

Mobilising Cultural Resistance: Palestinian Theatre Practices in Sites of Extreme Contention in the West Bank
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The West Bank in Palestine is a fragmented space existing under Israeli military occupation. It is divided and subjected to strict controls, which deny its Palestinian population freedom of movement between the different spatial segments. Presently, Palestinians have to overcome numerous physical barriers ('flying' and static checkpoints, military installations, Israeli settlements and bypass roads) to traverse the space of the West Bank, in addition to the imaginary barriers resulting from years of containment within a local area during the second intifada (2000-2005).

I will examine theatre practices in Palestine that are produced and performed within sites of extreme contention, located on the peripheries of the West Bank and near to Israeli settlements and the Separation Wall. I will focus specifically on the activities of the Freedom Bus, a project that utilises Playback Theatre techniques as an instrument of, and for, cultural resistance against the occupation.

This will be done through analysing the Freedom Ride - an annual programme that traverses the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in direct opposition to the military policies of 'enclavisation' and restricted Palestinian movement. I argue that through this highly visible and controversial practice, the Freedom Ride attempts to engage with the Israeli occupation at the strategic, rather than the tactical, level of political involvement. I examine the efficacy of this dangerous and problematic practice as a form of cultural resistance in a space that is occupied not only by a hostile state military, but also by a complicit international humanitarian regime.

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