I.B.TAURIS

YOUTH AND CONFLICT IN ISRAEL-PALESTINE

STORY-TELLING, CONTESTED SPACE AND THE POLITICS OF MEMORY

VICTORIA BIGGS

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For my parents, who always caved to child-me's demand for more stories

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Once upon an intifada

A tale of two stories

Once there was a farmer who had a cow, and when he went to milk her every morning, he found that she had no milk. He knew that someone must be stealing the milk in the night, so he was angry and he decided to hide that night and catch the thief.

When the thief came, the farmer jumped out and caught her. He was very surprised to see that it was a fairy. He asked her angrily, 'Why are you taking my milk?' She was crying and she told him, 'Please don't be angry. It's for the orphans who have gone to paradise and who don't have anyone to look after them.' The farmer understood and he felt sorry, and he said of course she must have some milk every day to feed the orphans in paradise.

This story was written in autumn 2014, in a Palestinian refugee camp near Bethlehem, where I was facilitating a weekly creative arts group. The author was an eleven-year-old girl named Nariman. My attention was caught by her juxtaposition of the mundane and the magical: by choosing a fairy as the protagonist, who can fly between earth and heaven, Nariman imbues her story with supernatural power, but the orphans must rely on stolen milk for nourishment despite that power. Nariman's mention of *Jannah* [paradise] is also striking. She is a Muslim, and according to Islamic belief there is no bodily hunger or earthly longing that is not satisfied in *Jannah*, including the reunification of family after death. Yet the children in her tale remain orphans even here, with 'no one to look after them' except the fairy. The precarity of this connection is made clear when their magical protector is captured by the farmer and has to beg for his goodwill.

Almost a year later, in May 2015, I heard a second story that seemed to chime with the first. This time I was with a twelve-year-old Israeli girl named Maayan, and we were sitting by ourselves in her family's living room, fifteen miles from Aida refugee camp as the crow flies. I scattered a set of pictorial dice across the

table, inviting her to choose three images and weave a story around them. She selected an oval face, a keyhole and an apple, which she arranged in front of her in that order.

> Is this a mask or an alien? I'll make it be an alien. So this alien wants to get to the apple, but he has to pass all kinds of stuff to get to it. A lot of problems. [Long pause] All kinds of people don't want to help him. They don't want to be the ones in last place. He's an alien. I think the apple's not really an apple, it's something like – something like a lot of gold, or treasure or something. Something that this alien really needs. In the end he gets to it, and he shows other people that it's important to help each other.

Maayan is grappling with vulnerability: that experienced by the alien, who is beset by problems; and that felt by the fearful observers, who suspect that helping the alien over his obstacles will be their own undoing. She is also concerned with otherness. The presence of the paranormal in her story, as in Nariman's, is not an indicator of any special power but a comment on the ethical demands posed by alterity. Both the farmer in Nariman's tale and the 'other people' in Maayan's eventually rise to that challenge with a gesture of care and solidarity.

The two stories converge even more closely than is apparent on first reading. Nariman wrote her story in the aftermath of Operation Protective Edge, the Israeli military incursion into the besieged Gaza Strip that began on 8 July 2014. By the time the incursion ended three weeks later, 1462 Palestinian civilians and 6 Israeli civilians had been killed.[1] Nariman and the other young people in her creative arts group remained preoccupied with Gaza long after that summer, particularly with the deaths of peers close to them in age. (Over one-third of the Palestinian civilians killed in Operation Protective Edge were minors.) The young people would discuss poverty and food insecurity in Gaza with great passion and distress. Orphans, loss, a precarious supply of milk, the question of who has the power and the political will to make a difference in the lives of the vulnerable – their conversations reverberate through Nariman's story.

Operation Protective Edge also looms large in Maayan's storytelling. She introduced the subject in a near-whisper: 'There was a war last summer. It was really scary because I thought my dad might have to go.' Her father is a reservist in the Israel Defence Forces (IDF). She peered at her fingernails, and we fell into silence. Recognizing that she was struggling to tell a purely autobiographical story, I offered her the opportunity to play a game with the pictorial dice. She was immediately alert and interested. 'Is this a mask or an alien? I'll make it be an alien …'

Maayan lives in an Israeli settlement in the occupied West Bank. The majority of its inhabitants, including Maayan's parents, are right-wing Jewish nationalists who oppose both the creation of an independent Palestinian state in the occupied territories and the extension of full civil rights to Palestinians living under Israeli martial law. Immediately after her hesitant mention of Gaza and the fear she felt for her father, Maayan selected an alien in need as her protagonist. When she finished telling the story, I asked, 'Why did the other people not want to help the alien?' In a low voice she replied, 'Because we're scared that if we help them, we'll be the ones in last place.' With that transition from third person singular to first personal plural, she collapsed the frame of the story and we fell back into her family's living room. 'We?' I queried. She stared at her hands and said in a near-whisper, 'Yes.'

Storytelling enables us to explore places that are physically and psychologically beyond our reach. This transportive power is never more apparent than in situations of oppression and intractable political violence, where people lead segregated lives and may have good reason to be cautious about the things they say, and in the wake of atrocity. The storyteller Dan Yashinsky describes how as the child of Jewish immigrants to America, living in the shadow of a genocide that was rarely discussed openly ('at least not when there was a child in the room'), he became 'adept at listening to clues and hints and story-fragments of lost lives and vanished families. I grew up as a war-haunted American kid in the fifties, tuned to a story frequency and feeling that if I lost the signal in the static entire Jewish villages would suffer a second disappearance.'[2] The Holocaust and the persecutions that preceded it are not merely exerting a moral pull over Yashinsky, inspiring him to reconstruct his relatives' pre-war lives through storytelling. It is growing up with the legacy of genocide that has sensitized him to the 'story frequency' in the first place. In its turn, storytelling enables him to transcend the constraints of space and time, revisiting and reconstructing lost villages in which he himself never set foot. Stories, he argues, function as crossroads between past, present and future, and traversing them 'confirm[s] one's place in the intimate network of one's relatives and in the wider realm of the community.'[3] While this is true, the stories told by Nariman and Maayan reveal that storytelling can do more than confirm a person's place in the social world. It can subvert that place, expand it, hang a question mark over the walls and fences that keep us in our allotted positions.

In Israel-Palestine, the walls are literal. In 1991 the Israeli military authorities cancelled the general exit permit for the Gaza Strip, requiring Gazan Palestinians to request individual authorization if they wanted to travel beyond Gaza's

365 square kilometres. In response to Hamas's victory in the 2006 Palestinian Authority elections, Gaza was placed under military blockade. Its inhabitants are sealed behind a fortified perimeter fence, a buffer zone and a labyrinthine web of restrictions on imports, exports and the movement of people. Neither Maayan nor Nariman has ever been to Gaza or had any personal contact with a Palestinian from Gaza, but in spite of – perhaps because of – the impossibility of direct contact, Gaza is central to their imaginings. Their stories blur the boundaries between the alien and the familiar, the living and the dead, and in so doing they expand the realm of community: 'He said of course she must have some milk every day …' 'He shows them that's important to help each other.' Storytelling is an active means of creating and reshaping community, not simply a way to claim one's own place in a static structure.

'Israel' and 'Palestine' themselves are popularly understood as two static and clearly defined national structures, when in reality they are made up of multiple subcommunities whose borders are in flux. While such overarching national descriptors might be meaningful on one level, on their own they cannot contain the full story. For that reason, this book does not concern itself with the idea of the 'full story' at all, but rather with fuller stories – the unfinished stories, the stories with unexpected twists and turns, the hidden stories and forbidden stories that rarely surface in public discourse on Israel-Palestine, whether in the region itself or among international audiences who live beyond it. The two stories given here hint at its principal themes: the relationship between storytelling and liminality, the importance of liminality in fostering empathy, storytelling's function as a conduit for taboo historical knowledge and the implications that the storytelling process has for how young people understand community, belonging and exclusion.

How this story began

Frank Kermode argued that storytelling – the creation of 'fictive concords with origins and ends' – is a way for humans to contend with our common end.[4] We tell stories partly because we know that one day we will die. Almost a decade ago, in a house trapped between a military watchtower, a checkpoint and a forbidding grey wall topped in places with CCTV cameras and barbed wire, I met women who were telling stories because they were determined to live.

The scene: Rachel's Tomb neighbourhood in north Bethlehem. The house stood on what had once been the main Jerusalem-Hebron road, an artery that

was severed after the Israeli military began construction on the separation barrier in 2002. During the Second Intifada (2000–5), the neighbourhood had become isolated, as it was the location of an Israeli military base and a locus of political violence. Restaurants and shops closed their doors. 'We lost below zero. We couldn't get work,' one woman said flatly. A story: another woman's husband, a mechanic, sliced open his shaking hand as he tried to repair a car quickly enough to satisfy an anxious customer, who was regretting entering the area and wanted to get out. He suffered permanent nerve damage.

Ṣumūd Story House was established by Rania Giacaman Murra and her family as a way to staunch the flow of families leaving the neighbourhood and to foster *ṣumūd* [steadfastness] by bringing them together around life-affirming cultural activities, such as music-making and storytelling. Rania recalls that she knew the hope had been fulfilled when she overheard neighbourhood women referring to Ṣumūd Story House as *baytnā* [our house]. I arrived here in 2011, planning to stay for six months to help develop a storytelling programme for children with learning difficulties, based on my experience in arts-based alternative education. Three years later I was living in Bethlehem and carrying out research into the transmission of hidden and forbidden histories among Israeli and Palestinian youth who inhabit areas of particularly high friction.

As part of my work with Ṣumūd Story House, I helped to gather short autobiographical stories told by neighbourhood women, which were mounted on the separation barrier as a way of both reclaiming physical space and declaring their right to speak. Some women were wary of participating. Melvina, a woman in her eighties who lived opposite Ṣumūd Story House, explained that the Israeli military authorities had revoked a young relative's Jerusalem access permit because he had been seen walking down a street in which an anti-occupation protest was taking place. All demonstrations, defined by the IDF as an unauthorized gathering of ten or more people 'for a political purpose or a matter that may be construed as political', are banned in the West Bank under martial law.[5] At first Melvina was afraid that coming to Ṣumūd Story House could similarly be classified as illegal political activity. 'But Rania kept persuading me to come, and after a while I thought to myself, "I'll go and see what they do there."' Melvina's story of her experiences of life at the foot of the separation wall now hangs a few metres from the watchtower. Teenagers from the area have graffitied a postal label reading 'Fragile' onto the grey concrete slabs. As I collected stories for inclusion in what the women were calling 'the wall museum', I was to discover something about the nature of such walls: their presence encourages rather than suppresses storytelling, and they are not

impermeable. Sometimes – perhaps more often than sometimes – a story makes it to the other side, with consequences.

That spring I stumbled on a story that caused me to revisit almost everything I thought I knew about separation in contexts of intractable political violence. It was a collection of diary entries written by teenage Palestinian girls during the Second Intifada, given to me by a colleague at Ṣumūd Story House. Buried among them was one entry that began *Dear Kitty*.

The historical associations were immediately apparent. Anne Frank addressed her own diary to Kitty during the two years in hiding that preceded her deportation and murder in Bergen-Belsen at the age of fifteen. Was it a coincidence? If not, how had a fifteen-year-old writer in Bethlehem encountered a Jewish teenager in hiding in wartime Amsterdam? The Holocaust carries a potent political taboo in Palestinian society, frequently manifesting as genocide denial, due to a widespread view that to acknowledge the extent and nature of Jewish suffering in Nazi-occupied Europe is to grant legitimacy to the actions of the Israeli state and to cede Palestinians' own claims to justice and restitution. As Michael Rothberg notes in his vital work on the interplay between Holocaust memory and decolonization, 'The articulation of the past in collective memory [is understood as] a struggle for recognition in which there can only be winners and losers, a struggle that is thus allied with the potential for deadly violence.'[6] Was the introduction of 'Kitty' to a Palestinian girl's diary simply part of that struggle for recognition, which Rothberg terms 'competitive memory', or does it indicate empathy and an openness to Jewish experiences in Europe and, by extension, the legacy carried by many Israeli families? And again, how had the diarist arrived at the idea?

I put these questions to Suzanne Atallah, an English literature teacher from St Joseph's School for Girls who was active in the life of Ṣumūd Story House. She had encouraged the girls to keep diaries when the Second Intifada's army curfews were making attendance uncertain and often unsafe. The diaries could be written at home, and they gave the girls a much-needed rhythm to their days and a sense of freedom:

> Documenting experiences and events helps to give the diary writer an inner feeling of calm and control … Many St Joseph students either wanted to talk exclusively about 'the situation' or wanted to avoid it totally, fed up as they were with 'negative talk'. As a genre, the diary allows to include all types of different information and frees the student from rigid either/or approaches.[7]

Analysis of the diary entries and awareness of the context in which they were written suggest that the fluidity of the genre actively enabled students to move

beyond competitive memory's either/or rigidity to the horrors of the past and the injustices of the present. Suzanne had used breaks in the curfew to introduce them to wartime diaries written by other youth, including that of Anne Frank. At first the girls refused to touch it. When they eventually did read it, prompted partly by boredom and restlessness under curfew, the result was an intimate community-wide conversation about the Holocaust: some girls' parents even contacted the school to request their own copies. Toine van Teeffelen, a Dutch colleague at Ṣumūd Story House who is married to a Palestinian woman, told me how as the only person with any real freedom of movement at that time he went to Jerusalem with instructions to buy all the Arabic or English copies of Anne Frank's diary that he could find. 'A parent all the way out in Taʿamreh wanted to read it.'

As survey data from Israel-Palestine indicate that denial or negation of the history and collective memory of the Other intensifies during times of increased violence and repression,[8] I was intrigued that this forbidden history had been able to bypass the barrier encircling Bethlehem at the height of the Second Intifada. Talking with women who had participated and reading the diaries they had written as teenage girls a decade ago, I began to wonder what role storytelling might play in enabling young people living with intractable political violence to approach hidden and forbidden histories, and to interpret these within the context of their own lives and the contested spaces they inhabit.

As I was working in a militarized area, in close proximity to the barrier that had become both a means and a symbol of segregation, I was especially interested in stories that were told by those who were living on a boundary of some kind – not merely physical boundaries, as with the separation wall; but more figurative borders, such as the line between languages in a peace-oriented Hebrew-Arabic school. The selection of my field sites (discussed in detail in the next chapter) gradually led me to recognize storytelling itself as a border-space, something that is clear when we consider genre and artificially imposed distinctions between fact and fiction: 'Stories may be fictional tales or they may relate personal experiences or group history, but all stories and other narratives are never pure fact or fiction. Even a fairy tale may be used to express something that the teller sees as true.'[9] This liminal characteristic means stories may be described as 'sites of defilement',[10] a concept that takes on fresh force when applied to contested spaces that are overshadowed by ethnically charged political violence and where separation and polarization are the norm. As a result, storytelling by its very nature has something particular to contribute to our knowledge of how memory and community are created in these spaces.

What are the characteristics of stories told here, and what implications do such spaces hold for our understanding of political violence in Israel-Palestine and its impact on young people's lives? How does this engagement with forbidden histories through storytelling affect the tellers' conceptions of belonging and exclusion in the present?

Most definitions of storytelling have focused on structure: a story is built around a coherent plot or narrative, distinguished by 'the possession of narrative connections'[11] that demonstrate a relationship between events as they unfold. A story must contain events, as the literary critic Michael Bérubé was reminded when he reacted to his young son's insatiable appetite for stories by simply reeling off a list of colours, only to be interrupted by an indignant, 'No, no, no … *Things happen* in a story.' Bérubé's next effort ('The tree blocked the cloud. The sunshine reflected off the water. The flowers grew …') elicited more frustration: 'That is not a story either … You're not telling why [things] happen.'[12] Meaning-making is at the heart of storytelling. Even though many stories do not contain a sequence of 'things that happen' with a clear internal rationale (Bérubé gives William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* as an example of a story that defies his son's criteria on a purely technical level), they may still help the reader or listener to make sense of the 'whys' in their own lives:

> This is not simply a matter of contriving scenarios in which good prevails over evil … [S]torytelling reworks and remodels subject-object relations in ways that subtly alter the balance of power between actor and acted upon, thus allowing us to feel that we actively participate in a world that for a moment seemed to discount, demean, and disempower us … In making and telling stories we rework reality in order to make it bearable.[13]

Storytelling's ability to nurture the teller's awareness of their own agency, and to enable them to cope with the painful circumstances in which they find themselves, is apparent from all the diary entries and was the uppermost concern for the teachers at St Joseph's School. However, this is not storytelling's only function in situations of political violence and oppression. A hint of its power in such situations glimmers through the writing and political thought of Hannah Arendt, who argued that storytelling is a way to transform 'the uncertain, shadowy kind of existence' led by the 'greatest forces of intimate life – the passions of the heart, the thoughts of the mind, the delight of the senses … into a shape fit for public appearance' and that this transformation is essential to preserving the storyteller's sense of self and belonging:

> Each time we talk about things that can only be experienced in privacy or intimacy, we bring them out into a sphere where they will assume a kind of reality which, their intensity notwithstanding, they never could have had before. The presence of others who see what we see and hear what we hear assures us of the reality of the world and ourselves …[14]

The distinction between the public and private realms in situations of political violence and oppression is especially sharp. Access to the public sphere and the legitimacy and recognition it confers are controlled by the powerful, leading to the development of a 'dual culture' – one official, one unofficial and clandestine, each with its own histories.[15] Storytelling not only mediates between the public and private spheres, but it can initiate a subversive dialogue between official and unofficial cultures and authorized and clandestine histories. Its power to mediate stems from its fundamentally relational quality: writing presupposes that there will be a reader ('Dear Kitty …'), while oral storytelling involves a face-to-face encounter.

The diary entry that set this project in motion highlights both the pain and the power that the mere prospect of such an encounter holds for young people who are growing up with segregation. Fifteen-year-old Wafa reflects on the people who surround her and the nature of her gaze towards them ('I look at each one in a special way'):

> Finally I want to talk about those who occupied our land, I mean the Israeli people … They don't respect us and the important point is that they forgot we are human beings like them … How difficult it is to look at them and see that they kill my people every day. Really I don't know how to look at them because I haven't learned how to look in a rude way. I don't need to be this way because all the people around me are kind to me except the Israelis so why look at them? I don't want to see them at all.[16]

The entry is reminiscent of the work on Emanuel Levinas and his emphasis on the face-to-face encounter, which is integral to storytelling itself. In the face Levinas sees not only 'the precariousness of the stranger' but an ethical imperative for social justice and 'the pure denuding exposure without defence' that makes it possible to listen to the other and receive her story.[17] Wafa averts her gaze ('How difficult it is to look at them … I don't want to see them'), yet in addressing her diary to Kitty she makes it clear that she has looked, has chosen to engage with a dark history that she knows has a central place in Israeli society. In the same paragraph, penned as the Second Intifada was raging around her, she differentiates Israelis from Palestinians ('They kill my

people every day') while asserting a shared humanity ('We are human beings like them'). She appears perplexed by her inability 'to look [at them] in a rude way.' Her closing words to Kitty are equally ambivalent: 'At the end, I tell you that my life is like a long journey that I'm taking with people on both sides who are always there for me when I need help.'[18] As Wafa opens this entry with 'There are lots of people around me' before describing the nurturing relationships she has with family, teachers and friends, it is possible that she is imagining herself flanked by encouraging companions as she makes her way through life. But the phrase 'on both sides' carries political connotations of which she would have been well aware; it could be that her idea of community extends beyond the separation barrier to include people whom she would rather not see. She offers no clarifications. Storytelling makes room for this ambivalence and ambiguity, and in doing so it pushes forbidden histories towards the surface.

Inspired by the girls' engagement with Anne Frank's diary, initially reluctant, then warm and empathic, I began my research with recent events that highlight the power and immediacy of forbidden history in Israel-Palestine. In 2011 the Israeli Knesset passed a law prohibiting state-funded bodies such as universities and museums from organizing events in commemoration of Palestinian dispossession in 1948, known among Palestinians as al-Nakba ('the catastrophe'). Not long after the passing of the so-called Nakba Law, on the evening of 25 April 2012, police barricaded the office of Zochrot, a grassroots organization founded by Jewish Israelis to cultivate justice and reconciliation through remembrance of the Nakba (the name means 'they remember' in Hebrew). The purpose was to prevent activists from holding an act of remembrance in Tel Aviv's Rabin Square, involving the distribution of flyers bearing the names of destroyed Palestinian villages and neighbourhoods. Police informed the activists that the leaflets were 'incitement material' and that distributing them would constitute a breach of the peace. They would only be permitted to leave the Zochrot office once they handed over the leaflets and identified themselves to police, and a stand-off ensued.[19] In that same year, a Hebrew language history textbook written for Jewish high school students was withdrawn from bookshops at the intervention of the Ministry of Education, as the authors had used the words 'ethnic cleansing' in relation to the events of 1948. In the immediate aftermath of these incidents, the Nakba in Israeli society and the Holocaust among Palestinians seemed like natural points of embarkation for a study on storytelling as a conduit for forbidden histories. Although frequently denied and suppressed on the public level, these two histories continue to flow under the surface of everyday life, forming a deadly undertow. Their pervasiveness convinced me of their significance.

The undertow of history

The public suppression of taboo memory in Israel-Palestine has never been total. Nor was it immediate. In 1949, before the state of Israel was a year old, the distinguished Jewish writer S. Yizhar published a novella about the depopulation of the fictional village of Khirbet Khizeh, told from the perspective of a soldier who participated in the expulsions. 'True, it all happened a long time ago …' Yizhar's narrator begins. But of course it had not happened a long time ago; it was still unfolding at *Khirbet Khizeh*'s publication. On the eve of the Nakba there were approximately 10,000 Palestinians living in Majdal Asqalan, today known in Hebrew as Ashkelon. In 1950 those inhabitants who had not already been displaced, some 2700 people, were issued with expulsion orders and deported to the Egyptian-controlled Gaza Strip.[20] The authorities settled new Jewish immigrants in their place. 'The people who would live in this village – wouldn't the walls cry out in their ears?' Yizhar's narrator asks of future residents of Khirbet Khizeh. The narrator's frenzied description of his own efforts to forget what had occurred is a poignant foreshadowing of the state-sanctioned repression of Nakba memory that would mount over decades to come. In 1978 the Israeli government banned the screening of a film based on the book. Yet despite the condemnation and controversy it provoked, *Khirbet Khizeh* was a literary bestseller in Israel. By engaging with the dispossession of Palestinians so openly – the unnamed 'it' that haunts his unnamed narrator – Yizhar ensured its place in the cultural (un)consciousness of the nascent state.

Holocaust memory is a vivid presence in Ghassan Kanafani's 1970 novella *Return to Haifa*, a landmark in contemporary Palestinian literature. After the 1967 war and subsequent Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and East Jerusalem, it became possible for refugees living in these areas to visit the homes from which they had been expelled. *Return to Haifa* hinges on an encounter between a house's former and current inhabitants. 'Every day I said that surely you would come' is how Miriam greets Sa'id and Safiyya, the Palestinian couple who knock on the door one day. Her anticipation indicates an indelible connection between the two families (at the heart of the novella, a Solomonic scenario: a baby Palestinian boy named Khaldun who was left behind during the terror of 1948 and has been raised by his adoptive parents as an Israeli child named Dov). But the narrative's structure makes it clear that the connection runs deeper than the stake both couples have in the son's love and loyalties. After she witnesses the body of a dead Arab child being tossed onto a truck by

Haganah fighters, the pre-state Jewish militia that would evolve into the IDF, the reader is presented with Miriam's unspoken recollection of her ten-year-old brother's murder during the Holocaust: 'When he saw the German soldiers, he turned and began running away. She saw it all through the narrow slit made by a short gap between the stairs. She also saw how they shot him down.' With the steady growth of the taboos on open discussion of the Holocaust and the Nakba, and the attendant rise of denial, the obliqueness afforded by art – literature, storytelling, song – has created 'narrow slits' through which Palestinians and Israelis gain sight of their interpellated histories.

On tracing other scholars' and practitioners' attempts to grapple with these histories, I was struck by the dates involved: every foray into forbidden terrain occurred during or immediately after a period of heightened political repression. In the jagged and bloodstained window between the First and Second Intifadas, the Israeli psychotherapist Dan Bar-On and the Palestinian anthropologist Fatma Kassem brought together a small group of undergraduate students in a dialogue programme called To Reflect and Trust (TRT), which hinged on the sharing of familial stories. The Holocaust and the Nakba emerged as central to the process.[21] In 2002, at the height of the Second Intifada, a number of Palestinian and Israeli teachers gathered under the auspices of the Peace Research Institute in the Middle East (PRIME) to quietly begin work on an unofficial high school textbook that would present mainstream Palestinian and Israeli historical narratives in parallel. (An English translation was published ten years later under the title *Side by Side*.)[22] Zochrot itself was founded in 2003. This pattern extends beyond Israel-Palestine. In a rich analysis that spans continents and languages, Michael Rothberg demonstrates that collective memories of atrocity are imbricated in one another, and that current violence often does compel people to visit the darker recesses of their pasts with new eyes and fresh questions. One haunting example is the state-sponsored use of torture in French-ruled Algeria, which prompted a social reckoning with the legacy of Vichy collaboration during the Holocaust. Collective memories of atrocity flow into one another and shape one another, Rothberg argues, which means they cannot be framed as competitors for public space and attention but should rather be understood as in perpetual dialogue with one another.

The anthropologist Jo Roberts has mapped out elements of that dialogue through a vivid study of Holocaust and the Nakba's impact on the lives of present-day Jewish and Palestinian citizens of Israel. Drawing on interviews, literary sources and historical archives, her findings reveal that collective memories of mass violence, the 'ghosts of catastrophe', are never 'absolute and unchangeable,

but … can transmute to accommodate the demands of a particular situation'.[23] She sees potential for reconciliation in this flux and flow, suggesting that it will be achieved not through political settlement, but through 'a reimagining of the body politic, a reworking of collective memory' that acknowledges how enmeshed Israeli Jewish and Palestinian histories are with one another, and with the physical landscape.

In a similar vein, in 2016 the Israeli political scientist Yair Auron offered a reading of Israeli historiography that explores the connections between the Holocaust, the Nakba and the concept of national rebirth, writing of the Israeli public's engagement with 1948: 'There are many "black holes" that we seek to avoid and are unwilling or afraid to see in the narratives and myths that were cultivated, as well as in the research and knowledge we transmit to our children about that war.' His book was born of the conviction that 'dealing with the truth, with the black holes, is a vital condition for mental health, both personal and collective'.[24] The result is a deeply personal piece of historical scholarship, a detailed reappraisal of Israeli historiography interspersed with autobiographical reflections on Auron's childhood in 1948's aftermath, when he ate oranges from trees whose unknown cultivators had disappeared. 'I do not remember that we asked what had happened to the inhabitants who had planted the trees … In those years, questions weren't asked and things were obvious.'[25] By attending to previously unasked questions, he attempts to nurture a conversation that will counteract competitive approaches to memory, and the politics of denial that spring from these.

Even the prospect of such a conversation is fraught with difficulty. The chief reaction to my research in Israel-Palestine has been one of curiosity, but curiosity accompanied by caution and, sometimes, suspicion. Among Palestinians, this is largely a product of the weaponization of Holocaust memory by successive Israeli governments and state institutions, epitomized by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's claim that Hitler had not intended to exterminate Europe's Jews but was persuaded to do so by Haj Amin al-Husayni, the Palestinian Grand Mufti of Jerusalem. Although Netanyahu's statement was rebutted by historians at Yad Vashem,[26] Israel's Holocaust museum and an international centre for Holocaust studies, some of the museum's own publications have sought to implicate Husayni in the Nazi genocide. Joseph Massad notes that 'in the four-volume Yad Vashem-sponsored *Encyclopaedia of the Holocaust*, the article on the mufti is twice as long as the articles on Goring and Goebbels and longer than the articles on Heydrich and Himmler combined. Of the biographical entries its length is only exceeded, and then

just slightly, by the article on Hitler.'[27] By according more space to a peripheral Palestinian figure than to the architects of the Final Solution, Massad argues, the encyclopaedia tacitly encourages readers to associate Palestinian aspirations to self-determination with Nazi ideology. This is symptomatic of a wider state-sponsored effort to code Palestinian history 'as a continuation of European anti-Semitism, indeed a continuation of Hitlerism,'[28] and by extension justifying mass dispossession and ongoing military occupation. I found that many of the Palestinians I encountered were wary of engaging with the Holocaust's legacy for this reason, feeling that the only way to prise their own history from the disfiguring mould into which it has been cast is either to deny the Holocaust or to dismiss it as quite irrelevant to Palestinian lives.

I encountered similar levels of caution among Israelis, this time fed by the crudely worded and frequently voiced conviction that 'the victim has become the oppressor', and the reframing of the Holocaust as a moral lesson that Jews have a special obligation to uphold. The frustration over this latter trope has been eloquently expressed by Ruth Kluger in her memoir of survival:

> During a discussion with some youngsters in Germany I am asked (as if it was a genuine question and not an accusation) whether I don't think that the Jews have turned into Nazis in their dealings with the Arabs … [I] sit in the student cafeteria with some advanced PhD candidates, and one reports how in Jerusalem he made the acquaintance of an old Hungarian Jew who survived Auschwitz, and yet this man cursed the Arabs and held them all in contempt. How can someone who comes from Auschwitz talk like that? the German asks. I get into the act and argue, perhaps more hotly than need be. What did he expect? Auschwitz was no instructional institution … Absolutely nothing good came out of the concentration camps, I hear myself saying, my voice rising, and he expects catharsis, purgation, the sort of thing you go to the theatre for? … No one agrees, and no one contradicts me. Who wants to get into an argument with the old bag who's got that number on her arm? … Now I have silenced them, and that was not my intention.[29]

Many defensive and repressive silences have been generated by the popular tendency to treat Nazi crimes as a moral litmus test and the benchmark of evil, and therefore the self-evident point of comparison for all other atrocities. Introducing a powerful essay collection that aims to move the conversation away from comparison, Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg 'propose another register of history and memory – one that honours the uniqueness of each event, its circumstances and consequences, but also offers a common historical and

conceptual framework within which both narratives may be addressed'.[30] They use linguistic terms to describe how this might be achieved, setting out 'a wholly different syntax and grammar of history' in which the relationship between the Holocaust and the Nakba is understood as metonymic rather than metaphoric, and so distinguished by contiguity rather than similarity.

One contributor, Omri Ben-Yehuda, demonstrates the political potency of reading the Nakba and the Holocaust as two distinct but contiguous events in his essay on the murky grey zone inhabited by Mizrahim [Eastern Jews] immediately after Israel's founding. This reading fosters 'a sense of belonging that subverts possession, as in the coupling of "Shoah" [Holocaust] with all its attributes (such as "trains", "concentration camps", the numbers engraved on the body, etc.) with (European) "Jews"'.[31] The memory of the *ma'abarot*, the notorious transit camps in which Mizrahi immigrants to Israel were initially housed, invites this alternative way of thinking about belonging and exclusion. The very name *ma'abara* invokes 'a place that has no solid boundaries, is unstable and tenuous, where arrivals and departures are constant', which in turn encourages us to recognize collective identity and memory are never static and are formed only in reference to an ever-changing Other.[32] Ben-Yehuda seeks to decouple the Holocaust and the Nakba from signifiers that fix these events in one time and place, such as cattle trucks and tattooed numbers, through a more sensitive vocabulary that has spatial-temporal relationships at its heart. 'Origins and destinations, much like departures and arrivals, are not exact opposites,' he writes, 'since each arrival implies a nonarrival and the possibility of another departure.'[33] The same could be said for the language surrounding stories: endings and beginnings, prequels and sequels.

When viewed through the semiotic lens applied by these authors, memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba 'do not suppress and deny each other but rather make sense in nexus with one another as part of any meaningful historical utterance'.[34] On discovering these essays I was gripped with excitement, recognizing in the linguistic metaphor the same illuminating quality that I had seen in storytelling. While these writers were turning to semiotics in order to 'transcend the binary, dichotomous confines that national narratives impose on history, memory, and identity',[35] I was considering storytelling's capacity to breach the same binary. This led me to probe the difference between story and narrative in depth. Although they are often spoken of as interchangeable, they are distinct, and I had begun to wonder if the concept of narrative might be reinforcing harmful dichotomous approaches to (hi)story.

Story against narrative

Narrative has become one of the most popular frameworks for interpreting ethnonational conflicts. '[They] involve the collision of two stories, two cultural narratives,' writes Jessica Senehi. She contends:

> These narratives underpin cultural identity, knowledge, and history in ways that actually encode the conflict into the identity of one group by excluding the knowledge system of the other community and defining that community as an enemy … Conflict resolution requires that both parties become aware of the constructed nature of narratives without discounting their legitimacy, learn to understand the narrative of the other community while recognising its legitimacy, and are able to craft a shared narrative and identity without losing hold of each community's distinct experience and need for healing and social justice.[36]

These convictions underpin numerous peace projects in Israel-Palestine. One study found that narrative approaches are being used in 34 per cent of coexistence-focused youth programmes; and although the narrative model remains less prevalent than approaches based on depoliticized ideas of ontological equality or on practical projects that emphasize cooperative working, it has proliferated rapidly since its development in the 1990s.[37] It started to gain currency abroad even before its adoption by coexistence programmes, fostered by the nature of international media coverage of the IDF siege of Beirut in 1982.[38] Today this entrenched idea of 'a clash between "two sides" or "two narratives" … continues to determine the conditions of reception' for stories told by, or about, Palestinians and Israelis.[39]

These attempts to distil Israeli and Palestinian history into parallel narratives mean that an artificial and bloody ethnonational binary may in fact be reified further, with lethal consequences, while the painful realities of life under military rule are blurred and power imbalances elided by a focus on subjective perception. As the feminist scholar Catherine MacKinnon wrote in her critique of postmodernist epistemologies, 'What we used to call "what happened to her" has become, at its most credible, narrative. Real harm has ceased to exist.'[40] Central to the dual narrative approach in Israel-Palestine the concept of collective memory, split into two, raises another set of concerns. When responding to ongoing state-sponsored violence, including home demolitions and forced displacement, is it ethical to treat memory itself as a territory that can be owned and partitioned?

In his provocatively titled book *In Praise of Forgetting* (2016), David Rieff casts doubt on both collective memory's usefulness as a concept and its very existence, pointing out that only individuals are capable of remembering, and by extension forgetting – and yet weaknesses in an individual's memory, a natural aspect of ageing, 'is not thought to pose a threat to society as a whole. In contrast, a collective failure of remembrance is often presented as if it were an invitation to moral and political disaster.'[41] Why, he asks, should the preservation of collective memory and the narratives that maintain it be treated as an unqualified good, the only ethical response to atrocity and pivotal to peace, when acts of collective remembrance have been used by so many despotic and even genocidal regimes to fuel state-sanctioned violence? Similar points were raised by Rieff's mother, Susan Sontag, in a reflection on the social significance of war photographs:

> Perhaps too much value is assigned to memory, not enough to thinking. Remembering *is* an ethical act, has ethical value in and of itself … But history gives contradictory signals about the value of remembering in the much longer span of a collective history. There is simply too much injustice in the world … To make peace is to forget. To reconcile, it is necessary that memory be faulty and limited.[42]

This is a compelling critique of approaches that present collective memory as territory to be claimed and cantonized, labelled 'theirs' and 'ours'. However, other frameworks exist, in which memory is not an object to be handed down through the generations and jealously guarded but a living and creative process that can nurture justice and compassion – namely Michael Rothberg's idea of collective memory as multidirectional, and Max Silverman's image of a palimpsest in which every layer transforms our perception of subsequent and preceding layers. The arguments of Rieff and Sontag are far more persuasive when applied to historic narrative, which is closely bound up with the notion of collective memory, but not interchangeable. The dangers they identify only manifest when history and memory are interpreted with reference to narrative alone – to the exclusion of story. The germ of this argument is found in Sontag's contention that memory is valued at the expense of thinking. Memory is a noun, thinking a verb. Nouns suggest stasis, while verbs are active. A noun can be possessed, while a verb evades possession. Similar vital distinctions exist between storytelling and narrative:

> Stories are living, local, and specific … Narratives, however, are templates: they provide us with the tropes and plotlines that we need to help us understand the larger import of specific stories we hear, read, or see in action … We learn these

narrative templates from our culture, not in the way we might formally learn the rules of grammar in school, but in the way we might unconsciously learn the rules of grammar at home – by being exposed to multiple examples of living stories that rely on them.[43]

Narratives might shape how we tell or react to stories, but storytellers have the freedom to make use of those narrative templates in myriad ways, and exposure to different stories might eventually transform the templates. Narratives are constructed slowly over time, while stories are alive and quick-moving, bubbling up in highly localized places. Distinguishing between the two in this way allows us to answer the vexed questions generated by a dual narrative approach to history. On a local level, Israel-Palestine is made up of many different ethnic, linguistic and religious sub-communities, each with its own histories. The stories filling the Yiddish-speaking *charedi* [ultra-Orthodox Jewish] neighbourhoods of Jerusalem, for example, may differ from those preserved in the streets of Rehavia, an affluent and more secular Jewish district. Some communities do not slot neatly into either of the two ethnonationalities, notably the Druze population; while Palestinian society, quite apart from its internal religious and cultural differences (Muslims, Christians of various churches, villagers and urbanites, refugee camp dwellers, and Bedouin tribes), has been carved up into separate legal cantons by the Israeli government. These are permanent residents of East Jerusalem, who are denied voting rights but are technically subjected to civil law; West Bank ID holders; Gaza ID holders; and Palestinian citizens of Israel, who are commonly referred to as Israeli Arabs, as if to try and place the idea of Palestinian-ness at a further remove from Jewish society. A person's status under the law influences the timbre and texture of their daily life. As a result of these intra-communal boundaries, some limpid, others rigid and artificially imposed, 'Israel-Palestine' is better understood as a kaleidoscope of communities that shift and overlap as well as two discrete national bodies. Shifting our focus from the construction of narrative to the telling of stories makes room for a plurality of experiences.

The localized perspectives afforded by storytelling also allow us to explore individual engagements with forbidden histories with an astute compassion, while still remaining attuned to the power structures in which individual storytellers live. Its emphasis on the particular and the local makes it more difficult to paper over the inequalities that exist between Palestinians and Israelis, which is a danger posed by the more abstract and generalizing nature of narrative. The members of PRIME discovered the relevance of storytelling in situations of asymmetric political violence during the compilation of the *Side by Side* textbook:

> Sharing personal stories was an essential aspect of this project … The asymmetry of power relations, and violence outside the project, had to be represented in the room through personal experiences of storytelling before a pragmatic, task-oriented approach could be introduced to bring about more symmetrical relationship.[44]

The textbook was formatted with a thick centre margin in which students could add their own stories and ideas as they wished, meaning that each textbook would be particular to one person. I did not know about this feature of the books until November 2018, when I attended a conference on contested histories hosted by the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. There I heard Eyal Naveh, one of the Israeli creators, describing *Side by Side*'s publication process to an international audience. The publishers of the English translation had removed that white space. 'They deleted the most important part of the book,' he said – and I was reminded of the theologian Judith Plaskow's passionate call for a feminist engagement with Judaism, which she sees as enabling 'the words of women to rise out of the white spaces between the letters in the Torah as we remember and transmit the past through the experience of our own lives'.[45] This is a reference to Midrashic description of Torah as black fire inscribed on white fire, in which the margins and the spaces between the letters are also of divine significance. Plaskow connects those spaces with women's lives as a marginalized group with mainstream religious practice and, significantly, she identifies storytelling as one way to bring their voices out of the margins.

This brings us back to the boundaries and barriers around which this study is organized. Experiences of social and political marginalization vary dramatically on the basis of participants' ethnonational group, sex and economic background, but there is one margin that they all inhabit, and this concerns their age.

Childhood as a contested space

Gilad Sha'ar, Naftali Frenkel and Eyal Yifrach were kidnapped and murdered by Palestinian gunmen on 14 June 2014, just as my research was getting underway. Two weeks later a group of right-wing Israeli settlers kidnapped a fifteen-year-old Palestinian from East Jerusalem, Mohammed Abu Khdeir. He was burned alive, and his body was dumped on the wooded outskirts of Jerusalem, near the remains of the village of Deir Yassin. In abandoning the body there, Abu Khdeir's murderers were making a mocking political statement: Deir Yassin was the site of a massacre perpetrated by pre-state Israeli militias during

the Nakba. The massacre was invoked through the torture and murder of a teenage boy, with his body becoming a tablet on which that memory was brutally inscribed.

Attributing the murders of Yifrach, Sha'ar and Frenkel to Hamas paramilitaries, on 8 July 2014 the IDF launched Operation Protective Edge, with the stated aim of destroying Hamas infrastructure in Gaza. According to a report produced by an independent commission of enquiry appointed that September by the United Nations' Human Rights Council, 2014 witnessed the highest civilian death toll since 1967 largely as a result of this operation. Minors constituted roughly a third of Gaza's fatalities. The violence took on a personal face for me when a close friend's cousins, three-year-old Qasem and seven-year-old Emad, were killed when the IDF fired on their house. In 2015 a rash of stabbing and car-ramming attacks perpetrated by Palestinians began to spread outward from East Jerusalem, targeting both Israeli soldiers and civilians. According to data published by the Israeli intelligence services in February 2016, just over half the attackers were under the age of twenty.[46] This spate of attacks has yet to assume a name, but terms I heard frequently over the course of that deadly summer were 'the intifada of the knives' and 'the intifada of the young'. Witnessing the impact of 2014 on young people I knew seemed to underline the importance of research that focused on storytelling among youth. Simple demographics also attested to the need: 33.09 per cent of Palestinians in the West Bank and 27.95 per cent of Jewish Israelis are under the age of fifteen, while in Gaza that figure is 42.75 per cent. This made me even more curious about young people's role in imagining and narrating the communities in which they constitute such a significant part, and the histories they invoke and exclude in the process.

As we move into the analysis of those stories, it is important to remain aware of how young people are themselves represented in scholarly and popular narratives of conflict. Children figure prominently in Israeli and Palestinian narratives, but rarely as narrators. Examining media coverage of *aṭfāl al-ḥijārah* [the children of the stones] during the First Intifada, John Collins finds that youth are 'hyper-visible but inaudible': photographs of teenagers clutching stones and giving victory signs are ubiquitous, while their voices are strikingly absent from the public sphere. He suggests that by transforming young people confronting tanks into political caricatures, media representations of *aṭfāl al-ḥijārah* perpetuated the idea that their activism speaks for itself, rendering any discussion of their political consciousness unnecessary. This pattern stretches far beyond the First Intifada. Young people in Israel-Palestine remain inaudible, yet hyper-visible.

Certain images have been seared into public consciousness and become part of a visual lexicon of the region's recent history: four-year-old Muhammad al-Durra cowering behind his father moments before he is killed; a small girl clutching at her mother in a rocket shelter in southern Israel; Palestinian boys, many of them, hurling stones at tanks; Palestinian toddlers dressed up in mock suicide belts and Israeli schoolgirls crayoning messages onto missiles destined for Lebanon. These images have become narrative tropes, governed by a distinct visual grammar that hinges on scale and contrast. Whether children are photographed throwing stones at a looming tank or huddling against a protective adult, the same meaning is communicated by the stark differences in height and size: fragility in the face of terrible danger. When children are pictured handling weapons or wearing suicide belts, the stark juxtaposition between that fragility and the destructive power of missiles and bombs elicits horror or outrage from the viewer. The composition of these images is designed to provoke an explicit moral response. As Susan Sontag has observed, 'Photographs lay down routes of reference, and serve as totems of causes: sentiment is more likely to crystallise around a photograph than a verbal slogan.'[47] The parameters of public discussion on children's lives in Israel-Palestine have been fixed in place by visual semiotics, which consequently make it difficult to arrive at a nuanced understanding of the young people's experiences or to access their stories as told by themselves.

One reason why these photographs hold such sway in the public domain is that they either violate or reinforce the tropes that constitute popular narratives of childhood, especially that of innocence. A 2012 report by a delegation of British lawyers on the treatment of minors in IDF custody noted: 'It may be that the reluctance to treat Palestinian children in conformity with international norms stems from a belief, which was advanced to us by a military prosecutor, that every Palestinian child is a "potential terrorist".'[48] In short, according to the logic of occupation, there is no possibility of innocence here. There are only varying shades of guilt, potential and actual. As the idea of childhood innocence holds such powerful cultural cachet, the widespread representation in official Israeli discourse of Palestinian children as terrorists in training or victims only of their own nation's violence (captured by the infamous saying, attributed to Golda Meir, that peace will be achieved when 'the Arabs love their children more than they hate us') may be understood as an attempt to divest them of the innocence conferred on them socially by virtue of their age, or at least to neutralize its political effects.

This process is most apparent in the case of Ahed Tamimi, a sixteen-year-old Palestinian girl from the West Bank village of Nabi Saleh. In 2018 she was

sentenced to eight months in prison after she was filmed slapping a soldier who had entered her family's yard. Her case sparked widespread international criticism of the prosecution of minors in military courts, prompting Israel's Minister for Culture Miri Regev to declare: 'She is not a little girl, she is a terrorist … It is about time they will understand that people like her have to be in jail …'[49] Attempts to downplay Tamimi's status as a minor were accompanied by a racialized preoccupation with her appearance: she is blonde. Her fair hair even led to an investigation by a classified Knesset subcommittee into whether the Tamimis were a genuine family or hired 'light-skinned actors' who had been 'chosen for their appearance' as part of a plot to manipulate the sympathies of Western audiences.[50] As Marina Warner has demonstrated in her powerful work on fairy tale, blondeness is bound up with innocence in European folklore.[51] In order to prove Tamimi's guilt, Israeli officials felt compelled to negate the cultural meaning assigned to her hair and complexion as well as her age.

An inverse process is at work in a photograph of a terrified young girl cowering with her mother in an Israeli bomb shelter, which appeared in the weekend supplement of the Hebrew language daily *Ma'ariv* in May 2012. 'Tens of thousands of Israeli children who have been living in the shadow of Qassam rockets for the last few years are suffering from post-traumatic stress,' the accompanying text reads. The same image had appeared in *Ma'ariv* two months prior, but in the original photograph, the little girl and her mother are Asian.[52] In the reproduction, their skin has been lightened to suggest a different ethnicity. The photograph seeks to capitalize on the cultural associations carried by fair skin – innocence, purity, fragility. Just as Ahed Tamimi's light-skinned blondeness must be exposed as a hoax before she can be designated as a 'terrorist' rather than as a child, the unnamed Filipina girl's appearance must be transformed before she can become a credible emblem of Israeli children's suffering, despite the fact that many Jewish Israelis are not white.

Childhood itself has been imbued with similar moral messages, as can be seen through popular depictions of soldiers in Israeli society. Following the First Intifada, the idea of soldiers as strong and socially responsible adults was supplanted by the image of the soldier as a dependent youngster, a trend captured by Doren Rosenblum's sardonic 1994 headline 'Honey, the soldiers have shrunk.'[53] Viewed through a psychological lens, this 'shrinking' of soldiers in Israeli popular imagination may allow conscripts' parents to express anxieties over their children's welfare and to cope better with the pressures conscription places on the family.[54] However, such representations also have a political function. This can be seen in a social media posting made by Avi Mayer, a former

spokesperson for the IDF, on 21 October 2015. Sharing a photograph of a young woman in casual clothes, her long hair hanging loose, he commented, 'This is 20-year-old IDF soldier Dikla, fighting for her life after a Palestinian attacker stabbed her in the throat.'[55] By giving her age and sharing a photograph of Dikla in civilian dress, he shifted attention from her status as a soldier who had been armed and in uniform at the time she was stabbed to the moral associations carried by youthfulness. 'Childhood' is not understood as a fixed period in a person's life, but as a state of innocence that can be cut short below the legal age of majority or extended beyond it.

While Israeli representations of soldiers emphasize their youth, Palestinian representations of young Israelis stress their connection to the army. An adult man interviewed in a study on refugee youth in Gaza commented, 'We imagined Israelis as an army without families.'[56] In Palestinian literature written post-1967, the principal Israeli characters are often soldiers, indicating that this perception is common.[57] Settlers are depicted in a similar way, illustrated by an article published by Ma'an (the main Palestinian news agency) after the kidnapping of the three Israeli teenagers in 2014. It was headlined 'Israel Deploys Heavily near Hebron after Disappearance of Settlers'; the boys' ages were never mentioned. The idea of ontological childhood innocence explains both the rarity with which Israeli youth appear in Palestinian public discourse and the way in which Palestinian youth are presented as inherently guilty in Israeli society: as young people have become symbols of moral purity and consequently of political legitimacy, childhood itself has emerged as a contested space. The other side may be discredited through questioning the innocence of its children.

Another common construction of children living with political violence is that of the trauma victim. In the long shadow of the Holocaust, as scholars turned from the study of history to that of memory, trauma emerged as the point at which history and memory converge. It has also become the glue that binds individual to collective experience, with the concept of post-traumatic stress functioning as 'a category which mediates between a specific individual's injury and a group or culture'.[58] The expansion of post-traumatic stress from a relatively narrow clinical descriptor to a potent cultural metaphor has particular ramifications for the representation of conflict-affected youth. In an inversion of the Eden myth, suffering leads to a knowledge of evil that is incompatible with the popular idea of children as innocent of such damaging awareness. Perhaps because of the conflation of childhood with innocence, trauma is presented as the loss of childhood itself. Jeffrey Prager, a sociologist and psychoanalyst who specializes in the legacies of racism in post-apartheid South Africa, depicts

post-traumatic stress as 'a social situation in which the children identify more powerfully with their parents' harrowing past than with their own separate and distinctive present. What is lost … is an identity that demarcates children's experience from their parents'; what is produced, in the same instance, is lost childhoods and lost generations.'[59] Over the three decades that have elapsed since the adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1989, numerous humanitarian practitioners and scholars of mass violence have gone beyond loss to speak of theft:

> Icons of 'stolen childhood' are particularly crucial devices in activists' strategies aimed at … mobilising scarce resources on behalf of children … Figures that occupied a prominent role in the early 1980s, such as the street child, have slowly disappeared from the agenda, while the child victim of violence has gradually become the dominant icon.[60]

The emergence of this iconography can be mapped onto the growth of trauma studies as a field. The scholarly reckoning with the spectres of the Holocaust was paralleled by the rise of humanitarian psychiatry, which departed abruptly from military psychiatry in its designation of trauma as 'a lived reality that offered a window onto an experience of suffering' as opposed to a diagnostic category.[61] Emerging after the Armenian earthquake in 1988, this understanding of trauma was refined in the Balkans over the next bloodstained decade.[62] It mirrors the approach taken by scholars working on Holocaust memory, who have framed trauma as a social condition or a bridge between individual and collective experience. Cathy Caruth's pivotal *Unclaimed Experience*, published in 1995, wove together neurobiological, psychoanalytic and literary insights into such trauma and was embraced by clinicians and humanities scholars alike.[63] This was followed by a spate of interdisciplinary writing on trauma that cemented its place in the contemporary cultural lexicon. From the late 1990s onwards, the street child was rapidly displaced by the victim of violence in a large corpus of treaties, international resolutions and reports by humanitarian organizations. Of the seven icons named here, the child victim is the most explicit and all-encompassing embodiment of trauma.

As with innocence, visual representation has been central to the development of the trope of the traumatized child. Ubiquitous fundraising photographs for charities involved in humanitarian aid and development show a hungry child clutching an empty bowl: she is typically pictured alone, her family and wider community invisible, inviting the viewer to imagine himself as the sole connection and source of support.[64] It is easy for researchers and humanitarian

practitioners who have long-term involvement with conflict-affected youth to insert themselves into the picture as healers and rescuers, if only subconsciously. In my own case this pitfall was widened by my previous work in adolescent psychiatric hospitals and the fact that so much of the scholarly literature on storytelling with conflict-affected children is concerned with psychological distress. Initially I struggled not to interpret the young people's stories as manifestations of trauma, and to see my role as a way of 'giving voice'.

This phrase, recurrent in the literature, implies that without the practitioner the child is unable to tell any story at all. It also pathologizes silence, turning it into a symptom to be treated rather than accepting it as a meaningful statement in itself. 'The prescription of "telling one's story" … as a key method and necessary precondition for "relief", "liberation", or "healing"' has been accepted uncritically by many creative practitioners working in the humanitarian field, while 'silence and "not-telling" are somehow denigrated as a dangerous retreat, a failure, or a site of continued harm'.[65] This aversion to silence among storytellers and theatre-makers puzzled me at first, as each of us knows the power of a well-placed pause and the imaginative stimulus applied by words left unsaid. Silence is not the antithesis of story. However, as my research progressed I began to hear my own inadequacies in my participants' silences, which made me susceptible to the allure of the trauma diagnosis. I felt its power when an eleven-year-old girl in Aida told me that her father had been tortured at the hands of military investigators, her hands pressing down to steady her shaking legs. Framing the storytelling as therapeutic would have allowed me to feel that I had the ability to transform her situation, or at least to do something of more immediate significance than to record her words and analyse them as part of a broader corpus. But that would have meant emphasizing my own role at the price of her voice, and potentially stripping away many layers of meaning from her stories. Using trauma as our sole interpretative codex is a form of silencing, which is why storytelling with conflict-affected youth should not be understood as psychological treatment but recognized as a form of artistic and political expression that is a natural part of the tellers' everyday lives.

While the preoccupation with trauma results in young people being silenced, the weaponization of the innocence trope perpetuates violence, as it involves suppression of empathy and a denial of young people's agency and even their personhood. Reducing them to silent images is an insidious form of dehumanization. This is the backdrop against which my research took place. Some adults would show an interest in my findings that verged on the prurient, and the expectation that they would hear something to consolidate their negative

perceptions of either Israeli or Palestinian society was palpable. Interestingly, most of these interlocutors were not Israeli or Palestinian themselves. In concentrating on the stories that young people tell, as opposed to the narratives in which they are embedded as tropes, I hope this book will promote a richer, more accurate and above all more human understanding of conflict-affected children and their lives.

Telling stories in tear gas

Field sites and fault lines

Before moving to my own apartment in Bethlehem's Old City, I lived in a Palestinian Christian home that was surrounded on three sides by the separation wall, on a road that once led from Jerusalem to Hebron but had been abruptly truncated by the barrier. Checkpoint 300, a military terminal that controls Bethlehemites' access to Jerusalem, was a two-minute walk from the front door. A watchtower overlooked our driveway and CCTV cameras peered down from the barrier. Only half in jest, my host family advised me to be careful to draw the curtains before using the toilet, to avoid featuring in an army surveillance centre.

Bethlehem lies in Area A, under the ostensible jurisdiction of the Palestinian Authority (PA). Under the Oslo Accords, Area A is autonomous, Area B is administered jointly by Palestinian civil and Israeli military authorities and Area C (constituting 60 per cent of West Bank territory and the location of most Israeli settlements) is under full Israeli control. All Palestinians living in these non-contiguous areas, spattered across the West Bank like ink in a Rorschach test, are subject to Israeli military law. It is difficult to tell where one area begins and another ends, with the exception of Area A. Roads leading into PA-administered territory are marked by lurid red trilingual signs: 'Warning! Palestinian Authority Area A ahead. Entry for Israeli citizens is strictly forbidden, dangerous to your lives, and illegal under the Israeli law.' When travelling in or out of Bethlehem on Palestinian public transport, I learned to identify a sudden metallic clinking as an indicator that we had crossed an invisible line into Area B or C, where the law on seatbelts is more stringently enforced.

My research spanned five principal sites: Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Hebron's Old City, the refugee camps on Bethlehem's fringes (Aida and Dheisheh) and settlements in Gush Etzion, with some additional fieldwork in Ra'anana and the cooperative bilingual village of Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom. The primary sites were chosen because they lie on the political and geographic fissures that

criss-cross the country; and having observed that forbidden histories seem more likely to filter through sectarian divides during times of heightened friction, I suspected that the same might hold true in spaces of friction. At first my mind went to the most concrete examples of such spaces, such as the segregated road that bifurcates Old Hebron; and Aida refugee camp, which is wedged against the separation barrier in northern Bethlehem and is the scene of frequent army incursions. A different manifestation of friction was present in the bilingual school I visited in Jerusalem, established as a practical way of living peace. In the words of a Hebrew language education kit on the Nakba, prepared by the remembrance organization Zochrot, 'How do we say "Nakba" in Hebrew?' Reading that question, I was reminded of the illuminating fire that sparks from flint and steel.

The choice of sites echoed the nature of storytelling itself. Michael Jackson, an anthropologist of storytelling and violence, defines a story as a 'site of defilement and infringement' that could not exist without its sharp-edged differences and contrasts:

> Stories are always structurally in-between. Whether considered in light of their function, form, or performance, stories create indeterminate and ambiguous situations that involve contesting parties, contrasting locations, opposing categories of thought, and antithetical domains of experience. In traversing the borderlands that ordinarily demarcate different social domains, or that separate any particular social order from all that lies at or beyond its margins, stories have the potential to take us in two very different directions.[1]

Such potential is keenly felt in the volatile border sites where I carried out my work. In observing how young people living here navigated their contested landscapes and the histories that permeate it, I was reminded of the movement of tectonic plates, and came to think of the boundaries I was probing as fault lines. The geological imagery seemed apposite, not only because of the centrality of physical place to my work, but also due to the way earthquakes can push previously hidden things to the surface and cover or alter what previously stood there. The idea of fault lines captured the sense of immediate upheaval I experienced when I moved between the visible poverty and overcrowding of Aida and the leafy settlements in Gush Etzion. It also provided a metaphoric way of understanding the many shifting strata that emerged in young people's stories, and despite the terror of the image (mirroring the unpredictability of their living situation), it also seemed to contain hope: that a place can change, and change quickly, and that familiar bloodstained and treacherous landscapes may not always look this way.

As Jackson observes, every story is charged with the power to 'screen out everything that threatens the status quo, validating the illusions and prejudices it customarily deploys in maintaining its hold on truth'. But they are also constant reminders of 'the possibility … that there may be no human experience that does not exist *in potentia* within every human being and within every human society; that, as Montainge put it, as much difference "may be found between us and our selves, as … between our selves and other"'.[2] The compelling power of stories to move people towards encounter and reconciliation by prompting a reappraisal of what it means to be 'other', despite their capacity to function as dividing screens and protective filters, reinforced my curiosity about storytelling's role in Israel-Palestine's liminal spaces, where the other exercises a particularly powerful effect on the lives and imaginations of inhabitants.

Finding participants

Approximately fifty young people took part in this research, with fourteen of them choosing to become more deeply involved and to meet with me regularly over an eighteen-month span. I approached them through schools, youth organizations, and other community groups and discovered that the adults in their lives were much more likely to grant consent if I already knew people within the organization, or I was introduced by a friend who was well known to its staff. 'We get a lot of research requests. I wouldn't be agreeing to this if you didn't know Leen. I have a lot of respect for her,' the director of one youth programme told me. There are significant methodological and ethical implications of carrying out fieldwork in an over-researched area, which will be discussed later.

Snowball sampling was my second method of recruitment, which was particularly useful as it gave me insight into how stories travel and community is formed. A striking example came at the end of a meeting with a fifteen-year-old Palestinian boy in Hebron, conducted in the shadow of an IDF watchtower, when he unexpectedly offered to put me in touch with teenage Israeli boys whom he had begun talking to on Facebook and had then met illegally in Jerusalem. This process reminded me of Guy Debord's idea of *dérive*, loosely translated as 'drift', as defined by the anthropologist Carolyn Nordstrom:

> It is generally translated as 'drift', and is a theoretical and methodological means of uncovering the often hidden or obscured realities defining a city and its people. The technique is to drop all one's preconceptions and simply to move in a city without a set plan, goal, or direction. The theory is that it will not produce

meaningless random chance, but will illuminate the relationships of the public and the invisible, social truths from social fictions, that characterise urban spaces.[3]

Nordstrom builds on Debord's concept to demonstrate how histories of violence are evoked through movement in urban space, giving the specific example of a stranger to London's growing awareness of the Troubles and their psycho-geography as he moves through the city in an innocuous search for a litter bin (many bins had been removed as potential bomb locations). The *dérive*, although conceived as a way to elucidate processes such as 'power, marginalisation, resistance, and the art and politics of "being" within a larger phenomenology of the city',[4] is not restricted to urban geography. It is also illuminating when thought about in sociolinguistic terms, as storytelling frequently organizes itself around drifts. In the case of the Hebron boy, who had bars on his windows to protect him from settler violence and whose movement was heavily circumscribed by the fact that he was not old enough to be issued an identity card yet old enough to look as though he might need one, the sensation of being 'like a chicken in cage' formed his point of narrative departure. He then moved onto social media and how much he liked computers, making it clear that the internet expanded the social space available to him. It had made an encounter with young Israelis possible, a hidden aspect of his life that he could not have brought up any earlier in our meeting: we had arrived at these hidden friendships via barred windows, chicken coops and computers, seemingly disparate objects whose relationship to one another is only revealed by narrative drift.

Asking participants if they knew anyone who might be interested in taking part in my research consequently became part of the storytelling process, a way of gaining some sense of the edges of the young people's social worlds and the unseen doors that connect them. The result was that I ended up with expressions of interest from the Gaza Strip, an Israeli kibbutz on the Gaza border, and Kfar Saba, a middle-class town not far from Tel Aviv, which seemed most notable for its sleepy anonymity. None of these were places that I had identified as potential field sites and yet all were part of participants' stories in some way. Ultimately I decided that expanding my research too far beyond my principal field sites would make the project unmanageably large, but the doors that opened through the stories I heard in those places are significant in their own right.

At first storytelling sessions were held in cultural and community centres or schools, usually with a teacher or a youth worker in attendance, but then I began to receive coffee and meal invitations from participants' families and the boundaries between research and personal life became less distinct. Teenagers in

Aida camp and Hebron sometimes took the storytelling sessions into the street or onto the flat rooftops of their homes. Young people from Israeli settlements, when asked where they felt most comfortable meeting, chose a range of places – a café, a park bench, their houses. This suggested that over time they began to see the research as connected to their private lives, and did not want it to be mediated through institutions such as youth groups. As I was keen to explore the link between the settings they chose for their storytelling and the types of stories that emerged, wherever possible I followed where the young people led.

I operated with a loose age range of 11–18. On consultation with community workers and teachers, it was felt that older children were more likely to benefit from a creative arts project that was chiefly oral/aural. The age range was applied with leeway (occasionally younger siblings and playmates wanted to join in, and recognizing that this was part of the family and community dynamic, I usually accepted) but it served as a general guideline.

I had prepared consent forms to be signed by participants and their parents, but some Palestinian families were troubled by this, not wanting to leave a paper trail showing their involvement. Other researchers have observed the same discomfort among Palestinian participants around signed consent and recorded interviews, stemming from fear of surveillance by the Israeli military authorities.[5,6] At first young people in Aida would not allow me to record storytelling sessions, but later changed their minds. In Hebron's Old City several young people were used to speaking on video (I was introduced to them through the grassroots activist group Youth Against Settlements, which promotes citizen journalism among Hebron youth), so they did not object to the voice recorder, but were uneasy about signatures. Weighing up the importance of informed written consent with the need to respond sensitively to the risks participants faced, I chose not to collect signatures. Consent was grounded in their existing relationship with me, or their confidence in the community figures who had recommended me to them, rather than in a formal contract.

Story-gathering

This project wove together oral storytelling with ethnography. As the anthropologist and storyteller Ruth Behar has pointed out, the two are natural companions. 'You learn in ethnography to make the ordinary seem strange, and the strange seem ordinary. Storytellers do that too.'[7] Trust and relationship are essential to the process of 'making strange', and they have guided my research

design, anchoring it in the phenomenological tradition. Phenomenology is fundamentally relational, epitomized by Levinas's classic work on the face as a metaphor for human intersubjectivity. Its second defining feature, intertwined with the first, is its absolute respect for the primacy of lived experience. Husserl's famous exhortation to 'get back to the things themselves' encourages researchers to 'approach events and activities with an investigative mind deliberately open, consciously trying to "bracket out" assumptions and remain attentive to what is present'.[8] Being faithful to this approach meant that I did not attempt to define storytelling for the young people, or to restrict them to any one genre or style; they were free to respond to the invitation to tell a story with any material and in any manner they chose.

Inspired by the storyteller Jack Zipes's idea of an 'anti-manual' for storytelling, I also refrained from compiling a detailed schedule of interview questions or storytelling activities in advance. I had a repertoire of games and activities culled from theatre (particularly social theatre and Theatre of the Oppressed) creative writing and ethnography, which I would adapt or reinvent on the spot according to the needs of the situation. I carried a selection of basic props, such as Story Cubes (pictorial dice that can be used as a stimulus for storytelling – the challenge is to weave a story around the pictures that roll up) and playing cards carrying questions, opening sentences and other story prompts. Too much planning would have been counterproductive, as thanks to the volatility of the environment creative practitioners working in situations of political violence have to be quick-thinking and responsive.

This is illustrated by something that happened on Tuesday 24 February 2015. Walking through central Bethlehem at about ten o'clock in the morning, I noticed that all the shops were shuttered, even on Manger Square, and had the uneasy sense that someone must have been killed by the army. That feeling solidified into certainty at the sight of a crowd straggling up the hill from Beit Jala Hospital. Later that day the teenagers in Aida told me the victim had been a twenty-year-old student from Dheisheh refugee camp. He was shot dead as he threw stones at Israeli troops. The teenagers were uninterested in the storytelling games I had prepared; they led me to a memorial in the camp, a stretch of wall covered in chalky names and decorated with a border of tanks, and one girl explained, 'These are the people who died in Gaza last summer, the children and the ones our age.' Recognizing that they would not sit indoors today, I went with them out onto the street, improvising a new activity: each person chose to face either the memorial or the separation barrier and took it in turns to tell the dead youth, the unseen soldiers or the walls themselves a story. The young people

were invited to step up to the storyteller and replace her if they felt inspired by something she had said. Interestingly, without instruction from me, they modified the activity further: they began recalling previous storytellers to the front. The session ended when a distant gate in the separation barrier rumbled open and soldiers emerged, equipped with riot gear, evidently anticipating protests. A teenager who had addressed her story to the army and concluded it with, 'When will you go away?' exclaimed, 'It's like they heard me!'

This is an example of a storytelling activity that was developed quickly in response to painful upheaval. Other activities were less successful. I frequently used a form of participatory mapping, with the young people creating a figurative map featuring all the places and people who were most significant to them, before telling stories based on the maps. This was disastrous in Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom. The teenagers were listless and bored as they drew. When I invited them to narrate their maps to me, their replies were flat. One girl walked out. An older boy kept glancing at his watch. Worrying that they had been corralled into participation by the youth group leader, I pressed on, hoping that an activity that had generated so much enthusiasm in other places would kindle some interest if I took a more directive approach. 'Now I want you to draw a place where you can't go.' 'I don't know what to draw,' one girl muttered in Arabic, and her friend replied, 'Put Gaza or Lebanon or somewhere. That's what she wants.' Catching this, I intervened. 'What do you mean?' At last everyone was looking at me. 'I mean researchers come here all the time,' the girl replied, half-accusatory, half-apologetic, 'and you all want the same things.' We discarded the maps, and I asked them to tell me what they thought of researchers. This session, while outwardly a failure, marked the beginning of a collaboration. I asked if they would help me design the project from the beginning. Some of them wanted to meet individually rather than as a group, and I returned to the village next week feeling that by sounding out their frustrations, we had established the mutual trust that is crucial to telling a story.

I began to think about the centrality of trust when I encountered Barbara Charbonneau-Dahlen's work on historical trauma, which hinges on Story Theory. Charbonneau-Dahlen is a Native American nurse who has used storytelling to investigate the experiences of Native people who had been incarcerated in mission boarding schools, and whose stories were blotted out from mainstream historical narratives. Centred on the principles of 'intentional dialogue', 'self-in-relation' and 'creating ease', Story Theory aims to create a warm rapport between teller and listener, recognizing that this relationship is rich with creative possibility. Outlining the symbiosis between Story Theory

and collective memory, Charbonneau-Dahlen notes that 'intentional dialogue may occur when two or more enter into the now, telling of the past, and passing the story to the future for others to dwell upon'.[9] Vital to the process is 'purposeful engagement with another', during which the listener remains attentive to the teller and, while making no assumptions about the story, seeks to clarify through respectful questioning those points that are obscure or have only partially been uncovered.[10] I realized that this conceptualization of storytelling as a journey of discovery for both tellers and listeners and its emphasis on non-judgemental facilitation could be as applicable on Israel-Palestine's fault lines as in the hospitals and clinics where it was devised, and I adopted it as my own compass.

Ease is created when 'the health challenge becomes part of [a patient's] life story rather than being perceived as an intruder from the outside with an agenda that is inconceivable, unapproachable, and uncontrollable'.[11] Of the principles underlying Story Theory, this is the most explicitly therapeutic. As discussed earlier, research on storytelling with conflict-affected youth focuses chiefly on therapy, emphasizing trauma at the expense of political agency and artistic and cultural expression. In this study the 'intruder from outside' is not psychological distress, but memory itself, or people from the 'other' community, or even myself as facilitator. My aim was to consider how young people respond to all these presences in their lives, however they might define them, and not to deliberately alter their current understanding. That said, narrative anticipation always invites the consideration of new and unspoken ideas; because of storytelling's very nature, shifts in perspective occur. The ease created by the application of Story Theory is essential for young people to feel secure enough to experiment with other vantage points afforded by a story and to face the 'What if?' on which storytelling hinges.

A creative ethic of care

The anecdote from Neve Shalom/Wahat as-Salaam raises the question of over-research, which is a significant issue in Israeli and Palestinian communities. Residents of Shatila refugee camp, for example, have complained that they are being exploited for researchers' professional gain, that their practical needs and political rights are disregarded in favour of culling stories, that researchers often arrive with objectives that clash with their own understanding of their lives and that participatory methods are repetitive and dull. Some

camp residents suggested that research involving young people is especially damaging, as children who have been lavished with attention and presents feel that they have been discarded when researchers leave the camp.[12] To work responsibly with young people, I realized that I needed to adhere to a coherent ethic of care.

If telling a story is an act of trust, listening is an expression of responsibility. If that listening is done well, it becomes an act of care. In describing her ethics of care, the educator and philosopher Nel Noddings has argued that attentive listening is one of 'the very hallmarks of caring'.[13] Without listening, there can be no care. My own sense is that the relationship is symbiotic, and that without care it is impossible to really listen.

What does it mean to really listen? At first my answer to this question was practical. I wanted to mitigate the risks of over-research by ensuring that the project offered a tangible benefit to the young people. In Aida refugee camp, storytelling sessions were incorporated into an after-school club. Teachers found that when I had taken some young people aside, they could give more attention to pupils with significant struggles. They saw the storytelling project as an enrichment opportunity that they were pleased to offer as part of their own programme. In one Gush Etzion settlement my research was viewed as an opportunity for young people to practise English. However, there was not always any immediate need that my work might address. A jaded-looking Palestinian mother in Hebron asked me with quiet sardonicism, 'And if my children tell you their stories, what will change? What's going to happen?' I told her that I hoped they would enjoy their afternoon. I realized too late that this could have been interpreted as facetious, but the mother smiled.

Listening well to a story means cultivating an appreciation of the context in which it is told, and so when I travelled to and from any given community, I would use the mode of transport that its inhabitants most commonly took themselves. To reach Kfar Etzion from my home it would have been simplest to take one of the dozens of yellow Palestinian minibuses that whip along the highway at terrifying speeds, get off near the village of Beit Fajar and walk. But in order to orientate myself in the landscape as seen by Kfar Etzion's youth, I made my way to Jerusalem first, where I could catch a bus operated by the Israeli bus company Egged back into the occupied West Bank. As parts of the West Bank's road network are formally segregated, I was now travelling on different roads, and the view from the window was altered.

The change was not only topographic. Egged buses that drive in the occupied West Bank are armoured (on Egged's online timetables these routes are indicated

by an icon of a tank) and sometimes I felt as if I were viewing the landscape through the dregs of a coffee cup, as less sophisticated armoured buses had a murky sheet of protective thickened plastic affixed to the windows. To return home, I would wait in the bus shelter at the spot known to Israelis as Etzion Junction, which is protected against car-ramming attacks by a row of bollards. This was the place from which the three Israeli teenagers, Gilad Sha'ar, Eyal Yifrach and Naftali Frenkel, were kidnapped by Palestinian gunmen as they tried to hitch a lift. The boys' photographs looked down from a memorial sign. A tattered poster affixed to the bus stop advised passengers on how to reduce the risk of being kidnapped.

Taking in that poster, I was uneasy. Palestinian friends sometimes worried about my habit of lone travel and chided me for dressing like a settler. 'It's the long skirts. Try and be less modest,' one advised me. In that moment I realized that standing in this place, looking as I did, I might be misidentified. As a Hebrew speaker I have been mistaken for an Israeli citizen on a regular basis, by Palestinians and Israelis, but I had never been worried about possible consequences until that moment. My anxiety was the cumulative effect of riding in armoured buses, using an online route planner that featured tank icons, and now discovering instructions on evading kidnap where I might ordinarily expect to see a timetable. In the aftermath of the killings of Frenkel, Yiftach and Sha'ar, several Israeli participants told stories involving buses or *trampim* [hitchhiking, a common mode of getting about in Israel]. Public transport was at the locus of their fears. My use of the same routes and the sight of that poster and memorial sign provided me with an interpretative gloss that helped me to appreciate the narrative significance of buses in a way I could not otherwise have done. Immersing myself in their context as far as I could made me more attuned to their stories.

The language I use to write about the young people and their stories has also been shaped by an ethic of care, which has meant abandoning many common theoretical terms. James Thompson, a theatre practitioner who has worked extensively with conflict-affected people in Sri Lanka, expresses my own disquiet about the vocabulary so frequently applied to the analysis and interpretation of story:

> Do we really *interrogate* texts, *unpack* experiences, *deconstruct* utterances? In Sri Lanka detainees are interrogated (and tortured), bags or belongings are *unpacked* (and searched) and houses are *deconstructed* by bombs (and reconstructed by families and communities) … Why doesn't theory go the whole hog and torture texts, frisk/body search performances and bomb speech acts? In light of a world

order woven with terror – actual, displayed, and imagined – a language of
enquiry that litters texts with verbs of breakage, dismembering and dislocation
seems callous … I would prefer to celebrate acts of construction, healing, holding
and re-membering. And find a vocabulary that rewards these acts.[14]

Finding the 'right words' is integral to storytelling not only from an artistic
perspective, but also from an ethical one. There are other ethical prompts
and principles embedded in storytelling, chiefly the invitation to let 'What
if?' loom large in our imaginations, encouraging us to rehearse different
possibilities, endings and interpretations. This imaginative capacity is integral
to moral reasoning and empathy for others, meaning that storytelling as an art
form has a profound political resonance. In choosing to focus my research on
storytelling's artistic and political functions, I was grounding it in a creative
ethics of care.

Knowing my place: Some thoughts on power and positionality

Aida camp lay just a few hundred yards away from my front door, hidden from
sight by the jut of the separation wall. It was always the smell that reminded me
of its proximity, the telltale chemical tang that comes just before the burning
in the eyes and throat. Aida is the scene of frequent IDF incursions; a public
health study carried out in 2017 indicated that its inhabitants may suffer the
highest recurrent exposure to tear gas of any population globally.[15] The sports
court used by Aida youth is covered by netting to protect them from falling
tear gas canisters and other detritus. The camp is packed against the barrier and
surveyed by watchtowers that have been charred by smoke from burning tyres
and Molotov cocktails. One watchtower is spattered in pastel colours, the result
of teenagers hurling balloons filled with paint. Overcrowding is chronic: in 2013
there were approximately 5500 residents living on a parcel of land that covers
0.71 square kilometres.

On the day in question, as I made my way towards the cultural centre where
our storytelling sessions were held, clouds of tear gas rolled over me. I couldn't
breathe, and I knew that I mustn't try. I should hold my breath until I got through.
But my lungs were treacherous and tried to take in air and now they felt as if they
were collapsing like punctured balloons. Medics wearing gas masks and Red
Crescent vests appeared as if from nowhere and escorted me inside. My nose felt
as though it were leaking acid. I wondered weakly how this substance had come
to be called 'tear gas', and decided that the understated name had probably been

chosen by its manufacturers rather than by anyone it had actually been used upon. Inside the building things weren't much better. The windows had been shuttered and the young people were still wheezing and fighting the urge to rub their eyes, their voices reduced to a rasp. This seemed to be military occupation distilled into one visceral metaphor.

The image of children gasping for air and speech recurred in my mind throughout my writing. The arts have often been deployed to sanitize injustice and to camouflage asymmetries in power that exist among conflict-affected people, the premise being that artistic participation is a way of creating equality in itself. Yet in working with a 'mosaic' of subcommunities, I recognized that the mosaic is not smooth, and that some pieces are pressed lower than others. The disparities are captured poignantly by the differing age of majority imposed by the civil and military legal systems. A Palestinian teenager living under military law can be arrested and prosecuted as an adult from the age of sixteen, while an Israeli peer with the same date of birth is considered a minor until eighteen. Of the sixteen- and seventeen-year-olds who took part in the storytelling, some were children in the eyes of the law, with all the accompanying rights. Others were not. By working with young people whose experiences are so vastly different, I do not attempt to paper over the inequalities of the political system in which they are caught up, but to demonstrate how stories are created and transmitted within that system.

Any discussion of power and positionality must incorporate consideration of my own role. At first I was reluctant to write much about myself, feeling that to give details of my life would be like a photographer inserting himself into the photograph he was taking. I was determined to stay out of the frame. However, as colleagues and friends pointed out, the young people did not experience me as invisible. Their reactions to what they observed of me will have influenced their storytelling. My identity also helped to determine where I could gather stories and where I could not.

As a white woman with a British passport, I enjoyed far greater freedom of movement than any of the young people. Palestinian movement is severely circumscribed under military law, while Israelis are prohibited by the IDF from entering major Palestinian population centres. Even within the Green Line, Jewish and Arab citizens lead broadly separate lives; and by virtue of their age, young people normally face greater limitations on their movement than adults. I could work with young people from so many subcommunities only because my own movement was not legally restricted, and as a member of neither ethnonational group, I do not share the same fears or risks. I was

open with all the young people about where I was working and where I lived, and although I sought to avoid being drawn into detailed conversations about my own life (e.g. when asked by Israeli teenagers if Bethlehem is frightening, I would respond, 'I can tell you about my experience there later, but for now I'd like to hear what you think. What do you imagine it's like?'), it became clear that many young people treated our meetings as a window into another place, a chance to catch glimpses into things they had often wondered about but never been able to see.

Almost all of them appeared to take it for granted that if they told stories to me, I would reciprocate. When working with young Palestinians in Hebron and Aida this was explicitly voiced at the end of many sessions: 'Now you tell us a story.' Younger participants were most insistent, suggesting that they were used to being entertained by adults through stories, and also that they regarded our meetings as dialogues or a transaction. Older youth displayed a similar understanding: at the end of each meeting, they would ask questions to elicit my own stories: why had I come to this country? Why was I interested in them? What was I discovering? I was reminded of the trope of the strange traveller, common in European and Middle Eastern folklore, who repays hospitality by telling stories.

By far the most pressing methodological question I grappled with in Israel-Palestine, as a Catholic Christian surrounded by material reminders of Jesus's own story, was how to research lovingly. Such a question may seem awkwardly personal and embarrassingly unscientific. However, it was clear to me that anyone who invites people to talk must share responsibility for the climate that talking creates. I was conscious of the injunctions to listen that recur across Abrahamic sacred texts, especially in the prayer recited by observant Jews morning and evening: '*Shma* …' (Hear …), and I recognized that being an attentive listener is crucial to love for neighbour, to solidarity with the oppressed and to the quality of ethnographic research. I carried out this project with a strong conviction that all young people have important stories, and my greatest concern was to ensure that I was listening astutely and lovingly enough.

Hearing stories in Bethlehem and Hebron, for example, I was able to visualize the places that young people spoke about. A mention of a certain street would bring its image to my mind, a story about an army incursion or killing would remind me of what I myself had been doing on that day and in what place. The tellers and I shared a set of landmarks. When listening to Israeli youth, especially those in settlements, I frequently had limited personal knowledge of the places and events they narrated. This meant that I related to their stories in a different

way, such as asking for more detail rather than unconsciously allowing my imagination to supply it. Sometimes I felt ignorant and I was embarrassed to show it, feeling that as a researcher I ought to be displaying expertise and that the young people might be put off by more basic questions. However, the young people responded to those questions with enthusiasm. One fifteen-year-old girl commented, laughing, 'It's good that you ask us all this. *Chilonim* [secular Israelis] think they know everything about us, and they don't. They think I live on a hill with a long skirt and a caravan.'

Intriguingly, although all the participants knew that I was non-Israeli and non-Jewish, the girl's remark implied that she was still classing me with *chilonim*. Her perception of me provides valuable insight into how she organizes and narrates her social world. I also noticed that Palestinian youth with Israeli citizenship would frequently address me in Hebrew, suggesting that on some level they associated me with Jewish Israelis. On one occasion I overheard a young boy in Aida replying, 'Bethlehem' to a stranger who was asking him where I came from. Although the young people knew that I was from England, they almost all appeared to be trying to place me somewhere on a local map.

As the months passed, I became aware of how my research – itself a story – was influencing my own understanding of community in contested space. I would encounter adults (sometimes Palestinian or Israeli, but more often internationals) who were excited by my research and would ask loaded questions about 'brainwashing' and 'cultures of hatred', apparently hoping that my work with youth would support their own view of the community they had cast as other. I saw this as dehumanizing treatment of the young people, an attempt to reduce them to pawns or puppets without any regard for what they had to say, which angered me. Reflecting on this anger, I noticed that I had begun to see all 'my participants' as part of their own distinct community (perhaps inevitably, as I could not help hearing each story in relation to the others, as polyphony). Listening to one young person and consciously struggling to be faithful to their experience in what I wrote became an act of solidarity with them all.

My writing was informed by this sense of the storytellers as constituting a distinct community. I would often move from Gush Etzion in the morning to Aida in the afternoon without a break, but always with a sudden wrenching sense of dislocation. In this book stories are presented next to one another in disturbing juxtaposition, in a reflection of both the physical landscape and how they were gathered. I was simultaneously aware of all my participants and their physical proximity, while feeling as if I had made a long journey instead

of going five miles down the road. By moving back and forth between these places throughout my writing, instead of devoting a separate chapter to each field site, I give primacy to the themes that emerged through the storytelling rather than forcing the stories to conform to Israel-Palestine's physical and political geography. I also hope that the reader will experience something of that dislocation and attendant discomfort, not only because it makes the fault lines that cross this study so painfully clear, but because the contrast raises important questions about the human and civil rights of the young people who inhabit them.

3

Language and the hidden landscape

The personal and political significance of language in Israel-Palestine is encapsulated by a story told by Rana, a fourteen-year-old girl from Bethlehem. As her family waited at a military checkpoint, a soldier asked her father for their surname. 'He told the soldier "Lama". The soldier asked for our name again, so my father kept saying "Lama". The soldier got angry and started shouting.' Eventually it registered with Rana that in addition to being a Palestinian surname, *lama* is the Hebrew word for why. 'A very good question at these checkpoints,' she concluded. The unintentional pun and its challenge to the soldier's authority provide a vivid snapshot of both the power dynamics that exist in the occupied West Bank and language's subversive potential.

Living in Bethlehem and making frequent journeys across the geopolitical boundaries that criss-cross Israel-Palestine, marked by checkpoints and roadblocks, I became acutely aware of these sociolinguistic aspects of structural violence and what they convey about processes of inclusion, exclusion and 'imagining community'.[1] Road signs with Arabic place names scrawled out by right-wing Israeli activists are a common sight; in some areas Palestinian communities are not signposted. Walking through Sheikh Jarrah, a neighbourhood of East Jerusalem, my eyes would be drawn to a street sign affixed to a former Palestinian home that is now occupied by Jewish settlers. The Arabic name has been obscured with an ominous bilingual sticker produced by the anti-miscegenation organization Lehava, which reads, 'Don't you even think about a Jewish woman!' But the rest of the street is inhabited by Palestinians and the settler family will hear Arabic floating through the windows at any given hour, a seeming incongruity that fascinates me: in blotting out the road's Arabic name, is it possible to mentally blot out its occupants, evidently imagined as rapacious males? Does language serve as a way to challenge or obscure the local landscape, allowing settlers to construct an alternative community that excludes their immediate neighbours?

These questions intensified during a checkpoint crossing of my own, when a Druze soldier insulted the bus driver in Hebrew: 'You Arabs …' It was late afternoon, and the bus was almost empty. Sitting near the front, I had a clear view of what occurred next as the driver replied in Arabic, 'Sweetheart, you're an Arab too. Just ask those Jews you're with what you are.' The soldier seized the driver by the neck and began to shake him, switching from Hebrew to fluent Arabic. I realized that the strength of the riposte did not lie simply in the driver's statement of affinity with the solider and his insinuation that they share subordinate status, but in his use of Arabic, which is also the native language of Israel's Druze communities. By refusing to reply in Hebrew, the driver pulled the soldier onto thorny common ground, causing the parameters of community to shift dramatically – 'you Arabs' became 'we Arabs'. As I went about daily life, shopping in the markets and chatting to bus passengers, I started to take note of the less spectacular shifts. The most obvious was unconscious code-switching on isolated words, occurring even in communities that view linguistic purity as a sign of ethnonationalist commitment and revealing the extent to which Hebrew and Arabic have cross-fertilized each other. Does this cross-fertilization influence how people imagine their communities and narrate their histories, even if it is not openly acknowledged or recognized? Code-switching hints at a politically charged and frequently taboo subject, intimate coexistence versus a stultified peace achieved through separation, demonstrating the way that forbidden histories and possibilities are encoded in language's DNA.

This chapter sets out to explore these questions with regard to youth in Israel-Palestine, analysing the function of language in their storytelling and what lexical choice, use of metaphor, and perception of the 'other' language have to say about how they imagine community – particularly the political no-go zones and the social grey areas, the hidden landscapes. I use 'hidden landscape' to refer to places that may be beyond a young person's sight or first-hand knowledge, as the sea is for some of the Palestinians in this study; but also for landscapes that are rendered invisible, as Palestinian presence is by the absence or vandalism of Arabic road signs. We will consider the vocabulary of symbol and metaphor that young people from the different participant groups have developed in narrating unseen spaces, discussing what these distinctive figurative vocabularies reveal about their encounters with the other, and the place that other holds in their understanding of community. We will pay particular attention to the cultural lexicon that young people are likely to draw upon in their stories, namely fairy tale and folk heritage – firstly in recognition of fairy tale's intimate relationship with oral storytelling and its role in how community is imagined,[2] and secondly

because of fairy tale's capacity to ignite imaginative engagement with the traumatic and taboo pasts that are an indelible part of every hidden landscape.

Fairy tale as an idiom of terror

The relationship between fairy tale and children's imaginative responses to political violence is vividly apparent in literature surrounding Holocaust memoir and memory. A psychotherapist working with survivor families characterized parents' Holocaust narratives as 'gruesome stories in which Hansel and Gretel were really pushed into the oven',[3] drawing a direct parallel between traumatic family history and the fairy tales that comprise most children's basic literary diet. This parallel becomes even more explicit in the writing of Eva Hoffman, a Holocaust historian and the daughter of Polish Jewish survivors:

> The hypervivid moments summoned by my parents registered themselves as half awful reality, half wondrous fairy tale. A peasant's hut, holding the riddle of life or death; a snowy forest, which confounds the sense and sense of direction. A hayloft in which one sits, awaiting fate, while a stranger downstairs, who is really a good fairy in disguise, is fending off that fate by muttering invocations under her breath and bringing to the hiding place a bowl of soup. The sister, young, innocent, and loved, standing naked above a pit that is soon to become her own mass grave …[4]

This dark-forested landscape, populated by monsters and teeming with unseen dangers, is borrowed from Eastern European folk culture. In using these motifs to tell the story of her parents' wartime experiences, Eva Hoffman added the Nazi death camps and killing groves to an imaginative mental map that also contained witches' cauldrons and Baba Yaga's cottage. The carefully maintained silence in Hoffman's home meant that this figurative language was the only means of discussing the Holocaust that was available to her:

> It was true of my parents, as it was of many survivors, that they did not talk much about their prewar lives … The six years of the war had created a geological fissure in time and removed the world before to another era. There was nothing to help me imagine time extending backwards. The cut reinforced the conviction that the war, the Holocaust, was the dark root from which the world sprang.[5]

This sense of dislocation from time, common in trauma narratives,[6] makes fairy tale an ideal medium for exploring intergenerational legacies of terror and trauma. Fairy tales are typically devoid of temporal 'landmarks' such as dates; in

this sense they are themselves dislocated from time.[7] Consequently the stories that Hoffman pieced together from the fragments that her parents dropped, and which seemed to hold the potency of a creation myth, can only find a home in the genre that opens with the classically vague 'once upon a time'. Equally important is the ambiguity of space in fairy tale, which is peppered with places ranging from the mundane to the fabulous that recall real life without resorting to 'real' place names, thereby liberating fairy tale from the constraints of physical geography. Through this process the Poland of the Holocaust became accessible to an emigrant child growing up in Canada:

> Towers, forests, rooms, cages, ovens, huts, and enchanted castles are typical locations that threaten characters with isolation, danger, and violence, including imprisonment and death. Even familiar locations – including home – can become defamiliarised and threatening, as in 'Hansel and Gretel' … It seems evident that the fairy tale's geography and ambiguous landscapes lend themselves well to mapping the actual experience of physical dislocation and disorientation brought on by war.[8]

The stylistic features of fairy tale make it an apt vehicle for forbidden history, partly due to its ability to convey the trauma-induced sense of temporal and spatial dislocation which is so frequently a component of such histories, but also because it furnishes us with a coded language of symbol and metaphor that is nonetheless widely understood. Children growing up in survivor homes may have been unable to talk directly about the Birkenau ovens, but a witch's oven could be substituted for these, enabling them to reassemble their parents' 'hidden landscape' using everyday cultural tropes and figures that they had harvested from fairy tale and folk heritage. Most research into this storytelling process is informed by psychoanalytic approaches to literature and preoccupied with fairy tale's potential as 'an emotional survival strategy',[9] a trend initiated through Bruno Bettelheim's work on fairy tale and trauma.[10] One study of children's literature of atrocity that focuses on fairy tale forms argues that Holocaust writing in particular 'would be unthinkable without the therapeutic ethos' that was midwifed by the popularity of psychoanalysis in the decades after the genocide.[11] The socio-political possibilities of fairy tale in narrating forbidden histories are rarely discussed, especially in relation to children's storytelling. Yet a sociolinguistic analysis of stories told by young people who live with the legacy (and the ongoing reality) of mass violence reveals clear political functions.

These functions result from the child's position as a 'ratified non-participant'. This concept, famously developed by the sociologist Erving Goffman, is

elaborated through Ruth Wajnryb's vivid applied linguistic study of the transmission of Holocaust stories in survivor homes:

> What happens here is that the child who is the listener moves from a clearly public role (listener) into a less public role (eavesdropper). As such, the listener is still 'ratified' – meaning their presence is known about, as distinct from say, a child hiding and overhearing – but the difference is that the eavesdropping child is allowed to be a non-participant. Being a ratified non-participant is a luxurious role in that one is able to take information in receptively but is relieved of the obligations of fully-fledged listeners, namely having to produce responses and exhibit overt, active listening behaviours.[12]

However, in characterizing the ratified eavesdropper's role as a passive one, Wajnryb does not take the concept far enough. In fairy tale and folklore, eavesdropping blurs into narrative omniscience, giving narrative power to the covert listeners. Eavesdropping also makes demands on children's ingenuity and creativity: having overheard their parents' midnight plans to abandon them in the heart of the forest, Hansel and Gretel lay trails of breadcrumbs and white pebbles to enable them to find their way home. The forbidden family histories that youth receive as 'humble, homely, disconnected units of narration',[13] which trickle through bedroom walls or are told to visitors while the young people recede into the wallpaper, invite a similar creative response. Through the familiar structure and rich figurative vocabulary of fairy tales, youth are able to organize those disconnected units into a coherent form, a process that is essential not only to psychological healing,[14] but also to community-building.[15] Through the stories that they weave around the significant histories that are rarely directly broaching with them, children become archivists and architects of community, two obviously socio-political functions.

An explicit example that I discovered while working at Ṣumūd Story House was a fairy tale that had been created by a group of twelve young people living in Bethlehem, in proximity to the separation wall. They had worked on this story as a group, writing it out and illustrating it in detail before narrating it, taking it in turns to voice the characters. It was later developed into an animated film:

> Once upon a time there was a little girl who brought food to her grandma every day … Her grandmother loved her so much that she made her a flowery dress. The little girl found it so pretty that she wore it every day, and everyone called her Warda [Rose].
>
> That morning her mother had cooked rice and chicken. 'Take this to your grandmother. Be careful!' Warda left at once. But that day she found her path barred by this huge wall. She sat and cried. A boy from school asked why she

was crying. Warda told him, 'I need to get to my grandmother but I can't get through any more.'

'Why don't you throw stones to break the wall?' he suggested. Warda threw one stone, she threw two, but the wall stayed up. After the third stone she began to cry again. The woodcutter came by and said, 'What are you doing, Warda?' She said, 'I want to go to my grandmother.'

'That won't work, let me help you,' the woodcutter said. He chopped down a big tree so that it fell against the wall. Warda thanked him and climbed up the tree, but the wall was still too high. She couldn't go down the other side.

Then an old man asked, 'What are you doing up there?'

'I want to go my grandmother. She lives on the other side.'

'Let me help you.'

The old man gave Warda a pencil. 'This pencil is very special. Draw what you dream of. You'll see.'

Warda drew a huge bird on the wall. And soon, it came alive. Warda jumped on its back with her basket … 'Good morning, Grandma, look what I brought you!'

This contemporary reworking of *Layla and the Wolf* (an Arabic version of *Red Riding Hood*) contains many themes. Immediately obvious is the young people's own distress at having their movement restricted and contact with near relatives made more difficult – something that is also present in stories about the wall that I heard from Bethlehem adults. The elderly relative of one participant reported, 'Everywhere I look I see the wall. I feel as though the wall is on my heart.' This sense of claustrophobia permeates the story (in their oral telling, young people spontaneously added several times that Warda was 'stuck' and 'crying') but cannot close it down; due to the narrative familiarity offered by the fairy tale form both tellers and listeners know that Warda will eventually outwit the wall/wolf. However, this fairy tale account of the construction of the barrier (which was built so rapidly in Bethlehem that youth in some neighbourhoods returned home from school to find that it had sprung up in their absence, in a seemingly fantastical manner) is not simply a psychological exercise in wish fulfilment, but a demonstration of young people's sense of responsibility to their community. Warda has a duty to take food to her grandmother, an act of caring; she does not give up when confronted by the wall, but remains there until she finds a way to accomplish her task. Because of her perseverance, the family is not severed. Although in reality there is no magic bird to carry Bethlehem's youth to relatives on the other side of military installations, simply telling the story is a way of affirming community connections in the face of movement restrictions.

The tale also reveals young people's perception of their own role and capabilities. Notably, in the story, the other characters (all but one of them adult) register no shock on the wall's sudden appearance and display no insight into Warda's situation – they have to ask why she cries and what she is trying to achieve. This could be read as the young people's own expression of frustration at the apathy and near-fatalistic resignation that characterize many political discussions among adults in Bethlehem. A nineteen-year-old female student from Bethlehem University commented in illustration of this point during an individual interview: 'When people live close to the wall, it starts to seem normal to them. When people from the villages come and see it, when they have to pass through Qalandia [a checkpoint], they're stunned. People from the outside can't understand why we accept it.' In the sense that they are marginalized politically, all young people hold such outsider status; Warda's horror at the wall's appearance and her determination to find a way round it are a demonstration of the sharp critical sight that her child's-eye position affords. The fairy tale also succeeds in bringing power out of vulnerability, as the only character capable of producing an answer is an elderly man. Age is associated with wisdom in folklore and fairy tale, but it also means physical weakness, which in Bethlehem is never more visible than in hours spent waiting at checkpoints. Between them, the child and the old man find a way to cross the wall and reunite families, a narrative device that demonstrates the connection between generations and reveals the skill and ingenuity of weakened people, who eventually achieve what the physical strength of the woodman and the stone-thrower could not. This is another characteristic of fairy tale, whose protagonists are often children.

In this retelling, the major point of departure from the traditional plot is the substitution of a cunning living creature with the wall. Although the wall is not always presented as inanimate in autobiographical stories narrated by Bethlehem youth (several stories treat it as sentient, with a twelve-year-old boy from the city centre commenting, 'it stares at you. I don't like to go near it'), in the tale there is no dialogue between Warda and the wall. Unlike the wolf, its presence in the story has no apparent rationale – and it is curiously detached from soldiers, who in autobiographical storytelling are always quick to follow any mention of the wall. To an outside listener, the 'motiveless malignancy' that permeates fairy tale might appear to strip 'Warda and the Wall' of all political content,[16] transforming it into a magical tale of triumph over adversity while avoiding the origins of that adverse situation. But from analysing the Bethlehem youth's purely autobiographical stories (defined as first-person narrations of

events that involved them directly) it becomes clear that the wall is so closely associated with stories of uncertainty, familial separation, land confiscation and job loss, bereavement, and fear of army violence that in their fairy tale – which was told among themselves, not with outsiders in mind – participants felt no need to elaborate on the circumstances of its construction. Most of them live in the Rachel's Tomb area, surrounded by the wall; one eleven-year-old boy touched on a common experience when he said, 'I invite all my class to my birthday every year but some of them still won't come. They don't like to go near the wall because of what happened here [in the Second Intifada].' The words 'the wall' are adequate in themselves to convey 'what happened here' among Bethlehem's youth. It has become part of a dark shorthand dictionary for violence and political terror. In addition, the absence of soldiers from the tale may be read as a political decision in its own right: 'Warda' presents Bethlehem's community as the storytellers want it to be, and soldiers have no part in that landscape.

Because of its treatment of space and time, fairy tale as a genre is closely bound up with loss; 'once upon a time' and 'in a faraway land' become powerful phrases for youth who have experienced home demolition or forced relocation, or who form the fourth generation in Palestinian refugee camps. In one study on the inner lives of very young children born in Gush Katif (the Israeli settlement bloc in Gaza) in the aftermath of the 2005 disengagement, one child consciously began his narration with, 'Once there was a faraway land. It is Gush Katif …'[17] His old home, in all its former mundane familiarity, has joined the unknown and distant countries that make up the landscape of fairy tale. The familiar phrase emphasizes the paradoxical distance that stretches between him and Gush Katif, the site of which is technically within driving distance but inaccessible to its former settlers; fairy tale vocabulary enables him to conjure up that lost landscape in one poignant phrase. However, in all the interview excerpts quoted in the study, one landscape remains obscured. Few informants make reference to Palestinian life in Gaza, and when such references do occur, they normally relate to rocket fire; the rocketeers remain unseen. One child suggests that Arabs should be happy with what they have, but does not describe what that is. A parallel absence echoes through 'Warda and the Wall', which deals solely with Warda and her neighbours; no Israelis feature in the story at all. This suggests that younger children's basic ideas of community are constructed around familiar faces belonging to people who speak their language and share their street. Yet the presence of the other community has a profound impact on the life of youth in Israel-Palestine, determining where they may live and even where they feel safe walking; and during storytelling sessions with youth in the Aida refugee

camp, which took place over nine months, the nature and significance of Israeli presence in their lives became manifest.

Working with Aida's young people, I found that creating fairy tales, with their powerful capacity for allegory, is a more effective method than direct questioning of eliciting stories about 'hidden landscapes' – in this case, the world on the other side of the separation wall, which winds tightly round the camp. In one early session, I wrote down the names of different places that I knew most of the young people had never seen – Gaza, Tel Aviv, Efrat (a settlement close to Aida), the beach – and asked them each to draw a card and imagine we had a magic carpet that could take us to the place they had drawn out. What would we see there? What would we do? Nine-year-old Huwaida, on drawing the card labelled 'Efrat', made a face, threw it back into the box, and announced, 'I don't want to tell stories about settlements'. Twelve-year-old Junayd agreed to base his story on Efrat, but it consisted solely of: 'They will shoot us if we go near and there's a prison there.' (The military prison is not in fact located in Efrat, suggesting that for Junayd the notion of 'prison' is bound up with settlements in general, not with one particular place.) All the young people struggled to expand their stories beyond a sentence. But when I used a method based on the archetypal structure of fairy tales, the Six-Part Story Method (6PSM), the picture changed.

Fairy tale is inextricably intertwined with the idea of 'the Other', as

> most of the accounts of encounters in fairy land involve incidents and adventures that occurred to someone else. This is the terrain of anecdote, ghost sightings, and old wives' tales, of oral tradition, hearsay, superstition, and shaggy dog stories: once upon a time and far away among another people …[18]

The alterity that is woven into the genre mean that fairy tale is an ideal means of exploring young people's attitudes towards that faraway 'other people' and the influence these unknown others have on their own lives. In situations of intractable political violence, the allegorical function of fairy tale makes it possible for youth to approach places and people whom they may not feel able to address in the first-person voice, as shown by Huwaida's reaction to my question about Efrat. In the 6PSM, participants are asked to draw a story in six stages, receiving a new prompt as they complete each segment. They must create a protagonist and a setting that are far removed from their own context; the protagonist does not need to be human and use of the fantastical is encouraged. In the second stage, they create a mission for the main character; in the third, they introduce obstacles that the protagonist encounters; and in the fourth, they detail helpful factors. The fifth and sixth stages consist of the climax and

aftermath. When the drawing is complete, each person narrates the story they have created without interruption. Devised by the Israeli dramatherapist Mooli Lahad, 6PSM's purpose is to allow clients to explore taboo or traumatic themes in their lives obliquely, without becoming overwhelmed by their proximity to the ideas raised.[19] However, its origins in oral culture and the fact that the method is based on the structure of traditional tales as opposed to particular psychopathologies mean that it can easily be adapted for use outside mental health settings.

Eight children in Aida camp took part in this activity. Five of them chose birds as their protagonists, and in each story the birds were endangered by some other animal – a wolf, a snake or other birds. Holding up his picture, ten-year-old Abed narrated:

> There once was a bird called Abdullah who lived in a tree with his children. There were big black crows in the sky, waiting to tear Abdullah's nest to pieces with their beaks. Abdullah was very worried because if the crows destroyed the nest he and his children wouldn't have a house any more. He decided that he needed to move the nest. His wife helped him and they flew away to another tree carrying twigs in their beaks to make a new nest. Then they carried the babies to the new tree, where they could live safely. The solution was to have a new nest where the crows couldn't come.

In an earlier activity, the children had drawn maps detailing significant places in their lives; at the centre of Abed's was a house surrounded by soldiers, with the separation barrier towering over the scene. 'He lives by the wall,' another child explained. Abed then drew a spiral round the wall and the house, commenting as he did so, 'This is the noise from their machines – sound grenades, guns, loudspeakers on the jeep, now they are shouting at us …' There is a military base on the other side of the separation barrier, adjacent to Abed's home. The image of jeeps moving in on the house is mirrored by the story of crows circling ominously above Abdullah's tree. Abed's 'other' consists of Israeli soldiers; throughout our workshops the extent to which they preoccupy him became clear. He would frequently leave his place to look through the window at the watchtower, saying, 'I think they can see us.' During the mapping exercise, he asked permission to go outside and sketch the wall; he returned almost instantly and said he was frightened the soldiers would take him to prison if they saw him drawing. Abed's mental map is boundaried by soldiers and military installations, which affect everything from the route he takes home to the feelings he has about that home. Stories told by other youth in Aida camp revealed a similar

pattern, with soldiers figuring not as individuals, but an amorphous horde that surges on the edges of the camp, often spilling into its alleyways.

Several young people attributed malevolent quasi-magical powers to the soldiers, with nine-year-old Huwaida stating, 'They speak even better Arabic than we do and they know everything we're saying. They can hear everything.' The Aida children's stories of the army are characterized by the fearsome suggestion of its omnipresence and omniscience. In addition to endowing soldiers with superhuman attributes, the children sometimes used the term 'green monsters' for them, a phrase I also heard in central Bethlehem. ('I didn't always call them green monsters,' one seventeen-year-old boy from Bethlehem recounted, when asked about the origin of the phrase. 'I started to call them that when I saw how they kill.') In the young people's imagination the soldiers clearly straddle the boundary between terrifying fantasy and an equally terrifying reality – monstrous, possessed of fascinating and frightening powers that seem barely human, and capable of carrying off unwary children (another common fairy tale trope that here finds its expression in the imprisonment of minors under military law). The soldiers fill the role of the archetypal fairy tale villain, who may present as human (even benign) in some circumstances while secretly possessing magical power and malevolent intent. It is noteworthy that unlike young people in Bethlehem itself, youth in Aida camp struggled to differentiate between the army and civilian Israelis: 'soldiers', 'Israelis' and 'Jews' were all used by them interchangeably, suggesting that the soldier is their one enduring symbol of the other (as well as their one point of contact).

Equally, many Israeli teenagers used 'Arab' rather than Palestinian, and their stories suggested that they could not perceive a difference between the cultures and nations of the Middle East. 'We [Jews] have only one state, they [Arabs] have twenty-two' was a frequent assertion, accompanied by uncertainty over where Palestinian communities were located. Nurit and Stav, sisters aged sixteen and fifteen, respectively, who live in the northern Israeli town Ra'anana, spent five minutes arguing over where the nearest Arab village might be. Although I had used the word 'community' in my question, they responded by speaking about 'villages', shrinking the concept and suggesting that they associate Palestinians with the countryside rather than with their own middle-class urban life. This uncertainty is crystallized in Nurit's image of Palestinian schools: 'When you imagine a school in – where they live, then for me, the first thing that comes up is a very dark place, like not very serious about studies, more about hurting Jews, or getting our country – [hesitant pause, then laughter] I said "our country".' Rather than giving a specific location, Nurit refers to 'where they live'; its

schools are 'dark', the darkness signifying Nurit's own lack of knowledge as well as the unseen dangers she senses there. Interestingly, her use of the phrase 'our country' prompted her to stop, laughing slightly, and query her own meaning. (Borders emerge in her storytelling as liquid and treacherous, something that will be discussed in detail in the subsequent chapter.)

In the stories told by children from most subcommunities, the other initially emerged as a faceless threat – Arabs massing on the uncertain borders of the world's only Jewish state awaiting their moment to strike; soldiers bursting into houses in the middle of the night, their near-omniscience making it impossible to hide. Stories from Israeli youth dealt more frequently with the fear and possibility of such violent encounters, while Palestinian peers were more likely to tell autobiographical stories in which violence had actually occurred. In one of the rare stories that dealt with soldiers as individuals Nariman, an eleven-year-old girl from Aida, described how soldiers had arrived in the small hours of the morning to arrest her father:

> My mum came into my room and said, 'Get up, get up, the soldiers are here, they're arresting Dad.' At first I said, 'You're joking! You have to be kidding me, Mum,' but then I heard Hebrew in the kitchen and when my sisters and I ran in, the soldiers were there. I couldn't see Dad. He was in the next room. I could hear him. There were soldiers blocking all the doorways. We don't know why they were taking him. At first they didn't want us to say goodbye to him, but then one soldier said 'Let them say goodbye,' and I could hug my dad.

Curious at her retelling of events – this was the first story in which an Aida child had quoted a specific soldier – I prompted her for more details about him. Did she know his age? Nariman looked incredulous and asked me to repeat the question, perhaps thinking she must have misheard. 'Thirty-four,' she said (the other children giggled). Aware that most Israeli soldiers in the Aida area are conscripts aged between eighteen and twenty-one, I recognized that this was a guess. 'What did he look like?' 'Like all the others.' As soldiers entering camp homes are uniformed and often masked, on one level these statements simply reflect the difficulty of telling one masked armed man from another. However, the young people's inability to pinpoint the soldiers' age range has additional significance, as many fairy tale characters are ageless; specific ages are rarely given, or else they are so fantastical as to be impossible in real life. This is a world in which jinn can live inside bottles for millennia and a princess might sleep for a hundred years. The soldier's perceived agelessness locates him within a genre that renders him eerily alien. Like many fairy tale characters, he is not bound by the constraints of space and time, and so does not have to be physically

present in order to inculcate terror in the refugee camp youth who sat listening to one another's stories. Like the wall itself, certain objects are enough to conjure up associations of the army, meaning that the soldiers' presence is felt even in their absence. In lieu of a story, one boy silently held out a rubber-coated bullet, following another boy's account of being tear-gassed on the way home from school (tear gas was leaking into the room as we spoke). The rubber bullet fell into my palm with the finality of a full stop; he did not elaborate on why he was giving it to me, trusting in the object itself to carry the story:

> Fairy tale magic works through the uncanny activity of these inert objects, and it deepens the sense that invisible powers exist around us, and intensifies the thrill, the strangers and terror of the pervasive atmosphere of enchantment. Magical worlds are a danger zone.[20]

The soldiers, the 'invisible powers', darken the edges of the Aida children's mental maps, and through fairy tale the young people give voice to the terror that these powers inspire. Meanwhile, Israeli youth in settlements may keep a wary eye on the Palestinian communities clustered in the valleys, located behind scarlet army signs that proclaim the area dangerous to Jewish Israeli citizens. But terror is only one aspect of the hidden landscape, albeit the immediately dominant aspect. A close linguistic analysis of the metaphors and symbols that youth develop through their storytelling suggests that fear of the other is percolated by curiosity and, that on probing the imagined boundaries of community, the idiom of terror eventually gives way to an ambivalent dialogue with the figures that populate the young people's unseen landscapes.

A lexicon of symbols

In her study on post-memory, the term she applies to the relationship that the descendants of Holocaust survivors have with the genocide, Marianne Hirsch offers a critique of the idea that collective and cultural memory cannot be 'mediated through embodied practice but solely through symbolic systems'.[21] The physical and temporal distances from the events and places that shaped their parents and grandparents' lives have caused children of survivors to graft their parents' experiences onto their own surroundings by recognizing everyday objects as symbols of the horror that their parents endured, a symbolic system that Ruth Wajnryb terms 'iconic messages', and that binds together material objects with metaphor in a process that is central to storytelling.

> Iconic messages refer to the meanings embedded in certain tangible objects, certain distinctive behaviours or attitudes, and certain formal occasions that resonate with Holocaustal significance … Long before I knew about crematoria, about bodies in concentration camps being burned in death factories, I knew there was something ominous about industrial chimneys … Without knowing why, I used to dread passing them. Something happened to my father's demeanour. He tensed and then went inward somewhere in his own mind, and I knew to keep out of sight and earshot in the interim.[22]

Symbol and metaphor are particularly important in the narrative lives of children who are growing up with an intergenerational legacy of persecution and political violence, especially when outward discussion is limited, as they enable covert exploration of these hidden landscapes. The development of such iconic languages is reminiscent of Lacan's work on language and the unconscious, in which he presents Poe's short story 'The Purloined Letter' as an example of how a signifier (represented by the eponymous letter and its substitutions) has primacy over both subject and signified (the letter's true contents are not known to every person who handles it, with some handlers being unaware of the counterfeits in circulation). 'The actions of each of the characters are determined in relation to the letter in the same way that the subject, without being aware of it, is acted upon by the signifiers of language in relation to the unconscious.'[23] Wajnryb's father, who did not speak openly about the Holocaust in the home, may have been unaware that factory chimneys caused his daughter to retreat 'beyond sight and earshot' in recognition that the chimneys formed the visible edge of a horrific hidden landscape. They had come to share a symbolic vocabulary without him necessarily being aware of it, even though Wajnryb did not grasp what exactly the chimneys signified for her father. The power of the signifier over the signified in the creation of metaphor is a reminder that in analysing the young people's storytelling, I am not speaking so much about the stories they told, but more about how they told them – and what I heard. This uncertainty is a continual reminder of the hidden landscapes that lie between teller and listener, and the blind spots that exist for both. It also left me intrigued at the way Israeli and Palestinian youth use identical symbols (particularly stones and stone-throwing) to signify different things, yet presume a shared vocabulary.

The entrance to Aida refugee camp is spanned by an enormous rusting key, a symbol of the houses that were lost in the 1948 Nakba, which is known in the refugee community as *al-miftah al-awda* [the key of return]. In the Aida youth's storytelling, this key emerges as a bridge between their grandparents' Palestine and their own present. On playing a game with a set of dice that carry

images designed to spark storytelling, Abed rolled a picture of a key, saying immediately, '*Al-awda* [the return]'. This is an explicitly political concept; all the Aida youth I met were conversant with UN Resolution 194, which grants refugees the right to return to their homes, and human rights discourse informed their storytelling more broadly. Yet for these youth, *al-awda* would mean a return to a landscape that is not merely hidden, but irrevocably changed; their grandparents' villages no longer exist. Despite the influence these places have on their inner lives, the youth do not associate the key purely with the past: several connected it with the current Israeli policy of home demolition, expressing fear of homelessness and describing demolitions that had recently occurred in the nearby village of Walajeh. This suggests that for them 'return' does not simply mean the recreation of their grandparents' Palestine but the establishment of justice in their present-day lives. As one eighteen-year-old young woman commented, 'I am sick of trying to prove to them [Israelis] that I am a person. We were real people once, human, and I want to be a person again.' In an example of signifier's primacy over signified, fifteen-year-old Stav gave 'unfinished houses' and 'a deserty place' as her mental image of Palestinian communities, suggesting that, for her, the state of these structures signifies a bleak and incomplete life. Meanwhile, for young Palestinians they can indicate either lack of funds to complete the project or demolition threats (the army can place a stop work order on homes under construction), as well as being a metaphoric expression of the desire for a secure home.

It should be noted that many Palestinian refugees who lived through the Nakba view it as ongoing dispossession rather than a historical event,[24] which means that in explicitly linking their own lives under occupation with their grandparents' experiences the children are contributing to an established community narrative that has been written into the alleyways of the camp. Walls have been painted with the names of former villages, each one represented by a tent, another symbol that is ubiquitous in Palestinian refugee camps. Streets and shops are routinely named after destroyed villages, in 'an embodied and communal act of remembering. In telling people where you bought your refrigerator, explaining where you live, or walking your daughter to school, you are not only recalling the places of the past, but … investing them with new meanings and associations in the present.'[25] The Aida youth's immediate environment is overlaid with this figurative and highly politicized map, but interestingly they did not spontaneously talk about the lost villages that have been introduced to their alleyways. A powerful metaphor that emerged in many stories was that of birds in flight, but no child made a lost village into

their destination, even though most of them had introduced themselves to me as being from those villages. Twelve-year-old Junayd, having narrated the story of Abdullah the bird, connected the story to his present-day life:

Junayd: If I could be a bird I would fly away from here.
Me: Where?
Junayd: Other places, the sea. I don't know where exactly. But then I would
              come back. I would always come back.
Me: Why is that?
Junayd: To look at the wall. If I didn't come back I would forget what they did
              to us, and that's like forgetting me.

The 'other places' remain hidden; Junayd's principal concern is with the tangible present, represented by the wall and the soldiers, whose influence on his life has been so profound that he considers them to be integral to his sense of self. However, unseen and physically unreachable places are always tantalizingly present in Junayd's stories, even though he does not elaborate on them. In the first workshop, on being asked to draw a mental map of his community, he filled three-quarters of the page with the separation barrier, with al-Aqsa Mosque and a soldier behind it. Unusually the wall features a door. 'It's for soldiers though. We can't get through it. Too many locks.' On looking closely at the drawing, I realized that he had drawn the figure he identified as a soldier without a gun and with a face. In the other children's drawings the soldiers were depicted in visor helmets, faceless:

Me: Why is this soldier smiling?
Junayd: He's happy because he's occupying Jerusalem. [Pause, continuing
              to draw] I like the soldiers. [Youth worker exclaims, interjecting,
              'Why?'] I love them and I hate them. I hate them when they do these
              things, like now [gesturing to the window] but they are like us. I
              think they are like us when they go home.

Junayd was the only young person in Aida to demonstrate awareness that soldiers have lives outside the army, and to feel that this might be significant. In another meeting, he drew a picture that he identified as a settlement house, which again featured soldiers, one on each side of a closed door. 'You can't go inside. They will level their guns at you.' Junayd's stories and accompanying artwork suggest a strong if uneasy curiosity about Israeli home life, a hidden landscape that is symbolized by locked doors and distinguished by an interest in how Israelis might relate to Jerusalem. (Junayd identified the figure in his drawing as an occupying soldier, but depicts him without a uniform and wearing

a smile; at first sight I thought this was a representation of Junayd himself.) While Junayd's stories always circle back to the concrete realities in Aida, the symbols they contain suggest that the hidden landscape of Israeli society is always present to him, prompting him to describe an alternative community in which soldiers have a legitimate place: immediately after describing the soldier on his mental map as 'occupying Jerusalem', he spoke of the soldiers' trips 'home', a word denoting genuine belonging.

Political graffiti on the separation barrier makes Aida camp a rich area in which to consider the role of symbolism in personal and community narratives. For one workshop, I took photographs of camp graffiti and invited participants to tell stories based on the images. This exercise provided valuable clues into participants' use of space and experience of their home environment, as some youth reported that they had not seen specific graffiti due to fear of the area where the images are located. One image showed Handala, the emblematic child-figure created by the refugee cartoonist Naji Ali, skipping hand in hand towards the horizon with Vittorio Arrigoni, an Italian peace activist murdered by Islamist paramilitaries in Gaza in 2011. Arrigoni's name was apparently not known to the children. Eleven-year-old Nariman said of the picture, 'This is a man who has been to get his child out of jail. His son was imprisoned by the Jews for six months and now he's free.' All the children identified with Handala – 'He's a boy from the camp' – and the stories elicited by this image almost all involved throwing stones at the army, which is typical behaviour among camp youth. Nine-year-old Huwaida related: 'My dad forbids me to go near the wall in case the soldiers kidnap me, but I go, and my [female] cousins and I throw stones at the soldiers, because we want to defend our land.' Throwing stones has become a metaphor in itself; fifteen-year-old Sami, relating the story of his arrest for throwing stones at a military jeep, said, 'One soldier tried to be nice. He asked did I know that stones can kill. I told him of course, David killed Goliath.' This suggests that Sami views stone-throwing as a means of communication rather than simply a method of fighting; it identifies him as the weaker party but also emphasizes his determination and hints at eventual victory. Fifteen-year-old Hanin, a Palestinian girl keeping a diary during the Second Intifada, took the symbolism further and identified herself as a stone:

> We are living in the land of peace but the circumstances that we went through and the feelings that we go through, especially when we feel that our country is being taken away from us, made us as hard as stone. So you see my dear friend, I am a stone, one of the many stones that are fighting the enemy.[26]

Hanin frequently refers to her Catholic faith in her diary, which imbues her declaration 'I am a stone' with biblical significance: 'Come to him, a living stone, though rejected by mortals yet chosen and precious in God's sight …' (2 Peter 4.5) She may have deployed this symbolism consciously, as the image of living stones is prominent in the Palestinian Christian community, standing in poignant contrast to the stones heaped in villages destroyed during the Nakba. Hanin's conception of herself also invokes memories of the First Intifada (1987–90), often known as *intifāḍa al-ḥijārah* (the intifada of the stones), in which young Palestinians (*aṭfāl al-ḥijārah*, children of the stones) were at the forefront of political protest. Through metaphor she indicates that she is part of an ongoing struggle, the stones part of a signifying chain that stretches back before she was born.

For young Israelis in this study, stones glance off armoured bus windows, jolting them into panic; they shatter windscreens and signify inexplicable hatred and disregard for human life. A seventeen-year-old boy from the settlement of Kfar Etzion, on hearing I lived in Bethlehem, exclaimed, 'No way! Do you know any terrorists?' I asked him what he meant by the term. 'Someone who throws stones.' Later he would ask curiously, 'Why do they do that? Throw rocks?' Other Israeli participants, notably Nurit and Stav, theorized that Palestinian children were being groomed by their parents for violent acts. Stones, which for many Palestinian participants, are symbols of resilience and agency, embody a long history of pain and protest, have become signifiers of irrational and inexplicable violence that is planned by adults. In Sami's story, this cut between signifier and signified is sutured by his awareness that the story of David and Goliath is common to Jews and Muslims, enabling him to push soldiers into an unexpected and potentially destabilizing encounter with the story and the meanings it holds for them. For Huwaida, throwing stones sends a message to her family as well as to the army; she is signalling her right to active participation in what she defines as 'defending the land' and rejecting her family's attempts to restrict her movements. Although '[children's] ability to claim ownership of space and place is curtailed by their dependent status in society and by the power of adults to define appropriate places for children',[27] the development of a symbolic language incorporating doors, keys, birds and stones enables young people to stake a broader claim to territory, freedom of movement and political participation through their storytelling.

Their relationship with less-familiar symbols, which do not hold the same near-universal currency in Palestine, was also politically charged. This is most clearly evidenced by the swastika that I discovered on the wall of a camp house, and which I interpreted as an assertion of pro-Nazi anti-Semitic views. During

the image-based workshop described above I placed the swastika among the other photographs without comment and invited the youth (all aged between nine and twelve) to choose any picture as the inspiration for their storytelling. None could identify the swastika correctly and they showed no interest in it. However, a small group of fourteen- and fifteen-year-olds who came to see what we were doing recognized it immediately: 'That's the Nazi sign.' Seeing that their younger peers had begun to write stories in the margins of photographs, they asked if they could do the same for the swastika, leaving the caption, 'This is the sign that the Israeli government likes to show to the Germans to remind them of what they did to the Jews.' These young people demonstrated awareness of the genocidal nature and scope of the Holocaust, but their response to the atrocity was governed by their own political situation; they viewed the mass murder of Jews in terms of exploitation of Holocaust memory on the part of the Israeli government and the implications that such exploitation might have for their own lives. However, they did not attempt to deny or minimize the Holocaust or to establish parity between their own situation and the Nazi genocide, a common pattern in Palestinian engagement with the Holocaust.[28] Rather than mapping Jewish suffering in Nazi Europe onto their own experience in the occupied West Bank, they put geographical distance between themselves and the Holocaust by noting that it took place in Germany. This suggests that they are able to make a distinction between the Holocaust itself (in which they stake no personal claim) and its aftermath (in which they do).

All the youth in Aida camp were at their most fluent and detailed when relating day-to-day personal realities. They were more hesitant to share stories about the hidden landscapes beyond the separation barrier, whether literal or figurative. This may in part be due to a desire to be factually accurate about the unseen places, but could also be attributed to the unusual conception of space and place that became apparent through the symbols that appeared most frequently in their stories and drawings. As Christmas neared, the young people became excited about the tree that would be erected in Bethlehem town square and described it multiple times. 'We are going to see it. There will be a bus. We go every year.' I realized that for my participants this represented a major journey, as evidenced by the following conversation with ten-year-old Reem:

Reem: I want to leave the camp. It's hard to stay here with the soldiers and the wall. I'll go somewhere else … I know someone who went to America. It's better to be there. It's a long way from here.

Me: Where would you like to live, and why?

Reem: Bethlehem or Beit Jala. There's no occupation there.

Beit Jala and Bethlehem are within a five-minute walk of the camp entrance, but Reem perceives the distance as being much greater, as like many refugee youth she rarely leaves the camp. For her Bethlehem does not constitute part of her wider neighbourhood, but is a place perpetually decked in fairy lights and represented by a Christmas tree, the scene of a party. Consequently it may be that many neighbouring communities, whether Israeli or Palestinian, simply feel too distant for young people to incorporate them into a sustained and personally meaningful narrative. Another possibility is that the figurative vocabulary of Aida's youth does not equip them to explore Israeli life in depth. As the Gaza-based psychiatrist Eyad El-Sarraj wrote, 'Occupation is a form of language. The child is well aware of the difference between the living conditions in his or her dirty camp and the living conditions in the newly built Israeli settlement.'[29] Huwaida's refusal to incorporate settlements into her storytelling may be read in light of this awareness and an attendant sense of humiliation. Equally, while Junayd was visibly interested in Israeli home life, his most elaborate stories involved guns, tanks and watchtowers. His considerations of a non-militarized Israeli life were given in shorter sentences and punctuated by frequent pauses. He seemed to lack the linguistic resources to convey this alternative scenario that he was nonetheless curious about; I was reminded of my own first hesitant attempts to speak Arabic and Hebrew. Going beyond symbolism and metaphor, the centrality of military apparatus to Aida youth's stories makes it more akin to grammatical structure; when this is taken away, the stories become more fragmented and disjointed. Consequently the interfaces between hidden and known landscapes are most frequently denoted through pauses, whispering and the visible struggle to identify the most suitable word – the construction of the story rather than the story itself. A richer figurative vocabulary is needed to access such landscapes, leading naturally to a discussion of the relationship between Arabic and Hebrew and the role of bilingualism in children's storytelling.

Mother tongues and other tongues

Language is one of the sharpest demarcations of contested space in Israel-Palestine, encapsulated in an anecdote related by the sociolinguist Yasir Suleiman. During a walk from East Jerusalem (predominantly Arab) to West Jerusalem (predominantly Jewish) his son pointed out that they always switched

from Arabic to more neutral English when passing a certain point. 'My son had intuitively identified a linguistic boundary which, to my astonishment, coincided with where the physical boundary between East and West Jerusalem had stood until 1967 …'[30] Although the boy had never seen the wall and barbed wire that had divided Jerusalem along ethnic lines, the history of that division had entered his consciousness through his parents' shift in language as they entered an area where they felt unable to use their mother-tongue. Language can indicate how a young person relates to a particular place. It is therefore unsurprising that bilingual education has been advanced as a means of creating a more just and inclusive society in Israel-Palestine, with its proponents viewing it as 'empowerment pedagogy' that will lead to 'greater cultural integration and pluralism'.[31] Shared languages are viewed as a precursor to shared spaces, an idea that is reflected in curriculum design for bilingual schools. Initially the curriculum emphasized perfect symmetry between the two languages, with the sole provider of bilingual education in Israel hiring Jewish and Arab co-teachers to work in each classroom. Eventually the provider would come to stress Arabic over Hebrew in an effort to address the lower Arabic competency level of Jewish students. However, Jewish Israeli acquisition of Arabic remains slower than Palestinian Israeli acquisition of Hebrew due to

> an adaptive, wider socio-political system in which Arabic carries little symbolic power. In Bourdieu's (1991) terms, it can be said in general that in Israel, speakers of Hebrew have more cultural capital in the linguistic marketplace than those who speak Arabic.
>
> It is not clear that the parents participating in the initiative are interested in changing the existing power relations in Israel. The Jewish parents … while clearly liberally inclined and hopeful in creating more humane and respectful environments for the Palestinian-Israelis, do not necessarily see the need for radical change. The Palestinian parents, who belong to an aspiring middle class, understand the advantages of linguistically empowering their children's entrance into the reigning bureaucracy and the need to adapt to the rules of the game … We cannot assume that solutions to these issues can be found in the narrow limits of the school and their surrounding communities.[32]

The asymmetries that exist outside the bilingual classroom affect how languages are used within the classroom. I witnessed the influence of these asymmetries over the course of three separate visits to an integrated school in Jerusalem, which later I explored during storytelling work with students. Discussing my project with an Israeli Jewish staff member, I explained that I was interested

in the transmission of forbidden histories across the language boundary. In illustration, I quoted the questioning title that the Nakba remembrance organization Zochrot [Hebrew: 'remembering'] has given to its education kit, 'How do we say "Nakba" in Hebrew?' The teacher looked quizzical, replying, 'I think it's the same word, actually.' Even after I had explained that I was not looking for a literal translation but attempting to understand the political, social and psychological aspects of discussing the Nakba in a bilingual milieu, he did not appear to view this as a necessary question, despite the hostile or ambivalent attitudes experienced by many Palestinians towards the Hebrew language.[33]

Rafael, a fifteen-year-old student at Yad b'Yad who describes himself as an Arab Jew ('And that's not totally politically correct'), outlined the school's linguistic dynamics unprompted after I commented on his fluency in Arabic:

> The dominant language in the school, though, is Hebrew. For Arab youth it's easier to learn Hebrew, because they're in it – Hebrew's basically around them when they go to the mall, and they get to experience Hebrew and practise Hebrew every day of their lives, even after school. And for the Jewish youth it's actually harder also because they started opening up and listening to Arabs and learning Arabic only as soon as they went to the school. And they only experienced speaking Arabic in the school. So the dominant language is Hebrew.

Arabic is presented here in terms of a profound and challenging encounter for the Jewish children, connected with the time when 'they started opening up and listening to Arabs'. Learning Arabic is synonymous with experiencing Palestinian stories. If becoming bilingual means 'opening up' to those stories, remaining monolingual implies a state of insularity and closure. In Hebrew this phrasing is reminiscent of army terminology, which 'opens up' roads or places areas under 'closure'. Learning Arabic emerges as a way of undermining such restrictions. Meanwhile Palestinian students are described as being 'in' Hebrew, a preposition that transforms the language into a physical location. Their Jewish peers are not said to be 'in' Arabic. This mirrors the terminology that is used to describe regional demographics: it is common to hear 'Palestinians in Israel' mentioned, but rarely 'Israelis in Palestine'. Hebrew's linguistic dominance parallels Israeli control over space and resources.

Three main attitudes towards Hebrew emerged among Palestinian youth in this study: the perception of it as the language of a colonizing power, which had replaced their own names for many towns and villages; as camouflage that may be adopted for personal safety; and as contraband. Budour, a fifteen-year-old Palestinian girl with Israeli citizenship, who lives in the Jewish-Arab cooperative

village of Neve Shalom/Wahat as Salaam, described the power dynamics that are played out in the village through language:

> They [Jewish peers] can't speak Arabic as good as we speak Hebrew. First of all they're shy, but it mainly happens because we go to a Jewish [secondary] school, so they stop learning Arabic at a point. Also, most of the people around us speak Hebrew and everything in this country just goes in Hebrew. [Laughs] So it really affects us, even though we live in this so-called bubble, the things that are happening outside affect us … [T]he conversation won't flow in Arabic the way it flows in Hebrew. I think that the older generation cares about it more than us. I don't know why. I don't know if it's bad that we don't care about it as much as they care about it, because language is a very important thing in culture, but … the fact that we're having this conversation is more important than which language we're doing it. This is my opinion. But I still think it's not OK that in a village that both communities live in, the language we speak in when we're together is Hebrew, mostly.

Budour makes a distinction between communication and the language in which communication takes place, stating that the interaction is 'more important' than the language. However, she also identifies that Hebrew's dominance in the village indicates a darker interaction with the community beyond: structural inequalities and political violence – 'things that are happening outside' – ensure that Hebrew remains preeminent. A Jewish teenager from Wahat as-Salaam/ Neve Shalom described how some Jewish adults on the village council had become defensive when Arab colleagues requested fully bilingual council meetings, with one Jewish woman commenting, 'It doesn't feel like the same Neve Shalom anymore.' In that story, Hebrew dominance is presented as the norm, even for this cooperative village. Budour gives a painful example of such norms when she describes her departure from Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom's integrated primary school for secondary education in a Jewish school, where her mother tongue immediately casts her as an unwanted outsider:

> I remember that I went to class, and I talked to my friend named Rafaat [a Palestinian boy from the village], and I said, I think I only said his name or asked him to give me something, and they [Jewish classmates] just turned around and looked at us … I even remember someone saying, 'I thought this was a very good school, why do we have Arab kids in it.'

Use of Arabic can lead to humiliating and sometimes even dangerous consequences. Nineteen-year-old Amal, a young Palestinian woman from

Dheisheh refugee camp whose father (a registered Jerusalem resident from Shuafat refugee camp) is a driver for the Israeli bus company Egged, explained:

> Last year an Arab bus driver was killed by some Israelis, because they knew he was an Arab, so my father – when I call him at work he doesn't speak to me in Arabic, sometimes he replies to me in Hebrew or English or anything other than Arabic, so I can understand that he can't speak to me in Arabic right now, or else maybe they'll know. And when he was a taxi driver, lots of times the Israelis, when they know he's an Arab they wouldn't take a taxi with him.

Amal's words came back to me in autumn 2015, when night-time gangs of right-wing Israelis were combing West Jerusalem streets in search of Palestinian labourers to beat up, asking passers-by for the time to see if they could detect an Arab accent. For some of the young Palestinians in this study, Arabic is associated with the comfort of home and the safety of Arab-majority areas; Hebrew is a precarious mask that is adopted beyond those borders. For others, knowledge of Hebrew is seen as risky in itself. Nine-year-old Huwaida, on being asked if she understood the soldiers in the checkpoint, replied, 'No, I'm a good Muslim and I don't speak Hebrew', raising her hands as though to ward off the question. After the other youth had left the room, she whispered that she is able to write her name in Hebrew. She declined to say where she had learned, evidently treating Hebrew as illicit material that is incompatible with her own linguistic heritage and religious identity.

A similar sense of treacherousness emerged during another visit to the bilingual school Yad b'Yad, where I listened to ninth-grade students (aged 14–15) describing the attitudes to bilingualism that they encounter outside the school walls.

Jewish Israeli student:	Some of my Jewish friends got so excited when they heard I study here. 'Wow! You learn Arabic! That's so cool! How do you say "I love you" in Arabic? Can you write my name in Arabic?' [Laughter] Some of them went, 'The only reason Arabs are in your school is because they want to learn our secrets and destroy us from the inside.'
Palestinian Israeli student: *(interrupting)*	I will destroy you. [Laughter] I live in a Jewish neighbourhood. We are the only Muslim family and it's hard because they [neighbours] think I am the only Muslim who is nice … I don't speak Arabic in the street near my house now, especially after this summer [2014].

Jewish Israeli student (2):	After the summer war all my friends on the outside say that the school can't work. That's it, done. They ask why I want to go to school with our enemies. Someone asked my mother why she's letting me learn Arabic, if she wants me to marry an Arab …

Bilingualism is associated with treachery ('learning our secrets'), destruction and cultural disintegration through intermarriage. During my field research, the Jerusalem school was targeted by arsonists, who destroyed a first-grade classroom and daubed racist anti-Arab slogans on the wall. Rania, a fifteen-year-old Palestinian student, opened our storytelling session with this event:

> I don't know if you know this, but our school was burned, so that day is important, and the day after, what we did with it … A few months ago our school was burned by three young people, I think they were from Lehava [extremist Jewish anti-miscegenation organization], and then they wrote – they burned the first-grade classroom, and they wrote stuff on the walls with spray paint. Like, they wrote 'No coexistence with cancer' and stuff like that … So some parents went there and some kids went there and they made posters, and since the first-graders didn't have their classrooms, they needed to fix them, so the next day our class said we should like give them our classroom and we will be in the library, so it will be easier on them. So we did that and our teacher said it will be nice if we come in the morning and – the first-graders were scared, so it will be nice if we take them to their classes and everything. So we did that, and we wrote more posters. I think this thing bonded us more than separated us, because it was a really happy moment, but it was sad … We were writing 'We all want to live in peace', 'Arabs and Jews want to be friends', and stuff like that … We always get stuff written on the walls, but that was the hardest one. If you write something, we stop caring about it, and we got used to it, but when someone gets inside the school and they burn it, it's more something that can – like what if we were in the school, and they did something to us? So it became really scary.

Walls are contested spaces in Israel-Palestine and they function as a powerful symbols in the children's storytelling, most notably when Junayd states that he needs to 'look at the [separation] wall' in order to avoid 'forgetting me'. The wall has become his mirror. One day Huwaida reported that she had seen a soldier drawing or writing on the separation barrier. I asked her what he had drawn, assuming it had been offensive. Huwaida replied indignantly, 'I don't know, it was too far for me to see, but that's our wall.' This story shows that graffiti is a way of asserting control over a space while indicating that it is possible for youth

to detach the wall from its actual purpose and original context, a phenomenon that has also been observed among young people growing up in close proximity to the so-called peace walls in Belfast, which have become entrenched in the physical and cultural landscape.[34] Rania's reaction to anti-Arab graffiti ('If you write something, we stop caring about it, and we got used to it …') is a blunter example of this process of desensitization. The arson attack reignited her awareness of writing's destructive power, with her linking the graffiti with the fire in one sentence ('And then they wrote – they burned …'). In responding to the attack by creating posters, intended to be displayed on walls, the children were using their own writing to reassert power over their space.

Thinking about the anthropology of space and violence, the Israeli architect and scholar Eyal Weizman has argued that 'the logic of visibility – to both see and be seen – dictated the overall design' of settlements, the separation barrier and military installations. Their function is to

> demonstrate the presence of the occupation's power. [Prime Minister] Sharon, flying over the Occupied Territories once remarked: 'Arabs should see Jewish lights every night from 500 metres.' Tactical consideration therefore engaged simultaneously with both seeing and being seen. The sense of being always under the gaze was meant to make the colonised internalise the facts of their domination.[35]

Daubing sinister graffiti on school walls also generates a feeling of being under observation, and by writing wall posters, Yad b'Yad students responded to that malevolent gaze. This act of retaking space through writing bilingual posters strengthened Rania's sense of community: 'I think this thing bonded us more than separated us, because it was a really happy moment …' Equally, Huwaida's comically proprietorial story about the wall can be seen as a way of subverting the military might that the wall is intended to convey: in her story she is the observing figure and the soldier the object of her gaze, and she stakes ownership over the wall. His drawing or writing is too far away to be seen; even the language he uses cannot be discerned, and Huwaida's story takes pre-eminence.

In spite of experiencing such violent opposition to the idea of bilingual education, students from integrated schools report that their experience of bilingualism is largely positive. Fourteen-year-old Mouran explained:

> People have graffitied things on our walls in the past, but it was worse that they actually came inside the school. I was scared after I heard and I didn't want to come, but then my friends reminded me that that's what those people wanted – to scare us. I came the first day, and every day after that. Now I do feel safe inside

the school, and even stronger for it. It was amazing how many people came to support us. There was one girl from a Jewish school who came up to me and said in Arabic: 'I hope that one day Jews and Arabs can live together.' I was surprised and speechless – and moved that she could say that to me in my language.[36]

When the arsonists violated Mouran's sense of security and belonging in the school, it was a Jewish stranger's use of Arabic that helped to restore her trust and confidence. Interestingly the Jewish girl's act also leaves her 'speechless', which emphasizes its unexpected nature: Mouran is not accustomed to hearing Jews use Arabic beyond the walls of Yad b'Yad. Bilingualism (or at least the idea of bilingualism) enhances and expands community by enabling young people to draw closer emotionally. It also renders hidden landscapes public, as it is impossible for the schools' immediate neighbours, no matter what their own ethnolinguistic group, to ignore the existence of the 'other' community when a bilingual education project exists in their street. In describing both the harassment and the support they have received while wearing school shirts in public, students displayed an awareness of the school's prominence and the challenge it poses to monolithic understandings of history and community.

However, bilingualism in itself is not necessarily enough to rework community, and attempts to use the language of the other can entrench rather than heal divisions. Nineteen-year-old Amal's reaction to optional Arabic language classes in segregated Jewish Israeli schools was one of suspicion:

> I consider Israel as a government as an enemy. It's a government of occupation. So when the government is trying to recruit their people, to – they're not teaching them Arabic just to get to know Arabs more. I feel like they're trying to teach them just to get more information about Arab lives and Arab people, to use it against us, of course, not to get to know us and be friends with us.

Amal's response is not rare. Many Palestinians view Arabic proficiency among Jewish Israelis as a strategy for maintaining army occupation, aware that Israeli students who opt to take Arabic in high school are viewed by the Israeli intelligence service as a pool of potential recruits.[37] In other cases, well-intentioned use of Arabic can highlight divisive inequalities without the speaker registering it. Seventeen-year-old Yuval, a boy from a Gush Etzion settlement, brought up his father's efforts to learn Arabic when I asked if he himself had any interactions with Palestinians:

> Not usually, no. You can see them in Rami Levy [a supermarket], you see them, you talk to them sometimes. My father, he learned to speak Arabic, and it's a new language and he really likes to speak this. [Laughs] So every time when he

meets someone he's trying to speak to them in Arabic to show that he knows how to speak it. And sometimes what will happen – the neighbours next to my home, my house, we have an Arab neighbour, his name is Fars. Faris. Faris [Attempting to pronounce the Arabic 'r']. He's a farmer, and they have a donkey. And sometimes we want a donkey, so we go to him and pay him and take the donkey for a couple of hours. It's a kind of connection, but a real connection there isn't.

In common with many settlement businesses, the Rami Levy supermarket chain employs Palestinians in menial roles, primarily as shelf-stackers and bag-packers. Their interactions with Jewish colleagues and customers are under scrutiny. A rabbi based in Yuval's community, Gideon Perl, approached the chain's owner when rumours spread that a Jewish cashier had become romantically involved with a Palestinian bag-packer. The owner gave public assurances that he was 'against assimilation' and that the employees concerned had left, while press reports circulated that the Palestinian worker had been sacked. Perl commented to the media, 'You need a whip to teach people a lesson after something like this happens.'[38] Yuval, while recognizing that his father's attempts to make conversation with the Palestinian workers in such a setting do not indicate 'a real connection', does not raise the class dynamic revealed by Arabic language conversations that take place over the packing of groceries and the loan of a donkey. The settings in which Arabic is most frequently used by Jewish Israelis (in military checkpoints and prisons, and when addressing Palestinian labourers) illustrate the stratification of society on ethnic lines.

By contrast, Palestinian teenagers tended to be very sensitive to these inequalities and the way in which language can highlight them. They are evident throughout Rania's storytelling. Although broadly positive about integrated bilingual education, she identifies times when her residency in a Jewish neighbourhood has created an uncomfortable sense of dislocation with use of the Hebrew language at the root:

It's a religious Jewish place. When I was younger, it was like, OK, I didn't know a lot of things, but now it's like – I feel like, 'Why do I live here? I'm not supposed to live here. This is not the place I'm supposed to be in.' Also I checked the street's history and everything and it's kind of Zionist, so it's like really weird for me living there, on [that] street … I feel like I'm supposed to be, all my friends live in Arab streets and places like – Arabs live there. It's just weird for me to live there. I feel like, I don't want to say this, but I feel like I'm cheating on my people … When I told them [other Palestinian young people] where I lived, they were like, 'What? Why would you live there? There are no Arabs there.'

When probed over the origin her discomfort, Rania returned to the street's biblical Hebrew name, stating that she felt out of place on a road named after an ancient Jewish pilgrimage. Its Hebrew name emphasizes her outsider status and her lack of connection with that history; the neighbourhood's Palestinian past is not referenced by the sign. The street name is written in English and Arabic as well as Hebrew, in a concession to the country's multilingual nature, but the transplant of the Farsi letter P into the Arabic word (there is no P in Arabic) only emphasizes the dislocation felt by Rania. Her choice of the phrase 'cheating on my people' carries romantic undertones, reminiscent of opponents' fears that integrated education will lead to intermarriage. Given that bilingualism itself has been transformed into a symbol of treachery and linguistic purity is conflated with patriotism, it is possible for language to tacitly reinforce divisions between communities and histories even within a bilingual environment; while integrated education does bring children into contact with the Other, that contact is still circumscribed by the expectations associated with each language.

Although wary of existing Arabic curricula in Israeli schools, Amal views the acquisition of Hebrew by Palestinians as a way to challenge discrimination and reduce fear, with full bilingualism the sign of a truly equal society:

> At the checkpoints, the soldiers will use Hebrew. When they attack the [refugee] camp, like in 2002 and so on, soldiers will obviously talk in Hebrew. So when you understand what they're saying, you'll understand what they're trying to do. And the language creates some kind of fear. As a kid I used to see these strangers with guns, speaking this – you know, a language I can't understand, so I used to feel more scared. But if you understand what they're saying, they're probably talking about something very normal, you know. So I wanted to – and also out of curiosity, I wanted to know what they say. Like, in general …
>
> One time – a lot of times, actually, [Israeli passengers] think my father is an Arab so he won't understand Hebrew, so they used to insult him … They would insult him in Hebrew or English, thinking he's a dumb Arab. But a lot of times he would insult them back, because he's not stupid, he speaks fluent English and Hebrew … You feel some kind of strength if you can argue, have an argument with an Israeli in Hebrew. First of all, it shows that you're not stupid, and second of all it shows that you can defend yourself and make a point. And language, it is a barrier, so that's why I think all Palestinians should be interested in learning in Hebrew. Because Israelis are interested in learning Arabic, by the way. They want to know us more, yes.

Amal is only able to view bilingualism among Israelis as positive if Palestinians learn Hebrew in turn, seeing this equality in knowledge as essential to destroying

prejudice about Arabs. ('If you can argue, have an argument with an Israeli in Hebrew … it shows that you're not stupid …') She is painfully aware that as a Palestinian, and particularly as a refugee, she is stereotyped as uneducated. Interestingly the phrase she chooses, 'dumb Arab', indicates lack of not only ability but muteness, an inability to tell her own story. The stereotypes she encounters and the vulnerability she experiences as a refugee are something that she returns to throughout her storytelling, along with language as a means of self-protection:

> Last night at three or four a.m. I woke up hearing the sound of grenades because soldiers, Israeli soldiers, they always come to the camps. Two months ago they killed a nineteen-year-old, a young man, because they – you know, they came in front of his house at two a.m. and they were very loud, so he went out to see what's happening, so they killed him. They shot him in the arm and it got to his heart, so he died. Jihad Jafari. He was very popular and well known … In the morning I had community service at the children's rehabilitation centre, and I saw that all the people were in the streets, holding Palestinian flags, wearing the scarves [*kuffiyeh*], and wearing black. The schools were out, they said, 'No school today, we have a martyr.' … So it was – you can see some kind of mourning, and at the same time they were all very angry. Because you feel that the camps are very – you know, soldiers don't go round to the city [Bethlehem] and take people and shoot them for no reason. The camp, it has no protection of any kind. So we feel very vulnerable and weak and easy to target. And the Palestinian Authority doesn't do anything about it, of course. And they [soldiers] know – they shot him and they went out and no one asked them where they're going and what they're doing, and we end up with a young man dead. And that makes people angry.

With her mention of PA inaction, Amal expresses bitterness that no one challenged the soldiers over what they had done or where they were going, presenting self-defence as a verbal rather than physical act. Interestingly her questions for the departing soldiers mirror the questions she herself is asked at checkpoints, which she repeats several times in her stories. This reversal reinforces her contention that language is an indicator of power. Learning Hebrew as a means of self-defence equips her with the ability to interrogate her interrogators, and to restore some order during chaotic midnight scenes that unfold during army incursions. Her first description of an incursion begins with unidentifiable sounds:

> I woke up because of an explosion in my house, and I was like what's going on. The soldiers came in the middle of the night. They didn't even knock! If they knocked we would have opened the door, but we were all sleeping, and we were

all under fifteen, and they blew up the door with explosions and stuff. So we all woke up, and what's going on? So the soldiers came in and the glass was all broken, the two doors were exploded, and we were very young and panicking and what's going on.

Here the glass-shattering explosions are punctuated by Amal's expression of confusion. The inchoate sounds of the raid are reflected in her earliest perceptions of Hebrew, terrifying and incomprehensible: 'I used to see these strangers with guns, speaking … a language I can't understand …' Her decision to challenge her own fear by learning Hebrew on the basis that soldiers 'are probably talking about something very normal' provoked a smile from me, as the image of soldiers exploding the front door in lieu of knocking seemed far from normal. However, it is apparent that Amal sees command of the other's language as a way to establish some kind of normality, flattening the dips and troughs in the socio-political landscape so that she stands on an equality with the soldiers who currently ask, 'Where are you going?', establishing herself as a capable and astute person instead of 'a dumb Arab' and fulfilling her curiosity about Israeli life: 'I wanted to know what they say. Like, in general …' For her the dismantling of the barriers that subdivide her life can be partially accomplished through the destruction of the language barrier.

This opening up of new horizons through language is most tangible in the stories related by Budour, Rafael, Rania and other young people growing up in an integrated milieu, as they are actively creating a new kind of community through their bilingualism. However, two stories from a ten-year-old girl in Aida camp reveal that youth in segregated and materially deprived areas may also view bilingualism as powerful, even if they have little opportunity to learn other languages. In one of the earliest storytelling sessions, which revolved round checkpoints, watchtowers and walls due to Abed's fear of being arrested for drawing the watchtower, Maha described a harrowing trip she and family had made for medical care:

My little brother was born with water on his brain [hydrocephalus]. He has special needs. He doesn't talk or go to school like the rest of us, and he needs me to take care of him. A little while ago he needed treatment you can't get here so we took him to the bridge [Allenby Bridge, the border crossing between Jordan and the occupied West Bank]. It was very difficult, the soldiers didn't let us through, there was a problem with the papers, or they wouldn't let us pass for some reason, and my mother was crying and even my father cried. My brother was crying, but not because of what happened, he didn't understand that. Maybe he was too hot or he was in pain. But they didn't let us pass that day.

Maha was sitting in a cluster of other children as she told this story. Her voice was soft and she only spoke with encouragement from Huwaida and Nariman, who had their arms round her. Towards the end of the session, when I asked if the children had any more stories they wanted to tell, Maha stood up, apart from the group, and spoke in a much firmer tone.

> We were at Allenby and we were taking my brother to that hospital. The Jews didn't want to let us pass, but I told them they had to. My parents don't know Hebrew, but I can speak to them all right, and I really told them in Hebrew, I told them [waving a finger], 'Don't you see my brother is sick? He needs to have an operation!' And when they understand that and I explained everything we could go through and take my brother to the doctor before he got even sicker.

Maha speaks no language except Arabic. With this story she does not relate what actually happened, but what she imagines might have happened if she could speak Hebrew. The narrative thread binding the two stories together is a sense of responsibility for her brother: 'He needs me to take care of him.' In the story she awakens a similar sense of responsibility in the soldiers by speaking Hebrew, enabling her to cross the border and rework the boundaries of community, with soldiers becoming her co-carers. Use of Hebrew places the boy within the soldiers' sight: 'Don't you see …?' She simultaneously highlights the injustice of a system that renders certain people socially invisible and presents an alternative landscape in which she is heard and her brother seen. Existing violence and the hope of compassion are present in both these stories, and are in several other stories analysed here; the bilingual encounter and various symbols (stones, checkpoints, ID cards) are the points where different possibilities converge.

Throughout the chapter, friction and convergence have emerged as vital themes in young people's narration of hidden landscapes. The stories that Junayd crafts around a generic sketch of a house, for example, culminate in an imagined visit to an Israeli home; his stories of army incursions into the camp and the angry response of Aida youth flow into a consideration of what the soldiers' home life might be like. By focusing closely on young people's use of language and the sociolinguistic and stylistic elements of their storytelling, this chapter has identified the vocabularies of symbol and metaphor that they draw on consistently in this process. These vocabularies are integral to their narration of community, with stones emerging as particularly strong signifiers of national belonging and political resistance among Palestinian youth. Stories of stone-throwing carry us into places of high friction, such as checkpoints and closed military zones, encouraging us to consider the role of the symbolic lexicon in the halting and transmission of stories across these fault lines. We have seen that

many symbols are prominent in the vocabularies of both Israeli and Palestinian youth, but that their meaning shifts; and that symbols held in common can spark curiosity about the other, as well as enabling young people to imagine and narrate social and physical landscapes that lie beyond their sight.

As John Collins observed in his study of collective memory among youth who came of age in the First Intifada,[39] it is common for researchers to equate Palestinian stories with testimony, a conflation that I have noted over the course of my own work. Collins recognizes that this conflation is often a product of the researchers' own political aims, but he does not appear to consider that it may be an unwitting consequence of focusing on story content without giving due attention to language, stylistics and form. In recognizing that language is the lifeblood of story and that it is impossible to separate it from content, giving attention to language subverts the documentary model that dominates traditional historical analysis and offers a richer way of interpreting the stories of youth affected by political violence. The identification of the symbolic lexicon and the role of metaphor in young people's imagining of community are especially significant in this, as the findings cast light on the ways in which creative use of language and stylistic borrowing from other literary genres enable narrators to elucidate lived experience.

When giving story prompts to young people, I rarely specified a genre or type of story, giving them freedom to relate autobiographical anecdotes or to create fiction as they chose. Interestingly they most often resorted to fairy tale or fable when narrating hidden landscapes, demonstrating a clear socio-political function for these subgenres: to discuss places and people that inspire fear or uncertainty, are experienced as distant or are perceived as off-limits. Fairy tale, a genre rich in symbol, emerges as a potent way for youth to map out the borders of their community. Wicked witches and plucky resourceful children are two simple fairy tale tropes through which Israel-Palestine's hidden landscapes are navigated by young people. (Conversely, the following chapter on violence in the narration of self and other will examine how symbol can be used as a way to move beyond the fairy tale archetypes of hero and villain.) Fairy tale and fable also enable young people to engage covertly with familial legacies of persecution and resistance that may not be discussed openly in the home, granting access to the landscapes of the past through this creative process of 'iconic messaging'.

Finally, an analysis of bilingualism and the politics of language moves the discussion from the past to the present, with cross-linguistic exchanges and code-switching once again highlighting the physical, social and mental fault lines that run across young people's lives. Whether the separation wall, the playground of

a bilingual school or a bus in which only one language must be spoken, these fault lines all constitute sites of encounter; and as the young people's stories demonstrate, stories told in and about these liminal spaces often lead to mention of unseen places and the others who populate them. A sociolinguistic map has emerged, inviting us to explore the specific ways in which children manage to rework its borders and to break down or otherwise transform obscuring barriers through storytelling, an analysis that draws attention to storytelling's violent power and also to the relational ethic at its heart.

Violence in the narration of self and other

Face to face: The fundamental violence of storytelling

Storytelling's ability 'to therapeutically and symbolically connect the self both to others and to the persona of the storyteller'[1] means that it has come to hold a prominent place in grassroots peace work in Israel-Palestine. Typified by Seeds of Peace, a large-scale organization that runs peace education programmes for Palestinian and Israeli youth that are centred on joint summer camps in the United States, narrative-focused peace groups aim to 'humanise the other and legitimise their collective narratives' through face-to-face contact in the belief that intergenerational conflict can be most effectively addressed through individual relationships.[2] While critics have noted that narrative approaches to understanding conflict may inflict further violence on marginalized groups, as emphasizing personal stories or even collective narratives can disguise the structural nature of political violence and suggest a false parity between oppressor and oppressed,[3] little attention has been given to storytelling's potential to generate fresh violence, or to the violence inherent in storytelling itself. Although storytelling's capacity to foster empathy in situations of intractable political violence is not in doubt, as it has been well-documented across a body of literature on peace education, transitional justice and community psychology, it cannot be conflated with reconciliation, as 'it may just as trenchantly exaggerate differences, foment discord, and do violence to lived experience'.[4] Yet the principal academic debates on narrative violence in situations of political violence tend to focus heavily on truth commissions, in which storytelling is built into the national reconciliation process in a clearly defined and thereby heavily circumscribed form (testimony). To date there have been no full studies on narrative violence in the everyday interactions between people living with intractable conflict, and only limited discussion of violence in narrative-based grassroots peace initiatives; storytelling in these contexts is presented as almost exclusively reconciliatory or therapeutic.

Moving beyond the debates on the value and validity of personal stories as a public response to political injustice, which characterize critiques of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions that were erected in South Africa and other countries grappling with legacies of oppression,[5] this chapter analyses narrative violence as it emerges in the everyday lives of young people in Israel-Palestine, focusing on school, home and public space. As some of the teenagers in the study are part of youth encounter groups or other coexistence projects, youth-focused peace initiatives that involve storytelling are also considered. This research revealed multiple facets of narrative violence – the face-to-face relation, erasure, partition, the breaching of boundaries and the burden of listener expectations – that we will discuss in turn, beginning with oral storytelling's requirement for a listener, a face-to-face relationship. As we will discover, this relationship is always charged with the electric possibility of violence, and a thorough analysis of this phenomenon and its implications is essential to our understanding of how young people in Israel-Palestine imagine and narrate community. It may also encourage more astute and effective uses of storytelling in situations of oppression and intractable asymmetric conflict.

In his analysis of the human face as an ethical imperative, Emanuel Levinas captures the vulnerability and latent violence that mark the face-to-face relationship. As intersubjectivity and understanding consciousness are its primary concerns, Levinas's phenomenological approach tessellates with the methodology and analytical tools that I have adopted in this study, which prioritize lived experience and how people make sense of their experiences. These choices were guided by my own understanding of storytelling as a phenomenon that brings the first, second and third person into a relationship, creating an intersubjective space in which the teller's experience is made available to the Other through narrative. Levinas's work on violence, which stresses the metaphor of the face, provides a consistent framework for discussing the potential for violence that is generated by storytelling:

> A thing can never be presented personally and ultimately has no identity. Violence is applied to the thing, it seizes and disposes of the thing. Things *give*, they do not offer a face … The face, for its part, is inviolable; those eyes, which are absolutely without protection, the most naked part of the human body, none the less offer an absolute resistance to possession, an absolute resistance in which the temptation to murder is inscribed: the temptation of absolute negation … This temptation to murder and this impossibility of murder constitute the very vision of the face. To see a face is already to hear 'You shall not kill', and to hear 'You shall not kill' is to hear 'Social justice'.[6]

The resistance to possession that distinguishes the face-to-face relationship, and by natural extension the storytelling relationship, assumes particular significance and strength in a region where a struggle is being waged not only over territory but also over civil rights, memory and the right to narrate. The use of an analytical framework informed by the philosophy of Levinas itself raises questions about that right, as in a radio interview following the massacres of Palestinian refugees in Sabra and Shatila in 1982, Levinas appeared to reject the suggestion that Palestinians might be understood as by Israelis as the Other: 'My definition of the other is completely different … [I]n alterity we can find an enemy, or at least then we are faced the problem of knowing who is right and who is wrong. There are people who are wrong.'[7] At the close of the same interview Levinas would assert that 'a person is more holy than a land, even a holy land', in oblique recognition of the crimes of Ariel Sharon's government, yet he cannot bring himself to speak of Palestinians in particular, only of persons in the abstract. His response to the journalist's direct question elides the question of universal responsibility for the Other that dominates his philosophical work, recasting alterity in a way that excludes Palestinian faces.

Given this act of erasure, it may seem like an act of narrative violence to read the stories of Palestinian youth through the lens of Levinas. However, the potency of his work on violence and intersubjectivity lies with the metaphor of the face itself, not his political views on the state and its security. As a result I agree with Judith Butler that the most powerful way to respond to this ethical contradiction is 'to think with Levinas against Levinas'[8] as we consider how what he termed 'resistance to possession' is manifested through face-to-face storytelling. A diary entry written by a Bethlehem schoolgirl during the Second Intifada, dealing with an interrogation, encapsulates that resistance:

> One of the soldiers asked me to go with him to see the captain. I was so frightened and thought, 'What do they want from ME?' When I arrived in the place where he was waiting for me, I was shocked to see many soldiers. I wasn't able to say a word. He told me that my name was Dana and that I was 16 years old. He asked me about my father and I told them that I didn't know where he was. I was saying 'I don't know' to all their questions, and that's when they threatened to burn my face or demolish the house.[9]

Dana lacks the narrative power to name herself in this exchange (she is told who she is by her interrogator, while the reality of arbitrary child arrest under martial rule is a continual reminder of what she is) and fear leaves her wordless.

Although she could not protest verbally, the face-to-face relation is enough in itself to make her resistance felt, which is why the first focus of the soldiers' threat is her face.

Two stories from my fieldwork explore this resistance in more depth. The first was told by fifteen-year-old Budour, a Palestinian with Israeli citizenship who lives in Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom. She recounts an event from her mother's childhood in the 1960s, when Palestinian citizens of Israel were still under martial law:

> My mother's memories from the army are very bad and sad. I remember she's told me stories that they used to come in the house and look for her father because he had these books from Lebanon, only that they were published in Lebanon, not that they were anti-Israel – you know, just published there. So they came and they took the books and they wanted to hit him and I remember she told me, really, like – she [pause] she lay on him and they hit her instead.

Regarding family stories and wider Palestinian history, Budour repeated several times in a group storytelling workshop, 'We carry these things.' A contrast emerges here between the army's treatment of the books, a tangible cultural and linguistic heritage, and the image of people carrying stories. As physical objects, the books could be destroyed; the stories cannot be confiscated, as they are inseparable from their tellers. Budour's summary of her often challenging conversations with other students at her high school, who are all Jewish except for a small number of Arab teenagers from Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom, illustrates this point: 'They have to listen now because they know I'm not going away.' She described her first day at school:

> They all looked at me and the other kids from Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom, especially the Arabs, like we were aliens. They just gathered around us and were like, 'No, what, you are Arab and you were born here and not in Gaza?' And what, they just, what, they didn't know what we *were* …
>
> In the first years … the only time we spoke to them was when we had an argument, and you couldn't really say your opinion, because there were so many kids with the same opinion that they were taught to think, so you would say something, just a little word, and they would jump and start yelling, and so, so many people around you are just yelling at you and you don't know what to do and you haven't even completed your sentence.

Although frustration, fear and a strong feeling of being suppressed are present in Budour's story, which was delivered in one long and rushed sentence that conveyed a sense of suffocation, it is clear that her presence in the classroom is a

story in its own right. She destabilizes her classmates' conception of community by interrupting the stories on which it rests, stories in which Arabs are not born here, but in Gaza. As most schools in Israel are segregated on ethnic lines, the refusal of her classmates to listen to what she had to say could be read as their attempt to retain some familiarity in an uncertain situation. However, in a vivid example of Levinas's paradox (the urge to negate the Other and her story, paired with the impossibility of such a negation) the other students emerge from the story as curious in spite of their unwillingness to listen. This paradox is summed up in the face-to-face relation: 'They all looked at me.'

The perception of Palestinians as the embodiment of unfamiliar and disturbing stories was articulated clearly by eighteen-year-old Noga, a resident of an Orthodox Jewish settlement in Gush Etzion, as she discussed the Nakba.

> It's a sad story for them, but we didn't have a choice, and I think that even if not everything was justified, they make it worse instead of solving problems. The refugees, the only Palesti – the only refugees from 1948 that live now [as refugees] are Palestinians, because all the other refugees in that time, like Jews for example in many countries, just built homes in other places. So when they talk about the Nakba I think it's too, still, they want to bring back the past. [Pause] You can't keep being stuck in the 1948 war. They're still refugees, I think only the Palestinians keep being refugees, and they give it to their children and their grandchildren.

Noga identifies self-conception as a refugee as an intrinsic and even unique part of modern Palestinian identity, echoing Budour's comment: 'The Nakba, we carry it.' It is also reminiscent of twelve-year-old Junayd's explanation for why he would not choose to leave Aida refugee camp permanently: 'I would always come back to look at the wall. If I left I might forget what they did to us, and that would be like forgetting me.' According to Noga, in 'giving it to their children and their grandchildren' – phrasing that treats history as a possession – Palestinians 'bring back the past', with the result that Palestinian experiences of political violence in 1948 are made present for Noga too, embodied by Palestinians themselves. Forbidden history is invoked by the presence of the other, presence that is epitomized in Levinas's thought by the face-to-face relationship.

Her initial reaction to the Nakba, which I raised during a word association activity, was hostile: 'That word makes me feel antagonised because it's not the real history.' This idea of real histories versus fictional histories will be explored in greater depth in the following chapter, but here the use of the adjective 'real' is noteworthy for what it says about Noga's vivid but frequently contradictory conceptualization of Palestinians themselves. As Noga perceives the Nakba as

a state of being rather than as just a historical event – 'Palestinians keep being refugees, and they give it to their children' – an admission of antagonism towards the word brings her into confrontation with the people who embody that word for her. It is also significant that Noga, who describes herself as being from a right-wing religious background, consistently uses the word 'Palestinian' where her peers might say 'Arab'; this may be read as a subtle affirmation of Palestinian peoplehood. Her speech is hesitant, with frequent pauses, and she moves between seemingly contradictory associations: the Nakba as 'not the real history', but also 'a sad story for them' in which 'we didn't have a choice'. In her self-identification with the pre-state Jewish paramilitary forces, Noga links herself to the events she is obliquely referencing, hinting that the Nakba is not simply 'a story for them' but also a story for her. She finally qualifies her response with, 'If you think like a Palestinian, if you are a Palestinian, it was real.' The empathy in this 'if' appears to be in tension with the earlier declaration of antagonism, generating a feeling of uncertainty.

This uncertainty is another vital component of the face-to-face relationship that is central to oral storytelling, a relationship that 'realises in the extreme an abandonment of the certainties and imperialisms of the self' and exemplifies Levinas's understanding of the ethical imperative as 'instability itself: the instability of the naked relation to the Other'.[10] As I listened to Budour's stories of her experiences at an almost exclusively Jewish high school and witnessed the hesitation of Noga and many other young narrators as they considered shadowy alternative histories, I became aware of a tension in the Story Theory methodology. As discussed earlier in the book, Story Theory hinges on three interrelated concepts: intentional dialogue, self-in-relation and creating ease. Intentional dialogue is defined as 'purposeful engagement with another', which initiates 'an active process of recognising self as related with others in a story plot'. Finally, 'ease is created in the midst of accepting the whole story as one's own'.[11] This third defining characteristic of storytelling seemed to conflict with the disquieting and fundamentally disruptive encounter with the Other that is central to the face-to-face relationship, and by extension the concept of self-in-relation, which is predicated on the idea that 'self is created in relation to others'.[12]

However, for young people who live with ongoing political violence, 'accepting the whole story as one's own' is rarely possible. The possibility of such acceptance decreases as the level of personal risk increases: while Palestinian youth living under martial law had complex and ambivalent stories to tell, stories that often revealed undercurrents of curiosity about the 'other'

community and empathy for its constituents, they were far less likely to identify the contradictions and uncertainties in their own narratives and raise them for discussion than were Palestinian youth who hold Israeli citizenship and have minimal contact with soldiers. Budour, although unequivocally critical of the army, was acutely aware of the fears and sense of psychological besiegement that haunt many of her Jewish peers, and she reflected sensitively on how her growing awareness of their experiences had transformed the way she sees her classmates. 'I felt that the purpose of people going to the army was because they really want only war and they hate Arabs and they want them to die. Now I understand that it's something bigger.'

Palestinian participants who encounter army violence on a regular basis, particularly in the Old City of Hebron and the refugee camp Aida, struggled to reconcile their own experiences with the army with empathy towards individual soldiers in any explicit way. Seventeen-year-old Mahmoud, from Hebron, opened our interview by pointing to a solider in the nearby watchtower and saying, 'If I got the chance I would kill him.' Later he described befriending young Israelis over Facebook ('I have at least ten or twelve Israeli friends. It is only the soldiers we hate') and travelling illegally to Jerusalem to meet them ('Sometimes I even climb the wall'). When asked if his friends would be conscripted that year, he replied, 'Yes. I tell them to be kind.' Mahmoud apparently did not register the tension between his desire to kill the soldier in the watchtower, his hatred for soldiers and his belief that his friends should accept conscription. He did not appear to have imagined refusal as a possibility for his friends. I asked no further questions to encourage him to try and integrate these aspects of his story, recognizing that by treating his Facebook friends as distinct from other soldiers, who represent oppression and suffering that he details minutely through his stories of camp life, Mahmoud enables himself to remain friends with them. Ease cannot be created through pressing the storyteller to openly accept and find a way to piece together all the apparently mismatching fragments of a story when this fragmentation is currently a safe way (and perhaps the only way) for the teller to negotiate a precarious life.

Storytelling in this context offers no neat endings and no resolutions. But even if storytellers cannot reach ease through explicitly claiming ownership of all the disparate and discordant elements that make up the story, a different form of ease is created through storytelling's fundamental instability. Through the inherent violence and vulnerability of the face-to-face relation, and the paradox set out by Levinas, storytelling creates a space where ambivalence is accepted and even expected. This suggests that storytelling may have liberating potential

for young people growing up with intractable political violence, as it creates a cultural space of exception in which they have the right to be uncertain and conflicted, a specific vulnerability that nationalized collective narratives do not permit. This leads us to a consideration of the experiences of young people in peace organizations that employ storytelling in their work, how this possibility is realized or suppressed through the different story methods that are used, and the impact that narrative-based planned encounters for peace have on young people's sense of self and community.

Storytelling as self-expression and suppression in planned encounters for peace

In order to understand the role that narrative-based peace projects play in the everyday lives of young people in Israel-Palestine, it is important to know the context in which they emerged. A recent appraisal of the efficacy of face-to-face peace programmes in Israel-Palestine over the last twenty years identifies four main models or approaches, of which the Narrative/Storytelling Model is the most recent. Devised in the late 1990s in response to demonstrated weaknesses in other models:

> It combines interpersonal interaction with interaction through group identities, subsequently combining the formation of personal ties with discussions of the conflict and of power relations. It is based on the assumption that, in order to reach reconciliation, groups in intractable conflicts must work through their unresolved pain and anger through storytelling. Encountering the experience and suffering of the other through storytelling is seen as enabling the conflicting groups to create intergroup trust and compassion by re-humanising, and constructing a more complex image of, each other.[13]

This approach was developed by Israeli psychologist Dan Bar-On, whose background is apparent in the quasi-clinical language of 'working through'. Storytelling is offered almost as a treatment with an expected outcome; little attention has been paid to the destabilizing possibilities of narrative discussed above. Recognizing the limitations that the pervasive idea of narrative as therapy may place on storytellers, not least by casting them in the role of traumatized subject, also means critically revisiting the methodologies underpinning this study. Story Theory was devised in a nursing setting, so the conceptions of narrative that inform this project are closely bound up with healthcare. In conclusion to this chapter I will discuss how the scope of

young people's storytelling at the loci of political violence may be broadened by shifting focus from the idea of storytelling as therapy to the content of the stories themselves, chiefly the depiction of the other and the significance of such representations in the tellers' understanding (and potential remapping) of community. This shift enables us to retain the person-centred relational values that characterize storytelling's therapeutic function, while expanding its horizons to include young people's political participation in community-building. It also has significant implications for our understanding of narrative violence and its liberating potential, as it allows teller and listener new ways of relating.

The Storytelling Model draws not only on the tradition of narrative as therapy but on the three models of face-to-face contact that preceded it. The Coexistence Model emphasizes 'widely shared and noncontroversial commonalities such as "we are all human beings",[14] while the Joint Projects Model aims to foster a common identity in participants by inviting them to work together towards a superordinate goal. Meanwhile, the Confrontational Model is concerned with power asymmetries, challenging Israeli Jewish participants to come to an awareness of their role as the dominant group. While these three models separate the personal and political, with the former two focusing almost exclusively on individual experience and the third examining systemic oppression, the Narrative/Storytelling Model aims to weave personal and political together, encouraging an awareness of the humanity of the Other while remaining attentive to structural inequalities. The Coexistence and Joint Project Models remain the most widely used, constituting 60 per cent of all encounter programmes, while the Confrontational and Narrative Models are implemented by 34 per cent of programmes.[15]

It is difficult to discuss storytelling approaches in isolation from the coexistence-orientated models, partly because encounter programmes frequently incorporate elements from other models while retaining one core approach, but mostly because the Coexistence Model was the backdrop against which all the others emerged and as such it continues to overshadow young people's experiences of planned contact programmes. Developed in the United States and brought to Israel-Palestine in the 1980s, it is at the heart of one of the largest and most far-reaching encounter projects in the region, Seeds of Peace. Rania, a fifteen-year-old Palestinian girl with Israeli citizenship who attends the bilingual Yad b'Yad school in Jerusalem, was a participant in the Seeds of Peace summer camp in Maine. She describes her experiences of storytelling within this framework:

I really liked it. It was different … Every day we had dialogues, like two hours of dialogues, and I was – I was – at first I wasn't really nervous but when I saw that it's like, really – it's hard being in dialogue because everyone is fighting and everything, so it was like really hard for me. But then, like, I think the last dialogue was really good. We learned how to talk … We shared stories and everything, like everyone shared their own story from where they live and stuff they've been through, so everyone was listening and respecting … There were stories that were like really hard to hear, mostly from the Palestinian side. My stories were not that hard because I don't live there and I don't go through these things every day, but this stuff is still really important for me. My stories were not that sad or hard. I shared stories about – one story that I got on the bus one time, from school, I went home, and it was a few years ago when we had these school T-shirts, so everyone could know that we were from Hand in Hand and like there were people not that happy about it. So – some boy, he was cursing me, and saying lots of rude things, and I was ignoring it, and then when he went to get off the bus he spat on me. And I was like, what. And I was with two of my friends, and they were Jews, so he only spat on me … And no one on the bus did anything, except for my friends, but not the driver or anyone on the bus, like, they didn't do anything or ask anything. So that was the story I told. It made me feel really bad, humiliated.

Rania identifies storytelling as a way of 'learning to talk' and establishing respect within the group. The transformative power that this story-based dialogue session held for her is demonstrated in her retelling of the event: her sentences became more fluent and detailed, with fewer pauses and filler words such as 'um' and 'like', and for the first time in our conversation she describes an emotional state. ('It made me feel really bad, humiliated.') Before she recounted this specific story, she compared it to the stories of Palestinians living under military rule – 'My stories are not that sad or hard' – and explained that the stories are nonetheless important to her, a qualification hinting that she felt her experiences might be considered less worth hearing than a story told by a teenager living in more difficult circumstances. It appears that the Seeds of Peace storytelling group was able to reduce this fear for her, as 'everyone shared their own story … everyone was listening and respecting'. The range of stories told in the group helped Rania to feel more comfortable in telling her own. She also notes that the combative atmosphere of previous workshops dissipated as the stories were told, giving her courage to take part. Storytelling emerges as a way to create an environment conducive to self-expression as well as being the means of self-expression.

It is significant that the storytelling group was the last session of the camp. Prior to this, the storytellers participated in a three-week programme designed to alter their self-concept, which places this final activity in a different light. The opening ritual for the camp, itself based around narrative, captures the changes that the facilitators hope to make in how the youth perceive themselves:

> Each delegation is escorted from the bus to the lawn overlooking the lake, in which they are told the origin story of Seeds of Peace … They are also introduced to the narrative of the new cultural system in which they will be (re)socialised. Bobbie [a Seeds of Peace cofounder] tells them: 'When you drove into Maine, when you crossed that border, there was a big sign. Did anybody see the sign? It said on it, "Maine, the way life should be." At camp, we try to make this a reality for you. So after tonight, you'll all be wearing the same green Seeds of Peace T-shirt. This is very important, because it shows that you're all equal. Everybody at camp is equal. All of you with each other, even with the staff. There is no inequality here.'
>
> At camp, the 'difference' of identity undergoes an attempted erasure through a radical restructuring of social ecology. Underlying this attempt is, most clearly, a liberal American cultural model that relies on a humanist ethic of identity pluralism: identity diversity is worthy of reciprocal respect, and it is the environments of youth that polarise them.[16]

This welcome reveals how coexistence-orientated programmes that emphasize noncontroversial commonalities at the expense of differences may restrict young people's ability to express themselves through story. Before they are invited to tell their own stories, the narrators are urged to see themselves (and consequently to narrate themselves) in a fundamentally different way, not as Israelis or Palestinians but as 'Seeds' (they are addressed as such during camp). This metaphor suggests that they are in the most basic stage of growth, requiring adult nurturing. Having been asked to bring something that represented her heritage, Rania had packed a traditional Palestinian scarf, but the camp's uniform policy meant that she could not choose when to wear it and that it was only brought out for a specific activity. This effort to blot out perceptible indicators of difference can itself be read as a form of narrative violence, and it highlights the difference between storytelling and constructing a narrative that we established earlier.

The camp's emphasis on the equality of all participants is equally jarring. Palestinian youth, especially those living under military law, do not experience equality in their daily lives; and by implying that it is possible to erase asymmetries

in power by holding the summer camp in Maine, as though their influence is no longer felt beyond Israeli airspace, the programme also underestimates the effect they have on young people. In Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom, Budour punctuated her stories with 'We carry these things'; the tacit message in the Seeds of Peace welcome ritual is that these things can be put aside with today's T-shirt. Secondly, the repeated affirmations of their equal status may make it more difficult for both Israeli and Palestinian youth to tell stories that accurately reflect how they live, or else diminish the impact of such stories when they are told, as they are being encouraged to treat equality as an ontological condition rather than a political right that is routinely denied.

Rania does not explicitly address this tension between the Coexistence Model that is at the core of Seeds of Peace's work and the organization's inclusion of narrative-based activities. She does, however, tell a story that epitomizes it. At Ben-Gurion Airport, as the only Arab in a group of Jewish teenagers from Yad b'Yad, Rania was taken aside for further questioning:

> They kept asking me why I'm with [the Jewish students] and then they opened my bag and they found the *hatta* [Palestinian scarf]. I brought it because Seeds for Peace asked us to bring something from like heritage. And the security kept me for a long time because of the *hatta*, they wanted to know why I had that *hatta*.

For Rania, the *hatta* does not just symbolize Palestinian heritage; it is a tangible reminder of her difference in the eyes of state officials. At camp, she was required not to wear the *hatta* as an expression of the camp's egalitarian spirit, which treats the scarf itself as a divisive and potentially dangerous object. 'But like it's not really about a *hatta*, they [airport security] held me up because I'm Arab.' By insisting that equality within the camp is a reality, the organizers unwittingly negate stories that end with that *because*.

Interestingly, despite its efforts to restructure notions of identity and belonging within the camp itself, Seeds of Peace participants arrive in twin delegations that are organized according to national group. Uneasiness over such binary groupings was expressed by several young people in this study, who were conscious of falling outside the categories in some way or not matching popular expectations about what they 'ought to be like' as a member of a particular group. This ambiguity formed a poignant theme in the stories that were told, highlighting a common dilemma faced by Palestinians with Israeli citizenship that also has relevance for Israeli Jews of Arab origin, as the narrators consciously positioned themselves on the borders between communities. bell

hooks identifies such marginal spaces as 'the site of radical possibility, a space of resistance … a radical perspective to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds'.[17] This image recurs across recent literature on cultural geography, which tends to emphasize the permeability of borders over their impenetrability. Echoing hooks: '[The border] is a paradoxical zone of resistance, agency, and rogue embodiment.'[18] Demonstrating the form that such resistance and rogue embodiment might take: 'Things that cross the border undermine the border's authority and have the capacity to "pollute" the inside that the border is trying to protect.'[19] Anthropologically informed research that applies concepts of taboo and pollution to border studies has sharp relevance to storytelling at epicentres of political violence: as we have seen, when understood in phenomenological terms stories traverse the boundaries between first, second and third person, and consequently between the subjective and the objective, private space and public space, the personal and the shared. It is the association between pollution and danger (and subsequently violence) that makes the stories of young narrators who situate themselves on a boundary particularly interesting here, as their stories may be read as threats to national or other collective understandings of self and other.

However, as Lila Abu-Lughod warns, anthropological research (including her own work) has frequently been compromised by 'a tendency to romanticise resistance, to read all forms of resistance as a sign of the ineffectiveness of systems of power and of the resilience and creativity of the human spirit in its refusal to be dominated'.[20] This romanticism is evident in scholarly definitions of borders that emphasize the creative violence that 'polluting' individuals may do to borders and conceptions of nation (by breaching them) over the destructive violence that borders may do to individuals even once a breach has been made: refugees who undermine a border's authority as per the concept of pollution may yet find themselves in detention centres or subjected to harsh immigration laws, for example. While borders can be sites of creativity, they are also symbols of wider structures of oppression and containment; in this context to write as though the former can counterbalance or even outweigh the latter is to obfuscate young Israelis' and Palestinians' experiences of marginalization on the basis of their youth, which is vital to interpreting their stories.

The use of the border concept to define young people's experiences and to organize them into a particular narrative is apparent not only in the way that narrative-based encounter groups rely on an ethnonational binary to categorize participants, but in how participants are encouraged to relate to their geographical environment. I was invited to attend the inaugural activity for a new cohort of

twelve-year-old participants at Kids4Peace, a Jerusalem-based peace education programme that is hosted on premises owned by the American consulate. As with Seeds of Peace, a summer camp in the United States is a lynchpin; the first year of the programme is named Camp4Peace in reflection of its importance. The camps are held at multiple locations in the United States, and on arrival for their first meeting, participants were divided into groups named after their host cities – 'Boston group', 'Seattle group' etc. – that will form their smaller Kids4Peace community for the coming year. After this initial dislocation, in which youth from Jerusalem and its environs were organized into groups named for distant cities and taught the English language camp song, the first activity began, entitled 'Mapping Me and My Community'. Young people sat in small groups to discuss with a facilitator (sometimes an adult employee, usually an older peer counsellor) how they perceived and interacted with Jerusalem. As I moved from group to group, it became clear that the primary aim was not to gain an understanding of how the young people see Jerusalem, but to correct geographical misperceptions. Many participants were unfamiliar with the city's layout and could not pinpoint Jewish and Arab areas in relation to one another. One Palestinian boy with Jerusalem residency, on being asked where his neighbourhood of Beit Safafa is located, replied, 'In the city centre.' The adult facilitator replied, 'No, it's a long way out from the centre, it's nearer to Bethlehem.' Rather than exploring the boy's personal geography of Jerusalem, in which his home is at the heart of the city (or in which Jewish Jerusalem is perceived as peripheral), the facilitator was more concerned with helping young people to assemble a physically accurate map. The imposition of these narrative parameters is a subtle form of 'doing violence to lived experience',[21] as young people's own stories of the city were constrained by the educational objective.

At the session's conclusion, a number of youth demonstrated resistance to that objective. After being invited to share what they had learnt, they began to give the addresses of recommended waffle bars and pizza places. More explicit and increasingly exasperated questions from facilitators ('We know about the waffles, but did you learn anything about people from another community that you hadn't known before today?') were met with laughter and more commentary on food, with group members acting as though they were unaware of what was expected of them. This reticence may be read as lack of trust (although who was most mistrusted, adult facilitators or new peers from the 'other' community, was unclear), an assertion of their own power in the face of adult expectations, or desire to establish connections with one another through apolitical pizza tastes and the rather more political group defiance of the adults present. Having

undergone a process of dislocation and disorientation, in which they were organized into groups named after American cities and the boundaries of their neighbourhoods as they see them were redrawn according to the municipal maps, youth had to find a different standpoint from which to view the city and narrate their experiences. Fast food outlets, ubiquitous in young people's lives and across the city, may have seemed like a logical option.

Several older participants, who expressed discomfort at being categorized according to ethnonational group and who reported frustration at the restrictions placed on them by planned encounter groups, located themselves on a border of some kind through their own storytelling. Although borders function as tools of partition and classification, even in coexistence-orientated encounter programmes, they simultaneously afford more complex ideas of belonging. They constitute the edge of each category, and through their storytelling, young people who position themselves on the boundaries either sharpen that delineation or work to blur it, rendering the border a place where 'inside and outside merge'.[22] Here we return to the concepts of purity and pollution that were discussed earlier in relation to borders, now applying them specifically to storytelling.

Purity in narrative? Storytelling as transgressing boundaries

Establishing any barrier means acknowledging the possibility of a breach, in which 'the danger from outside threatens to penetrate the safe inside'. Borders are also inextricably entwined with the lives of refugees, as 'the border is that which ensures [refugees'] existence. Were there no borders, there would be no refugees.'[23] In the world of modern nation-states refugees, migrants and stateless persons have become pollutants, as 'they blur national (read: natural) boundaries'.[24] The Israeli state has enacted a new categorical order through the use of colour-coded identity cards that divide the Palestinian population into subgroups: citizens, permanent residents of East Jerusalem, Palestinians from the West Bank and Palestinians from Gaza, with each card carrying different legal and civil rights. For West Bank and Gaza residents, the identity cards are supplemented by permits that grant the holder temporary passage to Israel on certain dates and using specified roads and checkpoints. In military parlance the term 'sterile' is routinely used to describe an area that has been cleared of people, reinforcing the image of the stateless Palestinians as pollutants who must be contained by this labyrinthine system of walls, checkpoints and paperwork. The testimonies of current and former Israeli soldiers, gathered through the

grassroots Israeli veterans' organization Breaking the Silence, demonstrate how Palestinian spaces are defined and their inhabitants controlled through the ideas of sterility and pollution:

> Someone comes along, he passes, you check his ID. The real inspection should take place on the other side, making sure he really went through and didn't stay inside … There's the enclave of the hotel and the beach … It was an enclave in the sense that it had to be a sterile area. Palestinians were allowed to move around there, but not stay. They pass through. It's a transit area.[25]

> Anything that's not 'sterile' is suspect.[26]

> Beyond the point where the soldier is standing, the road is 'sterile,' off-limits to Palestinians. Which includes what? It includes that they don't talk to you. You talk to them. You tell them what to do. Whoever talks, you say, 'Shut up! I don't want to know.' Because they're always telling you about their family and whatever, saying, 'I need to work and I need to …' You don't care—'Shut up, sit!' and so they lose … I take their ID, and it's gone. 'Sit here, you won't want to not be here when I get back.' They're always there when you get back. No one goes anywhere without his ID.[27]

Sterility means more than emptying or tightly regulating a space. It involves silencing its inhabitants, as the third testifying soldier makes clear. In this context stories themselves are pollutants and storytelling an act of political transgression. As discussed in the first chapter, permits and identity cards have been incorporated into the lexicon of symbols that Palestinian youth frequently use in storytelling; and as they often feature in stories in which the protagonists travel illegally or fool soldiers into believing that they are someone else, they are imbued with a quasi-folkloric quality – they have become signifiers of a trickster tale. Sixteen-year-old Yara, the daughter of a Palestinian mother and a Dutch father, described passing herself off as a tourist:

> When I was little it was really different, because I could go with only the Dutch passport and show them that with my father I'm Dutch, so I could pass … but now I'm like all the people here, I should have a permit … Once – do you know what's the DELF? It's an exam in French and they give you a certificate. So all the girls who did this exam, we went to Jerusalem with the nun who teaches us. And I didn't have a permit, so I brought my father with me. He had his passport, and my father – he always wants to show everything. He wants to show his visa, his name, everything … So I told him, 'No, Father, don't do this, because if they see you have a visa they're going to ask me for one.' The soldier told him pass, and then I came. I don't have a visa and neither do I have a permit, so I just showed him the passport, like this. He said, 'Show me

the visa.' So my father had a think and something told him, like, tell him I don't understand. So the soldiers asked us where's the visa, and my father told them, 'She's my daughter.' The soldiers were like yes, but where's the visa. 'I don't understand, I don't hear you!' he told them. [Laughter] So they told him another time, where's the visa, and 'I don't understand, I can't hear you!' So the soldier got fed up and he let us pass.

The absence of a visa and entry stamp reveals that Yara is a Palestinian with a foreign passport, which military law forbids her to use in Israel-Palestine. Her white father's presence encourages the soldiers to perceive Yara as a tourist in spite of her darker colouring, enabling her to 'pass' in both the literal and figurative sense. After relating the trick, she describes a crossing that she tried to make with her mother. While the first story demonstrated the ingenuity of a marginalized person in outwitting the army, in classic trickster tradition, the second focuses on powerlessness and humiliation:

> There was another time when I didn't have a permit and I tried to go with my mother. I was wearing jeans with these kind of metal things, studs, and I rang the alarm when I was going through the metal detector. So it rang and I had to take off my pants, but I couldn't, like how can I take off my pants in public? They told me to go back. I was crying and my mother, she said a few nasty words to the soldiers and then they told her to go back. So we went back.

Yara repeats the same phrase three times: 'They told me to go back,' 'They told her to go back,' 'We went back.' This echoes the soldiers' exasperated 'Where's the visa?' in her trickster story, which she also repeats three times. The similarity in structure underscores the difference in outcome. Narrated in succession, the two stories communicate the unpredictable nature of life on the border: on one day Yara is read as a white foreigner, on another she becomes a Palestinian. While her Dutch passport sometimes allows her to elude the 'categorical order' imposed on Palestinians by the army, the checkpoint's own categories have coloured Yara's narrative of her family, so that her father is associated with security while she identifies her mother as a source of danger. The sterile space is disturbed by a Palestinian woman who talks back, putting others around her at risk of retaliation:

> With my dad, I feel much safer – like, with my mum, I know her, when I set off this metal detector, she started to say nasty words and to say bad things about the soldiers and about Israel, it scared me, and I don't want her – like, if they – they can put a black dot on her name so she can't pass the checkpoint, and if they do that to her they will do it to me. So with my dad, nothing happens, I just pass and I feel free and safe.

In none of her stories does Yara confront the army directly. She depicts herself as outwitting them, crossing unseen ('These days the soldiers are sleeping, so you can just go'), or if necessary complying with permit regulations, but she is afraid to be known as disobedient and is fearful over her mother's public boundary-breaching. Yara shared stories about life in the home, but kept coming back to the checkpoint to illustrate the differences in her parents' temperament and behaviour. It is the checkpoint that led her to consider from an early age what it means to be biracial (an accepted outsider or a suspicious outsider according to the perception of the soldier on duty), thereby helping her to forge her own sense of self as well as shaping her relationships with her family. Borders and barriers are at the crux of her self-concept.

Another participant who occupies a similarly ambiguous position is fifteen-year-old Rafael, an Israeli Jewish boy whose paternal grandparents immigrated from Austria and Poland and whose maternal grandparents come from Yemen. He lives in an affluent Jewish area of Jerusalem and attends Yad b'Yad. He is also a peer counsellor at the coexistence-focused youth group Kids4Peace:

> Most of the time at Kids4Peace when people come, or even in the school, and you say, 'Let's play a game. Guess who's Arab and who's Jewish' – and every single time, people say, 'Well, you look Arab.' They say to me that I look Arab, and then they're completely surprised and shocked when I say I'm Jewish.

As he has attended Yad b'Yad from preschool, Rafael is fluent in Arabic and Hebrew, something that is rare for Jewish teenagers. 'It's easier for Arabs to learn Hebrew. It's all around them, even if they go to the mall, they have to learn it to survive in this society.' His bilingualism, combined with his physical appearance, encourages people to see him as Arab. He shared this story of mistaken identity at the beginning of the interview, establishing himself as a Jewish narrator. But as the interview progressed, his narrative voice altered. He used neutral third-person pronouns when referring to both Arabs and Jews, notably shifting from 'they' to a more intimate 'we' when speaking about the Holocaust. At other points he used the first-person plural in such an ambiguous way that it is difficult to judge which community he was referencing, his classmates as a whole or his Jewish peers specifically. The final story he told was of his maternal grandparents' journey from Yemen, which he concluded by describing his family as Arab:

> Until a year ago I would have considered myself an Austro-Yemenite … [Laughs] I have a very weird family, you know, half of it being [pause] Arab, I would even consider. Say you're from Morocco or Iraq, then considering yourself and the family as coming from an Arab state or country isn't completely politically correct here, but actually Yemen is [Arab]. I mean, my grandfather knew Arabic,

and basically the whole culture was Arab. And the other side being Holocaust survivors from Austria – I mean, when I tell people about the Holocaust, they're really surprised to hear that I have such a large Holocaust story in my family just by looking at me and my skin tone.

The dominant themes in Rafael's storytelling are integration and ambiguity. He begins by telling a story to introduce himself as Jewish (perhaps realizing from past experience that I would not be able to gauge his ethnicity) and then moves on to his school, which has shared living as its ethos. As he discusses life at Yad b'Yad, frequently changing from first- to third-person and back again and thereby offering multiple perspectives to the listener, he presents an alternative to the artificial erasure and subsequent reinforcement of boundaries that frequently occurs in coexistence-orientated planned encounter programmes. One vivid example of this is the way in which he plaits together Holocaust and Nakba history, first establishing himself as a brown-skinned narrator who has inherited a family legacy of stories from another continent and then revealing himself to feel a personal connection to both events. Another example is how he opens and closes his story: while acknowledging that his identification as Jewish Arab/Arab Jew may be viewed with suspicion or disbelief in Israeli and Palestinian society, the narrative structure makes it clear that for him these identities function not as a source of contradiction or personal tension but as the two poles of his world.

However, while Rafael has been able to integrate Jewishness and Arabness through telling and hearing stories, in narrating himself he is concerned not only with his self-understanding but also with how others perceive him and their response to his presence. While the ambiguity presented by his physical appearance and his bilingualism is thought-provoking and humorous in the relatively safe setting of a classroom or a planned encounter group, it becomes an inadequate disguise in the streets of Beit Safafa (a Palestinian neighbourhood of Jerusalem):

> I go to Beit Safafa a lot. I have friends from school there. I probably wouldn't speak Hebrew loudly in the street in Beit Safafa, and I don't always feel so safe at night … I think when people look at me they know who I am. Internationals, maybe Israelis, they don't know, but people in Beit Safafa – I think they can tell there's something about my clothing or my face, they know I'm not Arab, they know I'm Jewish.

When Rafael is relating a fear-inducing situation, such as walking alone at night in a neighbourhood where he is marked out from its inhabitants by his Israeli passport and ethno-religious background, he presents Palestinian passers-by as

astute observers, able to detect his Jewishness through his clothes or his facial features, even in darkness. This fear is echoed in a story related by Amal, a nineteen-year-old young woman who lives in the Dheisheh refugee camp. She also situates herself on a boundary throughout her storytelling, conscious of being the only female in a household of men (her parents are divorced and she lives with her father and brothers), one of relatively few Dheisheh women who do not wear a headscarf and, most unusually, a holder of Jerusalem residency (her father was born in Shuafat refugee camp, which was formally annexed to the state of Israel in 1967). She describes a visit to Jerusalem and her subsequent sense of alienation in language reminiscent of Levinas:

> One time I was in the car in Jerusalem with my brothers, and there was this bus. Most of them were Israelis, I can tell, of course. And I was just looking, and I don't know, you can recognise an Arab if you see him. So a guy was in the bus and he saw me and I think he realised I am an Arab, and he flicked me out. He gave me the finger, and I was like what. Like, that's nice. Yeah, I'd love to walk around in the streets in Jerusalem getting fingers and so on.

For both Rafael and Amal, their identity is written in their faces for hostile passers-by to read; traversing borders and entering spaces that are typically represented as 'off-limits' to their community heighten their awareness of who they are, how they might be read, and the possibility of hostility and violence. Border-crossing becomes a painful and often humiliating process. For Amal, who was undocumented for three years as the occupation authorities refused to register her in the same Jerusalem identity category as her father and siblings, and she was unwilling to apply for a green West Bank identity card that would formally separate her from Jerusalem relatives, it is an experience of colonial violence. This finds an echo in Rafael's experiences of the way in which the possibility of existing as an Arab Jew is routinely denied in the Israeli public sphere:

> The process of making discrete, hermetic spaces in which people are held serves the long-running colonial project of enclosing the colonised within boundaries. Clearly the boundaries of race have been drawn by colonising forces along similar, if not the same, lines: lines that divide the excluded from the privileged, the bordered from the mobile. These lines are slashes between groups, sharp, cutting edges that surely wound when crossed.[28]

All the storytellers who situate themselves on a border – most notably Rania and Budour, the Palestinian girls of Israeli citizenship; Yara, the Dutch-Palestinian girl from Bethlehem; and now Amal – describe being wounded by the act of

crossing borders. Perhaps because of his status as a member of the dominant group, Rafael focuses more on his Palestinian peers' experiences of pain than his own: he repeats several times 'It's hard for them' and expresses particular empathy for Rania. 'They're the only Arab family in this neighbourhood. That's tough.' Empathy is the predominant theme running through Rafael's storytelling; for the four Palestinian girls, it is humiliation. Budour and Amal related stories of the degradation that can occur on the border, when their ambiguous status arouses curiosity among the majority group – Jewish students in Budour's case, middle-class peers from Bethlehem in Amal's:

Amal: When I went to university, people would be surprised to know that I'm a person from Dheisheh camp. They'd say, 'You don't look like a refugee, or a one from the camps.' And I would be very frustrated, actually. I would be like, 'Why would you say that, how should people from the camps look like or sound like?' They have this disturbing stereotype that all people from the camps are very dirty and stupid and backward. I don't know why or how. Most of the people I know from the camps are very educated and very open-minded and very smart and very achieving … So I was a bit outcast in the university, as I was the one from the camp, and I still am a bit.

Budour: I remember them [Jewish classmates] even telling me [assumes surprised tone], 'Oh my God, you don't look like an Arab, your skin is bright and your hair is bright and it's not covered,' so they – they only had stereotypes … We were very shocked at first to hear their opinions. When I was in the seventh grade it was when Gilad Shalit was kidnapped, so it was a topic that we used to talk about. When I heard their opinions I was shocked. I didn't think someone would say something like kill the Arabs and the Arabs are dirt and they're terrorists. It was a big shock for me, because I only thought that it's like seeing a – a – a car accident on the news, and you say, 'That can't happen to me. It happens a lot, but it won't happen to me.' And then when you see it you're like – I remember that I didn't know how to – I didn't digest it yet, I was really shocked, and it took me a week to understand where I really was. I didn't know how I'm going to handle it, I didn't know how I'm going to fit in. I didn't have friends these years … [I]t was also very hard to talk to them, because they wouldn't really let us to do it. And they were very violent in a physical and in a literature way. It was very hard in the first years. But then when we started to grow up and to understand that OK, if we want to talk we have to really listen, we just became friends. That's the only way I can explain it.

Budour's representation of time is intriguing: at fifteen she has only been attending high school for three years, so by stating 'I didn't have friends these years' she could be admitting current loneliness and using the image of time elapsing as a narrative device to distance herself from it or suggesting that her initial experiences as a Palestinian girl at a Jewish school were so painful that they seemed to last longer than they did. This disorientation is captured in her stammering, and the sentence, 'I didn't know where I really was.' Another notable feature here is that Budour had the choice of attending an Arab school in Ramle, while Amal's family put pressure on her not to study at university. Both girls made the decision to cross sharp borders out of conviction that it was right. Budour closed her account of school life as a girl from Wahat as-Salaam/ Neve Shalom with, 'I think we are brave.' Meanwhile Rafael continues to visit Palestinian friends in Beit Safafa, even after dark, out of a sense of friendship and his belief in the eventual possibility of (cross)community living.

The border-crossing that becomes apparent from their stories is a vivid example of young people's political agency and the role they play in community-building: Amal, for example, described how her determination to study at university had transformed her older brothers' attitudes to education and encouraged them to think about studying for a degree too, although they had initially opposed her plans. She even links her attempts to challenge her family's views on her future with refugees' efforts to access education and achieve full civil rights, making the political visible through the personal, and vice versa:

> My four brothers and my father, they worked together to pay for the tuition. Compared to universities abroad, it's not expensive, but here it's very expensive and not everyone can afford it. And like, my last tuition, I still can't pay it, the due date was last week. So my father said, 'I don't have any money to pay for you,' so I'm already behind. But still, the refugees still struggle, and try to – you know, they care a lot about education, even though not all of them get the chance to go to university, they care a lot. They fight their way in society. They try to prove themselves, just like I was trying to prove myself to my brothers, it's the same thing. The camp is trying to prove itself to the people in the cities and to everyone, and of course to the occupation, that I deserve to live and I deserve to – you know, just to be. To exist.

In traversing boundaries, these young people are making alternative stories visible, a political action that invites narrative-based encounter programmes to re-evaluate their use of story with teenagers. Rather than being employed as a therapeutic or teaching tool, with the idea that teenagers need 'to learn how to talk' (to use Rania's description of Seeds of Peace's narrative programme),

storytelling could be used to give adults insight into the political lives of youth and to strengthen the peace and justice activism that the young people are already involved in, broadly defined. This means recognizing their freedom as storytellers and accepting that young people possess the right to narrate, even if the stories that are told are not necessarily peace-orientated.

It also means acknowledging the violence in storytelling, which Budour captures with her unusual phrasing 'violent in a literature way' – she references a corpus of creative writing rather than deploying the more common 'figurative'. That violence is contained in the other students' refusal to allow her to speak and tell her own story ('They wouldn't really let us talk …') and in the painful realization that in order to talk she 'would have to really listen', even at the cost of hearing her ethnic community being labelled as terrorist and described as dirt. Her story about this process provokes questions about the structural quality of such violence and Budour's conception of the community beyond her village: she had previously perceived the dehumanizing language that became her everyday norm as 'like a car accident on the news', an unpredictable occurrence viewed from the double remove of the television screen and a Jewish-Arab cooperative village. Another source of shock and pain was her teacher's reaction:

> All the times when we were called names, the teacher was in the class. And she wouldn't say, 'Don't call them like this, they're your friends.' She would say [adopts irritated tone], 'Keep it down. You're yelling.' And that's what's wrong here, not the fact that they're saying 'kill the Arabs' and 'we hate the Arabs' when there are Arab kids in the class. I can understand if they're not there, but we're there and you're our teacher.

Budour switches from the more distant third-person singular, which denotes absence ('I can understand if they're not there …'), to first-person plural ('We're there') in order to emphasize her presence. It is as though she is no longer addressing me, but confronting the teacher; time is liquid in her storytelling, and she moves frequently across the border between past and present. However, while violence cannot be contained in time, she does expect it to be contained spatially. Her comment suggests that she expects racist conversation to happen when she is outside the room, and even accepts this, but that she demands something different when she is in the group.

Violence's systemic nature is revealed through the act of border-crossing, her choice to go from Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom to a Jewish school whose pupils have had limited contact with Palestinians, which forced her to address her understanding of community and cope with bullying in order to forge new friendships with peers. Having examined both the violence that is done

to the narrator on the border and the creative power of violating that border, I will examine how young people construct their own boundaries between self and other, the language they use to describe the other, and ways in which the curiosity and narrative anticipation that characterize storytelling may create empathy even in fundamentally violent and exclusionary stories.

'What do they tell about us?'

When asked if there was one particular question she wished she could put to Israelis, Yara replied, 'What do their – if she was my age, what do their parents tell about us and what did they used to tell them about the Palestinians. Maybe that's the only question I'd like to know. How they see us, how they talk about us, how they imagine us and what we think.' With these words Yara captures a theme that runs through several of the young people's stories. Fifteen-year-old Natan, a teenager from a West Bank settlement, was more interested in asking me about his Palestinian peers – 'What are they saying about us?' – than in telling his own stories, evidently seeing my visits as fleeting windows into Palestinian community life. When I asked twelve-year-old Junayd to create an image or write a story that he would like to appear on the other side of the separation barrier, within sight of Israelis, he drew soldiers guarding a locked settlement, commenting, 'I want to show them how they look.' In transforming the separation wall into a mirror, Junayd suggests that he sees Israelis as being unaware of their own appearance. Yara's desire to find a similar 'mirror' in an Israeli teenage girl implies that she is uncertain about how she is seen. At other points in her storytelling, after mention of the army, this uncertainty solidifies into a conviction that Palestinian teenagers are feared:

> The people my age, like especially the boys – these boys always throw stones, so I think when they [soldiers], err – not me, but maybe the boys – they – I don't know, but these are basically their enemies, these teenagers … this is the age that the soldiers hate, because they're always protesting, they go on demonstrations, they – this is the age the soldiers hate. But I don't really know what they think about me.

This depiction of the soldiers and their dislike for Palestinian youth calls to mind Natan's frustrated questioning: 'Why do they do that, throw rocks? Don't they see it doesn't work?' These questions were posed on the cusp of his own enlistment, showing that his dominant feelings on entering the army are

exasperation towards Palestinian youth and curiosity about them. His curiosity is bound up with his enlistment, just as Yara's interest in how she is perceived by Israelis and her own perception of them is narrated in relation to the military. Young people's curiosity about the Other may coalesce around conscription due to an awareness that the soldier and the stone-thrower are usually age-related peers, as well as the fact that military installations are the main locus of contact between Israelis and Palestinians in the West Bank.

This returns us to the precise question of how these installations govern what is seen, and by whom. In his article on museology and representations of the Other, focusing on Orientalism and Victorian-era exhibitions, Timothy Mitchell asks, 'Is there, perhaps, some more integral relationship between representation, as a modern technique of meaning and order, and the construction of otherness so important to the colonial project?'[29] This question encourages us to see checkpoints, like museums and other state institutions, as part of an 'apparatus of representation'. In the checkpoint, soldiers are set apart by their uniforms and weaponry; they often man individual booths, while Palestinians are crowded into chutes, categorized by the colour of their ID card and the type of permit they hold. Seventeen-year-old Yuval, a boy from a rural West Bank settlement, describes witnessing the lines forming as he drives by checkpoints in the pre-dawn; with the exception of a story about one local farmer, he only ever speaks of Palestinians as a group. Checkpoint architecture encourages this perception. In her checkpoint stories, Yara recounts how she has observed soldiers closely to find out which ones are easiest to pass ('I never go to the girls. They're the strictest') and how she deliberately dresses unobtrusively, making sure she has no metal buttons that might call soldiers' attention to her. Paradoxically, given that the checkpoint is designed for surveillance, her observation of the female soldiers and her strategizing over dress are reminiscent of Frantz Fanon's veiled Algerian woman, 'who sees without being seen' and 'frustrates the coloniser. There is no reciprocity.'[30] Aware that she is perceived as an element of an amorphous mass rather than as an individual, Yara uses this knowledge to camouflage herself and to frustrate the checkpoint's purpose by passing without permission. Meanwhile, when asked what question she would put to Israelis given the chance, she pictures herself face-to-face with just one person – another sixteen-year-old girl – and expresses curiosity about how she and her community are depicted in that girl's home, and what the unknown girl imagines Yara's inner life to be like. This imaginary exchange invites a reciprocity that does not exist in the checkpoint lines, showing that while checkpoint architecture is significant in

shaping young people's perceptions of one another, they are sometimes able to breach its categories in their storytelling.

This breach did not occur in Yuval's answer to why the army holds such an important place in his life, which dealt with his self-concept and the perceptions others have of him:

> First of all the answer isn't in the brain, it's in the heart. And I feel it really hard. I think this is the biggest problem in the conflict, everyone here feels things, and other people can't understand their feelings. I feel part of the Jewish people. My grandparents, in the Holocaust – you see, you feel part of the Jewish people. And I see myself as part of all Israel, and as part of all the human beings in the world, but also as part of the religious people in here. And that's one answer to this question. It's my people. I want to do my best for them. You learn that some people are asking, 'What can someone else do for me?' Rights, human rights, what I deserve, what I can have, and sometimes the question you need to ask is what my commitments are, what I can give, how I can improve the world, be a better person, how can we be better people …
>
> I guess I won't be seen [by Palestinians] in such a good way, because, I think – unfortunately they can't see the Israeli soldiers, people who came to – people who came to try and make life bad. I guess when I'm a soldier I'll try to be the nicest person I can be. All Israel's army is trying to do this. Sometimes you have to do arrests and you have to do things that you have to do, but – I think I'll try to be the nicest man that I can, but I think they won't see me as the nicest man in the world.

Conscription is presented as the anchor of Yuval's life, with him casting his religious beliefs, national identity, moral sensibility and awareness of his family's history of persecution round the army. He pits conscript service against the human rights discourse that is prevalent in Palestine, treating conscription as a civic selfless act while human rights discourse is preoccupied with the self. Throughout his interview, he would express unease over Palestinians' quality of life, pointing to a village that lies within sight of his settlement and remarking, 'We are not clear [innocent].' However, when he is placed face-to-face with imaginary Palestinian watchers, that sense of responsibility dissipates; and rather than continuing to expand outwards ('I see myself as part of all Israel, and as part of all the human beings in the world …') Yuval's self-concept shrinks. He will now be 'the nicest man he can be', with the phrasing implying that he will be constrained. Those constraints are treated as inevitabilities rather than as ethical choices: 'You have to do things that you have to do.' That sentence could be interpreted as resigned, defensive or even pleading, as though Yuval is

directly addressing the Palestinians whose accusatory gaze he is now imagining, while his second person implicates the listener – conscription is a communal obligation.

The idea of army service as inevitable also surfaces at Yad b'Yad, with one teacher telling me, away from the students, 'The Arab kids understand it's something the Jews have to do.' The young people themselves presented conscription as divisive, with Rafael recounting:

> It's actually very hard for a lot of – mostly the Arab students here, having a friend for so long and then having him go to the army … In our class, most of the Arabs said that if someone would go to the army they would never speak to him again … [T]hey perceive the army as something very violent, they see it every day when they go to school, having to go through checkpoints, and having them check you every day, and you know, maybe one time going to a place and you see your friend whom you studied with for twelve years standing in the checkpoint seeing if you have guns and checking you.

In Rafael's storytelling the amorphous anonymity of the checkpoint is replaced by a jolting face-to-face encounter between two former friends. When asked about his own decision to refuse conscription ('I would go to prison before I went to the army') Rafael returned to the face-to-face relation, describing how his moral opposition had been nurtured through the stories he had heard from classmates and former soldiers:

> I was considering going to the army … because [pause] the consensus in Israel is, you know, you go to school, you go to the army. It's just a phase, a step in life. And especially after Kids4Peace and after Yad b'Yad and the stories I've heard of their experience with soldiers, you know, going to school and seeing soldiers, and all the stories I've actually heard from soldiers, and in my synagogue, it's actually really close by, it's a Reform Jewish synagogue, and this Rosh ha'Shana [Jewish New Year] a soldier came and told us about how his unit came to – to – to houses and, you know, just got, they were bored, and they just broke inside houses and broke a lot of things and stole some things and just got the family into one room, and they said the family was in complete mental distress because of that. And they did it just for fun. And that really affected me … I think I wouldn't go to the army, it got my opinion a lot stronger.

The destabilizing power of storytelling unsettled Rafael's perception of the army as a natural stage in life, prompting him to re-evaluate his own choices after graduation and what those choices might mean for the integrated bilingual community of which he is a part. In indicating our proximity to the synagogue where he had heard the soldier's testimony, he showed that knowledge of military

occupation and its injustices is built into his everyday landscape. In representing checkpoints, he encourages the listener to assume the eyes of a Palestinian ('You see your friend whom you studied with standing in the checkpoint …'), demonstrating once again his ability to transgress and challenge the borders that conscription reinforces.

Rania and Budour also comment on conscription's divisiveness and the threat it poses to community as imagined by youth who have grown up in a bilingual milieu, with Budour adopting an inclusive second-person voice as she imagines conscription's effect on Jewish friends from Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom:

> I think they really think about it in a very deep way before they go. They feel guilty from both sides, because if they don't go, the Israeli community would look at them in a way, and if they do go, then the Palestinians will look at them in a way. Both are negative. So it's really hard for them. I think they feel that they're stuck in between and they have to choose … Adam [a Jewish teenager] said about the law, 'It's a law and it's important.' I said, 'There are ways to get out of this law.' It's not something that you can't – and I said, 'I think you are considering going to the army not because of the law, but because you want to go to the army, because you feel that you need to go the army.' … And he said that when people will look at his resume and see that he didn't look at the army, it will affect him and his future, and this is right. This is the way this country goes … Even if you disagree with what the army does, you have the law, you have your future, and you have what people will say about you, so it's also dangerous for you not to go to the army, and you're also still scared … I don't really know what [roles] they [conscripts from the village] serve in, because they talk about it in numbers, like 801, and I don't really care. When it comes to the army, for me it's either go or don't go. If you go, I think it doesn't matter so much what you do, because in one way or another, you're serving this country in a way that harms the Palestinian people. So it doesn't matter if he's in the plane with weapons to Lebanon or if he's cooking, it's still the same purpose eventually.

As with Rafael's storytelling, Budour's use of the second-person singular ('Even if you disagree …') encourages the reader to assume the perspective of a member of the 'other' community. Budour emphasizes their fear ('… and you're still afraid'), remaining sensitive to that fear even when she challenges Adam over his decision not to refuse conscription. While she does not differentiate between combatant and non-combatant service, she does distinguish between the army as an institution and the individuals who constitute its ranks. This distinction is never present in the stories told by eleven-year-old Abdullah,

a Palestinian boy from Hebron, who at the time he joined the project was preoccupied by the rash of recent stabbings perpetrated by Palestinians against Israelis. Once I arrived as he and young people from neighbouring houses were absorbed in their own version of Cops and Robbers. Abdullah informed me that I was a soldier, and he was about to stab me. Adopting my assigned part, I told him that I was riding in my jeep and I would certainly not get out for him. Abdullah abandoned the game abruptly, and replied, 'I can't get close enough and they wear special jackets anyway'. Rather than focusing on the moral or political dimensions of the question of killing, he concentrated on practicalities; he sees the properties of the flak jacket, not the face. Although he frequently assured me that he was not frightened of the army ('They can't scare me'), in our final meeting he told the story of how he had noticed a cluster of soldiers at the end of his street. 'I turned the way I came and I ran away, and I kept looking over my shoulder to see if they'd gone. I hid in the shop on the corner.' He described snatched glimpses, sounds and smells: a jumbled sensory jigsaw puzzle of guns, boots, slamming doors, tear gas. His representation of soldiers in his autobiographical stories consists of these sensory fragments. Through his play he acts out more direct encounters.

Several Israeli teenagers, particularly sixteen-year-old Nurit and fifteen-year-old Stav, imagined attitudes like Abdullah's to be typical of how Palestinian youth must see them, attributing such attitudes to a hostile Palestinian education system:

> *Stav*: You see on TV shows the books kids that age study, and it's very anti-Israeli and like, yeah. Anti-Jewish … [T]hey [Stav's teachers] show a lot at school, like we see, we learn *ezrachut* [citizenship] and it's about Israel and we learn different stuff, who's against us and what wars and stuff like that, so they showed us.
>
> *Nurit*: I once saw a video that was shared on Facebook, and it said it's terrible how the Arabs teach their children to behave, and then you saw it's a children's show, a TV show, and the person there says, 'What do you do to Jews?' and then the kids, they answer, 'You kill them' or 'You hit them' or you – so I have this idea in my head and it's because I saw this video that probably that's how they teach their children.

Nurit and Stav have formed this image of Palestinian youth's environment based largely on their own schooling; learning 'who's against us' is integral to Stav's conception of citizenship. As she describes Palestinian peers' attitudes to her, she starts to question unprompted the education she herself is receiving:

Five-year-old kids are taught to hate Jews and that Jews are bad and Jews are –
just like five-year-old kids here are, 'Look, be aware that Arabs are – that Arabs
will kill people –.' You see it, they show like … a certain edge, the worst, just like
they [Palestinians] probably see the worst in – like I'm sure not all people tell
their kids that they have to – [trails off] I'm talking about an extreme, like not all
TV shows probably tell kids to kill Jews, just like not all parents tell their kids not
to talk to Arabs and to – so I think they're taking different extreme ends and so
that's what we think, and I think it's because we don't learn together and we don't
know them and – like I really don't know anyone who's Arab. Like, the cleaners
in my school, they're very nice and that's all the Arabs I know and that know me.

The only Palestinians who feature in the sisters' autobiographical stories occupy
a subaltern role, as cleaners; they stand in stark contrast to the young would-
be killers imagined by Nurit. Both sisters are aware that in narrating the Other
they are narrating the unknown, which later prompts Stav to oppose segregated
education ('It's wrong to separate kids so much') and Nurit to wonder how a
Palestinian girl might imagine her:

When you imagine a school in – where they live, then for me, the first thing that
comes up is a very dark place, like not very serious about studies, more about
hurting Jews … and then that's probably what she sees when she thinks of a
Jewish school. I understand now. For sure it's what we're taught and not what's
really going on – well, some of it.

Similar uncertainty is woven through the stories of the violence that the sisters
have experienced. Nurit identified summer 2014 (Operation Protective Edge)
as 'the first time I've ever been involved in a war', with Stav clarifying, '[Before]
it didn't really come to Ra'anana.' Nurit described watching television and
being terrified as she realized that rocket warning sirens were wailing in the
neighbourhood, not only on screen. The threat was represented only by sound,
while for Palestinian youth violence is usually epitomized by a visible army
presence. Nurit focused on the sirens rather than the rocket attack they denoted,
and neither she nor Stav mentioned the unseen rocketeers in this story:

I asked my father, 'What if it gets to Ra'anana?' and he said, 'Don't worry, it
won't.' And then after a few minutes we started hearing sirens, not just from the
television, but also from here, and it was – the first, I mean the first siren I'd ever
been in, and Stav was babysitting at our neighbour's house, so I got very scared.
What if she didn't know what to do?

This highlights the principal difference between Palestinian and Israeli
narratives of violence, self and other: for Palestinian youth violence is structural,

and therefore expected; whereas for Israeli youth it is a paralysing possibility that cements their dread of an unknown and unpredictable Other, whose face is usually beyond sight. In Stav and Nurit's case, their sense of remoteness from the Other is mirrored by an unidentified sense of remoteness from their town's recent history: Stav, born in the middle of the Second Intifada, asserts that 'it's the first time the *merkaz* [central region] people have really felt the war', apparently perceiving the suicide bombings that occurred in the *merkaz* as spatially and temporally distant from her.

Nurit and Stav frequently use distancing techniques, chiefly by avoiding words such as 'Palestine' or other geographic terms that invoke Palestinian presence. Nurit comes close to doing so in her description of the 1949 armistice line, but then retracts: 'They call it the Green Line, which is where it belongs to Israel completely and where there are also – where it's Territories.' Both of them use 'Arab' far more frequently than 'Palestinian'. Stav, when telling stories about her experiences during military incursions in Gaza, conflates Palestinian paramilitary activity with Islamist terrorism in the wider world. This has the simultaneous effect of making Palestinians seem much further away (while remaining source of fear) and subsuming the idea of Palestinian peoplehood into a pan-Arab, pan-Islamic identity:

> The Muslims and Arabs, their *piguim* [Hebrew: attacks] are much more extreme. I didn't hear about extremist Jews flying planes into buildings and killing thousands of people, and like people here bombed buses and shopping malls with a lot of people, and I didn't hear about Jews going to a big mall and blowing themselves up with the whole mall, and I think like [pause] they're much more extreme and everything has to be done violently and showing off that you have power or something like that.

While Stav frames Palestinian paramilitary activity as violent braggadocio, Nurit distances it from its political context, presenting it as a purely individual choice motivated by personal beliefs:

> I think there's a big difference between the personal things and the political things that someone could choose to do. I'm talking about *piguim* now. Someone from them – even if it's against what he's taught, and I don't know what they teach them anymore, but it's personal, if he goes and does something, it hasn't got to do with a war. It's personal. I think there's a really big difference.

For both sisters, war is a legitimate act driven by a need for self-defence, which means that they do not perceive Palestinian fighters as true soldiers or their activities as war. Describing Operation Protective Edge (2014), Stav challenges

Nurit's use of the term 'army' to describe Hamas's paramilitary wing, stating, 'It's not an army, it's a terrorist organisation. That's why they didn't call it a war, they called it an operation, because it wasn't even against an army, it was people throwing rockets at us and us going and fighting.' The word 'fighting' contains moral authority and purpose; *piguim* suggests gratuitous violence. The sisters do not see Palestinians as requiring self-defence, with Nurit commenting, 'If Hamas wouldn't start wars, I don't think Israel – unless we were in some kind of danger, we would have stayed in peace.' Her perception of Palestinian fighters is informed by her view of the Israeli army, with one acting as a moral foil for the other. The narrative is a stark one of good and evil.

Among Palestinian participants, especially younger ones, it was common to hear 'Israelis', 'soldiers' and 'Jews' used interchangeably. Yara shared the story of how, when she was four years old, her father had taken her to the beach. When she returned to Bethlehem, her mother had asked how she had spent the day. She replied, 'I played with the children of the army.' She examines the origin of such perceptions among Palestinian youth:

> When I was four years old, when you told me 'Jews' or 'Israelis', I only used to think about the army. I didn't think about other people. But now after I grew up and after much more experience, I realised that there are other people than the army. But these children still don't know … Mainly because of the [Second] Intifada and the bombings, all the people were talking about Jews, Israelis, army, and it just stuck in my mind that Jews are only the army.

As is the case in Stav and Nurit's storytelling, all the Palestinian participants narrate Palestinian paramilitary activity in relation to the actions of Israeli soldiers. This is most apparent in Amal's memories of the Second Intifada:

> I remember that we were in the roads of Bethlehem, and the tanks were everywhere. And I remember that we were driving and one of the military vehicles similar to a tank, they started driving towards us, and we had this really small car, and they were – and they – it walked above the pavement to kind of run us over. And my father was driving so fast and we kind of ran away, but we were – we panicked and were like oh my God, they wanted to kill us. I don't know why I remember this one very clearly.
>
> I remember another thing, that I saw the Palestinian resistance with my own eyes. I was also with my parents and we saw this, you know, this truck with people on top of it, and they were driving towards Beit Jala because it's a very high point and you can see Jerusalem. I think they had a gun or something. And we were like, 'Oh my God, they're going to fight the soldiers,' and we followed them. And they were like, 'What the hell are you doing? Go back!' and we were like, 'Oh my

God, go ahead, you're doing a great job!' Now when I say it, it sounds like I'm promoting violence. [Laughs] But it's not, it's resistance, it's different, and people don't realise what resistance is. You know, we're being attacked, you're going to have to fight back. You're not going to just sit there. I don't know, I was very excited that day. Not in a violent way or anything. I didn't see anything being – you know, I didn't see the shooting, but I saw, I think I saw the gun. And I saw the very scary – well, not scary men, they were very brave.

Amal emphasizes the power of Israeli troops, with the verb she uses to describe the military vehicle's pursuit ('It walked above the pavement to … run us over') giving the vehicle a monstrous sentience. The machine is faceless. By contrast, she is uncertain about the paramilitaries' armaments ('I think they had a gun … I didn't see the shooting …') in a way that emphasizes them as individuals over their military capabilities. Her attitude towards the paramilitaries seems conflicted, with relief, pride and enthusiasm blending with a briefly acknowledged and hastily retracted fear.

Political violence provides the primary vocabulary with which the young people describe members of the 'other' community. When asked what they associate with the word Gaza, the most common answers from Israeli youth were 'rockets', 'Qassams' and 'darkness'. Metaphor provides a richer vocabulary for the narration of alterity, which was obvious in the storytelling of twelve-year-old Maayan, who used a row of pictorial dice to create the tale of the alien that opens this book. We will revisit it here:

Is this a mask or an alien? I will make it be an alien. So this alien wants to get to the apple, but he has to pass all kinds of stuff to get to it. A lot of problems. [Long pause] All kinds of people don't want to help him. They don't want to be the ones in last place. He's an alien. I think the apple's not really an apple, it's something like – something like a lot of gold, or treasure or something. Something that this alien really needs. In the end he gets to it, and he shows other people that it's important to help each other.

Although she brought up 'the wars in Gaza' of her own accord, remembering frightening midnight telephone calls in which her father had been summoned to reserve duty in the IDF, she was reluctant to go into detail. She did not use 'Arab' or 'Palestinian' once, simply referring to 'whoever's fighting us'. This story was narrated immediately after a reluctant mention of the besieged Gaza Strip, and can be read as a guarded commentary on attitudes towards Gaza among the Israeli public: 'All kinds of people don't want to help him. They don't want to be the ones in last place.' The 'last place' hierarchy is reminiscent of the ethnic stratification that exists in Israel-Palestine, and Maayan's story communicates

both the fear of becoming the one oppressed and the ethical impossibility of perpetuating oppression. Metaphor enables her to express empathy for people beyond her sight and knowledge.

Noga was more direct when asked for her associations with the word:

> Gaza. I think – I see a picture in my head. A lot of destruction. And I have a picture of Shuja'iyya, you know, after we – I think there are really sad stories. I don't know how – I don't think we have a solution. I feel that when I think Gaza, I more think of them than rockets, than when they shoot at us.

Shuja'iyya is a neighbourhood in Gaza City that was the scene of a protracted Israeli assault in Operation Protective Edge, resulting in a high civilian death toll and the obliteration of much housing and infrastructure. Noga is unusual in that she knows the name of the area. When I asked how she had found out about Shuja'iyya, she replied, 'I go on their websites.' Just as her initial antagonism to the word Nakba was eroded by her awareness that it is 'a sad story for them', she is conscious that in 'Shuja'iyya, you know, after we – there are really sad stories'. That 'after we' suggests a personal grief that leads her to concentrate on the Palestinian inhabitants of Gaza rather than on the rocket fire that dominates other young Israelis' storytelling. Notably she shies away from describing what 'we' did in Shuja'iyya, giving no details of the stories she read. Palestinian residents appear late in her stories: when describing her brothers' combat service in Gaza, she commented, 'They went in after the fighting, when it was empty.' It appears that Noga is unable to entertain the possibility that her brothers participated in violence, causing her to clear the space of its inhabitants before they enter the story. However, her sudden restoration of Gaza's population to Gaza suggests that it is not always possible to retain this sterile image. Taboo memory has surfaced in her story through 'their websites', and awareness of the other has compromised her image of the army and potentially her image of her own family, underlining the impurity and the danger of storytelling.

This chapter has examined the polluting dangers in depth, recognizing that storytelling in situations of political violence has been sanitized by an excessive focus on its role in psychotherapy and peace education. Critically moving beyond these institutional applications of storytelling has enabled us to better understand its place in the lives of youth in Israel-Palestine, acknowledging that while it can be used repressively in adult-led peace-oriented groups, it has also been reclaimed by young people as a political act. The analysis reveals stories to be liminal spaces, distinguished by ambiguity and ambivalence, and

therefore spaces in which multiplicity of apparently conflicting ideas can be expressed simultaneously. Emanuel Levinas's metaphor of the face, in which the tension between violent urges and the impossibility of violence is presented as fundamental to every human relationship, forms a useful philosophical framework in which to interpret the stories of conflict-affected youth: it warns the listener not to attempt to reconcile perceived contradictions. Friction is intrinsic to storytelling itself, an idea that is reinforced by the content of the young people's stories, which continue to coalesce around fault lines.

With the exception of Israeli teenagers in Ra'anana, all the study participants may be classed as inhabiting a border of some kind (and participants in Ra'anana spoke of how the sound of rocket warning sirens had the effect of transforming the region's 'centre' into the edge, reinforcing the idea of borders as treacherous and shifting). As a result, these stories are all characterized by a sense of distance and separation, paired with an acute awareness of the other's proximity. This quality is reminiscent of Augusto Boal: 'Theatre is born when the human being discovers that it can observe itself … It perceives where it is and where it is not, and imagines where it could go.'[31] Imagining where one could (or could not) go is part of the narration of community and belonging, which is apparent throughout this chapter. Many stories deal with journeys frustrated by political violence or overshadowed by the threat of violence, with borders and crossing-points associated with destabilizing, uncertain and potentially dangerous encounters with the other.

The significance of these different fault lines to young people's sense of self and wider community is apparent from the amount of autobiographical storytelling that is structured around them. Their role in how young people imagine the other hints that these liminal spaces may also be instrumental in the transmission of the other's stories, such as the one Noga told at the very end of our last meeting. In response, the next chapter returns us to these liminal spaces – the separation barrier that Junayd transforms into a mirror for Israelis' use, the checkpoints that provoke questions about family and belonging for Yara, and the ethnolinguistic boundary straddled by teenagers at Yad b'Yad – and considers them as sites of transmission for forbidden histories, rather than places in which such histories are suppressed or driven underground.

Forbidden histories in contested spaces

Narrative drifts into forbidden terrain

The fraught nature of Israeli society's relationship with the Nakba and the Palestinian encounter with the Holocaust is exemplified by the location of Israel's Holocaust memorial museum, Yad Vashem. Lying within sight of the unmarked remains of Deir Yassin, a depopulated Palestinian village that was the site of a massacre by the Irgun in 1948, the museum's exit is spanned by a bridge inscribed with Ezekiel 37.14: 'I will put my spirit in you and you shall live again, and I will set you upon your own soil.' The threads binding Palestinian awareness of the Holocaust to the memory of displacement and loss that occurred during the Nakba ['catastrophe' in Arabic] were first made explicit by Emil Habibi, a Palestinian journalist and citizen of Israel, in his Hebrew language essay 'Your Holocaust, Our Catastrophe': 'In the eyes of the Arabs the Holocaust is conceived as primordial sin; by its power the Zionist movement managed to convince millions of Jews that its way is the right one.'[1] The result has been a deep societal reluctance to address the Holocaust openly, frequently manifesting as denial.

In Israel the Nakba culminated in state-sponsored acts of erasure, such as planting woodland to conceal traces of former Palestinian habitation. Grassroots attempts to foster remembrance in Israel resulted in the passing of the so-called Nakba Law in 2011, which prohibits publicly funded institutions from holding commemorative events. Two years previously a textbook produced for Arab schools in Israel was withdrawn by the Ministry of Education because it contained the term 'Nakba',[2] while a second text aimed at Jewish high school students, *Nationalism: Building a State in the Middle East*, was confiscated from bookshops at the Ministry's intervention because the authors had used the phrase 'ethnic cleansing' in relation to the events of 1948.[3] Returning to Yad Vashem and the ruins of Deir Yassin, the museum's name ['A Place and a Name' in Hebrew], carries bitter significance for Palestinian communities: demolitions

and forestation have transformed place so that the Nakba is not immediately visible, while government education policy represses its name.

Repression characterizes recent public responses to the Holocaust in Palestinian society. In 2012 UNRWA teachers' union protested against the introduction of the Holocaust 'under any name or pretext' to the UN-sponsored curriculum taught in refugee camps in Jordan. One teacher commented to a journalist, 'I would prefer to resign from my job than teach my students to sympathise with the same people who took our land.'[4] As I began my fieldwork in March 2014, Mohammed Dajani, then a political science professor at Al-Quds University, led a group of students on an educational visit to Auschwitz-Birkenau. The trip generated fierce controversy among East Jerusalem's Palestinian inhabitants that escalated to violence. Dajani received death threats and his car was torched outside his home. He eventually resigned his university post under the pressure. On an institutional or public level, the Holocaust and the Nakba are presented as two competing histories colliding in the same geographical space.

However, the Nakba is experienced by many Palestinians as an ongoing rather than purely historical event. This bleak reality was brought home to me when I got to know people in Umm al-Kheir in the south Hebron hills, a village founded by Bedouin who had been expelled from Arad in 1948. After the occupation of the West Bank in 1967 they once again find themselves struggling to remain in their homes, which have been repeatedly razed by IDF bulldozers. The precarity and dread faced by this impoverished herding community are experienced as a perpetuation of the Nakba. Palestinian dispossession is the policy of successive Israeli governments and embedded in the state's structure and apparatus, setting it apart from mass violence that occurred within a specific period of time. 'Both categories involve trauma: the difference is that historical trauma can be worked on or healed with time; structural trauma cannot be changed or healed.'[5] Secondly, Palestinians do not share the culpability for the Holocaust that Israelis must reckon with on engaging with Palestinian experience, which adds to the challenges of discussing the Holocaust in tandem with the Nakba.

This is one reason why storytelling is taboo memory's primary mode of transmission: stories, tellers and subjects are more clearly understood in terms of imbrication rather than culpability. Stories are not stationary or static. The way we tell our own stories is guided by the conditions of our present, and our reception of others' stories is determined by our own frame of reference and the symbols that appear in our own personal and cultural lexicons. One example of imbrication can be found in a production of *The Diary of Anne Frank* that was staged in the United States by Abdelfattah Abusrour, a refugee and theatre

director from Aida camp. He decided to have the audience filing past Nazi soldiers in order to reach their seats. Although checkpoints were a feature of life in Nazi-occupied Europe, it is unlikely that Abusrour would have conceived of this immersive theatre experience if checkpoints did not loom so large in his own life. Anne Frank's story had become imbricated in his own.

In a raw personal memoir of his army service in Gaza during the First Intifada, the Israeli peace education scholar Alick Isaacs provides another haunting illustration of what it means to be an imbricated teller:

> It now became my job to sort the men from the women, the young from the old. Waving my gun in the air, I motioned to the hordes that stood before me to sit down. The alleys were wet with flowing sewage. The stink was horrible. But the hundreds of women … all complied. Kicking off their sandals, they crouched down on their haunches and wailed … The alleyways were filled with lost sandals and plastic shoes … For weeks after that night, as we patrolled the streets of Khan Younis [refugee camp], we kicked our way through piles and piles of lost shoes.[6]

Isaacs could not have offered this image in ignorance of the mounds of shoes that form a permanent exhibit at Auschwitz-Birkenau. The separation of men and women at gunpoint carries associations of the selection ramp, which will also have been familiar to him. While he makes no explicit comparison between the women's ordeal and the Holocaust, he draws on a repository of Holocaust symbols to interpret and narrate the experience of Palestinian refugees. As we will see now, young people frequently craft their own stories with reference to the disquieting Other, and are acutely aware of their own imbrication in other stories.

Guided by Guy Debord's concept of derive or drift, 'a technique of rapid passage through varied ambiances', this chapter examines how young people use storytelling to navigate this contested space and the taboo memories that are embedded in its landscape:

> Dérives involve playful-constructive behavior and awareness of psychogeo-graphical effects, and are thus quite different from the classic notions of journey or stroll.
>
> In a dérive one or more persons during a certain period drop their relations, their work and leisure activities, and all their other usual motives for movement and action, and let themselves be drawn by the attractions of the terrain and the encounters they find there. Chance is a less important factor in this activity than one might think: from a dérive point of view cities have psychogeographical contours, with constant currents, fixed points and vortexes that strongly discourage entry into or exit from certain zones.[7]

Although developed in relation to urban space, the theory is equally applicable to storytelling and its role in our navigation of the past. Memory as mediated through the narratives constructed by history textbooks or curated by museums is analogous to a journey, which has a known destination and point of departure, while storytelling lacks this structure. It can be difficult to tell where one story ends and another begins: tellers and listeners may become caught up in tales that flow into one another, which they will then rework, retell and make their own. Exemplified in folk tales, these 'narrative drifts' are inherent to oral culture.[8] Recognizing that stories are potential dérives, with the power to reveal 'the constant currents, fixed points and vortexes' that carry us into or away from forbidden histories, I chose not to take the Holocaust and the Nakba as departure points or destinations. I rarely introduced these histories into the storytelling sessions directly, instead waiting to see if, when and where they would emerge. The result was a fascinating insight into the place of historic mass violence in the development of young people's self-concept, as they frequently linked these events with their own births.

This chapter opens with a definition of forbidden history, informed by the young people's storytelling, before mapping the 'constant currents, fixed points and vortexes' through which these seemingly polarized histories cross-fertilize and communicate with each other. As several storytellers connected the Holocaust and the Nakba with birth, the function of forbidden histories as near-primal origin stories is given particular attention. The chapter argues that existing taboos are reinforced by the Nakba's and the Holocaust's status as origin stories. Drawing on Michael Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, which challenges the popular understanding of such histories as collective memories in competition, it identifies the counter-currents that flow through young people's storytelling and pass beneath mainstream national narratives on forbidden history, asking what alternative ideas of community these might nurture.

Topographies of forbidden history in Israel-Palestine

Authorized history, epitomized by government-sanctioned school textbooks, may be read as a 'national biography' that encourages citizens 'to identify themselves as part of a collective body, the nation, to which they belong … and to which they owe allegiance'.[9] This approach to history developed concurrently with the modern nation-state, which provided new ways of classifying groups of

people. Recognizing that 'taboo protects the local consensus on how the world is organised',[10] Liisa Malkki suggests that refugees and displaced persons form 'a dangerous category because they blur national (read: natural) boundaries … They represent an attack on the categorical order of nations.'[11] Taboo histories also challenge that categorical order: their narrators or protagonists tend to be located in the blurred margins of society, as with the refugees of Malkki's study; the narrative of belonging and allegiance that forms the backbone of national identity is fractured by these 'voices from below'.[12] The challenge they pose to mainstream or nationalized history is the first recurrent characteristic of forbidden histories, followed closely by the social position of their narrators.

This intimate relationship between forbidden history and political disenfranchisement is made apparent in James Scott's work on power relations, which focuses on the 'hidden transcripts' of resistance that lie beneath outward performances of subservience from marginalized groups:

> What may develop in such circumstances is virtually a dual culture: the official culture filled with bright euphemisms, silences, and platitudes and an unofficial culture that has its own history … its own knowledge of shortages, corruption, and inequalities that may be widely known but that may not be introduced into the public discourse.[13]

According to this analysis, knowledge of the unofficial culture and its attendant histories is disseminated through a hidden language that is predominantly oral. Its oral nature can be inferred through the components identified by Scott, most of which are more closely associated with spoken language than with writing – 'rumour, gossip, disguises, linguistic tricks, metaphors, euphemisms, folktales, ritual gestures …'[14] These covert and fluid oral modes of transmission allow forbidden histories to flourish even in climates of severe political repression and locate them within the disciplinary boundaries of oral history. Through its attention to personal narrative, oral history 'provides access to undocumented experience … more significantly, the "hidden histories" of people on the margins: workers, women, indigenous peoples, and other oppressed or marginalised groups'[15]; and through 'the power of open telling … it democratises tellers and listeners by easing the monologic power of *what is said* into the collaborative, cogenerative, and yet potentially discordant *act of saying and hearing it*'.[16] This potential for easing that monologic power and thereby subverting mainstream or nationalized 'written' history is grounded in oral history's 'performative nature as well as the destabilising influence of the interviewer's presence',[17] a power that is also inherent to storytelling, due to the disquiet generated by the face-to-face

encounter. Making it clear that forbidden history's oral nature and the social position of its narrators are related, not merely incidental, Scott also frames his analysis of public and hidden transcripts in terms of performance, recognizing that forbidden histories are illicitly injected into the public transcript through acting, elaborate role-play and other oral 'arts of resistance' that by their nature necessitate an audience.[18]

That need for an audience also surfaces in trauma theory as applied to literature. Describing Freud's parable of the burning child, in which a dead boy appears to his sleeping father in a dream to plead for help as his corpse catches fire in the next room, Cathy Caruth notes that trauma is epitomized by 'this plea by an other who is asking to be seen and heard, this call by which the other commands us to awaken (to awaken, indeed, to a burning)'.[19] Consequently another distinctive feature of forbidden history is trauma and the accompanying need for a witness. However, the role of the witness is fraught with complications and may not be assumed openly. In her work on the intergenerational transmission of Holocaust memory, Ruth Wajnryb identifies silencing as a recurrent phenomenon in conversations between survivor parents and children born after the war. Her interviewees, adult children of mainly Polish Jewish immigrants to Australia, report that questions about their parents' wartime experiences were stoppered with 'Let's not talk about that' or similar sentences that indicated the child had 'strayed into forbidden terrain',[20] even though parents would paradoxically voice disappointment if they believed their children were not interested enough – an ambivalent desire to be heard without having to tell. The children's knowledge of the prohibited terrain was usually amassed obliquely, as the traumatic nature of the history to be communicated threatens to overwhelm both teller and listener. 'To compensate, the communication becomes increasingly indirect: messages are fragmented and dissonant, and meaning is so oblique that listeners' inferential skills are obliged to work overtime.'[21] The study details what Wajnryb terms 'the pragmatics of silence', demonstrating how the traumatic nature of forbidden histories is woven into their linguistic expression.

It becomes clear from her interviews with survivors of other atrocities that these linguistic conventions are not particular to the transmission of Holocaust memory in survivor homes. They distinguish the narration of forbidden histories in other contexts, in which 'knowing and not knowing are entangled in the language of trauma and in the stories associated with it'.[22] Trauma is inextricably bound up with the idea of repression and unspoken knowledge, which finds a parallel in the political repression of forbidden history. These four hallmarks of

forbidden history – its traumatic nature, its orality, the marginalized position of its narrators and its deviation from mainstream national or community narratives – have been thoroughly if incidentally documented across the literature on oral history and collective memory studies, with orality emerging as a way for oppressed groups to subvert hegemonic national narratives. It has been suggested that the scholarly interest in oral historical approaches to taboo subjects that burgeoned throughout the 1990s may have formed 'a crucial conduit by which trauma is being returned to the public domain'.[23] If trauma and taboo are so intertwined, it follows logically that taboo stories are also entering the public domain in this guise.

Another characteristic of forbidden history – the marginalization of its narrators – is of special interest given the power dynamics that exist in Israel-Palestine. The Holocaust is integral to the dominant national narrative, which presents the state's creation as a people's rebirth after unspeakable tragedy, with Palestinians frequently cast as Nazi collaborators. In an address to the UN made in October 2015, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu suggested that Mufti Hajj Amin al-Husayni, a prominent figure in Mandatory Palestine, persuaded Hitler to commit genocide. But although the present-day narrators of Holocaust history are not marginalized in the Israeli-Palestinian context, the people who populate this historical landscape – the victims and survivors who held a precarious position as an ethnoreligious minority in Europe – are nudged to history's edges. Along with public attempts to implicate Palestinians in the Holocaust, the suffering and powerlessness of the protagonists reinforce the public taboo that the Nazi genocide carries in Palestinian society. Nineteen-year-old Amal, a refugee in Dheisheh camp, adopted a belligerently indifferent stance towards Jewish collective memory that demonstrates the taboo's force:

> I hear these Holocaust stories, like a woman who came here after her family were all dead or missing, and I know it sounds bad but I think, 'So what?' My family are still refugees and the Israelis can choose to come and go where they like. It's sad that her family died but she has a choice about how to live her life. My family didn't do anything to hurt anyone, but now they're the ones with no rights.

Amal was reluctant to discuss the Holocaust. Although she was fluent and spontaneous on other topics, telling stories at length without prompts from me, she related this anecdote abruptly at the end of our meeting, when we were having coffee and the recorder had been switched off. She was conscious about the structure of her narration, occasionally reflecting on why she had chosen to tell stories in a particular order, so that her decision to tell this story after our

session had formally ended – thereby excluding it from her 'official' transcript – emphasizes her rejection of the Holocaust as an event relevant to her own life. In light of the way her family's experiences are denied or marginalized in the Israeli public sphere, her decision to place this anecdote outside her storytelling may be read as her own declaration of narrative power. She explains that she heard about this Holocaust survivor, named only as 'a woman' in her story, when answering questions from international visitors at Dheisheh's youth centre. In retelling the story, she does not reference murder, but describes the survivor's family as having 'died' or being 'dead and missing'. Although she acknowledges Holocaust deaths, the verb 'to die' is more passive and nebulous than 'to be killed'; the nature of the nameless survivor's loss is diluted through Amal's lexical choices. She foregrounds her own family's circumstances through the structure of her story, closing this anecdote with a reference to her named relatives rather than to the nameless Jewish woman and ensuring that they emerge as the story's central protagonists.

Fifteen-year-old Rafael, a Yad b'Yad pupil who has numerous Holocaust survivors in his family, explores possible reasons for such reactions to the Nazi genocide among Palestinians:

> You couldn't start talking with Palestinians about the Holocaust if you don't first start talking about the Nakba with Israelis, because I would say in the Palestinian consensus, there's a lot of, you know, 'We don't get our [remembrance] days, our remembrance doesn't really get remembered, we don't feel respected.' So as soon as they feel respected, you know – integrating, teaching people about the Nakba, Israelis – so they would say, 'We got the respect we deserve.' So maybe they would be open to hear other stories.

Amal's stories contain frequent mentions of movement restrictions and her frustration at these percolates within her short retelling of the Holocaust survivor's immigration to Israel ('The Israelis choose to come and go where they like'), while a sixteen-year-old boy from Hebron describes himself as 'living like a chicken in a cage'. Cage imagery is prevalent in many other stories, particularly those from refugee camps and Hebron's Old City, which gives resonance to Rafael's phrase 'open to hear other stories'. He sees Nakba commemoration as opening up space for discovery, a doorway through which Palestinians might approach the Holocaust and the place it holds in Israeli Jewish collective memory. In adopting the first-person voice of a Palestinian ('Our remembrance doesn't really get remembered') he also draws attention not just to the Nakba itself, but to the importance of the process of remembering for Palestinians – he is concerned not primarily with historical events but with pain currently

experienced by peers like Amal. By moving between narrative voices (a common feature of his storytelling, as discussed in the previous chapter) Rafael demonstrates the ethic of inclusive community that he feels open discussion of the Nakba might promote, which makes room for multiple protagonists with their differing histories.

His approach tessellates with Rothberg's theory of multidirectional memory, which aims to demonstrate 'how coming to terms with the Nazi genocide of European Jews has always been intertwined with ongoing processes of decolonisation; and to extrapolate the theoretical consequences of that newly understood intertwining for thinking about public memory and group identity'.[24] Responding to the 'logic of scarcity' that frequently characterizes popular understanding of collective memory, its place in public life, and its relationship to violence, Rothberg argues that

> many people assume that the sphere in which collective memories are articulated is a scarce resource and that the interaction of different collective memories in that sphere takes the form of a zero-sum struggle for pre-eminence … While there can be no doubt that many manifestations of contemporary violence, including war and genocide, are in part the product of resentful memories and conflicting views of the past … the conceptual framework through which commentators and ordinary citizens have addressed the relationship between memory, identity, and violence is flawed. Against the framework that understands collective memory as *competitive* memory – as a zero-sum struggle over scarce resources – I suggest that we consider memory as *multidirectional*: as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative.[25]

Examining both the young people's stories and mainstream public discourse on Holocaust and Nakba in Israel-Palestine, it becomes apparent that the perception of forbidden histories as encroaching on public space and threatening national identity is reinforced by their status as origin stories. Eli Wiesel has commented, 'In the beginning was Auschwitz', invoking a powerful creation mythos.[26] In her analysis of second-generation Holocaust memory, reflecting on her own childhood perceptions, Eva Hoffman writes, 'The Holocaust was the dark root from which the world sprang … [L]ike all children, I took the character of the recent past entirely for granted; that is, I took the conditions of the war and the Holocaust as a kind of mythology and the norm'.[27] This dark history supplied Hoffman with the archetypes she needed to construct her own story, her 'norm'. Interestingly, in his 1986 essay discussing Arab reactions to the Holocaust, Emil Habibi describes the Holocaust as 'the primordial sin', which indicates that

similar biblical language and metaphor also shaped early perceptions of the Holocaust in Palestinian popular imagination.

Many young people connected the Holocaust or the Nakba with their birth, with critical points in their development, or with their families. I began a storytelling session with eighteen-year-old Noga, a young woman from a religious settlement in Gush Etzion, by asking her to list at random the things that have shaped her life:

> The Holocaust. That's very important. [Pause] Then my family … I really don't know why, I used to read books, I'd watch movies. I don't know why, actually. My family wasn't there. It's very far from me. Not close. I don't know why, I just – it's stronger in me, for me more than for the other people I know. My friends, they don't see the Holocaust as very important. It's very important, but not as important as it is for me … It started with the stories, the books about kids who were hiding, the camps, and stuff like that. Since I was young I knew I wanted to go there.

The Holocaust emerges as the first formative experience in Noga's life, and after mentioning her family she returns to the Holocaust in a way that braids the two together, even though none of her relatives were involved. Although she states that 'it's very far from me', that distance has been negated by 'the stories, the books about kids who were hiding'. The stories prompted her to travel to the physical sites of the Holocaust, which she did as soon as she received the opportunity as a secondary school student. She does not name the death camps or give their locations, talking instead about 'wanting to go there', which implies that she understands the Holocaust itself as a place. Her use of the phrase '[the Holocaust] is stronger in me' reveals the extent to which the memory of the genocide has shaped her inner world. A storytelling session with Amal produced an almost identical pattern. Just as Noga links the Holocaust with her family, Amal connects the Nakba with 'the beginning of my life':

> 1948 is an important date, of course. It's not going to be something that I can ignore. I didn't live at that time, but as I said, as a refugee I'll always go back to that date. So. The Nakba. Then I think I'm going to go to 1995, the day I was born, the year I was born. Yeah, it's the beginning of my life.

In Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom, fifteen-year-old Budour told a two-line story that illustrates the Nakba's formative power in her family: 'My father's story – his name is Kamal, and he's named after his uncle who disappeared in the Nakba. We don't know if he died or ran away, so he is called after him.' Whenever Budour hears her father addressed by name, she is reminded of her missing great-uncle;

the lost are invoked by the living. The result is that Budour's life is permeated by the Nakba and an attendant sense of loss: 'Even though it happened many years ago and I haven't experienced it, I feel like it's a very big part of me.' Rafael, mentioning his relatives' deportation to Auschwitz, explained, 'I guess when I was maybe four or five, kindergarten, I kind of knew what happened ... because it was such a big part of my family.' Seventeen-year-old Yuval, an Orthodox Jewish teenager from a Gush Etzion settlement, told a story about his high school trip to Poland in reply to my story prompt about significant moments in his life. That story also led back to his family and his birthplace, Jerusalem:

> Actually, I remember one moment – it's not a thing, it's like a moment, a little moment – when I began to – last summer. I went to – teenagers in Israel, in the summer, when they're sixteen, seventeen or something like this, teenagers go to Poland. The Holocaust. Actually, it was terrifying to see. We came back, we went back to Jerusalem, and I saw my parents standing there in Arnon HaNetziv [an Israeli settlement in East Jerusalem], next to Jabel Mukaber [a Palestinian neighbourhood], and I saw them, and I remember being – feeling happiness, because I came back from a place where you can't imagine what happened there and you see your family and your parents who love you and you understand how wonderful your life is. Poland was not fun at all. It's my grandparents, they were there, in Auschwitz.

Yuval was reticent to share stories about his grandparents' experiences or to talk about the Holocaust in depth ('I want to talk about happy things'). In the only overt story he tells about the Holocaust he presents the listener with a stark visual diptych: his grandparents behind barbed wire in Auschwitz, and his parents awaiting his return in Jerusalem. Some of his phrasing – 'You come back from a place where you can't imagine what happened and you see your family ...' – is murky, with the listener unable to tell whether Yuval is referring to his mental image of his grandparents in the extermination camp or to the first glimpse of his parents standing in the city where he was born. This blurring of the two demonstrates the significance that the Holocaust has for his sense of self. Young people in Aida held a similar consciousness about the Nakba: in our first storytelling session as a group, when I invited them to introduce themselves, they gave their names and stated where they were from. 'I'm from Walaja.' 'I'm from Beit Jibrin.' 'I'm from Sataf.' Their first act was to indicate where they belonged on a mental map of destroyed villages and depopulated urban neighbourhoods in which they have never set foot, but which supersede their literal birthplace. In doing this, they made the Nakba the bedrock of all the stories they told over the months I visited them.

Whenever memories of mass violence become intertwined with origin stories, whether personal or national, the taboos attached to them are strengthened. This leads to a competitive approach to remembering, evident in 'The Contaminated Paradise', an essay in which the Israeli scholar Nura Yuval-Davis describes how a relationship with a Palestinian refugee now living in Britain brought her into conflict with childhood memories:

> He told me that he found children a problem and did not ever intend to have children of his own … And then it came out. His mother had abandoned him during the 1948 war. She ran away when the Jewish forces advanced towards the village, and left him, a four-year-old child, behind. He was rescued by other family members and grew up in a different neighbouring Arab country than the one she fled to.
>
> 'Which village was it,' I asked unsuspectingly.
>
> 'Oh, you might not know it, it doesn't exist anymore. A fishing village … Tantura.'
>
> …
>
> Tantura – where I learnt to swim in the sea, learnt the joy of empowerment and freedom, swimming in the deep but calm waters towards Seagull Islet … Tantura, where I experienced a sense of adventure exploring all the ruins – Palestinian and Roman (there was an ancient port there) – in and outside the water, accepting them both unquestioningly as naturalised relics of the past; where I escaped to a shady corner in the *bustan*, eating grapes and reading a favourite book; where my parents stopped being harassed, stressed city people and became fun people.
>
> Tantura – my childhood paradise.
>
> I could never again meet my Palestinian lover after that night. The child in me hated him. He invaded, dispossessed, tainted Tantura.[28]

For both Yuval-Davis and Rafiq, her ex-partner, Tantura's ruins embody formative childhood experiences: for Rafiq they represent the violence that led him to reject parenthood; for Yuval-Davis they were part of Eden, the locus of origin stories. Recalling her playful interaction with these 'naturalised relics of the past' in light of Rafiq's story makes it impossible for her to retain Eden. The Nakba has contaminated her personal origin mythos, with Rafiq paradoxically becoming an invader. Significantly the essay contains no further dialogue between the couple. Rafiq's last words are 'Tantura, a fishing village'. Yuval-Davis's instinctive reaction to those words is to write him out of the remainder of the story.

The Nakba's threatening encroachment is also a theme in Noam Chayut's autobiography *The Girl Who Stole My Holocaust*. Chayut never uses the term

'Nakba', but instead writes a forest fable whose fantastical quality sets it apart from the rest of the memoir, creating a narrative rupture. He inserts it into a chapter on a cross-country hike, immediately following a conversation with a Bedouin man who was displaced in 1948:

> For the past millennia, only a few pines grew in the Jerusalem hills, their provenance unknown. But the pine trees commonly seen in the Jewish National Fund-planted woods were imported from Europe … The oak, pistachio, buckthorn, and hawthorn – indigenous Mediterranean trees – live side by side in a competitive interrelationship, as in every society, each fighting for its own place but also living in harmony with its surroundings and neighbours … Not so the pine. It does not allow the local vegetation to live in its midst.
>
> …
>
> However, the pine tree burns easily because of the flammable resin flowing in its veins. When ignited, it burns and disappears just as fast as it took over its new territory. But the pine has one more unique trait: right after the fire, its seeds sprout in huge quantities. The fire destroys the woods and everything in it. Numerous other seeds that have so far been locked under the toxic needles lose their vitality in the heat and die. Not so the pine seeds … In a forest fire, the intense heat opens up the cone and revives the seed, bringing it back to life.
>
> This wondrous biological feature enables our friend the pine to come alive out of the flames and reconstruct its home and territory, whose gates are closed to all others.[29]

The Holocaust and Nakba are both encoded in this fable, with the forest fires obliquely referencing the Nazi slaughter and invoking the nationalist imagery of rebirth in Israel that is central to Chayut's account of his childhood. But the pines planted in vast numbers by the Jewish National Fund (JNF), instead of being uncomplicated symbols of survival and hope, assume a sinister quality. The JNF's government-sponsored practice of planting trees to disguise traces of former Palestinian habitation and to confiscate farmland is well established, and the national parks and nature reserves that cover the sites of depopulated villages are sometimes dedicated to the memory of Holocaust victims.[30] While Chayut treats the histories as related (the burning led directly to the release of the pine seeds that have subsequently prevented other plants from 'living in their midst'), the memories are presented as struggling for dominance in public space.

As we have already seen, forests are central to European oral folk culture, particularly fairy tale.[31] Although forests are less common in Middle Eastern landscapes, they still make an appearance in folklore and are imbued with similar tropes, as in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*, whose hero ventures into a forest to slay a monster. Children who enter such dark spaces risk their lives and must use

their ingenuity to escape Red Riding Hood's wolf, the witch in the gingerbread cottage, Baba Yaga: 'The girl and the wolf inhabit a place, call it the forest or call it the human psyche, where the spectrum of human sagas converges and their social and cultural meanings play out.'[32] Forests are the cultural origins of terror and uncertainty, figuring large in Eva Hoffman's mental reconstructions of her parents' Holocaust experiences in Poland. In the forests of Israel-Palestine, to which Polish trees have been transplanted, Nakba and Holocaust memory form the unseen dangers facing passers-by. As forbidden histories are embedded in Israel-Palestine's physical landscape, it is easy to view acknowledgement of the 'other' history as a treacherous territorial concession, one that becomes even more perilous when one's own collective history of mass violence is intimately intertwined with personal stories of birth, family and ultimately selfhood.

In such a context, self-preservation requires ever starker distinction to be drawn between girl and wolf, hero and villain, perpetrator and victim, good and evil, a process that contributes to competitive victimhood and entrenches taboos. Yet further readings of the young people's stories reveal that the convergence of histories does not always precipitate a defensive or proprietorial response. Antagonism can be mingled with empathy, and through almost all the stories I gathered, a discernible riptide of curiosity flows beneath reluctance to listen.

'Not the real history': Truth, empathy and typologies of taboo memory

Having placed the Holocaust at the heart of her storytelling, Noga demonstrates awareness that Palestinians might view the Nakba as similarly significant to their own stories. However, she is critical of this significance: 'When they talk about the Nakba I think … they want to bring back the past. You can't keep being stuck in the 1948 war. They're still refugees, I think only the Palestinians keep being refugees, and they give it to their children and their grandchildren.' She does not appear to register the dissonance between how she narrates the Holocaust's role in her life (as a formative event that overshadows her daily life and impels her to visit a continent that her Mizrahi family never inhabited) and how she treats the Nakba's place in the lives of her Palestinian peers (an impractical obsession over an event that ought to be left in the past). She does note her hostile reaction to the idea of Nakba – 'That word antagonises me because it's not the real history' – and as seen in the previous chapter, over the course of her storytelling she moves between denial, defensive acknowledgement and empathy with Palestinian

experience: 'If you think like a Palestinian, if you are a Palestinian, it was real.' With that closing sentence, she both raises questions about what it means for a history to be real and introduces the idea that there exist multiple histories. This idea is taken up explicitly by Budour:

> I think that each one has his different history, and it affects each one of us in a very similar way, but the history is different, and that's why it's very hard to talk about it and find a solution, because the stories don't always match. And it's always – it hurts when you hear about your grandfather crying because he doesn't have his lands any more, and he's not living with his relatives any more, and – these are all stories that really affect you, and like – the Nakba is very important to me. Even though it happened many years ago and I haven't experienced it, I feel like it's a very big part of me. I think this is a very big part of the conflict, and why it's hard to solve it, because each one of us sees it and connects to the story in a very different way. So it's very hard to find a place where everyone agrees.

Recognizing the existence of multiple histories and acknowledging that people interact with the stories in varied and ambivalent ways make it possible to acknowledge the significance carried by forbidden histories without feeling that they negate the teller's own experiences. This is vital in a country where young people describe those histories as 'strong in me' or as 'part of me', as a refusal to listen to the 'other' story that can be read as a denial of the storyteller's selfhood. A distinctive feature of Rafael's storytelling is that he identifies both the Holocaust and the Nakba as integral to his own story, revealing a tessellation between the histories:

> We started learning Nakba since preschool, but it was never something informative, you know – it was basically a day that we knew is sad and we knew it's about Palestine. I think I first became conscious of that in maybe fourth or fifth grade, and they came in and they told stories of what happened … Relatives of the kids from school, parents and grandparents, and they would come and tell stories … And where I live – you see Arab houses, especially in Emek Refaim Street, you can see the houses – traditional Arab houses, and you think, well – especially going to our school, when you hear all the stories of how the soldiers came and banished the people away and started living there, you think, well, who lived here seventy years ago and what happened to that family and where are they now? Are they dead? Did they flee to Jordan? Did they move? … Sometimes you go and you see Arab houses and you think, 'What happened there?'

In describing the Holocaust as 'a big part of my family', Rafael accords it intimate status, almost that of a relative, and emphasizes that he was conscious of its presence in the home before he was fully aware of its meaning. If Holocaust

memory is resident in his home, Nakba memory imbues the physical fabric of his neighbourhood. His perception of that neighbourhood has been shaped by 'all the stories of how the soldiers came' that he has heard at school, the other community in which he passes a large amount of time. In Rafael's storytelling, Nakba memory is embodied by streets that are inhabited by memories of the Holocaust. Merely opening the front door leads from one history into the other. Before describing the neighbourhood's traditional stone buildings and wondering about their former owners, he clarifies, 'My house is modern,' as if to distance it from a history that he presents as very close.

In discussing the Holocaust, Rafael uses the first person and intersperses political commentary on its place in Israeli society with family stories about relatives who perished. For the Nakba he uses second person, which could be read as a distancing technique, an invitation to the listener to consider Palestinian houses alongside him (a personal 'you'), or a suggestion that his questions on seeing the houses are in fact common if not publicly articulated (generic 'you'). Although a linguistic analysis of his storytelling reveals that he does talk about these histories in a different way, it is clear that he is comfortable with exploring both of them through story, whether as teller or as listener. He attributes this to awareness of how Holocaust memory can elicit Nakba stories and vice versa, enriching rather than erasing one another:

> You can say it's about Israel, because of the Holocaust we have Israel, and people often associate the Holocaust with Israel. I don't see it that way. I think the Holocaust was something about religion, you know, the Jewish people, not the Israeli people. You don't mention Israel in the Holocaust Memorial Day [at Yad b'Yad]. You mention what happened, you know before Israel even existed, and you mention what happened to the Jewish people, so it's way easier to – the Palestinian youths can relate to that. Also, we share stories, the Jewish kids share stories, and they say, 'Wow, that sounds like a story I have from my side about the Nakba' and sometimes it would remind the Palestinian youth about the Nakba. So it's easier to relate … I know sometimes people from the outside, if they hear about comparing Shoah, Nakba, they would say no, don't compare. There's a very large taboo about the Holocaust, and you know you can't compare to anything, you can't compare it, don't talk about it, which I completely disagree with because even when you do compare something, you compare the behaviour of what happened. You don't compare the actual historical event, you compare the behaviour of someone banishing you from your home and wanting to come back. Maybe that's a platform where Palestinians and Israelis can be – I don't know, share stories or even get closer, because you know we both had families and then someone banished us and we couldn't go back.

This is the preface to the family stories that Rafael shared about the Holocaust. He begins by questioning the origin story that connects Israel to the genocide, reframing it as a question of Jewish experience in order to make it more accessible to Palestinians, before emphasizing the importance of personal story in the transmission of taboo memory. Interestingly, given that many of his relatives did not survive, the image he uses for the Holocaust – 'someone banishing you from your home and wanting to come back' – does not reference mass murder, but expulsion and yearning, which are prominent themes in the family stories told by his Palestinian peers. This suggests that the stories he has heard about the Nakba affect the way he retells his family's Holocaust experiences. He does not share specific stories about the Nakba, but instead describes a set of themes that he has absorbed over his childhood:

> I remember a few stories that were something like, the soldiers came and they had to flee, or they were banished. So they would grab everything they could and go away, and then they would have this kind of hope to come back, and then they would try to come back two years after and they would see a Jewish family living in their house. And they would say, 'It's my home, can I live here now? I mean, it's my home,' and the Jewish family would say, 'It's not my problem,' and basically sometimes even sleep in the same beds they slept in. So I don't remember a particular story, but just the general kind of pattern that was in all the stories, you know – wanting to come back and even when coming back you couldn't do anything about it.

The typology that distinguishes his awareness of the Nakba – expulsion, powerlessness and being on the outside looking into a former home – is present in Rafael's Holocaust stories, as we will see. His repeated statements about being unable to 'come back' could refer to the impossibility of going back in time to restore what was obliterated in the Holocaust, not just the Palestinian refugees' struggle for the right of return. The idea of banishment becomes a poignant metaphor for the remoteness of the past and the loss of the people who lived then. This prompts him to concentrate on the possibility of establishing justice in the present, based on shared grief for what cannot be undone. Similarly, Budour recognizes that while the expulsion or killing of her great-uncle Kamal is a 'different history' from the deportation and murder of Rafael's relatives, 'it affects us in a very similar way'. Distinguishing between an event and its aftermath enables a more empathic response to emerge.

Yuval's stories about observing military checkpoints provide another powerful example of memory's multidirectional quality:

> It's sad, it's not a good thing, when I say this I'm really not proud of the things I say, it's shame on us, but I think we're trying to be better and better all the time, but the Arabs, most of the work they do is construction or in the supermarket, and if you drive at five in the morning, even before sunrise, when you're near the checkpoints here, you'll see – when I go on trips, you can see a lot of Arabs in lines, people who came to Israel to work. Trucks came, and they're put in trucks. Something like – it sounds horrible, how I describe it. It's not horrible. Trucks come and take them to work, and then put them back in Palestine, and that's – I guess it's a problem. You have to admit it, we have a big problem here.

Here Yuval's usually measured speech becomes agitated. He speeds up, occasionally stumbling over words. Elsewhere he makes it clear that he sees Israeli employment of Palestinians as positive; the source of his disquiet is the sight of 'Arabs in lines' being 'put in trucks', which he describes as 'sad', 'not a good thing' and 'a shame on us', before retracting his unease with, 'It's not horrible.' We have already explored the figurative lexicons that young people use to interpret the landscapes that surround them. Lines and trucks are clearly part of Yuval's own lexicon, allowing him to interpret the Palestinian labourers' present through the dark prism of his family's past. This shows the ambivalence with which young people approach memory: as Rafael's and Amal's stories indicate in different ways, the idea that the Holocaust and the Nakba could be connected in any way is often disavowed publicly. While that disavowal might be sincere, attention to the symbolic lexicon shows that young people's engagement with the past is multi-layered – the connection that Yuval draws between his grandparents and the Palestinian labourers is equally sincere. The oscillation in this story illustrates that he is simultaneously distancing the workers' lives from his family history and drawing them closer. He appears to be reassuring himself with, '[Trucks] put them back in Palestine, and that's …' Given the centrality of Holocaust memory to how he views his life and his family, it is probable that this unfinished sentence, his agitation and the unspoken comparison all lead to a line in a forced labour camp, or a truck delivering human cargo to the gas chambers. Without elaborating, Yuval then pairs 'It's not horrible' with 'We have a big problem here.' His rapid movement between horror, shame, rationalization and an acknowledgement of injustice magnifies the dynamic that is present in many of the young people's stories.

Stav and Nurit are descended from a family that was almost entirely obliterated in the Holocaust, something I knew before I met them. However, they did not give the Holocaust as one of their significant life events; and while most other Israeli participants were quick to introduce the subject, it did not

enter their storytelling until comparatively late on. Stav arrived at the Holocaust through describing the military incursion into Gaza in summer 2014 (Operation Protective Edge):

> Egypt closed their gates. They [Gazans] can't go there. Of course they won't let them go into Israel after – when there's a war, and like, they're not supposed to swim for their lives. And yeah, it's a problem, but we can't deal with the whole world's problems, we have enough problems in a tiny little country. And like, I think we had to defend ourselves not as a country for many years, and all around the history there wasn't a time when Jews were fine with everyone and nobody hurt Jews, and nobody – and there was the Second World War, where were they, did they come and save us, did they tell us, 'Come to Israel and live with us'? No, when we came to Israel nobody let us in, and people who starved – nobody helped us back then, and they're supposed to have defenders who don't spend money on rockets to throw at us, they should find them a place, build them safer places …

Stav spoke rapidly, her words blurring on the voice recorder, worry over Palestinian welfare clashing with a bitterly voiced, 'When we came to Israel nobody let us in …' This story contains several discordant notes. She acknowledges that it is impossible to leave Gaza, delineating each sealed border in turn: 'Egypt closed their gates … [T]hey won't let them go into Israel … [T]hey're not supposed to swim for their lives.' The narrative sequence reflects the hermetic sealing of Gaza's borders under siege and the impossibility of escape, but paradoxically she then charges Gaza's unnamed 'defenders' (this was the only time an Israeli teenager suggested that Palestinian paramilitary organizations might perform a defensive role) with the responsibility to 'find them a place'. Significantly this follows her description of Jewish refugees' struggle to find sanctuary, a struggle in which she includes herself through her use of first-person plural: 'No, when we came to Israel nobody let us in … nobody helped us back then …' The structure suggests that Palestinians in Gaza ought to undergo a similar solitary struggle to reach 'safer places', and the profoundly personal nature of that 'we' leads her to connect the siege on Gaza with British governmental quotas imposed on Jewish immigration in Mandatory Palestine. While on one level she justifies the siege, this comparison introduces a note of uncertainty, as she recognizes the quotas were unjust and fatal – the implication is that the siege is a natural consequence of failure on the part of the local Arab population to help during the Holocaust, perhaps even retaliatory in nature.

At other points in her storytelling, her perception shifts dramatically. Concern appears to be the dominant emotion, paired with a sense of powerlessness, and

the idea of the Gazan death toll as the logical consequence of historic Palestinian refusal to welcome Holocaust survivors is supplanted by criticism of Palestinian paramilitaries, which then leads to criticism of the Israeli government:

> I think it's very upsetting that little kids there and kids and – and – and they don't tell their parents to go and throw rockets at Jews, and they have to get hurt and die and stuff like that. It's upsetting that they have to suffer, it's just like, I'm not saying, like, I didn't hear of any [Israeli] kids dying in the last war in Israel, but we couldn't do anything because we were stuck at home because we were scared and it wasn't our fault. It was the Israeli Defence Ministry's fault.

Blame shifts several times, and with it the meaning of 'we' alters. When Stav talks about the Holocaust, 'we' might refer to her family, to Holocaust survivors or to Jewish people as a whole. Here she refers to herself and her sister ('We couldn't do anything because we were stuck at home …'), and by reducing that 'we' to the two of them, she dismantles the sharp us-and-them dialectic that characterized her initial discussion of Gaza. Elsewhere she describes Gazan youth as 'stuck' and 'scared', which suggests that she is not simply referring to herself and Nurit in the story above, but to age-related peers who share these emotions. Her stories move rapidly between polarizing and narrow definitions of community and more inclusive and empathetic ideas, with the memory of herself and Nurit afraid at home effecting the switch.

In Yara's storytelling the idea of home and household is also crucial to the articulation of empathy:

> [My father] started to tell me about the Holocaust, and to tell me that Jews suffered a lot when they were in Germany and in Europe … So my father told me, 'These are maybe some of the reasons why they are doing this right now with us, because they suffered a lot in Europe.' … Maybe it's something in every human, if someone does this thing to him he has to have revenge, maybe he can't do it to the same person, but he has to do it to another people. And I see that with my mum sometimes. Like she is fed up, she hates her boss, and her boss doesn't like my mother, so she keeps saying things that annoy my mother and sometimes my mother comes home upset and she expresses this anger at me and my brother. Like, 'You should do this, you should do that!' and she starts shouting and screaming. This is when I realised, when [my father] told me that they tried to make people suffer because they suffered.

Yara and Stav both collapse time in their storytelling. Stav implies that Palestinians in contemporary Gaza are connected to Jewish suffering during the Holocaust, while Yara uses the Holocaust to interpret the behaviour and attitudes of present-day Israelis, suggesting that there is a tangible link between

the Holocaust and her day-to-day experiences under military occupation. Such collapses in time can be read as anti-Semitic or anti-Palestinian, as they imply an indelible collective guilt. However, it is clear from the girls' storytelling as a whole that they are not concerned with blame, but with how to navigate events that cannot always be talked about openly. Yara was shaken by the scale of the Holocaust ('My father, he asked me do you know how many Jews were killed in the Holocaust … I told him six thousand, and it was six million …'). In grappling with its immensity, she transposes it onto her four-person family, seeing Israeli fear and anger in the behaviour of her exasperated mother. As her father is Dutch, and keen to share the wartime history of his own family, Yara's household has become the place where she can most safely engage with forbidden histories. This encourages her to use her family dynamics as a template for understanding the Holocaust's repercussions. Similarly, Stav is better able to explore the experiences of Gazan youth when she is alone with Nurit, and she uses their experiences of being 'stuck at home' as a way to try and understand life under blockade.

Trying to make sense of temporally or spatially distant suffering within the confines of the home can admittedly lead to a minimization of the events' significance and scope. Rather than transposing forbidden histories onto smaller domestic spaces, focusing on distances may foster more empathetic and less daunting encounters with such histories. Stav's and Yara's stories involve both distancing and the shrinking of space. Unlike other Palestinian participants, Yara does not draw any direct parallel between the Holocaust and the Nakba, saying that this is impossible for her due to her own circumstances:

> If you have lived these situations – you see that [other] people are living in these situations, you can understand them and feel them … you have this contact with other people, you understand how they think and how they feel, because you have lived the same thing that they have lived … For me, it's not the same feeling, because [Palestinian refugees] are still alive, but they were pushed out. In the Holocaust they were almost all killed. So I feel sorry about both of them, but for me, I don't really have someone that died because of the Nakba or the Naksa [1967 war] or even an Intifada, but if there was a member of my family who died because of these situations, I think I would feel the exact same way as the Jews felt. But for me, it's hard for me to imagine.

Yara begins by establishing the difference between the Holocaust and the Nakba (physical extermination versus ethnic cleansing), which she also views through the lens of her family's experiences: she feels unable to comprehend collective Jewish grief because she herself has not been violently bereaved. The missing

6 million lives and the enormity of that loss make Yara feel more remote from Jewish experience: 'You have this contact with other people … because you have lived the same thing that they have lived …' Her recognition of the limits of her personal understanding stems from that sense of distance, and the attendant idea that it deprives her of contact with peers like Stav. Acknowledging that full understanding is not possible enables her expression of compassion: 'I feel sorry about both of them.'

Distance (and the absence it implies) performs a similar function in Stav's storytelling. Her story would unsettle many listeners for different reason, depending on political constituency: the suggestion that Gazan suffering is connected to Palestinian attitudes towards the Holocaust, and the responsibility she then assigns to the Israeli government for Gazan deaths. As I listened, I resisted the urge to query her on these points. When I transcribed the recording, I was struck by her rhetorical question: 'Where were they, did they come and save us, did they tell us, "Come to Israel and live with us?"' as this question appears to be the unifying note that holds an otherwise discordant narrative together. At other points in her narrative, 'Where were they?' becomes 'Where are they?' as she struggles to pinpoint the nearest Palestinian community to her home. The question also encompasses her disapproval of segregation: 'I really don't know any kids my age who are Arab, not one, not any … And I think it's wrong to separate kids so much.' Although she rejects the idea of Palestinians from Gaza being permitted to enter Israel ('We can't deal with the whole world's problems, we have enough problems in a tiny little country'), presenting Gaza as a faraway place, she expresses a belief in integrated education several times. This demonstrates that even confrontational stories still communicate with one another: the angry 'Where were they?' that arises in relation to the Holocaust takes on a different tone when applied to a classroom from which Arabs are absent: 'I think – I don't think that's right.'

That classroom was the image Stav and Nurit left me with at the end of our last meeting, when I asked them what associations they had with the word 'Nakba'. They were visibly perplexed. Stav responded, 'Yeah, I know it, but not too much.' Nurit, shaking her head, asked, 'Which?' Stav added: 'Like, I know it's to do with Muslim religion or community or …' before trailing off. The session ended there. Stav was apologetic over her uncertainty: 'It's because we go to a religious Jewish school. We don't learn enough about other people's holidays.'

As she is growing up in a bilingual integrated village in which both Holocaust and Nakba are formally commemorated, the stories Budour tells about forbidden history engage with it openly, although they are still rich in symbol. Refugees

are central to her personal lexicon. She considers the Holocaust and Nakba in parallel with the experiences of African refugees in present-day Israel:

> Every [Holocaust] story's very hard for me to hear about, and we have a lot of immigrants coming to this country now from Africa. And the country is preventing them from coming. And when someone comes from Sudan, according to the law, not the law in Israel but in the UN, he's immediately a *palit* [Hebrew: refugee]. So this is a topic that I really care about. And when they don't accept them, that makes me very mad, because I believe that these people have a right to come here. Which also kind of crashes with the story about the Jewish people coming here and the Arabs not exactly wanting them to be here … So yes, there are stories – I think that the Holocaust is a story that affects me in many ways, that gives me, that makes me have *bikoret* [Hebrew: criticism] about both sides. About a side that wouldn't welcome people who needed help, and about a side that when they didn't get the help, they harmed that people in a very harsh way. They didn't put them in gas showers and kill six million of them, but yes, they killed some of them and yes, they kicked out some of them, like the Jewish people had experienced a lot of in their history. So it's kind of weird for me to learn about it all the time in school, and of course they don't teach about the things that happened in '48 or in '67. 'There was a war, we won' – that's it. So when I hear how the stories crash, it's just – I don't understand …

Budour's frustration at how Holocaust memory does not automatically translate into compassionate justice for Palestinians echoes through the stories of almost all the Palestinians who took part, notably Amal, Yara and the teenagers in Aida camp. They treat Holocaust memory as an ethical demand that must be answered. Budour goes further, voicing disquiet over Palestinian rejection of Jews trying to flee the Holocaust. This subversion of competitive victimhood is made possible by the appearance of Sudanese refugees: her concern over their reception in the Israeli state has led her to question how other refugees were treated in the same region in previous times. As refugees and refugeehood are so tightly woven into the fabric of Palestinian stories, it is striking that Budour would use the Hebrew *palit* over the familiar Arabic *laji*. Her code-switching indicates her receptiveness to other histories and the extent to which her own stories are imbricated in these. This adds alternative meaning to Silverman's theory of palimpsestic memory: viewing forbidden histories through a layer of more recent stories and memories, particularly stories in which the viewer feels less directly implicated, may make it possible to acknowledge forbidden history openly. The layers have the effect of reducing its painful glare, like smoked glass diluting sunlight: the reaction is no longer antagonistic.

In linking Holocaust survivors in Mandatory Palestine with the pre-state Jewish forces and nascent government that orchestrated the Nakba ('When they didn't get the help, they harmed that people in a very harsh way') Budour overstates both their demographic and political strength in 1948. Survivors constituted a marginalized group in the pre-state *yishuv* and were viewed with suspicion by its political elites, who felt that their inability to resist denoted physical and psychological weaknesses incompatible with the nationalist project.[33] However, while her conflation of Holocaust survivors with the nascent state may be at odds with 'the real history', it is faithful to the collective memory held by Noga and many of her peers, who do view Holocaust survivors as Israel's pioneers and reason for existing. This is a common pattern in Israeli society; one study of trainee teachers in Israel found that 80 per cent associated Israeli collective identity with Holocaust survivors.[34] Budour affirms the Holocaust's significance in her Jewish peers' lives while drawing attention to its discordant 'crash' with the Nakba, which she hears as an ethical imperative to welcome displaced people. So while the young people interact with forbidden histories in dramatically different ways, there are clear points of convergence.

These are most vivid in Rafael's storytelling about how his family arrived in Israel-Palestine, which encapsulates a multidirectional approach to taboo memory. The Holocaust, the Nakba and the Mizrahi Jews' experiences of persecution in other Arab countries enter into dialogue with one another. Arab Jews faced linguistic and cultural suppression when they arrived in the nascent state of Israel, in a state-sponsored and largely successful effort to cast Jewishness and Arabness as antonyms.[35] The possibility of Arab Jewish cultural life has been repressed by Israeli state institutions, and its memory erased from the national master-narrative.[36] Rafael's stories – told in three languages that he claims as his own – breach a strong set of taboos. A theme that appears in all the stories is the idea of a truncated journey:

> My second name, which is Jacob, is after my grandfather's brother, who almost got out, I mean he almost was saved, and he went on a ship on the way from Romania to Israel, which was actually Palestine there, back then, and the Russians thought it was a Nazi ship so they sank it. And he has another brother who was basically shot in the train station. And my grandmother's side, it's harder. There were ten children. Six of them were murdered in the Holocaust. And she had a twin sister, she and her twin were the youngest, and Mengele took them … And she was saved because of that. She was going to get killed in the selection, Mengele was, you know, selecting you go to work and you go to die, and their older sister came to Mengele and told him, 'Why are you separating

them, they're twins.' And he heard about it and took them to his cabin, and that's how they were saved.

My grandmother on my mother's side actually got stuck here in 1948. They used to come to Palestine from Yemen because they were merchants, and then Israel was created and they couldn't get back. So her father specifically did live in Israel, although the family itself lived in Aden, so they did have a house here. But they were very poor … So she grew up in Israel, basically, even though she was born in Aden.

The interjection from Rafael's great-aunt at the selection ramp in Birkenau brought an unexpected end to his grandmother's journey to the gas chambers. (The great-aunt herself perished.) The creation of the state of Israel terminated Rafael's maternal grandmother's journeys to and from Yemen, cutting her off from her birthplace and numerous relatives. These stories illuminate Rafael's engagement with the Nakba. He recounts several stories of internally displaced Palestinians trying to make the journey home, which always ends at a closed door. As with his Yemeni grandmother, an unpassable distance has opened up between them and their former home. Rafael is preoccupied with closing distances through his storytelling, as seen before: 'Someone banishing you from your home and wanting to come back. Maybe that's a platform where Palestinians and Israelis can … share stories or even get closer, because you know we both had families and … we couldn't go back.' The phrase 'get closer' takes on new meaning when we revisit the Nakba stories that Rafael told first in light of the family stories that he told subsequently. Through these stories, which are lined with interrupted journeys, Rafael is attempting to find narrative completion for journeys that family members had to leave unfinished. Amal is engaged in a similar searching journey:

I don't feel home yet anywhere. I'm hoping to find home somewhere … I'm a bit stuck. It's funny that my family issue, a lot of times I compare it to the Palestinian issue, and the refugees. Because they're kind of stuck in the middle. They don't have a home, a place they can call home. OK, they physically live here in Dheisheh, they physically live in Bethlehem, just like I live in my father's house, and they feel a bit comfortable in the camp, just like I feel comfortable in my room, but still, they're not here and they're not there. They can't go back. I can't go back to the whole family I used to have before the divorce. Like, we weren't a great family, but – I think the refugees, and myself – maybe that's why I identify a lot with refugees. They're stuck and I'm stuck. And I'm waiting to find home, just like the Palestinians are waiting to find home. Because home is not about having a house and living on the land, it's more abstract, and you can't just grab it.

Like Stav, Yara, several young people in Aida camp, and Maayan, whose stories were often structured round her parents' divorce, Amal uses her own family experiences as a way to navigate historic violence and forbidden histories. The familiar happenings of day-to-day life provide a means to interpret spatially and temporally distant events, and in the case of forbidden histories, using everyday stories as a compass renders the unfamiliar terrain less hostile. This also works in reverse: Amal's strong political awareness and the pride she takes in her refugee identity make her home life more bearable, as she narrates the personal in the political terms that she finds most meaningful.

As Budour and Rafael make clear in stories about their school experiences, the Nakba has no open place in the lives of most young Israeli Jews, as it is not formally taught; and as seen in Chapter 3, it is rare for Palestinians to encounter the Holocaust before the teenage years, and only then if they inhabit certain areas. However, this lack of knowledge is accompanied by an awareness that unknown stories exist. Although it was clearly challenging for them to expose themselves to Palestinian memory and experience, Stav and Nurit were drawn to those unknowns. A similar dynamic is seen in the fascination that the everyday lives of Israelis exercised over youth in Bethlehem and Aida camp, and the way in which Palestinian and Israeli youth in Hebron were occasionally drawn into conversation with each other between insulting salvoes. Having witnessed how their own stories and memories may carry young people into contact with forbidden and hidden histories, and the typologies that distinguish their narration, we will examine the places where the boundary between knowledge and mere awareness is at its thinnest and identify forbidden histories' points of transmission.

'Until the seventh wave': The liquid borders of memory

None of the Palestinians I worked with in the Old City of Hebron had heard of the Holocaust, while in the refugee camps it was common knowledge, at least among older participants. Amal sees this heightened knowledge as part of a general tendency among refugees towards greater political awareness and sensitivity to injustice:

> It's just who we are, and it's something you can feel everywhere around you …
> [A]s refugees, we are the people who felt the injustice. I was born with no land.
> You're living on the property of the United Nations. You can't move around
> because you're a refugee, and you – wherever you go and whatever you do,

you're still a refugee. You're still marginalised. You can see the poverty all over
the refugee camps. Some people tend to escape the fact that they're refugees,
but I … proudly call myself a refugee because I feel that I am a holder of the
cause, instead of someone who's just – who's just, you know, an inferior in their
society … It's different from someone who's coming from the city. When I'm
in university I see that people who come from Bethlehem or Beit Jala or Beit
Sahour … they don't know much about what happened in Hebron this morning,
or what happened at the whatever checkpoint yesterday. I don't know why, but
I think it's in the culture … So if something is going on in Hebron or Jericho
or Gaza or wherever, we care a lot, and we feel that we have to do something.
We can identify with other people's struggles, because we're refugees in the first
place, and we've seen a lot of things that other people didn't.

When I invited Amal to give examples of these unseen things, she brought up
her mother's experiences in the First Intifada, thereby reiterating the idea that
political responsibility and understanding are transmitted through the family ('I
am a holder of the cause'). The story she tells invokes a memory that has become
contentious in present-day Palestinian society:

My mother was only seventeen, and she was in prison because the soldiers
attacked my grandfather. He was very sick and they kicked him and beat him,
so she was defending my grandfather, and she got imprisoned. She was very
active, and she used to go to marches even though she was a girl. At that time it
was very acceptable for girls to go to marches. They were encouraged to go and
to organise the whole thing. My mother raised me to be very patriotic and very
political.

Amal frequently voices concern and anger that Palestinian women's political
participation is no longer accepted unquestioningly by men, as it was during
the First Intifada. She describes how she and her classmates at the girls' school
took to the streets spontaneously to protest Operation Cast Lead (2008), despite
their teachers' objections. By doing so, they invoke the memory of the First
Intifada and use it to reclaim political space in the present day. Amal attributes
her decision to do this to the strong political consciousness that she imbibed
from her refugee mother, which will not allow her to assume an auxiliary role.
This willingness to breach taboos extends to her engagement with Israeli Jewish
collective memory, although at first she was careful to disclaim any relationship
with the Holocaust, despite her repeated assertion that living as a refugee grants
insight into 'other people's struggles'. As Noga did over the Nakba, Amal stated
that mention of the Holocaust made her angry. Again, like Noga, her antagonism
was shot through with uncertain empathy:

> In both cases [Holocaust and Nakba] it's very complicated and not easy to – even to live with. It's not something that can be natural. Never, never. I don't know. [Pause] It's not something you can get over. I don't know. I can't just – it's not easy to look forward. Because of my family situation and political situation, it's not easy to foresee the future, because there are so many restrictions and surprises and complications. So you have to fight every day, each day by day. It's tiring, but that's – that's how we should – that's the only way.

Amal's usual poise and fluency are replaced here by halting, hesitant sentences that verge on the cryptic, punctuated by frequent pauses. 'I can't just – it's not easy to look forward' suggests that she sees engagement with forbidden history as part of 'looking forward'. She does not elaborate on what this might mean, but presents it as a tiring struggle that has to be fought in increments 'day by day'. It is unclear to whom she is referring when she says, 'That's how we should – that's the only way …' to people affected by 'both cases', including Israelis, to Palestinians or only to fellow refugees? Respecting her obvious discomfort, I did not press her to say more on this. She later returned to the topic of her own volition, with the vague 'It's not something you can get over' assuming a more concrete form: 'I think the Jews are traumatised by the Holocaust.' Her frank admission of anger, paired with the way she resolutely inched closer and closer to the topic that had aroused it, is perhaps an illustration of what she means by 'fighting every day, each day by day …' As a refugee, living with almost nightly army incursions in the camp and routine discrimination, she is willing to take more figurative risks by placing herself in the buffer zone between Israeli Jewish and Palestinian memory, exposing herself to the incursions of forbidden history.

Yuval also positions himself in that buffer zone. Unlike Nurit, Stav and many other Israeli participants living within the Green Line, he had heard of the Nakba. I asked how and when he had become aware of it:

> I don't know. I don't know when. I'm more close to the Arabs in here, so I know what it is. [Long pause] When you live close to someone, you – first of all, I believe that I will know more and I will understand more, and everyone will understand and know more in this complicated situation. There will be less hatred and people who can't talk to each other. So I try to know things. I don't know when I knew it – about the Nakba, but it's the chance for attacks or something like this, and I live in here and someone might attack me [laughs], so it is more obvious from in here.

'In here' is Yuval's terminology for settlements in the West Bank, whose residents ordinarily lead sharply separated lives from their Palestinian neighbours.

Yuval acknowledges the degree of segregation several times ('There is some connection, but a real connection there isn't') and comments ruefully that he has no opportunity to meet Palestinian boys of his age. 'It's not like I can go to play basketball with them.' Paradoxically he attributes his knowledge of the Nakba to inter-community closeness, which he does not believe exists within the Green Line: 'I'm more close to the Arabs in here, so I know what it is.' This enhanced knowledge is produced partly through friction, namely by an increased risk of being targeted in Nakba Day protests and partly by a desire to know, stemming from the belief that knowing Palestinian stories will mean fewer 'people who can't talk to each other'. How Yuval has acquired his knowledge of the Nakba (and his view of such awareness as essential to reducing hatred) without having contact with Palestinians remains unclear. He himself is unsure, seeing the Nakba as a feature of his immediate environment that he registered without realizing, or an all-pervasive knowledge akin to amniotic fluid.

As seen previously, place is central to the transmission of forbidden histories, with young people's homes, present-day Israeli neighbourhoods featuring traditional Palestinian architecture, refugee camps and the occupied West Bank emerging as the chief sites of transmission and encounter. Place can also elicit or suppress empathy, something that is strongly apparent in Yara's storytelling. She is one of few participants to own hatred: 'I hate Israelis. Maybe if they started to think of a peaceful way to end this, I will start to like them, but until then I'll hate them.' However, this declaration of hatred was made in between stories of the checkpoint and army violence during the Second Intifada; empathy emerges when she is relating stories from the family home. Laughing, she describes how an aunt offered soldiers hot chocolate when they requisitioned the house: 'They broke down the door, you can still see the damage – I don't know why my father doesn't paint it properly – and she came in with hot chocolate.' This story emphasizes the act of hospitality over the army incursion in a way that allows her aunt to retain control of her living space. Yara's approach to Israeli people, and by extension their collective memory, is heavily influenced by place. Liquid-like, forbidden history is able to enter some spaces but not others, leaving compassion, hostility or both in its wake.

Yad b'Yad and Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom are places where story-sharing is actively encouraged. As an Arab Jew, drawing on two heritages that are frequently pitted against one another, Rafael is sensitive to the possessively territorial approach to memory, grounded in ethnonationalist conceptions of place and belonging:

Tunisia, Greece – they're often ignored. There is a lot of racism from the Ashkenazi Jews towards the Mizrahi Jews. They believe that the Holocaust belongs to them. It wasn't a lot of North African Jews who went to the Holocaust, like a few thousand, a few dozen thousand, and they're like a small percentage, and they would say, 'Maybe a few thousand but we had millions.' In a way they do think that – I mean, 'The Holocaust is mine,' which is a horrible thing to say, but people think that. Also the way Palestinians say the Nakba is theirs, and Palestinians from Galilee say the Land Day is theirs.

Efforts to de-territorialize the memory of the Holocaust have been met with controversy in Israel-Palestine. The students of Kedma School, an institution with a majority of Mizrahi pupils, attracted protests attended by Israeli politicians when in 1994 it expanded the annual Holocaust Memorial Day ceremony to include the lighting of a seventh candle for victims of other atrocities. Calls were made to the Ministry of Education for the school's closure. The principal, Sami Shalom Chetrit, reported a phone call from a furious woman who screamed, 'You Moroccans have already stolen everything from us, but that's it! Do not dare to touch the Holocaust. You will not steal the Holocaust from us with your belly dancing.' Critics asserted that as the student body and faculty were predominantly Mizrahi, the school lacked the credibility to draw universalizing lessons from a European Jewish tragedy.[37] There is also a similar tendency in Palestinian society to resist discussion of Mizrahi Jewish experience of persecution in Arab lands, partly to avoid being cast as guilty by ethnic association, but also due to fear that a false parity might hamper attempts to secure justice for Palestinian refugees through the implementation of the right of return.[38] Competitive victimhood is nurtured here through 'an antagonistic complicity of nationalisms',[39] which posits that a secure national future can only be obtained through denial or minimization of the other's collective memory.

The border zones delineated in the previous chapter – which emerged as liquid and permeable – are places where nationalist categories of outsider and insider, citizen and stranger, purity and danger start to collapse, with border apparatus such as checkpoints, barbed wire and separation barriers only serving as a paradoxical reminder that such a collapse is possible. The way in which borders render such categories unstable through their own liquidity has implications for how forbidden histories are narrated. This is made clear in a story told by Budour about the seizure of her family's land, which is centred on a spatial metaphor:

> I know a story about my mother's grandfather, and she told me that he was very rich, and he had many lands. He owned many lands, and he had many people working in them. He didn't work in his lands, he just sat at home and got the money, and once the occupation [of 1948] started, he was left with almost nothing. She told me a story that once she went out, and she saw her father collecting tin from the trees [finding scrap metal to sell], and crying, and she always tells me, 'We had land even in the sea, to the seventh wave.' She always tells me … And my mother's story is also that a lot of her family ran away to Nablus. And my father's story – his name is Kamal, and he's named after his uncle who disappeared in the Nakba. And my grandmother, my father's mother, also has a story but I don't really remember it. It's about her father. The only thing I know, because she doesn't have a great memory, is that her father used to be a sheikh, an imam in a village not so far from Taybeh, and today it's occupied. But he's still buried there. And so she went there to see his grave and the people there kicked her out. So people here can't even go to see their relatives' graves. [Pause, quieter voice] That's how deep the conflict is, I think.

On one level the metaphor of the seventh wave is simply used to convey the extensive material loss sustained by Budour's family. However, it has also entered the structure of her narrative, with her constant repetition of 'I know a story … She told me a story … And my mother's story … And my father's story … And my grandmother has a story …' simulating the roll of breaking surf, impossible to contain. This imbues the story with a sense of inevitability, intensifying the feeling of loss it imparts. At last the reader is deposited at a graveside, the most traditional site of remembrance, and the wave's motion becomes suddenly vertical with the reference to depth: 'That's how deep the conflict is, I think.'

This flowing spatial metaphor is reminiscent of Rothberg's conceptualization of memory as multidirectional, which is at the core of this chapter; and it also underlines the significance of space and place in the transmission of taboo memory. Rothberg and other scholars in the field of memory studies, notably Max Silverman through his metaphor of the palimpsest, have touched on the role of liminality in large-scale cultural transmission of memory through literature and film; this study demonstrates that similar processes are at work on a more localized intimate level, in the day-to-day lives of conflict-affected youth, inviting us to treat the young people's stories as part of a much wider literary corpus. Their incorporation into a cultural palimpsest moves our analysis further away from therapeutic approaches to young people's storytelling. In delineating recurring characteristics of forbidden history – its traumatic

quality, the subaltern status of its narrators, its predominantly oral nature and the way it runs counter to authorized national narratives – the chapter has provided a framework for a comparative analysis of stories in other situations of political violence, potentially advancing and enriching the multidirectional understanding of memory.

Forbidden history contributes to the volatility and violent uncertainty that prevail in places of transmission, as seen in one of the stories with which I opened this work: a Palestinian bus driver who decided to talk back to a Druze checkpoint soldier and who hinted at the existence of another history, pulling the soldier onto unstable ground. The uncertainty generated by what Budour terms 'stories that crash' both reinforces and corrodes the taboos on memory, and uncertainty and ambivalence remain a dominant theme in the Holocaust and Nakba stories shared by almost all the young people. These histories are clearly integral to their imagination of self and community, with Holocaust and Nakba often surfacing without being elicited by me, and youth treating them as an intimate part of their home life. Participants both reinforce and rework established national boundaries of community in their narration of forbidden histories, seen most sharply in Rafael's and Yuval's storytelling. Yuval, in drawing a link between the Holocaust stories that are such an intimate part of his family life and the Palestinian men with whom he has 'no connection', is forming a connection: as his conception of community is rooted in shared history, his hesitant incorporation of the Palestinian labourers into his family history hints at a growing sense of kinship with them, kinship that he rejects on another level. Once again, boundaries and belonging are in constant flux.

These stories demonstrate that ambivalence can coexist with strong ethnonational sentiment and commitment to one national narrative, and that alternative stories are most likely to be expressed through metaphor, symbol and other oblique means. They also suggest that young people living in areas of high friction are more likely to be aware of forbidden histories than young people who are at some distance from these fault lines, even though the fault lines' inhabitants lead largely segregated lives. Again, this indicates that fault lines play a fundamental role in the transmission of forbidden history, and that even in heavily segregated areas, the idea of the border is enough to facilitate transmission; it joins the other metaphors in the storytellers' figurative lexicon.

Returning to that lexicon, the 'unfinished houses' that Nurit and Stav associate with Palestinians, and the locked doors that recur in Junayd's stories

about Israelis, provide an overarching metaphor that enables us to understand the place of forbidden histories in the young people's lives and their role in how community, belonging and exclusion are imagined, with house-building analogous to storytelling. Forbidden histories are concealed behind a door. They emerge piece by piece as the house is built. They spill out when door is opened for the first time, perhaps at the turn of a rusting key of the sort that prompted Abed to say 'The return'. Even when the house's inhabitants and stories remain publicly unacknowledged, their presence – or the possibility of their presence – is felt in young people's lives and evident in the stories they tell about what, and how, they remember.

Happily ever after? Telling endings

Unfinished houses

Once, when I was working in a secure adolescent psychiatric unit, I overheard a nursing assistant telling a fifteen-year-old patient who had been admitted after a suicide attempt, 'Everything's always OK in the end. If it isn't OK, it's not the end.' The girl's tearful voice echoed down the corridor: 'That's fucking *bullshit*.'

When I sat down to write this final chapter, her words came back to me, partly because of the bleak knowledge that this young woman did take her own life before she reached the age of eighteen, and partly because of my own desire to create a 'good ending' – for my research, for my book, for my readers, and above all for the young people whom I left behind in Israel-Palestine, and whom I often think about. As time passes, I find myself registering the milestones in my participants' lives. *Noga and Yuval will probably be discharged from the army about now. Rafael, he will be of conscription age – is he in jail for refusing? Budour will be leaving high school soon too. Now it's Christmastime. Are the Aida camp youth still excited about Bethlehem's tree? Junayd – is he as thoughtful and astute as I remember him? And Abed, is he still frightened to stray too near watchtowers?* The unanswered questions flicker across my mind like the cursor on the screen.

In a typical sequential literary narrative the expected function of an ending is to provide closure, if not satisfaction, with the author 'walking backwards out of the narrative, vacating textual space at his or her conclusion by reversing the perspective or redirecting the angle of one vision on events'.[1] Climax is provided by this shift in perspective, which may take the form of a sudden twist in plot, while closure is achieved through a coherent resolution of the narrative's discrete and disparate parts, and represented gesturally by the physical closure of the book as the reader arrives at the last page. This understanding of endings and

their function cannot be applied easily to oral storytelling, even with tales that end in 'and they lived happily ever after' or other classic codes that signal conclusion. Such stories spill beyond their 'happily ever after', altering with each retelling, as evidenced by the many versions of traditional tales that flourish in oral folk culture. Listening to my participants' stories over a long period of time, especially in a group, I noticed that stories often melted into one another in a similar way, with one person picking up where the previous teller had left off. Young people would return to previously told stories, sometimes months later, to add more detail or to give a different version. This made it difficult to gauge where the ending came, if one came at all. Their stories were elicited by my questions and prompts, which added another layer of complexity: how did my choice of prompts affect the endings the young people gave? Had I asked other questions, would the narrative trajectory have altered or might the same stories have emerged anyway?

Moving from structural to thematic consideration of endings, rupture, discontinuity and incompleteness are recurring motifs in the young people's storytelling, further complicating the challenge of locating an end. This sense of incompleteness originates from the young people's usual inability to physically explore the places that feature in their stories, which becomes clear in Stav's and Nurit's response to the question 'What is the word "Gaza" to you?'

> Nurit: Oh, I've thought of [Gaza] so many times. It's like really really dark, and –
> Stav: Yeah.
> Nurit: And seriously, if I imagine what it looks like, I don't know, because I've never, I really haven't seen it – I don't even know where the soldiers go to. I imagine it like this scary place, with rockets flying around, and I don't know – a big empty space, very dark.
> Stav: I think a lot of things … I always imagine it with unfinished houses, because I know when we – we have grandparents that live in the *shtachim* [the West Bank, lit. 'territories'], and when we drive next to them, next to the villages and stuff like that, all the houses are unfinished. Like from the outside. So I always imagine it like unfinished houses and sand. Like a deserty place.

Pat Rogers describes endings as a 'Parthian dart' that the author or storyteller releases as she 'walks backwards from the narrative, vacating the textual space'.[2] This understanding of endings, which treats them as carefully controlled and strategic, can only apply to stories in which the teller is familiar with the space, capable of consciously guiding the listener to the reversed perspective or new angle that is identified here as central to an ending. This is true even of fairy tales, which are typically set in an unspecified land 'far, far away'. As we discovered

through analysis of language and its relation to hidden landscapes, the genre is rich in cultural motifs and symbols that function as landmarks, enabling teller and listener to make sense of and map out these imaginary spaces. By contrast, Stav lacks knowledge of and consequently narrative command over the unknown Palestinian places she depicts: she glimpses the houses from the windows of a car as she travels on a segregated road network, and is familiar with them only 'from the outside'. Unfinished houses and empty spaces serve as a potent metaphor for the young people's storytelling as a whole, whose discontinuities are reminiscent of half-built staircases and whose sense of incompleteness is invoked by a blank concrete wall awaiting its colour.

The image of the unfinished house is equally applicable to my research. The year after concluding my fieldwork and returning to Britain, I made a return visit to Israel-Palestine. My journey back was overshadowed by the illness and death of a close friend and other profound loss, which changed how I related to the places I had come to consider as home. Bethlehem's old white streets and the other familiar haunts seemed to have been washed with a grief that would never dissipate, and the unseen weight of it was almost too much to bear. I sank into my seat on the flight to Manchester with a sense of relief mingled with pain. Would I ever live here again?

The return was spontaneous, with no clear aim behind it; it was only after I arrived in the country and sat down to write that I realized the decision to return was driven by my own preoccupation with endings. As a storyteller and writer as well as a researcher, I wanted to craft an effective ending, an urge that became sharper with loss. It raised questions as well as precipitating the purchase of a plane ticket to Tel Aviv. What did I mean by an 'effective' ending? I had been treating the young people's stories as bricks and building-blocks, intended to be part of a larger whole. My unspoken restlessness came from the belief that if only I looked in the right places I would find the missing bricks to complete the whole: a house that all my participants might be able to look at and call home. That was the ending as I imagined it. Wandering through East Jerusalem in the soft grey rain, unsure quite where I was headed, I recognized that my house would have to remain unfinished.

This final chapter moves beyond closure to examine other characteristics that endings might possess and the functions they perform, giving special attention to how participants treat the concept of ending in their stories. Possible endings to violence and oppression were imagined in several stories; others dealt with the ending of a life. Working with older teenagers, I was conscious that they stood in a liminal position between adolescence and adulthood, and wondered

what the end of childhood meant for their storytelling. In bringing together a structural analysis of the stories and the themes and stylistic features common to their endings, a reflection on my own role in shaping these endings, and an examination of how the storytellers approach the idea of ending, the chapter provides vital context for the concluding discussion on what this research tells us about young people's conceptualization of community through storytelling: 'beginning' and 'end' are not only time markers, but also spatial and geographical demarcation lines, and are therefore particularly significant in any narrative representation of belonging and exclusion.

The sense of an ending: Making meaning through narrative structure

Any attempt to separate ending from closure and to question the frequent conflation of the two that occurs through sequential narrative that will bring us into contact with feminist literary theory. Participants' stories sometimes flowed in concentric circles (Rafael's storytelling, which began with him establishing himself as Jewish through his family's Holocaust history and rippled out to include Arab identity, with him widening and elaborating on stories that had come before) and were at other times told in hesitant jerky forays, with the narrator pulling back to her locus (Yara's storytelling, which always led to the checkpoint; and Maayan's storytelling, which was tied to her parents and their separation). The absence of linear structure in the young people's narratives evokes feminist responses to the traditional teleological plotline (linearity is encoded even in the term 'plotline') that culminate in either marriage or death for women, whose narrative structure reflects and reinforces social structures. In these critiques the work of Virginia Woolf's fictional novelist Mary Carmichael – 'Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence' – represents the emancipatory potential of alternative narrative structures that lack the 'expected' ending.[3] Given the oppressive nature of the dual-narrative approach and its promotion of a rigid binary among in Palestinian and Israeli youth, already considered in the earlier chapter on narrative violence, this image of breaking sentence and sequence takes on particular relevance. Feminist writing and literary theory provide an illuminating gloss on participants' stories, encouraging us to view their non-linearity as a liberating quality. They also provide insight into how the young people's storytelling might be seen to undermine dominant narratives

and cultures, military culture especially, or to draw out other meanings and interpretations from these stories.

For many Israeli participants, the army means the end of childhood; and in a clear linear process, conscription signals their initiation into the national collective. Seventeen-year-old Yuval takes it further, identifying army service as fundamental to being Jewish: 'This is not [a question] for the head, it's for the heart. It's about what it means for me to be a Jewish man.' As a young Orthodox man from a religious settlement, he connects army service with maleness; eighteen-year-old Noga, aware that she is one of girls from her own Orthodox settlement community who will enlist, explains her decision with, 'I think that today you can be a religious girl in the army.' Emphasizing the difference between army life and her life as it is now, and the importance of this experience to Israeli identity, she states:

> I'm going to army … I want to be in the – it's all the Israelis, and it's – kind of to be an Israeli … It's not *the* reason to go, but – yeah … Why is it to be an Israeli? First, everyone needs to do it. It's a different experience, I think, it's not like the regular life from what I've seen. It makes you meet people you don't meet in your life.

Although both Yuval and Noga present army service as the end of one story and the beginning of another, in sequential narrative style, the way in which they approach the army through storytelling brings that linearity into question. This is particularly apparent in Noga's storytelling, as army service is not socially expected of her; she treats it as something distinct from 'regular life', a way of encountering new people as well as asserting her place in society. The familiar linear structure of the conscription story is subverted by her emphasis on the unfamiliar faces that would not appear on her religious settlement kibbutz. Although Yuval treats army service as a fundamental part of Jewishness and maleness – and therefore something intrinsic to his sense of self, rather than 'a different experience' to be pursued – he prefigures his discussion of the military with his hope to spend a year volunteering in a centre for children with special needs before enlisting. While volunteer work is common among Israeli youth, this type of civil service is typically performed by Orthodox women or people with health problems that preclude enlistment, and is seen as lacking social cachet. Yuval must be aware that childcare is coded as feminine, associated with bodily weakness, and carries little prestige, but instead of allowing his journey to adulthood to end with him armed and in uniform, he presents an alternative route. In putting my next question to him, I was left wondering which road to

take, the one ending in the recruitment base or the one leading to the childcare centre. In creating a fork in the narrative road, he breaks the narrative's linearity and complicates its ending; he has identified himself as a soldier, but has also chosen a role for himself that is seen as feminine. The end of adolescence and his emergence into (male) adulthood is no longer straightforward.

Narrative itself, 'in its movement forward toward resolution and backward to an initial moment, is overlaid with what has been called an Oedipal logic … its "sense of an ending" inseparable from the memory of loss and the recapturing of time'.[4] Some feminist scholars have read narrative's linearity as fundamentally violent, even sadistic, in that it 'depends on making something happen, forcing a change in another person, a battle of will and strength, victory/defeat, all occurring in a linear time with a beginning and an end'.[5] Violence is defused by the concentric structure and uncertain endings of so many of the young people's stories, and the ambiguity that distinguishes their storytelling. However, the parallels drawn here between narrative and sexual violence have special import for the young people's depictions of conscription, because in signalling the end to childhood, conscription is also bound up with developing sexuality. Teenage girls (Israeli and Palestinian) were particularly sensitive to this aspect. Power, frustration and sex form the undertow in Stav's description of the army:

> I don't think girls have a lot of influence in the army, like in *sherut leumi* [civil national service], they don't make a very big change, and in the army … I don't think girls have enough options, like ways they could give to the country. So if we're going to give two years out of our lives it should be to make a change, but –. Girls don't do *kravi* [combat], which I wouldn't have done anyway … There are hardly any girls that do *kravi*, you know most – like in the Air Force there are like two girls that are pilots. It's like men controlling the whole thing, there is really no place for women. Like maybe the coffee we could make in many different places. [Laughs] In intelligence, there are girls doing cyber stuff, but it's like the only thing where you could really make a change I think, and really give to your country.

It was only after listening to conversations about female army service in other Orthodox homes that I realized domestic images such as coffee-making can function as a metaphor for aspects of military service that are viewed as disturbing or immoral, including mixed company and casual sex. Stav's rejection of that constraining domestic role could be read as a rejection of the army's social norms in toto, although she does not raise them explicitly. Rather than constructing a linear narrative about military service, involving her aspirations and expectations, she begins and ends with female lack of influence. The lack of

sequential progression towards a resolution (an interest in being chosen for a prestigious unit, for example) reinforces her statement that 'there is no place for women'. She refers to female soldiers as both 'girls' and 'women', indicating that they are on the cusp between adolescence and adulthood, a place she will soon occupy herself. Arriving at this point has prompted her to think about what it means to be a woman both in the army itself and in a heavily militarized culture; and the symbol she chooses is the coffee cup, overtly domestic and covertly sexual.

This sexual dynamic emerged more clearly in one of Yara's checkpoint stories:

> And once there is a funny thing that happened. We didn't really speak to them [soldiers], but my friend's sister, she – we went through the checkpoint and there were, it was four o'clock, and at four o'clock all the people from Palestine who work in Israel come back from their jobs. So it was full. Like, they were all men and you couldn't even pass, it was very hard, and they're all like huge, so you can't pass and it will take a long time. So the sister of my friend went to the soldier, she's pretty, so she went like this to show him. [Flutters eyelashes, exaggerated preening.] Like he could open the door for us from the other way so we could pass, without having – so the soldier started looking at us and smiling. [Laughs] And then he told her, 'Come here,' and she came to him and he told her, 'I know what you want from me, but I'm sorry, we can't let you pass from here, it's against the law.' So she was sad and then she came back. [Laughs] So we couldn't – we waited for the queue to finish.

This story has a circular rather than linear structure: the girls 'came back', a recurring phrase in Yara's checkpoint stories, and the anecdote ends with them waiting to pass rather than the crossing itself. This ending emphasizes the movement restrictions that govern their lives and the disparity in power between occupier and occupied, signalling to the listener that this is the main import of the story – its themes are humiliation and powerlessness. However, the anecdote fleetingly introduces a different dynamic between the soldier and the Palestinian girls: Yara's friend attempts flirting as a strategy in the knowledge that the soldiers are, like her, in their late teens or early twenties. Her awareness of sex and the currency that her appearance might carry emerges alongside her recognition of the soldiers as age-related peers. For Yara, another friend's seventeenth birthday jolted her into this same recognition:

> When I used to go to the mall with my friend – my friend is from Beit Sahour, she's from here, but she lives in Beit Safafa [a Jerusalem neighbourhood]. Sometimes the people in Beit Safafa – there are people in Beit Safafa that are crazy and they want to join the army. You don't know why. So she told me, 'What

do you think about me joining the army?' She would never do that, but she was like – because she knows that I will start to call her [names], say things – so she wanted to tell me what do you think. So I told her, 'Never do that or I won't talk to you again.' This was the time when we realised that these people [soldiers] are our age, she could go now to the army. Usually I don't think about it.

The military functions as a concrete marker of childhood's end for both Israeli and Palestinian youth. Social workers supporting Palestinian teenage boys who have been in army custody explained to me that the boys frequently view arrest and imprisonment as an initiation to adult life, and they no longer identify themselves as children after their release, due to the prison experiences that set them apart from their peers and even their older relatives. As with conscription for their Israeli counterparts, military imprisonment becomes a rite of passage, 'a ceremony of leave-taking' for childhood.[6] Consequently each appearance of the army in a young person's story indicates an end of some sort: an abrupt termination to a young Palestinian's journey, as at roadblocks and checkpoints; the limits of a storyteller's known landscape, as with Nurit's attempt to imagine Gaza ('I really haven't seen it – I don't even know where the soldiers go to'); and finally the ending of a life. Nineteen-year-old Du'a, a young Palestinian woman from Bethlehem, commented, 'I used to try and talk to them [soldiers] when I was really little, but now I couldn't. When I look at one now, I think was he in Gaza, what did he do in Gaza. Always Gaza.' The result is that the young people's narratives are fissured with potential endings, even though they may lack the climax and closure that accompany a conventionally structured narrative. Through these fissures, the 'sense of an ending' pervades each story, with emancipatory effect: the onus is no longer on the storyteller to satisfy the audience by creating a narrative closure that she does not experience through daily life with intractable political violence, but on the listener to register all the disparate and sometimes disjointed stories that make up that young person's experience. Storytelling's liberating potential is achieved partly through privileging youth's lived experience over established narrative conventions and adult expectations (perhaps essentially the same thing) and partly through introducing a myriad of endings rather than narrowly emphasizing only one.

Through her storytelling, fifteen-year-old Budour demonstrates how she consciously disrupts the linear narratives of war and national struggle that she encounters at school and in Wahat as-Salaam/Neve Shalom. The Israeli calendar is punctuated with days of mourning and celebration, which form a powerful story of suffering (Yom ha'Shoah), struggle (Yom ha'Zikaron) and rebirth (Yom

ha'Atzmaut) that is re-enacted each year. Budour disrupts this narrative by refusing to participate in commemorative events for dead soldiers:

> There was a boy who was in the Air Force and he was killed. He died because there was a problem in the plane. On the day when they remember the people who were killed in wars [Yom ha'Zikaron], only the Jewish people go to his grave, so this is the part where we're really separated. So it's very hard for us to go there, thinking, 'You were in the war of Lebanon. [2006] You were killed, but you were there because you had weapons on that plane, and you were going there to harm people.' I mean, I can't ignore this fact. I'm sad that his family lost him, and that we lost someone from the village, but I can't ignore the fact that if he went there then other people would lose their relatives. So I can't go there and show 100% support for his family. It's very hard for me. And this is one of the things when we said do you think the Nakba affected you – I can't stand there showing my sorrow to someone who was going to do something that for me is a crime. And I said it in front of Meir once [fifteen-year-old Jewish participant] and he said that he doesn't agree with me. I remember that we had that discussion. And I sort of feel guilty that day, when I don't go to show my support to the family, but I really can't, because I can't ignore the fact that he died when he was going to do that thing.

By absenting herself from the graveside of the dead pilot and refusing to assume any role in the national narrative that will culminate in fireworks on Independence Day, Budour does not attempt to forget or minimize his death. Her use of the first-person plural demonstrates that she perceives him as part of her community and experiences a sense of loss: 'We lost someone from the village …' In moving away from the graveside – Rogers's image of the storyteller 'walked out backwards' from the narrative recurs again – she makes room for the dead of Lebanon and invites the listener, in this case Meir, to consider their stories. The ending of one life becomes a narrative gateway into the lives and deaths of unknown neighbours on the other side of the border.

Budour's reference to the Nakba highlights the cyclical quality that is present in many of the young people's storytelling. Nakba memory recurs with each war and act of political violence, forming a touchstone for grief. This pattern has been demonstrated in sociolinguistic and anthropological studies of narrative in Israel-Palestine. When the anthropologist Fatma Kassem interviewed elderly Palestinian citizens of Israel about their experiences of internal displacement in the Nakba, 'phrases such as "days repeat themselves", "Look, we do not need to tell our stories, only say what is happening to the Palestinians", "the poor people of Gaza" … were frequently uttered'.[7] The present invokes the past, making it

impossible to arrive at an ending in linear fashion; Budour's stories of 2006 bring her back to 1948. Yet despite this cyclical structure, she is one of few storytellers who see exiting the traumatic past and violent present as a possibility. Having examined how 'the sense of an ending' can be introduced to a story even if it lacks a clearly delineated, we will discuss how the young people envisage an end to political violence through their storytelling.

'To make the dream come true': Ending political violence

The beginning of my fieldwork was marked by the abduction and murder of three Israeli teenage boys by Palestinian gunmen in the West Bank, the torture and revenge killing of a fifteen-year-old Palestinian boy by a group of Israeli settlers and a military assault on Gaza. The research drew to its close as a rash of politically motivated stabbings broke out in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and people on the street began to speak of a third intifada. I heard some Palestinians referring to it as 'the intifada of the knives', and others as 'an intifada of the young', in recognition of the fact that so many of the attacks were being carried out by teenagers and young men. This was the backdrop against which the storytellers presented possible endings for the conflict. In the final storytelling session I undertook, seventeen-year-old Yuval explained that he sees no ending:

> Part of the sadness of this situation is that it's – in some kind of way it's unsolvable. A lot of people can say, 'Ah, two countries for two peoples,' or, 'When I will be in the Israeli government, I will solve all the problems and everything will be gone,' and also people in the world [adopting pompous tone]: 'Ah, what are they doing? They don't know how to do it! Let me do it! I will do it better.' People know how to say what's wrong. We also see what's wrong. I live here and my life is good, I admit it, my life is really good. And I see what's wrong. We have a lot of things to – to protect, but to improve. After all the dreams and nice words, you have to also do something in the end … There is a chance. I hope that it will happen, but I guess it won't happen, that we will learn to love each other. It can't happen … People die in the end. There's only one thing that can happen: that the conflict will be. Just be.

Several tensions and disconnects emerge through Yuval's words. There is the disparity between his quality of life and that of Palestinians living in close proximity to him, which he raised independently of my questioning; the tension between Israeli self-defence and the Palestinian need for civil rights (only hesitantly articulated); between Jewish presence and Arab presence; between

international perceptions of the conflict and his own lived experience; between 'dreams and nice words' and the imperative to take action; and ultimately between the hope that 'we will learn to love each other' and the bleak conviction that 'people die in the end'. Reconciliation is acknowledged as a possibility – 'There is a chance' – while enduring violence is presented as inevitable fact, the 'only thing that can happen'. Yuval treats the conflict as a state of being that is distinguished by death and the fear of death, and one of the few autobiographical stories he shared revealed the pervasiveness of that fear:

> I'm not so afraid. Sometimes, to be – [pause] I mean, to be killed. Two weeks ago a man from Alon Shvut died [Yuval's community, a small religious settlement]. Someone shot him at the gate of Alon Shvut. And every one of us, everyone loved him – really loved him. I'm friends with his daughter, and his son is a good friend of me, and to be killed – it's a terrifying thing, that someone I love, that something will happen to someone that I love, and unfortunately, it's not – it makes sense in our environment, that something like this will happen. Every time there is an attack or something like this, on WhatsApp, everyone will say, 'I'm alive, send a sign of life,' and everyone will say, 'I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive …' That something will happen to someone – it's even more frightening than something will happen to you.

Although he begins by declaring himself to be 'not so afraid', Yuval states that the fear of a loved one dying is ever-present ('It makes sense in our environment') and describes this as 'terrifying'. This suggests that his initial disclamation of fear does not mean that it is absent but that its omnipresence has transformed it into a normal state. His story also provides a snapshot of how fear shapes social interaction in his community, with teenagers using social media as a means of checking one another's safety.

As Yuval told few personal stories, preferring to discuss his political views or to speak about life in Israel in general terms, the autobiographical anecdotes he does share possess a particular forcefulness. 'I'm alive, I'm alive, I'm alive' is how he ends this final story, the repetition not only emphasizing the fear shared by him and his friends, but echoing the first personal story he shared: his return from a school visit to Poland and his first glimpse of his parents. 'We came back to Jerusalem and I saw my parents standing there … I saw them and I remember feeling happiness. I came back from a place where you can't imagine what happened there and you see your family and you understand how wonderful your life is.' Consequently Yuval's storytelling, like that of so many other participants, moves in circles: the ending returns the listener to the beginning. The whole narrative revolves round opposites, with Holocaust deaths

and Yuval's ongoing fear of bereavement forming one magnetic pole, while a triumphant joy in living ('You understand how wonderful your life is') forms the other. Political violence and death are integral to Yuval's world, making it difficult for him to go beyond the hesitant 'There is a chance' in describing reconciliation. This becomes clearer with the second ending he imagines:

> There is a chance, also, that we will leave the country. It can happen. In the history of the Jewish nation, it happened. Two thousand years ago, the Jewish people lived in Israel. It can happen. We try that it won't happen … but we admit that it can happen, and I don't know, maybe there is a way that they [Palestinians] will leave, but I don't see it. They live here, I mean.

It is apparently easier for Yuval to imagine one community leaving en masse than it is for him to narrate an ending in which both remain, showing the extent to which segregation and past violence have affected his conception of community. However, this ending also contains an affirmation of life – in this case, Palestinian life – and that itself may be read as acknowledgement of the possibility of shared living.

Dying is also a prominent theme in the diaries produced by Bethlehem teenagers during the Second Intifada, as killings were more frequent at that time and almost all the teenagers suffered a personal loss (one participant in the creative writing project, Christine Murra, was killed by an Israeli sniper; and several writers were bereaved of other friends or family members). Interestingly, one teenager opens her hesitant first entry with deaths, in a poignant example of how endings and beginnings are intertwined in narratives of intractable political violence:

> Now I'm writing … who knows? Maybe after a while I won't be able to … so I want to write to say all that I want to say.
>
>   Look, I think about death every moment, but I like my life and want to live longer – well, not for a very long time where I can't stand up on my own two feet. Almost everybody that I loved died, but if I think deeply about it, I will find out that we are all visitors on this earth.[8]

This is the entry in full. It is not clear whether fifteen-year-old Rouba is imagining her own death when she mentions a future inability to write, or simply noting that self-expression is difficult. This vagueness is also present in her description of personal bereavements; she offers no names or details, and within the same sentence 'everybody that I loved' has become 'visitors on this earth', in a stark transition from the intimate to the blankly impersonal. This image of life as a fleeting visit forms the backdrop for all the subsequent stories that Rouba shares, commencing with a military incursion: 'I was scared at the beginning of the Israeli invasion (the one that lasted 40 days) because it was my first time to see

tanks and military vehicles in Bethlehem.' That beginning is pregnant with the deaths that Rouba alludes to in hesitant language.

Another Palestinian teenager employs a spatial metaphor to convey the occupation's intractable nature, mirroring Yuval's image of the conflict as a state of being: 'Days have passed and life is just going on; we are still under the same circumstances. We are like a giant man stuck in a small place; he can't run away and he can't stay.'[9] This sense of being trapped in an impossible situation is present in many of the diaries, and it also surfaces in the storytelling sessions I conducted ten years later. When invited to envisage an ending to the conflict, Noga responded, 'I don't know if I can do anything about the conflict. Even though it interests me, I don't know why, or what I can do.' Fifteen-year-old Rania, an Arab student at Yad b'Yad, expressed jaded irritation at such questions:

> There's a lot of people that come to see the school, and they choose me a lot [for interviews] … Like some of the interviews at school, they're like really boring, like 'What is peace?' [tongue-clicking, sighing] or questions about the school, like 'Since when are you in the school?' and 'What do you do in the school?' and kind of, I'm used to these questions so they're boring … I don't have anything that I want to get from these interviews, so I don't have a problem with any sorts of questions, so there's nothing that I want people to ask. It's just like I want them, like, they want to hear and be respectful and everything. Sometimes they bring us people who disagree with the idea of the school … so it's just, I don't feel like I want to answer their questions.

Rania's exasperation at being asked to define peace made me reconsider the images of innocence and guileless wisdom that are attached to childhood, which may lead adults to approach young people in the belief that they possess privileged quasi-spiritual insights into conflict and its resolution. In stating that she herself does not have 'anything I want to get' from these interviews, Rania implies that she is aware her adult interlocutors may have something they want to get, and she was firm in registering lack of interest. Stav voiced similar criticism of adult faith in young people's innate capacity for peacemaking: 'I don't think giving these decisions to kids will suddenly make it all better.' This prompted me to stop asking direct questions about how young people envisage an end to political violence, acknowledging that some of them might see the question as fetishizing their youth rather than as representing a genuine interest in their political thinking and imaginative lives. Instead I looked for clues in stories they told in response to other prompts and questions. Yara, for example, returned to the separation barrier and its checkpoints when narrating an end to violence:

> First of all, the wall. I think we should mix with them [Israelis] and start to know more about them, and they know more about us, and for them, like – start to come here, we go there, know more about our cultures, and no more checkpoints, no more army, no more, err – yeah, this is like the wall and the checkpoints, these are the main things, and especially Netanyahu, he should [pause] leave. [Laughs] I heard on the radio his speech, because he won another time, he said, 'We will continue building settlements, we will continue destroying houses, we will continue taking land.' So this is like – I don't know.

Yara juxtaposes the image of a relentless military occupation ('We will continue building settlements, we will continue destroying houses') with the destruction of occupation's infrastructure ('No more checkpoints, no more army'), offsetting her potential ending against the Israeli government's stance. The repetitive phrasing suggests a stalemate. Earlier on she expressed doubt that peace would ever come, saying, 'We live in totally different cultures and I think there is no time when we will live peacefully with each other, even – because we don't think the same and it's hard.' She was also the only participant to acknowledge feeling hatred towards members of the other community. 'I still hate them. Yes.' Despite this, she imagines the conflict ending through seeking 'to know more about them' as well as through destruction of occupation. In creating an ending, she is capable of transcending the dominant emotion she feels at present, while still acknowledging it.

Stav also explores the possibilities of interpersonal contact:

> I think that kids should be open to other kids, without their race or religion or beliefs, because when we grow up we'll choose our friends probably by where we work, so it doesn't have to go by if they're religious or not religious, or if they're Jews or not Jews. And I think it's wrong to separate kids so much, and I think we're closed off to a lot of people who we could have been friends with and known and learned from. We're closed off. I think from *gan* we should have been together, from kindergarten … I think it [conflict] is because we don't learn together and we don't know them and – like I really don't know anyone who's Arab.

Stav uses spatial metaphors of opening and closure that implicitly reference checkpoints and military curfew, as in Hebrew similar vocabulary is used to describe these. In her narrative it is not just Palestinians who are under *seger* [closure]; she sees herself as 'closed off'. This is reminiscent of a remark by Waard, a ten-year-old Palestinian girl living in close proximity to Israeli settlers in Hebron's heavily guarded Old City: 'They [settlers] have put themselves in a cage.' Both girls recognize that in limiting Palestinian freedom of movement, occupation has circumscribed how Israelis live their own lives. In envisaging

an alternative, Stav does not use the future tense, but a wistful past conditional: 'We could have been friends …' This suggests that she imagines a life without violence as a possibility that existed once, but that is now beyond reach.

Budour arrived at this topic through a story about an activity at her Jewish high school:

> There was a time when we sat in the class. I think they told us to build – to find a solution, to build our own country. So we [students from Wahat as-Salaam/ Neve Shalom] said that we want the country to live how Neve Shalom lives. Then there was an argument that was so stupid. The things they said – 'What do you mean, we can't live all the country like Neve Shalom lives, it's not realistic, you don't even have a flag.' That was the main problem, the flag. [Laughs] And I said, 'Actually, we do have a symbol for the village,' and they said, 'OK, but it's not official, so it doesn't count.' Then the teacher even said, 'What if I want the Magen David [Star of David] to be my symbol on the flag?' I said, 'Why can't we make a new flag?' And I mean there were so many stupid questions.

Budour's story raises fascinating questions about language and symbolism, positing that the ability to imagine alternatives to enduring political violence is enhanced if young people have access to a richer figurative lexicon than that afforded by state symbols. 'Why can't we make a new flag?' is a controversial question in a largely segregated education system, whereas in a bilingual integrated village it becomes a logical suggestion. Following this anecdote, Budour demonstrates that envisaging an end to conflict was more than an imaginative exercise for her; she finds that her presence in the school has changed attitudes among her peers.

> My [Jewish] friend who I used to fight with in *Amud Anan* [Operation Pillar of Defense, 2012], he told me a few weeks ago, 'I think you got a much better education than I got.' They even did a story about us, in Channel 2, about us being friends and the fights we used to have and what does it mean about the country's future, about the solution, which was very interesting. So he told me that he thinks we got a better education. So I think the way that they [Jewish classmates] look at the village is a positive way, but they still have some doubts. They don't think it's very realistic that everyone would live in this way, but they do consider this place as a positive and a good place. They always want to visit and to see it, and they ask me a lot of questions about how it goes.

Paradoxically Budour's Jewish classmates view the village as a utopia in microcosm, an improbable fairy tale ending and as a present-day reality that can be visited and questioned. It is a physical embodiment of one alternative future, which Jewish teenagers have come to think about through contact with Budour, its narrator.

Like Budour, fifteen-year-old Rafael identifies creating a strong integrated community as crucial in challenging segregation and thereby ending violence:

One thing which is special about our school [Yad b'Yad] is that it's not only a school, it's also an entire community around it, so a community of parents and brothers and even cousins who don't necessarily go to the school, who don't have a child who goes to the school, but who are still part of the school community. So we started integrating the kids from the school into the community and doing a lot of community days and more trips and things like that so the class would be more connected, then the time of sixth grade came, people would say, 'Well, I'm really connected to the school now, so I'll probably stay.' Also having a lot of talks with the children and telling them the importance of staying in the school, and the fact that if you do want to make even the slightest difference, you need to continue with that.

In Rafael's view an end to violence is being co-written by every young person who opts to attend Yad b'Yad instead of moving to a segregated school for secondary education. He does not envisage any ending to the occupation and its violence other than full integration achieved through young people's active participation in the education system. Rania lacks his conviction that her participation is automatically transformative on a wider level, but comments, 'I don't see any difference, I don't feel that it changes anything, but I still do [it], because maybe it will.' She is motivated by the mere possibility of a different life, even if it remains unseen.

For Amal, an end to political violence is imagined as a homecoming: 'I can't go back to the whole family I used to have before the divorce … Maybe that's why I identify a lot with refugees … I'm waiting to find home, just like the Palestinians are waiting to find home.' She does not describe what such a home would be like, saying only what it is not: '[It] is not about having a house and living on the land … [Y]ou can't just grab it.' This illusory and intangible idea of home contrasts with the assertive declaration that follows: 'But I'm just like the Palestinian cause. I will be the one who's going to find a solution for myself, because as Palestinians, we're not going to wait for the United States or the Arabs or Israel to find us a solution. We're going to find our solution ourselves.' She does not describe the solution, but makes it clear that it will be brought about through solidarity and community – 'ourselves'.

Budour, Rafael and Rania are able to draw on their present experiences of shared living when imagining an end to conflict, which have furnished them with practical examples of what the future might look like. In the absence of such

experiences, other young people use allegory and fable to narrate an ending, as with this short tale written by four sixteen-year-olds from Bethlehem:

> There was a little boy who was holding his toy, a pigeon. While he was playing, he had a dream. He dreamed about another world where he could talk about his toys and his hobbies, his interests and his dreams, instead of just talking about guns, blood, and killing. A world where he could run and play with his friends. In that world was no war, no tanks, no rockets, and no shelling and bombing. A world full of peace. A bullet, an evil bullet, came like a thief and entered his heart. It took his soul and his dream away. His pigeon was beside him, right there next to his motionless body. But the pigeon remembered the boy's dream, and came to life and flew away. It decided to tell his dream to the world. And it decided to make the dream come true.

As seen in our examination of symbolic lexicons, birds in flight are present in many of the young Palestinians' stories, especially those told in Hebron's Old City and Aida camp. In a Bethlehem version of *Red Riding Hood*, Warda was able to escape the wall with the aid of a bird that she drew on its concrete, which also 'came to life and flew away'. However, the stories do not end with a simple escape; Warda remains in Bethlehem, crossing the wall daily to help her grandmother, and the pigeon decides 'to make the dream come true'. Reading this story, which was written in English, I assumed that the writers had been trying to add a symbolic dove to the story but had mistranslated it as pigeon. When I queried it, the writers replied that they wanted to keep their pigeon. The choice of an ordinary bird that is typically classed as vermin and has no symbolic weight suggests that for these storytellers, an end to violence may lie with people who are overlooked, and that answers can be found in everyday life. The ending as they imagine it combines the fabulous with the mundane. Notably, the writers do not describe how or even whether the dream is actually realized – they end with the pigeon deciding 'to tell the world', with storytelling. As with many other participants, they either cannot imagine the specifics of an ending to the violence that permeates their lives or do not see such an activity as important. It is the act of telling the story that matters.

When I asked Yuval how the region might look with the arrival of peace, he smiled and said, 'That's hard. I don't know.' 'Imagine.' There was a long pause, filled with birdsong and the sound of occasional traffic. Eventually: 'I can't.' Ten-year-old Waard in Hebron explained, 'Even if they change and they decide to be nice with us, we will never live in peace with them because we will never forget everything they did to us, never.' She cannot imagine a future without

referring to the violence that has been part of her life since birth. Her family has suffered several attacks from settlers, with the complicity of nearby soldiers; Waard herself has needed medical treatment. Interestingly, given the stress placed on memory in peace and conflict studies, a teenager from Bethlehem identifies forgetting as crucial to future coexistence: 'I can assure you that right now I don't like the Israeli people but maybe in time I will forget what they did to us and respect them.'[10] A shared future is contingent on forgetting, meaning that the young people's difficulty in imagining the future may be intensified by the potency of the past as it manifests in the present. Waard, who has bars on her bedroom windows to protect her from attacks by settlers, can only view her future through those bars, while teenagers who have grown up in bilingual communities striving for full integration are able to ask questions such as, 'Why can't we make a new flag?' All the imagined endings to intractable violence were deeply rooted in the children's present-day lives, revealing yet another circle in narrative: the future returns us to the present.

Ending the research: Central themes and patterns

There is a vast body of research on narrative and memory in Palestine/ Israel. To my knowledge, this is the first in-depth qualitative study to focus exclusively on young people and their lived experience, and to concentrate on their storytelling as a socio-political and literary act rather than as therapy or a means of peace education. It has also involved youth from diverse and highly polarized subcommunities, and while its idiographic nature prevents us from drawing statistical generalizations from the data, the themes that emerge from the young people's storytelling remind us why such quantitative analysis on narratives, social attitudes and beliefs in situations of political violence can be at best partially accurate and must be cautiously applied. For example, in her seminal work on the Holocaust and Nakba as twin 'ghosts of catastrophe' that haunt Israel-Palestine, Jo Roberts notes that according to survey data Holocaust denial among Palestinian citizens of Israel dips and rises according to ongoing political events, and stresses that 'the collective understanding of a historical event is mutable, shaped by reaction to a present threat of exclusion.'[11] My own work significantly increases insight into the mutability of collective memory, especially taboo memory, by casting light on the storytelling process through which memory and the resultant ideas of belonging are mediated and developed among youth.

The young people's stories are shot through with ambivalence, which is vital to this process. This was the overarching theme that emerged as I listened to the storytelling groups and transcribed individuals' stories. As we saw when the material was analysed with reference to the work of Levinas, storytelling creates a space in which such ambivalence can be freely expressed, as it is integral to the face-to-face relation. Therefore Yara is able to declare the hatred she feels for Israelis while thinking that 'we should mix with them and start to know more about them'; Noga denies the very existence of the Nakba, but recognizes that Palestinians have suffered because of it; Mahmoud fantasizes about killing soldiers while hoping that his Israeli friends will return to him and play football after their army service is over; Rafael can explore what it means to him to be both Jewish and Arab; and Yuval expresses hope that 'we will learn to love each other' despite his belief that violence is everlasting and 'people die in the end'. Quantitative and some qualitative methodologies struggle to capture this fluidity and ambiguity in thought, with the result that survey and poll data is often crude and two-dimensional. As the project progressed, a seventeen-year-old Israeli boy from a religious settlement who had not participated himself asked me in a manner that seemed to unite jocularity and suspicion, 'So what have you found out about us?' I identified ambivalence as a primary finding, explaining how young people appeared to move between multiple apparently conflicting beliefs depending on situation. His whole demeanour changed. After a short silence, he replied, 'I do that.' He appeared moved.

Young people responded positively to sensitive questioning that probed these ambiguities, suggesting that the presence of ambivalence indicates topics of particular importance to them. Taking an exploratory interpretative approach was vital: if I pointed out an apparent inconsistency directly, there was a risk that the storyteller would see me as attempting to catch them out in a contradiction rather than trying to gain a multifaceted understanding of their lives. I also had to be mindful of what their experience of researchers had been: like Rania, several young people had been interviewed regularly and had come to feel jaded by adults and their expectations. Israel-Palestine is an over-researched area, especially Palestinian refugee camps, with inhabitants complaining that researchers 'do the same interviews with the same people all the time'. This has led to suspicion that many stock questions, particularly those on the refugees' right of return, are politically motivated and intended to bolster a particular agenda.[12] Becoming attuned to ambivalence means moving away from stock questions, and recognizing it as a vital part of how young people imagine

community and respond to their histories may enable research to become more fruitful for participants as a result.

This project joins a body of anthropological research in issuing a challenge to humanitarian approaches grounded in the nebulously named 'area studies', which have a tendency to cantonise lived experience by region. For example, until recently the experiences of Palestinian refugee youth were treated as exceptional by humanitarian practitioners, and therefore of little import for young people living in other situations of protracted forced migration. Efforts to map points of intersection led to a large-scale comparative study of Afghan and Sahrawi youth, which revealed that 'multiplicity of identity and some contestation over social memory did exist among these youth. This suggested to us that there may, in fact, be a commonality, a multivocality and a heteroglossia among refugee youth …'[13] Terms such as 'multivocality' and 'heteroglossia' (in my own work identified as ambivalence), with their emphasis on word and voice, draw attention to storytelling's possibilities in situations of political violence and their aftermath. These possibilities are already being developed through an ongoing innovative participatory research project that explores the idea of citizenship among youth living in post-conflict urban societies, YouCitizen (2014–present), which relies on digital 'story mapping' to gain a comparative understanding of how young people make and remake citizenship in these spaces. Academic interest in the socio-political aspects of creative and media arts among youth in conflict-affected societies is growing, and my own research joins such initiatives in mapping out this emerging trajectory.

Storytelling has potential to enrich such comparative work due to the phenomenological underpinnings that have been examined here. The impetus to 'go back to the things themselves' ensures that researchers simultaneously remain attuned to the specifics of each situation and therefore avoid perpetuating the iconography of the 'universal child', while also recognizing commonalities. Phenomenological methods are concerned with the insight that subsequent data might give into earlier data, an intercommunicative process that is characteristic of oral storytelling (particularly folklore and fairy tale, which borrow from, echo and cannibalize one another). Storytelling demands a vulnerability and an awareness of the Other that compel listeners to question their own ideas and assumptions, making them better able to appreciate the many ambivalent and shifting stories that contribute to young people's experience of community and interpretation of memory.

Unsurprisingly, given its focus on the subversion and crossing of boundaries, this work also highlights the benefits that an interdisciplinary perspective can

bring to work with youth affected by political violence. It is still rare for their stories to be studied as stories, with close attention to literary, linguistic and stylistic aspects; scholars and practitioners are more concerned with story as evidence or as testimony.[14] The literary and applied linguistic analysis that forms the bedrock of this study, with its emphasis on metaphor and the influence of fairy tale forms, has demonstrated eloquently that studying story as story can furnish answers to questions that might otherwise be treated as the preserve of social sciences. The literary aspect of this study dovetails with Michael Rothberg's and Max Silverman's landmark work in memory studies, which draws on literature and cinema to examine the transmission of taboo pasts in contested spaces. Conducting a literary and applied linguistic analysis of participants' stories has invited us to consider these stories as part of the wider cultural and artistic landscape, further challenging the tenacious associations that have been drawn between story, testimony and therapy while highlighting the strength of the relationship between language, memory and space.

Another vital finding was the fluidity with which young people narrated space. 'Israel', 'Palestine', 'here' and 'there' were used in elastic ways. Yuval, describing how he had witnessed soldiers processing Palestinian workers at checkpoints, expressed disquiet: 'I know the soldiers would put them back in Palestine … [T]hey [Palestinians] need to come here so they can have a better life.' We were sitting in a West Bank settlement that Yuval classes as Israel, so what constitutes 'here' and 'back in Palestine' for him? It seems that these terms change in meaning, sometimes functioning as toponyms and sometimes as ethnonational descriptors of community that cannot easily be mapped onto physical space. The same phenomenon is seen in Yara's storytelling, when she talks about Palestinian labourers 'coming back from Israel' but affirms Jaffa and Haifa as Palestine, and in stories of youth from Hebron. Twelve-year-old Tahani, on being asked where soldiers come from, replied, 'Israel.' 'Where is that?' 'It's far.' Her response suggests either an uncertainty about Israel's actual geographical location or a sense of being far removed from it psychologically. Stav and Nurit described visiting grandparents who live in a West Bank settlement, recalling their childhood confusion at not finding an actual Green Line painted on the ground and being unable to tell where 'the Territories' began. Basic geopolitical and spatial terms cannot be taken for granted in young people's narratives of community; their meanings are nebulous. This is particularly noticeable in stories narrated in, and about, the fault lines that criss-cross the region.

Moving onto the stories' specific content rather than their broader defining characteristics, historical trauma emerges as central to young people's self-

concept and sense of community. Noga, on being asked to list the most significant things in her life, gave the Holocaust. The Holocaust was central to the first story Yuval told and it formed the backdrop for all subsequent stories. Holocaust and Nakba were woven together throughout Rafael's storytelling. Budour, lingering behind after a group storytelling workshop, told me, 'The Nakba – we carry it,' and on another meeting commented, 'When you see your grandfather crying like that, it's not something you forget.' She also revealed that the Nakba colours her thinking on current events, linking her family experiences to the carpet-bombing of south Lebanon in 2006. Interestingly the young people in Aida camp rarely mentioned the Nakba by name, although when they introduced themselves at the beginning of the project they gave the name of their families' original villages. When I asked about this, after nine months in the camp, twelve-year-old Amr told me, 'We know we're in the camp and you already know it's a camp, so there's nothing to say about that.' Another boy, seeing an iconic Nakba-era photograph of a Palestinian refugee woman hiding her face in her scarf being mounted on the separation barrier, interpreted her gesture according to his experience of daily life in the camp. 'Tear gas, so she is covering her nose.' The boys indicated that the Nakba constitutes their present reality; as its presence is taken for granted, they rarely feel the need to point to it. By telling me their family villages from 1948 and identifying these as their homes, they indicated that the community they experience in the camp and as a peer group was forged by the Nakba, as without it they would not be growing up together.

Young people's knowledge of and readiness to talk about forbidden histories were varied. Stav and Nurit, for example, had not heard the term 'Nakba' and thought it referred to an Islamic holiday, while Yuval and Noga had considered it in depth. I found that knowledge of the Holocaust was greater among refugees than among Palestinian peers from outside the camps, and that youth from settlements tended to be more aware of the Nakba. In the final stages of the research I invited older participants to consider the reasons for this. Yuval replied simply, 'We are close to them in here [in the settlement].' When I pointed out that earlier he had told me that he never interacts with Palestinians, he said, 'We are still close. When you live near somebody, you feel it.' He could not pinpoint the moment when he had first become aware of the Nakba. Amal, a refugee in Dheisheh camp, felt that greater Holocaust knowledge was partly due to the fact that refugee camps are highly politicized spaces where great emphasis is placed on the importance of education as resistance and empowerment, and partly because the refugees' own experiences have made them more attuned to the suffering of others, including the persecution of Jews in Europe. While

responses may be far from empathetic, encompassing denial or minimization of the genocide, the Holocaust still occupies an important if unsettling place in the social and political history of Palestinian refugee communities. Rafael, Yara and Budour identify this experience of collective trauma as a means to promote reconciliation, arguing that people can use their own histories to develop empathy for the suffering of others. In Rafael's words: 'Maybe that's a platform where Palestinians and Israelis can … share stories or even get closer, because you know we both had families and then someone banished us and we couldn't go back.' Forbidden histories are presented as the fulcrum from which a new community might emerge, as there is no way back to the old.

The young people had developed figurative lexicons that they drew on throughout their storytelling, which offered a way for them to approach forbidden histories and navigate hidden landscapes. Stones, keys, birds, walls, doorways and unfinished houses were symbols that recurred across multiple subcommunities, and we saw that youth were more likely to explore alternative conceptions of community through these symbols than to tell straightforward (auto)biographical stories, a system that Ruth Wajnryb refers to as 'iconic messaging' in her work on intergenerational transmission of Holocaust memory.[15] Young people were also more likely to resort to metaphor in order to express empathy. Further applied linguistic and literary research into the origin and development of such lexicons, featuring an analysis of art, music and other cultural output, might provide insight into the nature of the relationship between metaphor and empathy. Such research carries practical implications for peace and reconciliation work in situations of intergenerational political violence.

The ambivalence that typifies the stories and their tellers' elastic use of terms such as 'Israel' and 'Palestine' demonstrates the need to move beyond the constrictive dual-narrative approach that dominates peace education at present. The transmission of forbidden histories across inter- and intra-community boundaries also reveals that mainstream national narratives, while significant in their own right, can never fully express young people's engagement with history. This supports Eyal Naveh's contention that the 'historic narrative can no longer be taught as one story and one memory but only as a mosaic of intercommunicating stories and memories'.[16] However, this understanding of memory and community raises significant ethical and political questions about power relations in Israel-Palestine. The focus on narrative in academia and the popularity of storytelling among NGOs specializing in peace education have contributed to the idea that violence in the region is the result of an ethnonational conflict between two sides struggling for dominance, and peace can be achieved through promoting

cross-cultural and interreligious understanding through personal story. Along with an increased emphasis on subjective individual experience, his approach has elicited anger from Palestinians, especially those from marginalized and impoverished refugee communities:

> There is a trend now to focus on Palestinians not as a political subject from Palestine but as a human being. Bullshit. I am not saying we do not need to focus on the personal problems. But there is some sort of directed effort to sway attention away from the political problems and onto the personal and the individual, and this is the danger.[17]

The personal and political cannot be easily disentangled in Israel-Palestine, as I saw one day when I was accompanying a Palestinian friend who holds Israeli citizenship on a search for a new apartment in Nazareth. One property owner phoned us while we were still en route and asked if she were Arab. 'I can't rent to Arabs. It's nothing personal, you understand.' She reacted with smiling but tired courtesy – 'I understand' – and when the call ended, began to laugh. 'You're not renting to me because of who I am,' she said to the air in front of her face, 'and you tell me that's not personal.' I was astonished by her apparent lack of anger. She gave a brittle sigh. 'Vicky, if I got angry at that I'd be angry all my life.'

Storytelling is never an apolitical act, least of all in a context such as this. In the previously invoked image of the storyteller 'walking out backwards' from the narrative space, we find dynamics of power: people walk backwards from authority, from sacred sites and sometimes from a threat. Storytelling can also be read as an act of political resistance or subversion, or a way to assert one's humanity in the face of dehumanization – the face-to-face relation insists on that recognition. The young people seemed aware of this, and when asked to close the storytelling session by saying anything they would like, they frequently ended by challenging how others might perceive them. 'I am not a terrorist,' was uttered several times in Palestinian communities. One girl in Hebron quoted her teacher: 'We're not here to upset anybody and we're not here to make anybody happy. We are here because we are here.' Budour added, 'I want you to know that after the fight we had the other day, about army [she and Jewish peers had argued about conscription], we all went to my house and played on the trampoline … This is what our village is.' Yuval commented, 'I hope people outside will read what you write and see that the situation is not just about bad Jews.' Their final act was to emphasize community, expressing appreciation for it and asserting their place in it.

Asking those final questions – 'Is there anything more you want to add?' 'What questions do you think I should have asked, but didn't?' – made me

confront my own role in shaping both the ending and the storytelling as a whole. I had tried to remain sensitive to young people's reactions to my prompts and adjust them accordingly. I also kept questions broad and non-directive, enabling the storytellers to choose which path to take. However, my choice of my prompts, my wording and numerous factors beyond my control (being white and female, for example) undoubtedly influenced the stories that were told. The unexpected twists and turns taken by many stories form a meaningful reminder of stories that were not told and questions that remained unasked: I was stunned when Noga responded to 'What do you think of when you hear the word "Gaza"?' with an unhesitating 'Shuja'iyya', having prepared myself to hear 'darkness' or 'empty space' (recurring images offered by Israeli youth). Every time I was jerked out of my own expectations in this way, I was reminded of the existence of stories I had not heard or enquired after. As a result it does not matter that the stories gathered cannot be considered 'representative' in statistical or demographic terms, or that there is no way to be wholly non-directive when conducting story-based research, as each story leaves space for others to follow, space for shock. Storytelling, like life, is governed by a certain amount of chance. This is clear from how Amal chose to end our last storytelling session, by referring to one of the many poems that hang on her bedroom wall to indicate how precarious and incidental she considers her place in the refugee community about which she is so passionate:

> There is a poem by Mahmoud Darwish, and actually it's very connected to the theme that I'm very stuck and very lost, and I'm living very by chance. 'Dice Player'. It's like he didn't choose to be born Palestinian, he didn't choose to be born with this father and this mother and these brothers and these sisters, he didn't choose anything. He was created by chance and living by chance. Any little detail that changed in his life, maybe he wouldn't exist right now. Just like all the events in my life. Sometimes I think by chance I got to university, by chance I was born in a refugee camp, by chance I'm still alive sometimes. And like I said, life is full of surprises and you can't foresee the future. That's enough. I've already talked too much.

I think of chance and surprises on my last bus ride before returning to England. Dusk has fallen and the windows are streaked with rain. Beit Jala checkpoint, Route 60. A soldier clambers on board. *He's not going to make the passengers queue in the rain,* I think, *interesting, his unit is usually the worst.* Just ahead of me, a Palestinian girl aged no more than seven is chatting quietly to her rain-beaded reflection, in Hebrew. '*Shalom, Meron, ma nishma? Kol beseder?*' The soldier stops beside her. 'Hey, are you talking to me? My name isn't Meron, I'm

Daniel.' The girl sighs exasperatedly and responds in Arabic. 'No, of course not you, I'm speaking to my friend on my cellphone.' 'You have a friend who speaks Hebrew? Where is he?' Tutting from the girl. 'I don't know. I haven't met him yet.'

I look at the soldier's face, briefly reflected in the window. When this girl grows up she may still be meeting him, or someone dressed just like him, every day on the Route 60 checkpoint, assuming she has a permit to travel. Or perhaps something will have changed and she will have her Hebrew-speaking friend. Who knows? I look at the soldier's reflection, now streaked by rivulets of rain, and see that the child is no longer looking at his face in the window but staring out into the darkness blanketing the hillside. He checks permits without saying anything more. The bus drives on to Jerusalem.

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