Affective attunement is certainly a kind of mirroring, but one that is quite different than Lacan's concept of mirroring where "mother-as-mirror consolidates child-as-other," as Lisa Cartwright has written.[56] It is a mirroring that allows emotional states to move, to change, and to be authentically represented rather than simply copied.

But this asks for an active spectator—one who will "watch" rather than "look" in Azoulay's terms, who will not change the channel, close the browser tab, discredit the footage with claims of digital falsification, or choose to ignore the presentation of a dissensus.[57] The activeness demanded is precisely that required by Azoulay's citizen contract of photography, and is not present in each and every one of us spectators.[58] And because it is not all of us, an Israeli soldier who sees himself in the mirror at a demonstration or sees footage of himself replayed in a Palestinian home chooses not to contemplate his role in a settler-colonial regime, but instead to break the mirror. Self-reflection is a choice, as is facing the rupture, the dissensus, that might be caused by such reflection. It is for this reason that footage, when used as a mirror, does not guarantee change to the sociopolitical order.

Yet in zones of conflict it remains true that there is something "better" about using a camera to mirror back injustice to a society, rather than merely one's eyes or one's words. Camera footage can literally show—and do so seemingly more objectively—via its indexical relationship to reality. A protest banner from Bil'in captures this relationship beautifully. It reads, "Their Eyes Won't Stop Showing the Israeli Soldiers' Crimes," a slogan that is illustrated not by a drawing of human eyes but instead by a camera (Plate 10).[59] Importantly, the slogan does not say that eyes won't stop watching, seeing, or even witnessing the Israeli soldiers' crimes. To watch, to see, to witness: these are the actions of which human eyes are capable. Eyes, however, cannot literally "show" war crimes; only cameras possess this ability.[60]

I'd like to end this chapter by considering the B'Tselem video archives not in the abstract, but as a concrete entity of physical storage of digital material. Early footage in the B'Tselem collection was recorded and stored on tapes, which lived in the halls of B'Tselem's former headquarters in West Jerusalem (Figure 3.10).[61] Once video recording mechanisms began to transition to SD cards in 2010, the footage was stored on a series of computer servers maintained at an offsite location for security, and most of the original tapes were digitized and added to the collection. These videos are now accessed via a secure network link from B'Tselem headquarters, and a fraction of them have been published online via YouTube and

Figure 3.10 Videotapes in storage at the B'Tselem headquarters in Jerusalem, 2015. Photograph by the author.

B'Tselem's website. On the internet, mirroring is a technical term for the wholesale replication of a website on a different URL, but with identical content. Online, mirroring aims for velocity: it reduces web traffic that might clog the network and points users to locally hosted versions of sites that can be accessed more quickly. This kind of mirroring also aims to archive, whether to provide real-time backup and access (as with the Pirate Bay) or historical archiving (as with the Internet

Archive's Wayback Machine). These kinds of copies are invaluable even for smaller organizations when, for instance, changes to YouTube's terms of service result in the automatic deletion of videos, as was the case with hundreds of clips of the Syrian revolution.[62] The mirror creates the copy and in the copy resides important qualities for citizen-filmed footage: access, velocity, and permanence.

So, while the mirror hypothesis of citizen videography might fail to provoke the kind of reflection or dissensus that causes change to the sociopolitical order of Israel–Palestine, "mirroring" causes footage to live on, physically: to circulate with velocity, alacrity, and permanence as it searches for a reckoning.