LINGUISTIC AND SPATIAL PRACTICE IN A DIVIDED LANDSCAPE

by

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A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of PhD

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University of Toronto

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Abstract of Thesis

This dissertation demonstrates how changes in spatial boundaries map on to changes in the boundaries of national belonging through an ethnography of linguistic and spatial practice in a divided landscape. In Israel, as in many places around the globe, new forms of segregation have emerged in recent years, as violence and the fear of violence become increasingly bound up with the production of social difference and exclusion. In Wadi Ara, a valley in the north of the country where my fieldwork was based, segregation between Jewish and Palestinian citizens has dramatically increased since the fall of 2000, as the place of Palestinians in a Jewish state is being reconfigured. In this dissertation I focus on the changing movements and interactions of Jewish Israelis in Wadi Ara as they articulate with changes in the ways difference, belonging, and citizenship are organized on a national scale. I examine how increased hostility, fear, and distrust have become spatialized; how narratives of the past shape contemporary geographies; how competing ways of interpreting and navigating the landscape are mediated; and how particular forms of encounter are framed. My central argument is that through daily linguistic and spatial practice people in Wadi Ara do more than just make sense of shifting boundaries; they bring these boundaries into being and, in the process, they enact both self-definition and exclusion, reflecting and circumscribing
the changing place of Palestinians in Israel. The dissertation is based on 19 months of fieldwork between 2002 and 2006.
Acknowledgments

So many people are so happy to see me finish this dissertation. It is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to thank them for their roles in seeing it through.

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The knowledge that my parents, Ian and Laurie Sone, love me and believe in me sustained me in this, as in everything I do. The political and intellectual roots of this dissertation go back to values I learned from them, and from my grandparents, Norman and Mary Davis.

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Bibliography
A Note on Translation and Transcription

Unless otherwise stated, all transcribed interactions are translated from Hebrew. I have indicated where the original interaction took place either in Arabic or in English. I have used the following transcription conventions:

[.....
.....] square brackets in two turns mark overlapping speech

(.) pause

it’s not – dash marks self-interruption (a word or phrase broken off before it is finished)

xxxx unable to decipher

kno::::w colons mark elongated syllable

[a bypass road] square brackets mark transcriber’s comments

THAT’S what capital letters mark loud, emphasized speech

hhhh laughter

‘lets meet’ single quotes indicate quoted speech

... some material from original transcript has been omitted

(shtuyot kaele) original Hebrew or Arabic phrase
Maps

Israel / Palestine (Wadi Ara area in red)
Source: Jewish Arab Mayors’ Forum in Israel (JAMFI)
Main Areas of Palestinian Localities in Israel
Source: Payes 2005
1. Linguistic and spatial practice in a divided landscape

Early on the morning of September 28, 2000 Ariel Sharon, then member of the Israeli Knesset and head of the opposition Likud party, went up to Haram al Sharif / the Temple Mount in Jerusalem. His actions upset a precarious balance and provided the spark that ignited violent conflict in the occupied Palestinian territories. This time, the intifada was not contained outside the green line borders of Israel. Palestinian citizens of Israel, who form a minority comprising roughly 20 percent of the population, protested the actions of the Israeli government and expressed solidarity with Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza in demonstrations all over the country.¹ Over ten days in October, twelve Palestinian citizens of Israel were shot and killed by Israeli security forces during protests.

Following this traumatic event, Palestinian citizens’ national demands and critiques of Israel came to the forefront in increasingly radical, vocal, and demanding ways, drastically changing their relations both with the Israeli state and with the Jewish majority. Jewish Israelis reacted with increased hostility, fear, and distrust toward the Palestinian minority; this can be understood as a response not just to the threat of a minority perceived to be unruly and potentially violent, liable to take to the streets once again, but also to the threat that Palestinian demands present to Jewish Israelis’ self-definition as citizens of a Jewish and democratic state.

¹ While members of this group are referred to in the dominant Israeli idiom as “Israeli Arabs,” I refer to them instead as “Palestinian citizens of Israel.” I discuss my reasons for this in Chapter Two.
Scholars and activists have recently argued that “the boundaries of citizenship are being redrawn . . . to create a new consciousness among Jews and Arabs alike that the Arab citizens’ ‘citizenship’ is not real; in other words, that the Arabs are in effect ‘citizens without citizenship’” (Rouhana and Sultany 2003:10). In this dissertation I argue that changes to the “boundaries” of citizenship are both reflected in and shaped by changes in spatial boundaries, as they are worked out through daily movements and interactions.

In Israel, as in many places around the globe (see e.g., Caldeira 2000), new forms of spatial segregation are emerging as violence and the fear of violence become increasingly bound up with the production of social difference and exclusion. The primary ways I found that Israelis are experiencing, understanding, and making sense of the violent upheaval of the past eight years is through movement and through talk. People’s daily routines and habits, how they get to work and where they buy their groceries, are in a constant state of flux. As people go about these movements, assessments of safety and comfort, danger and fear are a constant, daily preoccupation, and a constant topic of conversation. Over the course of my fieldwork, as I began to listen to more of such conversations, and to follow people in their movements through a rapidly changing landscape, I began to ask questions about the profound political resonances of these seemingly mundane practices.

In this dissertation, based on nineteen months of fieldwork conducted between 2002 and 2006 in Jerusalem and Wadi Ara, I focus on the intersection of linguistic and spatial practice in a context of conflict and change. I look at how
people shape their surroundings as they navigate in, around, and through them – discursively and spatially. More specifically, I focus on how such movements and interactions are changing in response to violent conflict and, in turn, on how these changing practices articulate with changes in the ways difference, belonging, and citizenship are organized on a national scale. The bulk of my fieldwork took place between November 2003 and February 2005, and focused on Wadi Ara, a valley in the north of Israel known as a “mixed” area because it is inhabited by both Palestinians and Jews. Wadi Ara was seen as the epicentre of the protests of October 2000, and segregation in the area has dramatically increased since then. My central argument is that in their daily movements and interactions people in Wadi Ara do more than just make sense of shifting boundaries; they bring these boundaries into being and, in the process, they enact both self-definition and exclusion, reflecting and circumscribing the changing place of Palestinians in Israel.

2. A history of the project: From Jerusalem to Wadi Ara

The events of October 2000 came at a critical moment in formulating my research project, forcing a reassessment of my political outlook and, in the process, of my fieldwork. My own fears, critiques, doubts, retreats, disillusionments, and tentative attempts to move forward, as well as those of the people with whom I did my fieldwork, are reflected in this dissertation. The changes wrought by the events of October 2000 both shaped my project and, eventually, became its focus. For this reason, and in order to understand how it was shaped by my personal history, my political positionality, and the particular time and place, I think it is important to share a brief chronology of this evolving project,
I applied to graduate programs in anthropology in the fall of 2000, with a fieldsite and a clearly defined project to which I was firmly committed. My decision to pursue graduate studies in anthropology in many ways followed from my choice of fieldsite. I had found a place that fascinated me, that I believed in, that I wanted to contribute to, and I subsequently decided that the contribution I had to make was through ethnographic fieldwork. My fieldsite was Neve Shalom / Wahat al Salam (NS/WAS) – a bilingual and binational primary school near Jerusalem that teaches Arabic and Hebrew to children from both linguistic backgrounds, with the goal of promoting coexistence.

My involvement with NS/WAS began when I spent my third year of undergraduate studies on a fellowship at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. The year was 1998-1999. Despite the recent assassination of Yitzhak Rabin and the frequent bombings in the buses and cafes of Jerusalem, I was swept up in the optimistic atmosphere of the Oslo years. Reconciling my Labour Zionist upbringing with my interest in social justice and cultural critique did not seem impossible. My maternal grandparents met as youth leaders in the Shomer Hatsair movement in Toronto in the 1930s, and have remained committed throughout their lives to its principles of socialism and Zionism even though World War II prevented them from making aliya (immigrating to Israel), a goal for which they spent their teenage years planning and training. My parents brought their five children to Israel to live on a kibbutz in the Yizrael valley when I was four years old, though we returned to Toronto two years later. Returning to Israel to study in my twenties felt like something of a homecoming, yet an ambivalent one. My love for the land of Israel
grew alongside my awareness of the fundamental inequalities and injustices on which the state of Israel rests. I gained back fluency in Hebrew and was thrilled to find that this, along with my native accent (the legacy of my childhood years on kibbutz), allowed me to “pass” as Israeli. In my quest to take on – or at least understand – this part of my identity, I hiked the wadis of the Golan Heights and the hills of the Judean desert while I learned in my courses to question the founding myths of Zionism, uncovering the imperialist, nationalist, militarist imperatives behind the songs and stories I had grown up on.

In retrospect, I see that my perspective reflected the blind spots and short-sightedness of the Oslo era (see Chapter One). I hoped for peace; I believed in coexistence. I called for an end to the occupation and for equal rights for Israeli Arabs without questioning the Jewish character of the state. When I went on a fieldtrip to NS/WAS with one of my classes I was, like many others before me, captivated by the site of Jewish and Arab children playing together (see figures 0.1 and 0.2). That same day, I spoke with the principal and with the kindergarten teacher and arranged to volunteer at the kindergarten one day a week for the rest of the school year.

While my days at the school were taken up by the mundane tasks of cutting and pasting and wiping noses, I became fascinated by the issues with which members of the school community grappled on a daily basis: How could teachers counteract the tendency for Arabic speaking students to learn Hebrew better than Hebrew speaking students learned Arabic? Could Israeli national holidays, such as Independence Day, be commemorated in a way that was inclusive of the Palestinian
perspective and that gave equal weight to both historical narratives? For the remainder of my undergraduate course work at Hebrew University and later back at the University of Toronto I explored these questions, translated into the terms of linguistic anthropology, in my essays: How can bilingual education challenge language ideologies about dominant and non-dominant languages? What role can education play in resisting and changing, rather than reproducing, existing power structures and inequalities? I drew on the literatures on critical pedagogy and language ideologies in my proposals to conduct ethnographic fieldwork at the school in order to explore these questions.

But even as I was drafting my applications to graduate programs in anthropology, in the fall of 2000, Ariel Sharon went up to Haram al Sharif / the Temple Mount; the second intifada broke out in the territories; Oslo collapsed; and twelve Palestinian citizens of Israel were killed during protests by Israeli security forces. These events plunged the region into violent conflict and fundamentally reconfigured relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. Less importantly, these events also called into question the basic premises and fundamental terms of my project.

In the spring of 2001, just after sending in my acceptance to the PhD program at the University of Toronto, I flew to Israel for three months of preparatory fieldwork. I returned again the following year for a month, as I was beginning to write my thesis proposal. For April, May, and June of 2001 and December of 2002 I was living in Jerusalem and catching the school bus to Neve Shalom twice a week. At Neve Shalom I made myself useful in whatever way I could while trying to clarify my
research questions. When I wasn’t at the school, I cobbled together lessons in colloquial Arabic wherever I could find them: at the YMCA with a group of foreigners including journalists, academics, aid workers, and activists (the language of instruction was English); at an immigrant absorption centre with a group of young immigrants from North America; and with a private tutor. I became fascinated by the politics of learning Arabic in a context where this was an increasingly unlikely choice for Israeli Jews.

Of all the times I have lived in Israel, these were the hardest. In March of 2002 Israel began Operation Defensive Shield, reinvading every West Bank town (except for Jericho) that had been turned over to the Palestinian Authority during the Oslo years. This was the largest military operation in the West Bank since the 1967 war. From my window in Talpiot, which is on the southern edge of Jerusalem, I could hear gunfire in Beit Jala and planes flying over Beit Lechem. Meanwhile, suicide bombings in Jerusalem kept increasing in number and scale. Friends and acquaintances, including many teachers at Neve Shalom, asked me over and over again what I was thinking coming to Israel at a time like this: Was I crazy? I should go home. If they had my options they never would have come. In fact, they would leave in a second if they could. It pained me to see everyone around me succumbing to hopelessness, despair, cynicism, and hate. Even as I continued commuting to Neve Shalom, I struggled with doubts and questions: What meaning, what relevance did coexistence initiatives have in the context of outright war? Given the current circumstances, what role could bilingual education possibly play in forging a better future?
Back in Toronto, in 2001-2003, while I was preparing to go to the field, the prospect of fieldwork in Israel seemed increasingly dangerous, increasingly fraught. At the same time, academic discussions of Israel were increasingly extreme and increasingly polarized. I found calls for academic boycotts unproductive but I had no alternative suggestion for what a productive role for an academic might be in this context; how, then, could I insist on going? The events in Israel forced me to reassess not just the relevance of my project but also fundamental elements of my personal beliefs and my identity; did I want my fieldwork and my thesis to be caught up in this painful process?

I spent my first year of course work exploring other options. I was drawn to the comparatively straightforward issue of anti-poverty activism in Toronto. On this issue I knew exactly where I stood and felt like I had both a right and an obligation to take a stand. Nearly everyone I spoke with advised me to abandon my project in favour of one less personally involved, less complicated, less dangerous, both physically and academically. Without my advisor’s unwavering support I would no doubt have abandoned the project, and this thesis, for better or for worse, would be a different one. Yet rightly or wrongly, in spite of everything and for reasons I am not sure I can explain, I persisted.

An intensive course on the political sociology of Palestinian citizens of Israel, taught by Dan Rabinowitz in the spring of 2003, helped me to change the focus of my research by foregrounding recent changes in relations between Palestinians and Jews in Israel, and questioning Neve Shalom’s potential impact in light of these changes. My thesis proposal focused on how conflicting ideas of the state and of
citizenship are negotiated in the process of learning local histories and landscapes at Neve Shalom / Wahat al Salam. I wrote:

[In light of the events of October 2000] scholars have recently argued that for Israel truly to be a state for all its citizens, what is required is no less than a fundamental re-evaluation “of Israeliness itself”; that is, a redefinition of the state and of citizenship, of Israel and of being Israeli (Rabinowitz, Ghanem, and Yiftachel 2000). This is a challenge that must be met by both scholarly and activist experiments in new ways of ordering and interpreting social experience in Israel. My work aims to contribute to the project of redefining Israel through an ethnographic exploration of one context in which this challenge is being actively engaged.

Still optimistic in spite of everything, I argued that “through the process of negotiating conflicting versions of place and memory at Neve Shalom / Wahat al Salam, new meanings of the state and of citizenship, of Israel and of being Israeli, may be emerging.” A short section at the end of my proposal posed questions about spatial practice: “Who goes where? Who is welcome where? How do people decide which locations are dangerous and which are safe? How are common understandings of these boundaries negotiated?” These questions, tacked on at the end of my thesis proposal, would come to form the core of my research.

When I arrived in Israel in November 2003, I had successfully defended my proposal to my committee but I remained profoundly uncertain, on a personal level, that what was going on at NS/WAS really constituted a relevant and meaningful
engagement with the crucial questions I had identified about redefining Israel. In my first months in the country, I was sensitive to the ways Israeli academics and activist friends responded to my project. My questions about the role of place and memory in redefining Israeli identity interested them, but when I mentioned Neve Shalom many tuned out, or became dismissive. In the current political context, their reactions implied, there was something naïve to the point of laughable in coexistence initiatives. Their responses made me feel out of tune, out of touch, compounding my own doubts.

I began taking Arabic lessons at Givat Haviva, an Arabic language school in Wadi Ara, soon after I arrived, commuting from Jerusalem to Wadi Ara every Wednesday with another classmate for a full day of classes. Still fascinated by the complex dynamics of language learning, I also found myself drawn to the landscape of Wadi Ara, one of the few areas of the country where Jews and Palestinians live in relative proximity to one another and a region that plays a central role in mobility and access in the country (see Chapter Two). I was curious to see how my questions about fear, movement, and safety would play out there. I introduced myself to the students and teachers in my classes as a student and anthropologist, and obtained consent from them to tape our classes and observe our interactions as part of my doctoral research. The rest of my time I spent at Neve Shalom.

Neve Shalom was going through a very difficult time when I arrived. The daily news provoked ongoing and repeated conflicts and existential crises among parents, teachers, and administration. On the morning in March that Sheich Ahmed Yassin, the leader of Hamas, was assassinated by Israeli forces, I rode the school bus
as usual with the kids from Beit Safafa (a Palestinian neighbourhood in Jerusalem),
listening as they repeated the outrage and fear they had heard their parents express
at the breakfast table that morning. Ali, a precocious and smart-alecky grade sixer,
pronounced: “World War Three is about to start!” In the staff room that day there
were bitter arguments and tears: Was Sheich Yassin a martyr and a holy man or a
terrorist? How should this be discussed in the classroom? Similar arguments
followed each suicide bombing and every military incursion into Gaza or the West
Bank.

Jewish parents were pulling their kids out of the school in alarming numbers.
Some of the best teachers left for ‘normal’ schools; others suffered burnout.
Personal tragedy added to the atmosphere of gloom when a veteran teacher’s adult
daughter committed suicide. Power struggles and administrative disarray
compounded the situation. There was a protracted struggle with the ministry of
education and the governing body of the village over the administration of the
school. The new Jewish principal (one of two co-principals – the other was
Palestinian), an external appointment from the ministry, confided in me over ginger
tea in her home that she was not sure she could do this much longer.

There I was, in the midst of all this, trying to fit in and to feel productive. I
wrote in my fieldnotes on February 1, 2004 about Neve Shalom: “It doesn’t feel right
now like a good place to be. A place that is struggling, in conflict, not feeling good
about itself and within itself is really not likely to welcome an outsider – a dubious,
il-defined outsider, poking her nose in and hanging around and watching.” At the
same time, my doubts about the relevance and importance of the project persisted.
Was anyone still searching for a “bridging” narrative, a way to reconcile opposed perspectives on history and memory, outside of Neve Shalom, or hadn’t that search been abandoned as Palestinian demands shifted from integration to autonomy (see Bar-On 2006)? Should children be made to bear the mistakes of their parents’ utopian experiments (see Bekerman 2006)? My questions about redefining Israel in relation to people’s movement, safety, and boundaries increasingly felt like the right ones, but Neve Shalom felt like the wrong place to be looking for answers. I found that my fieldnotes were filled with more interesting observations from my one day a week at Givat Haviva than from the rest of the week at Neve Shalom. Wadi Ara, a place where, due to the particular historical geography of the region (see Chapter Two), negotiating changing social boundaries was a daily preoccupation, felt much more relevant than Neve Shalom, a place where Jews and Palestinians were brought together only in the context of a struggling institution.

When the school year ended in June I decided that I would not return to Neve Shalom in the fall and that my primary fieldsite would be Wadi Ara. Givat Haviva would be my home base, I decided, my way in to Wadi Ara, and learning Arabic would be my way in to questions about spatial and linguistic practice and shifting boundaries in the area. In August I moved to Wadi Ara and joined an intensive Arabic language course at Givat Haviva full time as a true participant observer: both a student in the class and an anthropologist. I remained in Wadi Ara for the remainder of my fieldwork and, while my experience at Neve Shalom and living in Jerusalem informed my writing, this is the fieldsite I focus on in this dissertation.
There is one further important way that the focus of my research changed over the course of my fieldwork. While I set out initially to write an ethnography of Jews and Palestinians, one that would bridge divisions in describing a divided landscape, the dissertation has become something else. While the dissertation is concerned with the implicate relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel, these relations are presented primarily from the diverse points of view of Jewish Israelis. In Chapter One I explain the importance of scrutinizing the everyday movements and interactions of Jewish Israelis because of the often overlooked role they play in shaping the place of Palestinians in Israel. This focus is intended both to fill an important gap in the literature on Palestinians in Israel and as a corrective to feelings of complacency and blamelessness on the part of the Jewish majority.

Concerned as I am with silences and erasures, it is important to point out that Palestinian voices and perspectives are largely absent from this dissertation. This is because this absence is a very real presence for Israeli Jews in Wadi Ara, and it is their perspective that I am trying to convey. In focusing on the implicate relations between Jews and Palestinians I still do strive to write against divisions but in a way that doesn't write these divisions out of the experiences of those with whom I did my fieldwork.

To be an ethnographer of Jews and Palestinians in Wadi Ara at the time I did my fieldwork was, for me, an impossibility. This is a further way that my personal identity, my political positionality, and the particularities of time and place shaped the fieldwork that I did. While I did get to know Palestinian residents of Wadi Ara and Palestinian members of the school community at Neve Shalom, and while I lived
for the month of August 2004 with a family in Kafr Kara (a Palestinian village in Wadi Ara), I was always positioned in my fieldwork as a Jewish (and many assumed Israeli) researcher. At the particular time that I did my fieldwork, being a Jewish researcher in Palestinian towns and villages in Wadi Ara did not feel like a welcome, appropriate, or politically sensitive way to position myself. I was always acutely aware of – and uncomfortable with – my own role in continuing a history of Israeli Jewish “expertise” in Arab matters (see Eyal 2006, Rabinowitz 1998) that has both been enabled by and contributed to the scrutiny, surveillance, and control of Palestinian citizens by the state. Further, I was never able to interact consistently with Palestinians in Arabic – partly as a result of my lack of fluency and partly as a result of the complex politics of language choice in this context: most Palestinians I interacted with preferred to speak to me in Hebrew. For these reasons, over the course of my fieldwork, I became increasingly uncomfortable with positioning myself as an ethnographer of Palestinians, and I chose Givat Haviva as my home base in part in response to these reservations.

I have been careful in writing this dissertation not to overstate my access to and understanding of Palestinian perspectives. In my reluctance to position myself as an expert on Palestinian citizens of Israel in my writing as in my fieldwork I don’t mean to deny them a voice, or agency, or an active role in the dynamics I describe. Here I fill in but one multi-faceted side of the picture – a complex, volatile, changing picture, and one that I inevitably view through the lens of who I am and who others

2 Since most people related to me as an Israeli because of the way I spoke Hebrew, despite the fact that I always introduced myself as a student from Canada, the fact that I am not an Israeli citizen did not seem to mitigate this dynamic.
perceive me to be. The work of filling in the other side(s) of the picture I leave to others (such as the scholars I cite in Chapters One and Two), or to the work I hope to do in the future. I hope that the dynamics will be different when I next return to Israel to do fieldwork. In the meantime, the voices you will hear in this dissertation are those that I feel I am best positioned to listen to, and to convey. Chapter Two provides detailed descriptions of the people with whom I did my fieldwork, of Wadi Ara, of Givat Haviva, and of my methodologies, but first, in the next chapter, I elaborate my arguments and situate my questions.

3. Overview of the thesis

In Chapter One, “Shifting Boundaries and the Place of Palestinians in Israel,” I discuss the events of October 2000 in some detail, in order to provide context for the changes in relations between Jews and Palestinians that the thesis addresses. I then elaborate the central questions and terms of the thesis in relation to the literatures on divided landscapes, linguistic and spatial practice, and questions of nation, state, and citizenship as they pertain to the Palestinian minority in Israel.

In Chapter Two, “Wadi Ara: A Divided Landscape,” I set the scene for the chapters that follow by sketching a critical historical geography of the landscape in which this dissertation is situated and introducing the places where, and the people with whom, I did my fieldwork. In the first section I outline the contours of Wadi Ara and the history of war, dispossession, land confiscation, and preferential settlement that has shaped this divided landscape. The second section entails a description of my primary fieldsite, Givat Haviva, an introduction to the people with
whom I did my fieldwork, and a discussion of my methodologies.

Chapter Three is called “White Spaces on the Map: Geographies of Intimate Distance.” Meron Benvenisti wrote that in 1948, just before the founding of the state of Israel, “on the mental map carried by [Jews], the Arab communities were white patches – *terra incognita*” (2000:56). This chapter explores the contemporary relevance of Benvenisti’s observation by describing the ways that increased hostility and distrust became spatialized in Wadi Ara during the time I did my fieldwork there. In tracing the contours of this landscape and its various boundaries, as they are understood and experienced by the people who navigate through them, what emerges is a picture of intimate distance, maintained by daily acts of encounter or avoidance. It is a distance maintained in the face of “unavoidable proximities” (Hartigan 1999:86); it therefore requires a considerable amount of interactional work. In this chapter I argue that while Palestinian spaces in the Wadi are shaped by various forms of erasure, they are far from being ignored. Israeli Jews return to them again and again, whether directly or indirectly, whether through critical reflection or through fear, as they work out the conflicted meanings of these spaces in conversation with one another (though almost never with the Palestinians who live in them). Through the juxtaposition of the very different perspectives of a variety of classmates and informants, I complicate my own rubric, borrowed from Benvenisti, adding nuance and colour to “the mental map carried by Jews,” showing instead of a singular “mental map” a variety of situated geographic imaginations.

Chapter Four, “Return to the Wadi: Narratives of Nostalgia, Violence, and Fear,” explores the role of evocations of the past in shaping contemporary
geographies. While the previous chapter is concerned with how social boundaries shift in the perspectives of different people, this chapter is concerned with how they change over time. In Wadi Ara people adjust to their constantly changing reality by constantly revising their personal geographies, making decisions about where to go and where not to go, where they feel safe and where they do not. Yet even as once familiar places are cut off by new boundaries, both tangible and intangible, the places people no longer go have not disappeared from their talk; on the contrary, these places provide a particularly poignant narrative frame through which memories of better days and the experience of drastic change are articulated. In this chapter I analyze a sequence of place-based narratives commonly heard in Wadi Ara during the time of my fieldwork: narratives of nostalgia, of violence, and of fear. These narratives about specific places invoke memories of recent violence that mark certain spaces as off-limits, while simultaneously invoking memories of better days, when these spaces were accessible. Through detailed analysis of these narratives this chapter explores how the temporality of the contemporary geography of Wadi Ara is narrated.

Chapter Five is called “Erasure and Disclosure on the Trans-Israel Highway.” The history of the Palestinian citizens of Israel has been characterized as a series of “distortions of omission and commission” (Slyomovics 1998) that eradicate Palestinian presence in the landscape, reinscribing Jewish claims to land over Palestinian ones in ways that are at once material and discursive. This chapter explores a very specific and very recent set of “distortions of omission and commission” – those found in the Arabic place names on road signs on the Trans-
Israel Highway. “Highway 6” is a new private express toll highway that runs from the north to the south of Israel; just before I began my fieldwork, construction was completed on the section of the highway that reaches Wadi Ara. In this chapter I begin by looking at the specific historical and political economic conditions of the road’s construction and the fierce opposition, on environmental and social grounds, with which it was met. I then examine a less commonly voiced critique of the road based on its impact on Palestinian citizens of Israel, placing it in the context of the ongoing “Judaization” (making Jewish) of the landscape of Israel. I then focus on the experience of driving on this road, looking at the road signs, at how their meaning is interpreted, and at how they participate in both obscuring and revealing Palestinian presences in the landscape of Israel, before and after 1948. I focus not on a textual analysis of the signs themselves but on an ethnographic description of how they are read, questioned, joked about, ignored, justified, explained, and critiqued by drivers and passengers on this road. In interrogating competing ways of interpreting and navigating the landscape and its various histories, I explore the road’s implications not only for mobility but also for visibility.

While the earlier chapters are concerned with the many ways Jews and Palestinians in Israel maintain their distance Chapter Six, “Fieldtrips and Other Encounters,” asks what happens when they meet. An integral part of the Arabic language classes I participated in at Givat Haviva was the opportunity for fieldtrips or tiyulim (singular: tiyul), as they were called in Hebrew. In this chapter I examine this set of highly structured ‘encounters’ – events carefully and self-consciously orchestrated to enable Jewish Israelis to speak Arabic and to interact with
Palestinians by traveling to Palestinian spaces. I argue that the encounters enabled by these *tiyulim* are over-determined by a number of tropes – prototypical encounters – that structure and constrain the possibilities available to participants: the genre of *tiyul*; the tourist experience; the anthropological trip to the field; and behind all these, the colonial encounter. Through ethnographic descriptions of fieldtrips I participated in to Nazareth, Barta’a, Um el Kutuf, and Mukeble, I argue that the reliance on these tropes effectively ensured that while we did cross boundaries in these fieldtrips, the encounters enabled only certain sorts of interactions while presuming certain sorts of citizens.

In Chapter Seven I conclude by returning to my central argument. Recognizing that the processes I describe here did not begin when I arrived in the field, nor did they end when I left, I also extend my analysis to consider briefly some recent events in Israel and in Wadi Ara.
Chapter One

Introduction: Shifting Boundaries and the Place of Palestinians in Israel

1. October 2000

Early on the morning of September 28, 2000 Ariel Sharon, then-member of the Israeli Knesset and head of the opposition Likud party, walked up a wooden ramp covered in green tarpaulin, leading from a plaza with a wall to another plaza above it with two domes, gold and silver. At the bottom of the ramp was the Western Wall, the Kotel, a remnant of the retaining wall of the Second Temple and a site holy to Jews. In the open plaza in front of it, international tourists regularly flock to snap pictures; observant Jews gather to pray, walking backward across the plaza as they leave the wall so as not to turn their backs on it; Israeli soldiers in the dark green uniform of the Border Guard surround the plaza and surveil it from above, monitoring all entrances with metal detectors. The plaza of the Kotel is accessed on one side from the Jewish Quarter, and on the other through the narrow alleys of the shuk of the Muslim Quarter. Designed by architect Moshe Safdie, the plaza was built shortly after Israeli forces conquered the Old City in 1967, once again giving Jews access to this holy site. It was built on the ground of Palestinian homes that were razed to make way for it (see Abu El-Haj 2001, Weizman 2007).

The ramp leads from the foot of the Kotel to its top, which levels out to form a plateau – another plaza, overlooking the one below – on which stand the Al-Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, their gold and silver domes surrounded by cedars. This site is holy to Muslims, and the rock beneath the golden dome is believed to be both where the world began and the site from which Mohammed
ascended to heaven. This plaza is accessed from the Muslim quarter and is administered as a *waqf*, or Islamic religious endowment land, rather than by any national sovereignty. The plaza fills with devout Muslims regularly for prayers, and especially every Friday at noon, when the Imam’s sermon is sometimes followed by demonstrations.

This site is both the symbol and the core, the epitome and the extreme, of spatial relations in this region; it is everything that is holy and everything that is divided in this most holy and divided city – condensed, concentrated, and literally piled one on top of the other to produce an effect of “vertical schizophrenia” (Weizman 2007:54). The future of the Temple Mount / Haram al Sharif was the most contentious issue in the failed Israeli-Palestinian negotiations in Camp David in July 2000. In the last weeks of summer in 2000, then, these two holy sites were coexisting in a precarious balance, one on top of the other yet resolutely separate, awaiting a decision on their collective fate. When Sharon went up the ramp on that morning in September (his action is always described in Hebrew using the verb *la’alot* – to go up), he violated this carefully maintained balancing act of vertical

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1 Eyal Weizman, a critical Israeli architect, understands this as the most radical manifestation of a particularly Israel pattern of vertical segregation. In his book *Hollow Land*, he argues that by 2006 the separation between Israeli and Palestinian areas in the occupied territories “was not articulated on the surface of the terrain alone,” but rather in three-dimensional space: “Revisioning the traditional geopolitical imagination, the horizon seems to have been called upon to serve as one of the many boundaries raised up by the conflict, making the ground below and the air above separate and distinct from, rather than continuous with and organic to, the surface of the earth” (2007:12). Israel controls the militarized airspace and subterranean aquifers over and under areas of Palestinian control; Israeli settlements are built on hill-tops and connected by raised roads and extended bridges or tunnels; in turn, Palestinian militants dig tunnels under the walls of Gaza to smuggle people and explosives, and launch rockets over them.
segregation, invading Muslim space with all the symbolic force of the Israeli state.

Accompanied by an entourage and surrounded by hundreds of army and security forces, Sharon’s action was not spontaneous or unanticipated. It had been announced in the media three days earlier, and opposition to it had been building among Palestinian religious and political leaders, who regarded this provocative move as a statement of claim to the Muslim holy site, at a time when the fate of Jerusalem was yet to be decided. Police and eyewitness reports estimate that there were 1,400 Palestinians waiting for Sharon, among them representatives of the Palestinian Authority and the Islamic Movement in Israel, as well as several Palestinian members of the Israeli Knesset, who were gathered to “protect Al Aqsa.”

While the ensuing melee ended in only minimal injuries, the following day was Friday and, following noon prayers at the mosque, clashes between Palestinians and Israeli security forces resumed. Seven Palestinians were shot and killed by Israeli security forces.

The war in the occupied territories, widely understood to have followed from these events, became known as the Second Intifada or the Al-Aqsa Intifada and was

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2 My description of the events of September 28-29, 2000 is drawn from the Report of the Or Commission (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003a) – the full text in Hebrew of the official report of the government-appointed commission of inquiry into the events, released in 2003 – and from Dalal’s (2003) critique of the report. Descriptions of subsequent events are drawn from the Or Commission report, the English language summary of the report (Or et. al. 2003b), a lecture by Sarah Ozacky-Lazar (2004), and various reports put out by Adalah, the Legal Centre for Arab Minority Rights in Israel. Adalah is an NGO appointed by the families of the Arab victims and the High Follow-Up Committee for the Arab citizens in Israel to represent them before the Or Commission of Inquiry. (For more information on Adalah and its position in relation to other Palestinian NGOs in Israel see Payes 2005. For critiques of and responses to the Or Report see the following section.)
televised around the world. The loss of life, humanitarian crisis, abuse of human rights, destruction, economic damage, and restrictions on freedom of movement that ensued in the West Bank and Gaza have been well publicized (see e.g., B’Tselem 2001a,b,c). What is less well remembered outside Israel, but has been seared into the memory and current consciousness of Israelis as a national trauma, are the events of the next few days within the green line, now commonly known as *Iruei October* – the October Events.

On September 30, Shabbat and Rosh Hashana, the Arab sector in Israel declared a general strike, a day of protest and mourning in defense of Al Aqsa, in solidarity with Palestinians who were engaged in clashes with Israeli forces all over the West Bank and Gaza, and out of frustration and hopelessness with political avenues for improving their own situation. On the following day, October 1, as protests continued throughout the country, crowds of protesters came down from the hills of Um el Fashem and began to block Wadi Ara road at the Um el Fashem intersection, throwing stones and (according to reports) molotov cocktails. A small group of the border patrol (*Magav*) was stationed at the intersection, on the far side of the road from the city, with instructions to keep the peace. They used live ammunition, tear gas, and rubber bullets to disperse protesters. A report by Adalah, the Legal Centre for Minority Rights in Israel (date unknown), indicates that 60 people were injured at this spot on this day, including Sheikh Ra’ed Sallah, the Mayor of Um el Fashem and a leader of the Islamic Movement in Israel. Mohammed

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3 Rosh Hashana is inevitably one of the worst days of the year for traffic in Israel, since people are on the road, traveling to be with their family for the holiday. This increased the impact of protesters blocking the roads, particularly in Wadi Ara.
Ahmed Jabarin (24) was shot dead, and Ahmed Ibrahim Jabarin (19) died the next day in the hospital from injuries sustained from a shot in the abdomen. Both young men were citizens of Israel, shot and killed by security forces of their own country.

For the next ten days a historically silent and oppressed minority participated in mass demonstrations all over the country, their tone heightened by outrage at the killing of Israeli citizens and of increasing numbers of Palestinians in the territories. A press release issued by Amnesty International on October 2, 2000 reported that, after four days of clashes, 35 Palestinian civilians in the occupied territories were dead with hundreds of others injured, and condemned this “indiscriminate killing” (Dalal 2003). Wadi Ara road was closed, blocked by protesting crowds, and traffic lights along its length were smashed. Banks, post offices and other institutions associated with the state were set on fire. One Jewish Israeli citizen was killed by stone throwing when driving near Jisr a-Zarka. Between October 1 and October 9, twelve Palestinian citizens of Israel, from Um el Fachem, Nazareth, Sakhnin, Arrabeh, Moawiye, Kufr Manda, Jatt, and Kufr Kana, were shot and killed by Israeli police forces. Reports indicate that some of the victims were shot in the back; others were killed by sniper fire (see Dalal 2003). On October 8 Jewish residents from Natsrat Ilit attacked the eastern Palestinian neighbourhoods in Nazareth; Adalah reports indicated that police protected the Jewish Israelis and

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4 Their names and home towns are listed in an undated Adalah report.
5 Adalah argued before the Or Commission that police fire on demonstrators was “massive and indiscriminate,” providing evidence from medical studies of the injuries inflicted as a result of police (see Dalal 2003). Human Rights Watch (2000, cited in Dalal 2003) found that security forces did not appear to face imminent threats to their lives or serious injury.
allowed them to continue their attack on Palestinian citizens of Israel, aiming their weapons only at Palestinian demonstrators and killing two (Dalal 2003, Adalah, date unknown).

Three years later the official summation of the Or Report on the events of October 2000, commissioned by the government, described their impact succinctly: “The land shook” (Or, Khatib, and Shamir 2003b). Sarah Ozacky-Lazar, a researcher on Palestinian citizens of Israel at the Givat Haviva Jewish-Arab Centre for Peace, described her reaction to the events of October 2000 as follows:6 “I felt? That that’s it. This is the end. That everything was going to fall apart. That there would really be a civil war here that would be much more dangerous than the struggle in the territories.” There was no civil war, but these events were a dramatic breaking point in relations between the Palestinian minority and both the state and the Jewish majority in Israel (see Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 2001, Dichter 2001, Rouhana and Sultany 2003, Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005, Rekhess 2002, Smooha 2004). The breaking point did not, of course, come from nowhere. Sharon’s visit to the Temple Mount is often called the “spark” that ignited the events of October 2000; while this event did provide the spark, the coals were already there, as Ozacky-Lazar (2004) put it, and they were hot. Decades of exclusion, alienation, discrimination, and deprivation were behind the events of October 2000, brought to the fore by a number of more recent developments.7

6 Her comments were made in a lecture on the subject to our Arabic language class at Givat Haviva, October 13, 2004.
7 An outline of this history, especially as it pertains to Wadi Ara, is found in Chapter Two. For detailed histories of Palestinian citizens of Israel from 1948 until the
2. Before and after October

The 1990s was a decade of change in the Middle East, in Israel, and also among Palestinian Israelis. From the late 1980s to 2000, Israelis experienced the Intifada (beginning in 1987), the Gulf War (1990-91), the Madrid Peace Conference (1991), the Oslo agreements, culminating in mutual recognition between Israel and the PLO at the historic signing on the White House lawn (1993), the big suicide bombs and exploding buses of the mid-1990s, the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin (1995), a Netanyahu-led Likud government (elected 1996), and then a Barak-led Labour government (elected 1999). The usual way of narrating this sequence of events implies that were it not for the assassination of Rabin, peace would have prevailed; in contrast, critics point out that the Oslo accords and their implementation were deeply and inherently flawed (see e.g., Rabinowitz and Abu Baker 2005:99-102; Mansour 1993; Yiftachel 2001, 2004), and many argue that the rage that erupted in the territories in October 2000 was in large part a result of these failures.8

8 The most commonly voiced critiques of Oslo include the following: the territory offered to the Palestinian Authority under the accords amounted to a series of cantons, divided by Israeli roads and security zones, that could never support a viable state; during the Oslo years, while supposedly facilitating the transfer of the West Bank and Gaza to Palestinian control, Israel continued to build settlements and expand settlement infrastructure, while increasing military presence in the territories and restrictions to Palestinian freedom of movement; ultimately, while Oslo provided the Palestinians with the “symbolic trappings” of statehood it failed to
This same decade was a time of change among Palestinian Israelis, partly in response to the events outlined above. Following a brief period of hope that the Oslo process would provide an opportunity to improve their own lot in addition to that of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, Palestinians in Israel quickly understood that they were to be marginalized and excluded from this process as from so much else. Caught in a bind of “double peripherality,” they were “removed at one and the same time from both the Palestinian and the Israeli context” (Rekhess 2002:7). Ignored by both the Palestinian leadership and the Israeli government, their status and their future as citizens of an Israeli state neighbouring a future Palestinian one was simply not on the agenda.

Meanwhile, in the parliamentary arena, the Rabin-Peres government (1992-1996) did initiate some tangible progress for Palestinians in Israel, both in the allocation of resources and in recognition of their civic legitimacy at the parliamentary level (Dichter 2001:14, Rekhes 2002:8). Nobody expected the subsequent Likud government, under the leadership of Netanyahu, to continue this trend, but expectations were high among Palestinians in Israel for the Barak address in a meaningful way their desire for self-determination (see Stein 2008:131).

When Rabin was forming his coalition government in 1992, two Arab parties agreed to support his cabinet in Knesset votes without having seats in it; this arrangement proved crucial to the stability of the coalition as they formed a “blocking majority” on any contested vote. In return, Rabin increased the share of the national budget directed to the Palestinian sector, improving education, housing, and infrastructure (see Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005:96, Dichter 2001:14). Dichter argues that this “bestowed on Arab MKs a new level of legitimacy” (2001:14), and that it was a clear statement of Rabin’s controversial position on a critical issue: that a majority of the polity, not necessarily a Jewish majority, is necessary for crucial parliamentary decisions.
(Labour) government. Elected in 1999, and having received an unprecedented 95% of the Arab vote, Barak immediately “turned his back” on the Arab electorate, excluding Arab MKs (members of Knesset) entirely even from the coalition negotiations, let alone from the coalition, and subsequently ignoring the Palestinian sector completely and pointedly: no official visits, no consultations with Arab leaders, no discussion of their issues. Palestinians felt “neglected, used, betrayed” (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005:97). The disappointment and bitterness over these events among many Palestinians in Israel was still palpable five years later, when I was in the field. Ozacky-Lazar (2004) argues, and my experience confirms this, that if you ask Palestinians in Israel about the causes of October 2000 many will tell you that Barak was at fault, and not Sharon.

Increasingly disillusioned with parliamentary and civic action as a means of bringing about meaningful change to their situation, and facing ever-worsening economic and social conditions, Palestinians in Israel were turning to new goals and new tactics by the fall of 2000. After decades of quiescence, a new generation of leaders was “determined to redefine their situation within Israel, modifying the very nature of the state in the process” (Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005:10). Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker, in their influential and widely cited book, The Stand Tall Generation (published in English in 2005 as Coffins on Our Shoulders), saw this as a generational shift, from a generation “worn out” by the struggle to achieve equal rights as citizens through democratic parliamentary and legal means, a generation whose goal – broadly speaking – was to make Israel “a state for all its citizens,” to a generation prepared to make its claims in increasingly nationalist (i.e., Palestinian)
Elie Rekhess (2002) characterized these changes as the “localization of the national struggle” – demands were increasingly focused inward, on civic status inside Israel, yet increasingly in terms of a Palestinian national identity. What was at stake was no less than a fundamental re-evaluation “of Israeliness itself” – that is, a redefinition of the state and of citizenship, of Israel and of being Israeli (Rabinowitz, Ghanem, and Yiftachel 2000). By October 2000, Palestinians in Israel were ready to take to the streets.

Following those ten days in October a tense calm prevailed, but the Barak government failed to deal properly with either the deaths or the underlying problems. A commission of inquiry – the Or Commission – was called that published a report in 2003. While the report did make some strides in acknowledging discrimination against Palestinians in Israel and calling attention to the need for change (see e.g., Shamir 2005), it failed to recommend that any police officers be brought to justice. To this day the families of those killed have not been able to identify who killed their sons, let alone see them tried and convicted.

These events and their outcomes, along with the continuation and intensification of the war in the territories, led on the one hand to increasing politicization among Palestinians in Israel and on the other to increasing distance from the state (Ozacky Lazar and Ghanem 2001:20). These trends culminated in the Israeli elections in February 2001, which the Palestinians in Israel resoundingly boycotted. It was only by refraining from voting that they were able to make themselves heard, “demonstrat[ing] their presence via a very significant act of absence. It was perhaps the most thunderous of their silences” (Dichter 2001:8).
As Palestinians expressed their anger, frustration, and political demands, all of which had been mounting for decades, in increasingly vocal and demanding ways, they began, not for the first time, to be seen by Israeli Jews as a feared, dangerous, hostile element. Relations between the Jewish majority and the Palestinian minority changed dramatically after October 2000. Palestinians in Israel were deeply disappointed with Jewish Israeli reactions, and especially with lack of support from the Israeli left. Not only was there no identification with their pain over the heavy loss, Palestinians felt that they themselves were blamed for what had happened (Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 2001). At the time I arrived for my fieldwork, in the fall of 2003, increased hostility, prejudice, hatred, and fear were palpable in Wadi Ara. The boundaries of national belonging were in the process of being reconfigured.

These trends have been documented by an emerging cohort of Palestinian academics, many of them associated with NGOs such as Mada, Sikkuy, and Adalah that are concerned with the rights of Palestinians in Israel (Sultany 2003; Smooha 2004; Rouhana and Sultany 2003; Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 2001). Rouhana and Sultany (2003) document the emergence of a “new consensus within Israeli society in support of discriminatory policies and practices toward the Palestinian minority” (5). They call this the new Zionist hegemony, and argue that it is shrinking the boundaries of citizenship and democracy, instituting narrower limits than what was previously tolerated. They provide evidence of this in government policy, legislation, and “public discourse” – consisting of public statements in the media by prominent figures. They point out that amendments to existing laws were passed

10 On Palestinian NGOs in Israel see Payes 2005.
by the Knesset in 2002 that stipulate (among other things) that candidates running for Knesset will be disqualified and existing elected Knesset members will have their immunity lifted if they reject Israel’s identity as a “Jewish and democratic state.” New legislation was passed in 2003 that prevents Palestinians from the territories who marry Israeli (Arab) citizens from living in Israel. Public opinion polls indicated a substantial increase in the number of Israeli Jewish respondents who support transfer or “encouraged emigration” of Arab citizens of Israel. Rouhana and Sultany conclude that “the boundaries of citizenship are being redrawn . . . to create a new consciousness among Jews and Arabs alike that the Arab citizens’ ‘citizenship’ is not real; in other words, that the Arabs are in effect ‘citizens without citizenship’” (2003:10). This consensus, they argue, has arisen in the context of “Jewish political ethnocentrism and self-deception,” a heightened sense of existential threat, and despair about the solvability of the conflict.

Sultany (2003) also provides detailed evidence of the “decline in the legal and civic status of Palestinian citizens of Israel” (9), concluding that “the process of exclusion, alienation, and delegitimization of Palestinian citizens in all areas of life in Israel is readily discernible” (9). In government decisions, public opinion surveys, and statements by public figures he demonstrates “a hegemonic discourse of hate . . . one that dominates public debate, public consciousness, and reality itself” (10). These reactions can be understood as responding not just to the threat of an unruly and potentially violent minority, liable to take to the streets once again, but also to the threat that Palestinian demands present to Jewish Israeli’s self-definition as citizens of a Jewish and democratic state.
3. Shifting boundaries: Change and the everyday

It was in this climate that I arrived in Israel for my fieldwork in the fall of 2003. This was the fourth time I had been in Israel since 1998. As I traveled back and forth, I was struck each time by how drastically different was the daily reality I arrived at from the one I had left before. Each time I arrived in Jerusalem it took me a few weeks to acclimatize to new routines, new restrictions, the new patterns and rhythms of daily life, so different in 1998, 2001, 2002, and then again in 2003. Could I take buses now? Could I sit in a café on Emek Refaim? Could I shop in the market in the old city, or in Mahane Yehuda, the market downtown? Could I take the shortcut through Sheikh Jarah, in East Jerusalem, on the long walk from the university on Mount Scopus to downtown? Like everyone around me, I adapted to new realities. I listened to the news every morning and all day, obsessively. I planned my day’s itinerary based on what I heard, foregoing buses, cafes, markets, and entire neighbourhoods if the situation sounded particularly tense. I bought a new over-the-shoulder bag to replace my knapsack – easier to flip open for a security check every time I entered a public building. I learned to pause and wait, upon hearing a loud boom, a frequent occurrence, to see if it was followed by sirens; if not, it meant it wasn’t a bomb but a fighter jet breaking the sound barrier. I developed alternate routes for arriving at familiar destinations; on some days, I stayed close to home.

As I began to settle in to a routine, my perspective shifted. After an initial period of acclimatizing to the changes since I had last been there, I began to realize
that the acclimatization process was ongoing, and that I was not alone in it. The shifting “boundaries” of citizenship described in the previous section have more than just a metaphorical resonance; spatial boundaries between Jews and Palestinians in Israel have also been in flux since 2000. New walls, barriers, and checkpoints have drastically changed the landscape of Israel/Palestine during that time (see Weizman 2007, Misselwitz and Rieniets 2006), but also within Israel, segregation between Palestinians and Jews has dramatically increased.

I found that the primary ways that people around me experienced and responded to the violence and upheaval was through movement and through talk. People’s daily routines and habits, how they got to work and where they bought their groceries, were in a constant state of flux; as people went about these movements, assessments of safety and comfort, danger and fear were a constant, daily preoccupation, and a constant topic of conversation. As I began to listen to more of such conversations, and to follow people in their movements through a rapidly changing landscape, I began to ask questions about the connection between these changing practices and changing relations between Jews and Palestinians. I searched for a way to accommodate the dynamism and flux I observed, and the importance of the everyday, in the way I thought about social and spatial boundaries.

Sarah Ozacky-Lazar and As’ad Ghanem (2001:44) describe increased segregation between Jews and Palestinians in Israel as follows:

Since the events of October 2000 most Jews have steered clear of Arab towns and villages: not visiting them, not shopping there, not eating in
restaurants. Those whose jobs require them to enter Arab settlements expressed fear and sometimes bring along armed guards. Businesses that suddenly lost their Jewish customers have suffered severe economic damage. On the personal level, Arabs too are afraid to go shopping or visiting places of entertainment in Jewish cities. They report anxiety about speaking Arabic in public, discomfort at staying in hotels and resorts, and sending their children to shopping malls. One result of this is a trend toward economic segregation and an attempt to make do with the services available in Arab locales—both to support Arab businesses... and to avoid the unpleasantness associated with rubbing against the Jewish street.

Monterescu (2007), Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker (2005), and others notice similar changes to personal and social geographies. While these studies seem to suggest a correlation between changing attitudes toward Palestinians and changing spatial practices, the precise nature of this dynamic is not explored. What is the relationship, then, between shifting social geographies on the one hand and shifting limits of citizenship on the other? How do changes in spatial boundaries map on to changes in the boundaries of national belonging?

To date there has been no research published that provides ethnographic evidence of the important changes in Israeli “consciousness” described above, or that explores how this new “consensus” manifests itself in practice. Neither has there been ethnographic documentation of changing spatial practices and their relation to this new consensus. This dissertation aims to fill this gap by
demonstrating how spatial boundaries map on to the boundaries of social belonging through an exploration of linguistic and spatial practice in a divided landscape. In changes to daily movements and conversations, changes in relations between Jews and Palestinians are profoundly felt at the level of everyday practice. It is my contention that these everyday practices in turn play a crucial role not just in reflecting but also in shaping the place of Palestinians in Israel.

4. Divided landscapes

Israel is not the only place to see the emergence of new boundaries in recent years. As violence and the fear of violence become increasingly bound up with the production of social difference and exclusion, new forms of spatial segregation are emerging in cities across the globe (see Caldeira 2000). In Belfast, Sao Paulo, Johannesburg, Detroit, Jerusalem, Toronto, and Paris, walls and fences are being erected (Weizman 2007, Misselwitz and Rieniets 2006), gated communities and fortified enclaves are being created (Caldeira 2000, Low 2003), “ghettoes” and “inner cities” are being displaced and reformed (Silverstein and Tetreault 2005, Kipfer and Keil 2002, Wacquant 2008), public spaces are shrinking (Mitchell 2003). New boundaries created by “anti-terror” security measures, neoliberal restructuring and gentrification, crime and policing, and migration intersect with and sometimes transform older boundaries formed around violent conflict, gender, race, and poverty. Boundaries are inscribed and reinscribed on the space of the city using every available material and semiotic resource, in attempts to mark self from other,
to make claims to territory, to exclude and enclose, and to secure, control, and surveil.

This is not an ethnography of a divided city, yet I turn to this literature to help me think through the ways social boundaries are changing in Wadi Ara. I build on the insights of anthropologists who have explored urban terrains of conflict, violence, and fear in nuanced detail. In particular, I engage with recent work that tries to capture the dynamism and flux of social boundaries, their situated, shifting, and perspectival nature, and the ways they are configured and reconfigured through daily practice. Too often studies of segregation reproduce segregation in the telling; that is, portraits of divided cities often overstate the fixedness, rigidity, and impermeability of social boundaries, exaggerating the coherence and uniformity of each side of the divide in emphasizing difference across the divide (e.g., Schnell and Ostendorf 2002). Instead, along with the authors cited below, I emphasize the other side of segregation: ambivalence and flux, contact and entanglement, encounter and confrontation, avoidance and disregard, distances maintained in the face of unavoidable proximities. To paraphrase John Hartigan (1999:110), I focus on all the ways lives, bodies, and speech brush and grind against each other in enacting, challenging, and reshaping divisions.

While I engage in more depth with the works of these authors in the chapters that follow (see especially Chapters Three and Four), here I provide a brief overview of the work on divided cities that has shaped my approach. I focus on what each author has contributed to my understanding of the changing nature of social boundaries, the articulation of violence and fear with social space, and the role of
language in these dynamics. In the section that follows, I develop my unique approach to these issues, which focuses on the intersection of linguistic and spatial practice.

In Belfast, the city most often compared to the Israeli context, an early paper by Frederick Boal (1973) was important in shifting the focus of segregation studies from residential patterns to “spatial activity patterns.” In his surveys Boal asked Protestants and Catholics along the Shankill-Falls divide, a key interface area, where they wait for the bus, where they buy their morning paper, and which homes they visit in the neighbourhood. His work, while still presenting a static picture of segregation, invited further questions on how people move through and use divided spaces. Allen Feldman’s (1991) influential book added an ethnographic dimension in delineating the ways violence, the memory of violence, and the anticipation of violence are mapped on to social space. His work emphasized the importance of narrative and embodied practices in continually reconfiguring social boundaries on a variety of scales. Recent work by Jarman (2005) focuses on interfaces as dynamic spaces, emphasizing the ways new forms of intersection and conjunction emerge through variations in use, development, and regeneration in a “post-conflict” context. Shirlow and Murtagh (2006) likewise emphasize changes to the urban landscape produced through constantly negotiated and contested spatial practices, contending that “division is not static but is being maintained within a world that constantly alters” (7). The questions they ask about mobility and immobility are particularly important.
The “intertwined mutation of urban spaces and cultural orders” (Hartigan 1999:52) has also been extensively explored in the American context. While here the boundaries are drawn along different lines – poverty, crime, and race are more important than armed conflict – American urban anthropology has come far from Robert E. Park’s (1925) early definition of the city as a mosaic of social worlds which “touch but do not interpenetrate.” Sally Engle Merry’s (1981) early work on perceptions of danger was important in showing the ways urban space is transformed as fear is “encoded” on the landscape. The strength of her work, for me, lies in her detailed ethnographic analysis of the ways “patterns of staying away” are worked out through daily movements and interactions. More recently, John Hartigan (1991) explores the “nuanced terrain” of class and racial difference as they map on to urban space. He pays careful attention to the role of language in shaping the local inflections through which people understand and experience the significance of race and class. The “interpretive repertoires” that people deploy to make sense of “encounters, avoidances, and exchanges” (3) are shown to be key ways through which racialized and classed identities are configured and reconfigured in urban space.

Another recent ethnography that picks up on the importance of language in the ongoing production of social boundaries is Teresa Caldeira’s City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo (2000). Caldeira offers an ethnographic analysis of the ways crime, fear of violence, and the degradation of citizenship rights intersect in changes to the urban landscape. She presents fascinating interview data
to support her arguments, including narratives of violence that closely resonate with those I analyze in Chapter Four, arguing that:

   Like other everyday practices of dealing with violence, crime stories try to recreate a stable map for a world that has been shaken. These narratives and practices impose partitions, build up walls, delineate and enclose spaces, establish distances, segregate, differentiate, impose prohibitions, multiply rules of avoidance and exclusion, and restrict movements. In short, they simplify and enclose the world (20).

The strength of Caldeira’s analysis, for me, lies in her insistence on the central role of everyday conversation in shaping and transforming social boundaries.

In this dissertation I aim to understand the production and the impact of shifting social boundaries in a time of conflict and change, and the imbrication of space, violence, and fear. In this regard I participate in conversations raised by these authors, though the landscape in which my analysis is set is not an urban one. In the Israeli context divided (or “mixed”) towns and cities are the obvious place to examine segregation between Jews and Palestinians, and these have been extensively studied (see Monterescu and Rabinowitz eds. 2007, Misselwitz and Rieniets eds. 2006, Yacobi 2004, Torstrick 2000, Rabinowitz 1997, Romann and Weingrod 1991, Benvenisti 1983). But it is not as though the residents of a kibbutz (a relatively privileged, exclusively Jewish space), for example, do not participate in
excluding Palestinians from Israeli public space. \(^{11}\) Recent work on suburbs and other exurban spaces (e.g., Duncan and Duncan 2004) encourages us to ask: If we think of the spatialization of violence and fear primarily in terms of city spaces, what kinds of dynamics of scale and movement are obscured? If we consider only those who live in the same city as their ‘others’ to be participating in segregation, what kinds of practices of exclusion do we overlook? In moving beyond the urban this project participates in problematizing questions of scope and scale in work on divided landscapes. It also aims to explore such landscapes through a novel analytic approach: the intersection of linguistic and spatial practice.

5. Linguistic and spatial practice

In this dissertation I focus on the intersection of linguistic and spatial practice in a context of conflict and change. I examine people’s practical engagements with the spaces and places of their daily lives and uncover the ways these activities are mediated and accomplished through language. That is, I look at how people shape their surroundings as they navigate in, around, and through them – discursively and spatially. More specifically, I focus on how such movements and interactions are changing in response to violent conflict and, in turn, how these changing practices articulate with changes in relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel. It is my contention that the ‘ordinary,’ ‘everyday’ movements of Israeli Jews are intimately

\(^{11}\) Studies of segregation in rural areas of Israel have focused on the ways regional planning processes reproduce inequality and exclusion (see Yiftachel 1992, 2006), but the focus on people and practices taken up in studies of mixed communities has not been explored in this context, nor have the changes brought about by fear and violence.
bound up with the ways difference, belonging, and citizenship are organized on a national scale. More broadly, my analysis suggests that the links between changing linguistic and spatial practices and changing boundaries of national belonging should be more fully explored.

*Practice*, as an orientation to social theory, is widely understood to have emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the work of Pierre Bourdieu (1977[1972]), Anthony Giddens (1979), Michel de Certeau (1984), and others. Broadly speaking, the emphasis on practice emerged in reaction to the limitations of earlier theoretical frameworks, particularly those that over- emphasised structure. Practice theorists shifted the focus of analysis from structuring rules and systems (be they symbolic, social, linguistic, or economic) to the actions and interests of individual ‘actors’ or ‘agents’ – their ordinary “ways of operating” (de Certeau 1984:xiii) – as they shape and in turn are shaped by “historically situated systems of meaning” (Collier and Yanagasako 1989:36). Genealogies of practice theory may be traced across a range of disciplines, along paths overlapping and often obscuring each other (see McElhinny 1998), as the concept of practice is taken up by and adapted to very different theoretical and political projects.

My work draws on the concept of practice more as an approach than as either theory, method, or symbol (see McElhinny and Muehlmann 2006:699, Collier and Yanagasako 1989, Ortner 1984). I do not attempt in this thesis to resolve any of the classic tensions or debates associated with practice theory.\(^1\)\(^2\) Rather, I use the

\(^1\) I do not claim to overcome, once and for all, the divide between structure and agency and its attendant dichotomies (for recent discussions of agency see Bourgois
concept in an attempt to draw together divergent bodies of literature, some of them derived from the work of practice theorists, which together allow me to approach the intersection of language use and lived space in a context of conflict and change. In particular, I draw on the concept of practice as it has been variously articulated by feminist anthropologists (see Ortner 1984, 1996, Collier and Yanagasako 1989, McElhinny 1998), linguistic anthropologists (see Goodwin 1990, Hanks 1990, Eckert and McConnell-Ginet 1992), and critical geographers (see LeFebvre 1991 [1958], 1991 [1974], Massey 2005, Harvey 2001, Soja 1996). For me, the appeal of the approach lies in its usefulness in foregrounding change, the everyday, and the ongoing production of social reality.

Ortner (2006:16-17) explains the appeal of practice theory to feminists, Marxists, and other critical analysts interested in social change as follows: “the idea that the world is ‘made’ – in a very extended and complex sense, of course – through the actions of ordinary people also meant that it could be unmade and remade.” One of the ways that the making and unmaking of the social world – or the production and reproduction of social relations – has been taken up can be traced back to Marx’s concern with the production of capital. While Marx was certainly no practice theorist his concern, when taken up by critical geographers and applied to spatial relations, brought concepts of practice and the everyday to the fore. Questions

2003, Wardlow 2006, Ahearn 2001), nor do I present a unified theory of practice which finally and adequately incorporates issues of power and history (see Ortner 2006), though my work does remain attentive to both.

13 Lefebvre’s work, of course, was contemporary to, rather than derived from, the early theorists but was picked up in the critical geography literature primarily after its translation into English in 1991.
about the production of space (Lefebvre 1991, Harvey 2001), the production of scale (Smith 1984, Brenner 2001), and the production of mobility (Cresswell 2006) ensued. It is from this genealogy that I borrow the concept of spatial practice.

By spatial practice I mean people’s practical engagements with the spaces and places of their daily lives – the ways they orient to them and the ways they navigate in, around, and through them. Following de Certeau (1984), Clifford (1997:186) describes the premise of spatial practice as follows:

‘space’ is never ontologically given. It is discursively mapped and corporeally practiced. An urban neighbourhood, for example, may be laid out physically according to a street plan. But it is not a space until it is practiced by people’s active occupation, their movements through and around it.

Eyal Weizman (2007:7), in his analysis of the “elastic geographies” of the frontiers of the Palestinian occupied territories, writes:

The various inhabitants of this frontier do not operate within the fixed envelopes of space – space is not the background for their actions, an abstract grid on which events take place – but rather the medium that each of their actions seeks to challenge, transform, or appropriate.

Notwithstanding – or perhaps precisely because of – the inevitable overtones of “occupation” in the Israeli context, I use spatial practice as an analytic in order to capture the way a landscape acquires both shape and meaning through the various

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14 I owe the neat formulation of this genealogy to the Critical Spatial Practice reading group of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (www.walkinginplace.org).
ways it is occupied – that is, the ways a landscape is challenged, transformed, and appropriated through people’s movements through it and actions in it. In Lefebvre’s (1991:18) words, I aim to understand the “interaction between ‘subjects’ and their space and surroundings.”

The focus on spatial practice is meant as a corrective to the tendency, particularly in the Israeli context, to focus on space and place through the lens of the phenomenological, the symbolic, the sacred, or the hegemonic. Space and place have figured prominently in Israeli social analysis, as scholars attempt to make sense of conflicting nation-building projects that converge over a common territory. Israeli anthropologists have been particularly effective in showing the ways that the ‘social construction of place’ (see Tuan 1991, Hirsch and O’Hanlon 1995) has been implicated in nationalist and colonial-settler projects; they have also revealed how place and space have been used to define collectivities, to make claims to history and territory, and to control, regulate, exclude and resist. These studies have located the meaning of place in ritual and commemorative acts (see Zerubavel 1995, Katriel 1995, Handelman and Katz 1990), in material manifestations of social interventions in the landscape (see Boyarin 1994 on ruins, Abu El-Haj 2001 on archaeology), in folklore and oral histories (see Slyomovics 1998), but rarely in spatial practice (for exceptions see Weizman 2006, Yacobi 2004). As a result, these writers often focus on institutionalized visions imposed by the state – static, homogenized, one-sided ones – rather than exploring how such visions are interpreted, contested, and changed in daily ways.
The focus on practice as a way to understand lived space, then, allows me to recognize the significance of changes in people’s practical engagements with the spaces of their daily lives: whether they take a short-cut or choose not to; whether they stop for gas at a particular station or wait for the next one; the ways they give directions and interpret road signs; where they visit and how they find their way home. It also allows me to recognize and interrogate the political resonances of these everyday movements, linking up the boundaries that are inscribed and re-inscribed through such practices with the boundaries that circumscribe difference, identity, and belonging.

But if spatial practice, following Lefebvre (1991:18), is about the “interaction between ‘subjects’ and their space and surroundings,” it is also about interactions between subjects about their space and surroundings. A central argument of this dissertation is that the movements and activities that give shape and meaning to social space are mediated, accomplished, and produced through language. Like other definitions and visions that establish our understanding of social reality, they are always “inscribed in language, and enacted in interaction” (Gal 1991:197). While critical geographers’ analyses of spatial practice often claim that space, scale, or mobility are, at least in part, “discursively” produced, their claims are rarely brought down to the level of linguistic analysis. As such, an implicit dichotomy between the material (read as spatial) and the discursive (read as linguistic) is maintained, and the detailed ways in which spatial practices take shape and are given meaning is not explained in this literature.
The making and unmaking of the social world is also a central concern of linguistic anthropologists, for whom a belief in the productive capacity of language – the ability of words to "contribute to producing what they apparently describe or designate" (Bourdieu 1991: 220 emphasis in original) – may be one of the few principles that unify a diverse discipline.\textsuperscript{15} My work aims to integrate the insights of linguistic anthropologists with those of critical geographers, looking at the ways spatial practice is mediated, made sense of, accomplished – produced – through linguistic practice. In turn, I argue, it is in the intersection of changing spatial and linguistic practices that changing meanings of the state and of citizenship, of Israel and of being Israeli are negotiated.

In anthropology, work on language and place has been effective in delineating the ways in which senses of place are locally articulated (see Johnstone 1990, Basso 1996, Basso and Feld 1996, Stewart 1996, Frake 1996), while a focus on the “multivocality and multilocality” of place (Rodman 1992) has usefully foregrounded geographies of displacement and marginality, contestation and resistance (Selwyn 1995, Williams 2001, Bender and Winer 2001, Susser and Schneider 2003, Baynham and De Fina 2005, Modan 2007). These literatures approach the social and discursive construction of place in terms of experience, sense, memory, perception, meaning, narrative, and discourse; in order to foreground the centrality of change, the everyday, and the ongoing production of social life, I focus instead on linguistic practice.

While the application of practice theory to linguistic analysis remains scattered (McElhinny and Muehlmann 2006:699), some fundamental commonalities can be discerned. A practice approach focuses on language “as a form of action fully embedded in the social world,” locating linguistic practice in “situated processes of verbal communication” and foregrounding “the articulation of speech with other aspects of the social world” (Hanks 1990: 9-10).

Among other aspects of the social world, linguistic practice has been studied through its articulation with spatial knowledge, social organization, and interactional uses of space (see Levinson 1995 for review). Posing such questions as “How do people refer to places, describe spatial arrangements, say where someone is going, and so forth?” (Levinson 1995:355), this literature puts everyday language use at the centre of understanding how social space is given meaning. While these analyses – by and large – focus on orientations to space implicit in linguistic forms such as honorifics (Keating 1994), deictics (Hanks 1990), or elicitations (Sidnell 1998), my analysis instead focuses on those occasions when people’s practical engagements with places become explicit. This work is oriented toward language as practice, but not necessarily toward space as practice, at least not in the overtly political sense in which critical geographers understand it. It is concerned with uncovering how a shared “tacit understanding” of a “common sense” geography is accomplished; such understandings may be either universal or specific to local cultures or languages, but they are not often differentiated within them, and not often shown to be open to contestation, negotiation, or change.
(Sidnell’s work, 1998, is an exception). The result is a dynamic, detailed, though decidedly depoliticized approach to space.

In contrast, more recent work by Jan Blommaert, James Collins, Stef Slembrouck, and others explores the “dialectic of space and language” specifically in relation to hierarchy and systemic inequality asking, among other questions, “how does space organize regimes of language” (Collins and Slembrouck 2005:198)? Focusing on questions of globalization, migration, and diaspora, these authors revisit foundational concepts in linguistic anthropology such as competency, socialization, community, and context, in order to explore how multilingualism “is structured and regimented by spaces and relations between spaces” (Blommaert et al. 2005:205). Their argument about the implications of spatial analysis for how we think about language is an important intervention yet, while they do pose the obverse side of the question (Collins and Slembrouck 2005:191) – how language use contributes to the production of space – this receives less attention in their work.

It is this question that I pick up here, always with attention to the political resonances of both spatial and linguistic practice. This focus results in a very different view of the intersection between language and lived space than that of, for example, William Hanks (1990) in his influential study of referential practice among the Maya. Hanks focuses on social norms, on what Bourdieu called the “immanent regularity of practices” (1977:22, cited in Hanks 12). These are a set of schemes or orientations that “exist in a practical state in agents’ practice, and not in their consciousness, or rather, their discourse” (Bourdieu 1977:27). That is, they are grounded in what actors “actually do and not what they say they do;” as such they
“need not be subject to discussion or conscious regulation” (Hanks 1990: 12). While the kinds of daily movements I analyze here – navigating a highway, stopping for gas, shopping for groceries, choosing a route to a friend’s house – can be understood to “exist in a practical state,” they are far from being commonly agreed on or tacitly understood. In a context of conflict and change, such movements need to be understood both by what people do and by what they say they do; they become both practical and ideological.16 A time of change calls into question both social norms and the “regularity” of such practices.

In a context of drastic change, memories of violence and the potential of future violence have made these practices the subject not just of conscious reflection but of intense scrutiny. These kinds of mundane, quotidian movements are constantly discussed, in detail and at great length, as they are constantly changing. It is these discussions and conversations I focus on here. I look at the stories people tell about the places they no longer go; the ways they articulate and locate their fears and the ways they assess the fears of others; how they make choices about their movements and how they explain, justify, or lament these choices. I argue that these conversations do more than just make sense of shifting social boundaries; they bring these boundaries into being and, in the process, they enact both self-definition and exclusion. To understand the nature of self-definition and exclusion in Israel, the next section examines questions of nation, state, and citizenship in relation to the Palestinian minority in Israel.

16 On the relationship between practice and ideology see Eagleton 1991:78ff.
3. “Implicate Relations”: Palestinians in a Jewish state

While Israel has traditionally been characterized as a Jewish democracy, the contradiction this entails becomes clear when the Israeli state is viewed through the prism of its relations with the Palestinian minority. This prism is itself multi-faceted, as the view it offers changes depending on how it is framed: questions of state, nation, citizenship, colonialism, minority rights, or ethnic/religious/national identity have been foregrounded in the works of different scholars. Working from these diverse critical perspectives, scholars have characterized Israel as a colonial power (Zureik 1979), a settler society (Shafir 1989, Kimmerling 1983), a system of control (Lustick 1980), an ethnic democracy (Smooha 1990), an ethnic republic (Peled 1992), a system of graduated citizenship (Migdal 2004, 2006), and an ethnocracy (Yiftachel 1999, 2006).¹⁷

Kretzmer (1990) provides a detailed analysis of how institutional discrimination works in Israel, in ways both overt and covert, through budgetary discrimination, resource allocation, and implementation of laws. He points out that the Knesset has the power to enact laws that infringe upon all basic constitutional principles, including the principle of equality. The Law of Return and the Nationality Law are the main pieces of legislation that “expressly use the criterion of ‘Jew’ as a

¹⁷ Lustick (1980) looks at the fragmentation and cooptation of Palestinian citizens under military rule (in the 1950s and 60s), analyzing the state mechanisms that were deployed to ensure control over this minority. Smooha’s (1990) idea of ethnic democracy tries to reconcile ethnic dominance with democratic principles. He has been critiqued by Peled (1992), who points out that the definition of and access to public good are always in Jewish hands, and Yiftachel (1999), who argues that because of ethnic dominance, Israel does not really qualify as a democracy beyond adherence to narrow, minimal democratic guidelines. I am grateful to Dan Rabinowitz in whose class I worked through this literature.
condition for a right or privilege” (Kretzmer 1990:89). Beyond this, non-governmental organizations such as the Jewish Agency, the Jewish National Fund, and the World Zionist Organization are granted authority over such integral services as immigrant absorption, ownership and allocation of land, infrastructure for new and existing settlements, water rights, educational institutions, and social services: “While entrusted with tasks that are par excellence tasks of a governmental nature, their mandate [as Jewish institutions aimed at furthering Jewish aims only] restricts them to dealing with the Jewish sector” (96). As such, their activities are a way to realize discriminatory policies that “may not be adopted by government agencies bound by the equality principle” (97). These legal and extra-legal distinctions converge to shape a profoundly unequal geography that Yiftachel (1999, 2006) characterizes as an ethnocracy. In Chapter Two I explore the role of Israel’s land policy regime in undergirding an unequal state, when I describe the historical geography of Wadi Ara.

The ways exclusion and stratification work in Israel, though extreme, are far from unique, and many scholars articulate their critical analyses of Israel through the idiom of comparison. Indeed, as only some of these authors recognize, discriminatory policies and practices in Israel are not only similar to but draw upon and build on technologies of rule used in a variety of colonial, post-colonial and multi-ethnic contexts. Zureik (1979) equates the Zionist project with the colonial trajectory of European states, comparing Palestinians to native populations in

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18 A further means of covert discrimination, in Kretzmer’s terms, is the requirement for army service for all Jews but not Palestinians, and the subsequent restriction of access to certain jobs, resources, or privileges based on army service.
classic colonial situations. Shafir (1983) and Kimmerling (1989) refine this sweeping comparison to specify the historical parallels to immigrant-settler societies, such as Canada, the US, Algeria, and South Africa, in particular with respect to land and labour. They point out that in these settler societies, as in Israel, land is alienated from the local population, who are then used to produce goods out of the land. This history, they argue, is what ultimately shapes relations between Jews and Palestinians, understood as immigrant-settlers and a local population.

Another approach frames the relations of Palestinians in Israel to the nation and the state in terms of citizenship and minority rights, comparing Israel to other multi-ethnic contexts where rights are differentially distributed among citizens based on ethnicity (e.g., Rouhana 1997, Sultany 2003). For example, Rouhana and Ghanem (1998:322) argue that “it is not citizenship or membership in the state system that determines the extent of services and privileges that the state bestows on the individual and the group: the determining factor is membership in the dominant ethnic class.” Joel Migdal (2006), however, critiques comparisons of Israel to states with a dominant ethnic/national group and a relatively large minority (such as ethnic Latvians and Russians in Latvia or ethnic Turks and Kurds in Turkey), arguing that such analyses “tend to take the various groups as given and the lines of differentiation as immutable” (5). He advocates instead “a more complex multigroup ... categorization, encompassing relations between Jews and Arabs as well as status and identity differences among Jewish subgroups themselves.

19 Kimmerling focuses on the “degree of frontierity” – the presence or absence of free land – as the central distinguishing factor in these cases. He characterizes Israel as a settler society without a frontier.
(and, to a lesser extent, among Arabs)” (5). Migdal argues that Israel is best characterized as a system of “graduated citizenship”: different groups within the state carry different levels of formal legal rights and obligations (as described by Kretzmer 1990) as well as different informal, affective feelings of belonging to the state. The focus on graduated citizenship as a hierarchy of privileges and obligations that is not fixed but “dynamic, changing under the pressure of inter- and intragroup struggle” (22) brings other comparisons to light. Ong (2006) discusses the multiple modes of governance that administer segments of the population in Malaysia and Indonesia differentially “in terms of their relevance to global capital” (78); Thobani (2007) discusses the ways dominant Canadian ideas of nationhood both rely on and exclude immigrants and First Nations; DeGenova (2007) argues that the position of migrant Mexican migrant workers in Chicago is structured both by ideologies of “nativism” and by racialized polarities between black and white.

Yet while situating Israel in a comparative and historical perspective is an important analytic move, we must recognize that, as Ann Stoler has recently argued, “acts of comparison [also] perform important political work” (2006:57). Stoler points to the need to historicize the “politics of comparison” in imperial studies in particular, and to trace the changing stakes involved in recognition of connections and claims to exception. In the context of Israel/Palestine, certainly I think the more interesting question is not which comparisons are more apt, but rather which are deployed by which scholars, politicians, activists, and journalists, in which contexts,
and for what purposes. When is Israel compared to South Africa, when to Northern Ireland, and when to the US? When is it seen as an exception? When are Palestinians in Israel read as an indigenous population, when as an ethnic minority, and when as second-class citizens? Though answering these questions is beyond the scope of this dissertation, I remain attentive to how comparisons circulate in critical analyses of the Israeli state, and to how questions of inequality in Israel are framed.

What all the authors cited above share, despite their various ways of framing the problem, is the goal of destabilizing the consensus around Israel as a Jewish democracy. While I aim to participate in this important project, and while I build on their work, many of their analyses focus on how Israel’s self-definition as a Jewish democracy frames and defines citizens, rather than on how citizens understand, experience, and imagine this contradiction, in terms of the state, the nation, and the boundaries of belonging. Anne Stoler (2006b:95) has recently argued that, in imperial studies, the focus on macroscales of policy and strategy, security and design somehow remain[s] unmoored to micromovements of peoples who are subject and scarred, beholden to and invested in these empires on the ground. This is . . . a call to identify those structured imperial predicaments by tracing them through the durabilities of duress in the

20 Recent conflicts around ‘anti-apartheid’ campaigns on university campuses in Canada, which compare Israel to South Africa’s apartheid regime as a way to mobilize similar tactics of opposition, are but one demonstration of the highly charged nature of comparisons in this context (see Aiken-Klar 2008).
21 This is something I hope to explore further in future research.
subsoil of affective landscapes, in the weight of memory, in the maneuvers around the intimate management of people’s lives.

My focus on linguistic and spatial practice is meant to illuminate precisely these micromovements, the “maneuvers around the intimate management of people’s lives” within a state profoundly structured by imperial legacies.

Stein and Swedenburg (2005:6-7) argue along similar lines that radical scholarship on Israel/Palestine largely overlooks the realm of “daily cultural practices” because of a definition of the political overly influenced by nation-state paradigms. Stein (2001:4) suggests that ethnography can illuminate "the fluid ways in which state institutions and discourses produce citizen-subjects, practices, cultural formations and regimes of intelligibility, even as they are produced by and through them." (On ethnographies of the state see also Gupta1995, Mitchell 1991, Scott 1998, Sharma and Gupta 2006.) A critical anthropological perspective on Israel (see Stein 1998, 2001, 2008, Rabinowitz 1997, Slyomovics 1998, Kahn 2000, Kanaaneh 2001, Monterescu and Rabinowitz 2007, Habib 2004), and especially a focus on linguistic and spatial practice as described above, can make visible the daily practices through which the Israeli state and nation are constituted, and through which changing ideas of Israel and of Israeli citizenship are negotiated. I argue that it is particularly important to bring such practices to light in Israel, a place where, to paraphrase Brett Williams (2001), the state lies heavy on the land.

22 The “daily cultural practices” explored in their edited volume, however, are generally limited to “expressive” practices, understood as popular culture.
The critical scholarly literature on Israel/Palestine is also deeply divided, with very separate histories and trajectories of work on Palestinians in the West Bank, Gaza, and the Palestinian diaspora on the one hand, and Israelis on the other. As in so much else, Palestinians in Israel are caught in between, excluded from either group and overlooked in scholarship as in policy and diplomacy (see also Rabinowitz 1998). The few critical ethnographies of Israel which take seriously the presence of Palestinians in Israel either study them in isolation or point out omissions and erasures without filling them in (though see Rabinowitz 1997, Slyomovics 1998, Rabinowitz and Monterescu 2007, Torstrick 2000 for exceptions). I am not the first to point out how this scholarship remains stuck in the very nation-based paradigms it seeks to critique (see Stein and Swedenburg 2005, Monterescu 2007). My work, as discussed above, is a study of segregation that tries not to reproduce this segregation in the telling; I focus on social boundaries to illuminate not division but ambivalence and flux, contact and entanglement, encounter and confrontation, avoidance and disregard, distances maintained in the face of unavoidable proximities. I therefore start from the understanding that the lives of Jews and Palestinians in Israel are not only highly interdependent, but mutually constitutive.

In this I draw on the work of Yuval Portugali (1993), who characterizes relations between Jews and Palestinians as “implicate,” to denote “enfolded inward” (xii). That is, he argues that Israeli and Palestinian histories, societies, and individuals cannot be defined or understood independently of each other (39);
rather, they are mutually constituted and mutually constitutive – historically formed and continually forming against the other but always in relation to the other. Portugali is a geographer, and his insights have been fruitfully applied to the spatial dynamics of Palestinian-Jewish relations in particular. Monterescu (2007), in his analysis of these dynamics in Jaffa (a mixed city), follows Portugali in arguing that “the two groups and their identities were constituted in a series of dialectic oppositions and homologies which not only opposed each other, but at the same time dialectically created each other, in dynamic but constantly asymmetrical relations of power” (175). Yiftachel (2006) similarly relies on Portugali’s theory of implicate relations to argue that in the Zionist-Palestinian struggle for territory “the spatial practices and ideologies of each movement profoundly influenced the other” (57): “neighbouring entities develop and change in constant interaction, becoming ‘enveloped’ through a process of mutually dependent development” (8). These analyses provide a nuanced way to understand the interconnections and reflections that underlie what may on the surface appear as segregation, emphasizing that what is divided is far from separate.

Shuli Dichter (2001), head of the NGO Sikkuy that works for the advancement of civic rights in Israel, began his submission to the Or Commission Inquiry into the events of October 2000 with the following critique of scholarship on Palestinians in Israel:

Until the last decade, in general, inquiries into the relations between the state and Arab citizens have been examined from the perspective of Jews and of the state, meaning, the Jews are conducting the research and the
object being studied has been Arab citizens.

The exception to this incisive critique is the emerging body of work on and by Palestinian citizens of Israel (working in the academy or in NGOs), which has continued to grow and strengthen since 2001, when Dichter wrote this. An ethnographic perspective is regrettable and notably absent among these scholars (see Kanaaneh 2001 for the only exception I know of, in English or Hebrew).

Dichter continues:

An inherent assumption of this approach is that Arab citizens and their behavior constitute the main variable, and that relations between the State of Israel and Arab citizens are determined mainly by the behavior of Arab citizens, while the state merely reacts. Only rarely is the behavior of the state itself examined critically by academics or by state institutions.

Even more rarely, I would argue, is the behaviour of Israeli Jews examined critically in terms of the role it plays in shaping the place of Palestinians in Israel. This dissertation attempts to counter the trends described by Dichter by focusing on the “implicate relations” between Jews and Palestinians in Israel, as seen through Jewish Israeli eyes. Jewish Israeli perspectives are thus made the object of study, rather than remaining the implicit, unmarked, and therefore privileged gaze. This answers Stein’s (2008:15) call to pay more serious attention to “both the terms of Israeli

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24 This is the body of work I relied on in making the argument about the shrinking boundaries of Palestinian citizenship in the beginning of this chapter.

25 This chapter, though, cites those authors who do. Rabinowitz (1998) similarly argues that Israeli scholars tend to study Palestinian society in isolation from its power relationship to the Israeli state.
dominance and the everyday Israeli cultural machinery of Palestinian dispossession.”

Dichter (2001) further writes that relations between Palestinians and Jews in Israel fluctuate along axes of presence and absence, recognition and disregard; the tensions between these poles animated my research, and it is precisely the negotiation of this “matrix,” in linguistic and spatial practice, that my work seeks to understand, for it is within this matrix that the implicate relations between Jews and Palestinians are played out.²⁶ Dichter argues that the phenomenon of disregard “expresses the general attitude of Jews toward Arabs in the context of Israeli citizenship.” He too draws on Portugali’s research to illustrate this, which demonstrates how disregard is manifested spatially:

For the most part, Jews in Israel ignore Arab localities, meaning that they do not exist on the Jews’ cognitive maps… In fact, the disregard described here has been one of the longstanding behavioral modes of Jews and of the state in this conflict throughout the past fifty years… The phenomenon has also been termed ignorance, a lack of knowledge, an absence of the opportunity for social contact, and so on. But the truth is that knowledge of the facts of blatant discrimination is no guarantee of a change in attitude; this disregard may well be what it appears – part of the behavior of a ruling majority preoccupied with itself alone, behavior that mere facts are inadequate to alter. The disregard, rather than a preventive to conflict, is an

²⁶ See also Handelman and Shamgar-Handelman 1997 on “the presence of absence.”
active conflictual behavior: a way of handling the conflict that aims to diminish it. Motivated indifference of this sort has many faces, some of them elusive and difficult to distinguish. By its nature, it is not driven by malicious intent, but by the intention not to come to grips with the conflict. Generally, the one who disregards in this fashion is surprised when confronted with the fact of his disregard, indeed will exert himself to remain unaware of it, and will reject the facts when brought to his attention in one way or another (Dichter 2001:8).

Much of this dissertation provides ethnographic evidence of the ways this disregard is manifested linguistically and spatially, through processes of erasure and of distancing. But the dissertation over all takes Dichter’s argument one step further in exploring the politics of recognition behind this disregard. More than a way of avoiding dealing with “the conflict,” I argue that this disregard is a way to avoid confronting the fundamental contradiction entailed in Israel’s self-definition as a Jewish democracy. It therefore plays a crucial role in constituting Israeli Jewish national identity.

I would argue that this is the same politics of recognition that underlies Benedict Anderson’s influential definition of the nation as “an imagined political community.” Anderson argues that the nation is “imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6). The national community, then, is constituted through an imaginative act of recognition – that “image of communion” that connects fellow-members separated
by space and even time. For though they may never come face to face, they are
linked by their shared experience of the space and time that separate them or, more
specifically, by an imaginative awareness of this shared experience. They thus
conceive of their nation as “a solid community” moving steadily onward through
shared calendrical time (27), through a shared “familiar” landscape (32), and in a
common language (44). In reading the morning paper or singing the national
anthem, the individual is linked to other members of the nation through the
awareness that this same “mass ceremony” “is being replicated simultaneously by
thousands (or millions) of others of whose existence he is confident, yet of whose
identity he has not the slightest notion” (35).

If it is through the recognition of this “experience of simultaneity” (145) that
the nation is constituted, then it is precisely through the denial of recognition that
the divided national community in Israel is imagined. In Israel Palestinians and Jews
trace widely divergent patterns of collective memory over a common past and over
a common landscape (Slyomovics 1998: xii; see also, e.g., Abu El-Haj 2001,
Benvenisti 2000, Boyarin 1994). They not only locate and localize (Slyomovics
1998) images of a radically different past in the same place, they also move through
different calendrical cycles, which are in turn located and localized in different
spaces and inscribed in different languages. Stores and markets are closed on
Saturday in Jewish neighbourhoods, and on Friday in Palestinian ones; the
calendrical cycle of Israeli national holidays and state ceremonies is based on a
narrative that denies the presence of Palestinians, or renders them only as an enemy
(Handelman and Katz 1990); Israeli national symbols like the national anthem
likewise exclude Palestinians (Rabinowitz et. al. 2000). The “experience of simultaneity” for the Jewish majority in Israel thus depends on the active disregard of those whom it excludes.

This denial of recognition is not contradictory nor peripheral but integral to the constitution of the Israeli national whole. In many ways this dissertation is concerned with the ways Israeli Jews imagine the nation as a divided community: its borders and boundaries, its internal frontiers, and its others. I examine the practices through which many Israeli Jews – who, following Anderson, do not know, meet, hear, or see most of their fellow-members – contrive to recognize only some of these fellow-members, disregarding others, or imaginatively constructing their absence. I argue for the crucial role of daily linguistic and spatial practice in imagining this divide. I also consider maps, census, and identity cards (see Chapter Three), road signs (see Chapter Five), place names and museums (see Chapter Six) – central technologies through which the state shapes this divide, but also key sites where boundaries of belonging are actively negotiated. I argue that in Israel national belonging is constructed in part through the imagination of the absence of Palestinians, that the nation is constituted in part through this exclusion.

Sunera Thobani has recently argued that in Canada it is the exclusion of the other (First Nations, immigrants) that “renders the nation possible and coherent” (2007:20): “the national subject is not only existentially but also institutionally and systematically defined in direct relation to the outsider” (Thobani 2007:5). Further, following feminist and postcolonial critiques of nationalism more generally, she points out that “a national identity that is formed primarily in relation to that which
it excludes remains tied to the excluded, and the excluded Other becomes the
nation’s double” (20); in other words, their relationship is always implicate, always
enfolded inward, always wrapped up one in the other. Like constructions of
nationhood in other settler societies such as Canada, I argue, constitution of Israeli
national identity relies both on its forms of alterity and on their denial. The figures
of “the native” and “the stranger,” arguably conflated in the case of Palestinians
Israelis, play a critical role in “how national subjects experience and configure the
national community’s borders” (Thobani 2007:15). In the words of Amy Kaplan
(quoted in Stoler 2006b:100), these figures “both remain lodged within the
‘domestic’ sense of the . . . nation and cast a dark shadow across its unstable
borders.”

I would argue that the disregard described by Shuli Dichter is so deeply
entrenched precisely because recognition of Palestinians in Israel necessitates not
just coming to grips with “the conflict” but a painful reckoning with the fundamental
contradiction in Israel’s self-definition. That is, only by ignoring the presence of
Palestinians in their midst (disregarding them, denying them recognition, actively
imagining their absence) can Israeli Jews maintain their self-image as citizens of a
state that is both Jewish and democratic.27 To recognize the impossibility of the
Palestinians’ position and the validity of their demands is to acknowledge the need

27 See also Rouhana and Sultany (2003:8) on the “self-deceiving consensus”: “No
Zionist party, including on the Left, has ever acknowledged the fundamental
contradiction between Israel as an ethnic Jewish state and its claims to be
democratic. One possible explanation for this denial is the ‘invisibility’ of the Arab
minority for Israeli Jews. The prevailing attitude of the general public . . . is that if
Israel is the state of the Jewish people, and if the Jewish citizens enjoy democracy,
then Israel by definition must be both Jewish and democratic.”
for a fundamental reconsideration of the very essence of Israel. I would argue that this has long been the fundamental dynamic of Jewish-Palestinian relations, but the events of October 2000 and following have brought this painfully and dramatically to the fore. In the next chapter I describe the historical and geographical processes through which this matrix of presence and absence, recognition and disregard, was formed. In the chapters that follow, I analyze how people in Wadi Ara navigate this matrix as they move through a divided landscape.
Chapter Two

Wadi Ara: A Divided Landscape

1. Introduction

In this chapter I set the scene for the chapters that follow by sketching the geographical, historical, and political landscape in which this dissertation is situated and introducing the places where, and the people with whom, I did my fieldwork. In the first section, I outline the contours of Wadi Ara and the history of war, dispossession, land confiscation, and preferential settlement that has shaped this divided landscape. The second section entails a description of my primary fieldsite, Givat Haviva, an introduction to the people with whom I did my fieldwork, and a discussion of my methodologies.

I begin with an important note on context. While this dissertation focuses on Wadi Ara, it is important to keep in mind the situation in Israel/Palestine generally during the time I did my fieldwork. During the time I was in Israel a Sharon-led Likud government was in power; the plan for disengagement from Gaza was announced (December 2003) and was carried out the summer after I left (August 2005); construction of the separation wall (begun in June 2002) was progressing, with the northern section that runs just south of Wadi Ara completed while I was living in the area; two leaders of Islamic Hamas (Sheikh Ahmad Yassin and Abed Aziz al Rantissi) were assassinated by Israeli forces (March and April of 2004); Yasser Arafat died in Paris (November 2004); Mahmud Abbas was elected to the presidency of the Palestinian Authority (January 2005). In Wadi Ara alone, in the
three years between October 2000 and my arrival in the field, 29 people were killed in terrorist attacks.

Oren Yiftachel (2006) has recently argued that “the entire area under Israeli control – that is, Israel/Palestine between river and sea – should be analyzed as one political-geographic unit” (8). While his argument is compelling, and while the following chapters should be read with the situation in Gaza and the West Bank always in mind, it should be noted that the focus of this dissertation does remain firmly within the green line. This reflects both the limits of my expertise and the perspectives and experiences of those with whom I did my fieldwork.1

2. Wadi Ara: Critical historical geography of a divided landscape

Wadi Ara is the name of a wide, shallow valley in the north of Israel (see maps and figures 2.1-2.4). If you follow the coastal plain north from Tel Aviv, about a forty-five minute drive, and then turn east, you can follow this valley across the width of the country, as it skirts the northern end of the hills of the West Bank. A highway runs through the valley, and the sloping hills that rise on either side of it are covered with farmland, interspersed with mostly Palestinian villages, a few Jewish ones, and one Palestinian city: Um el Fachem. The northern slopes of the Wadi merge with the green plateau called in Hebrew Ramat Menashe, after the biblical tribe that settled in that area; in Arabic it is called Roha, meaning rest, since it was a place where travelers on an ancient trade route would rest on their journey.

1 For a recent ethnographic account of social and spatial practice in the West Bank during the second intifada, see Allen (2008).
To the north-west, beyond this plateau, the Carmel mountains rise toward Haifa, and directly to the north lies the Galil region. The Wadi’s eastern end connects with a valley called Ibn Amer in Arabic, for the tribe who lived there in Ottoman times, and Yizrael in Hebrew. The city of Nazareth lies to the north-east, and Afula is located at the junction of the two valleys. The Wadi’s western end slopes toward Hadera on the coastal plane.

The green line, the armistice line of the 1948-49 war that separates Israel from the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank, runs just over the southern slopes, immediately behind Um el Fachem. During the time of my fieldwork, the portion of the wall that runs through this area was completed, sealing Wadi Ara from the hills of the West Bank to the south. This means that Wadi Ara road is the first place you can drive across Israel, east to west, as you go north from the centre of the country, connecting the heavily populated coastal plain to the lower Galil and Emek Yizrael. The countless standstill traffic jams I have sat in attest to the valley’s centrality as an access route to the north; on weekends and holidays traffic is routinely at a standstill from Megiddo to Highway 6, and you can see the braver or more foolhardy drivers bumping along the fields that line the road as they bypass you. The hills to the south have meant that Wadi Ara has played this role of crossroads for centuries – long before the current configuration of borders and traffic. The highway follows the path of an ancient trade route between Egypt and the area that is now Syria and Lebanon.

The majority of the residents of Wadi Ara are generally referred to in Israel as “Israeli Arabs” and collectively as “the Arab sector.” In contrast, I refer to them as
Palestinian citizens of Israel, a marker of political and national identity with which they increasingly identify (see Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 2001:59, Smooha 2004), and which emphasizes that Israeliness for many is a question of citizenship and not of nationality; that is, many see their national identity as Palestinian and their citizenship as Israeli. Rabinowitz (1993) further explains that the common label of 'Israeli Arab' is imposed, not chosen, emphasizes culture over nationality, and silences the link which Palestinians have to the disputed land. These Palestinians (as opposed to those in the West Bank, Gaza, or the Palestinian Diaspora) live in the state of Israel, as demarcated by the green line, and have Israeli citizenship. They live mostly in the Negev, the Galil, the Triangle region and Wadi Ara, and in the mixed cities of Lod, Ramle, Yaffo, Haifa, and Jerusalem (see maps).

The particularity of their situation dates back to the end of the 1948 war that followed the declaration of the founding of the state of Israel, known as the War of Independence to Israeli Jews and as al-Naqbah or the Catastrophe to Palestinians. This war drastically reconfigured the territory of Israel/Palestine in general and Wadi Ara in particular. In 1947 there were approximately 600,000 Jews in

2 The results of two surveys conducted by As’ad Ghanem provide statistical evidence of this change. In response to the question “Which of the following best describes your identity?” in 1995, 38.4% chose “Israeli Arab” while 27.4% chose “Palestinian in Israel or Palestinian Arab in Israel”; in 2001, 21.8% chose “Israeli Arab” while 36.2% chose “Palestinian in Israel or Palestinian Arab in Israel.” In a separate survey conducted by Sammy Smooha (Smooha 2004), 22.9% chose “Israeli Arab” and 41% chose “Palestinian in Israel or Palestinian Arab in Israel.”
3 The term “Israeli Arab” is used in the thesis when I am relaying the words or perspectives of others who themselves use it. This is because the labels are an important part of identifying and understanding different perspectives.
4 The most commonly cited sources on the 1948 war in the critical literature on Palestinian citizens of Israel are Benny Morris (1989) and Walid Khalidi (1992). On
Palestine, their land holdings covering 8% of the territory; by 1949, 78% of this territory was in Jewish hands (Yiftachel 2006:58). Between 700,000 and 750,000 Palestinians were displaced from their homes and became refugees, and more than 420 villages were destroyed. The number of Palestinians who remained within the green line borders of Israel at the end of the 1948 war is often estimated at 160,000 – approximately one sixth of the population before the war. Israeli citizenship was granted to all those who either remained within Israel throughout the 1948 war, returned there shortly after, or have been born there since. Although many Palestinian citizens of Israel feel "solidarity, unity, and a shared fate" (Rabinowitz 1997), as well as a shared history, with those Palestinians living outside the green

the highly contested historiography of the 1948 war see e.g., Ram (1996). In particular, the issue of whether Palestinian refugees “fled” or were “expelled” is a highly contentious one.

In this chapter I report statistical and numerical data gathered by others with some frequency. While I recognize, along with Ian Hacking (1990), Mary Poovey (1998), Charles Briggs (2003), and others, that the collection and circulation of such numbers is heavily implicated in national projects of producing, maintaining, and surveilling difference, I found them impossible to avoid. They are such a significant part of how Palestinians in Israel (like other minoritized or indigenous groups) are represented, and of how they have come to represent themselves. Reports of numbers of refugees displaced, villages destroyed, and dunams of land confiscated circulate in academia (as in other arenas) in attempts to draw attention to the historical wrongs done to Palestinians in Israel. Similarly, statistics on poverty, unemployment, and inadequate funding for education or infrastructure are increasingly used to call attention to the contemporary situation of this group. This may have something to do with the recent trend Laurie King Irani (2007b) has identified toward the use of the discourses and terms of international law and human rights in advocacy work by and for Palestinians in Israel. Many of these numbers are debated, often fiercely (see Ram 1996), and certainly they are wielded by specific sources for specific purposes, but this is not my focus here. In cases of discrepancy or debate, I have chosen to present the numbers most consistently offered, or offered by those scholars or organizations whom I most trust and whose purposes I most agree with.
line – including those living in villages visible from their windows – their Israeli citizenship has meant that they have lived very different lives.

Comprising approximately 20 percent of the population of Israel, Palestinians in Israel are precariously situated and variously understood as a religious, linguistic, cultural, ethnic, and sometimes national minority. Whichever way you define their minority status, the fact remains that they are systematically denied full rights as citizens on the basis of this status. While they are equal to Jews “at the declaratory level” (Payes 2005:7), Israel’s self-definition as a Jewish state is used to justify unequal budget allocations and discriminatory laws on issues such as housing, education, and political participation (see Kretzmer 1990, Chapter One).

Some of the most widely circulated of the statistics gathered in the last eight years that demonstrate social and economic deprivation, underdevelopment, unemployment, poverty, and exclusion among Palestinians in Israel include the following (from Dalal 2003, Dichter 2001, Ozacky-Lazar and Ghanem 2001, Payes 2005, Rabinowitz and Abu-Baker 2005):

- Three-quarters of the communities defined by Israel’s Bureau of Statistics as low-income are Palestinian.
- The infant mortality rate for Palestinians is nearly double that of Jews.
- The 24 towns with the highest rates of unemployment are all Palestinian towns.
- The poverty level among Palestinian children is three times higher than that among Jewish children.
• Palestinian local councils receive 50 percent less funding per capita from the
government than Jewish Israeli councils receive.

• Only 5.7% of all civil servants are Palestinian citizens, and of these
only 2% have policy-related roles.

• In academia, approximately 50 college and university lecturers are
Palestinians, among approximately 5,000 overall.

Underlying this inequality is a long history of dispossession, confiscation, and
marginalization from land and territory.

Oren Yiftachel (2006:143), a geographer whose work on this issue is widely
cited, argues that it is the state’s land policy that creates the spatial foundation for
what he calls the Israeli “ethnocratic regime.” He summarizes this geography of
inequality as follows:

• Palestinians comprise between 16 and 18 percent of the population but
privately own 3.5 percent of available land; the area of municipal jurisdiction
for Arab municipalities covers 2.5 percent of the area of Israel.

• Over half of the land owned by Arabs in 1948 has been expropriated by the
state.

• Palestinians are blocked from buying, leasing, or using land in 80 percent of
state land area.

• More than 700 Jewish localities have been built since the founding of the state;
during the same time no new Palestinian settlements have been built.

To understand how this geography of inequality came to be, we must return to Wadi
Ara at the end of the 1948 war.
The border in the area was created in April 1949, when the armistice agreements between Israel and Jordan were signed at Rhodes, after the war. Wadi Ara was handed over to Israel in exchange for land in the hills of Hebron, and the residents of the Wadi, like other Palestinians who remained within the green line at the end of the war, were granted Israeli citizenship. Newman (1995) explains Wadi Ara’s strategic importance at the time as follows:

Israel insisted on controlling key transportation routes that linked different parts of the country, even if it meant significant deviation from the ceasefire lines. This involved territorial exchanges. The inclusion of the Wadi Arrah region, including fifteen Arab villages within Israel was agreed to by the Jordanians so that Israel would not reopen negotiations over parts of Samaria (Pappe 1992). Control of this area, including some strategic locations in the surrounding foothills, ensured Israeli control over the road linking the towns of Afula in the east to Hadera in the coastal plain [i.e., Wadi Ara Road].

Wadi Ara’s central role in mobility and access in the region has repeatedly been key in shaping the fate of its residents. The continued importance of the region in the geography of contemporary Israel was demonstrated during the events of October 2000: keeping the roads clear and unblocked by protesters was considered of the highest strategic importance, and senior officials were quoted saying that the route must be opened “at any cost.”

For this reason the border in the region, as elsewhere, followed strategic imperatives that proved to make little sense in human terms. The route of the green
line in the area essentially split in half a corridor of heavily populated Arab land:

“What had previously been a single functional and cultural space suddenly found itself divided between two separate political entities” (Newman 1995:9). The most dramatic example of this is the town of Barta’a, split down the middle between east and west, West Bank and Israel (see Chapter Six, Grossman 1992), but separating the adjacent urban centres of Um el Fachem and Jenin was equally arbitrary.

The new border meant that the residents of Wadi Ara – Arab citizens in a new Jewish state – followed a very separate trajectory from their neighbours across the green line. For the first seventeen years of their citizenship, until 1966, they were under military rule. During this time, the Israeli government implemented an aggressive project of settlement, aimed at consolidating its new borders and maintaining a demographic advantage by building and populating new settlements, for Jews only, on land previously inhabited by Palestinians displaced in the war. To facilitate this a variety of new laws and regulations enabled the confiscation of 1,288,000 dunams of Arab land (Benvenisti 2000:162). Land continued to be confiscated from the remaining Palestinian towns and villages, effectively cutting off their future growth. Jiryis (1976) reports that Um el Fachem and the surrounding towns in Wadi Ara lost over 40,000 dunams between 1945 and 1962.

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6 A dunam is a unit of area used by the Ottomans and still used in Israel and other countries that were formerly part of the Ottoman empire. It has been standardized in a variety of ways in different countries; in Israel it is equal to 1,000 square metres.

7 The most important of these was the 1950 Law on the Acquisition of Absentees’ Property, which allowed the state to confiscate the property of anyone who did not occupy his or her property on September 1, 1948. This affected hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who were displaced by the events of the war, and were on that day either in different parts of Israel or outside the country.
By the end of 1949, 117 new Jewish settlements had been founded within the new borders of Israel (Newman 1995); by the end of the 1960s over 600 Jewish settlements had been founded (Yiftachel 1999). The influx of Jewish refugees and immigrants, from Europe and North Africa, was mobilized for state imperatives and settled in the new “development towns” of the “periphery.” Meanwhile, not a single new Palestinian settlement has been built since 1948 (Dalal 2003, Yiftachel 2006). Oren Yiftachel (1999:372) calls this combination of displacement, confiscation, and selective settlement a “state-orchestrated and essentially non-democratic Judaization project.” (See also Benvenisti 2000:Chapters 4,5, Jiryis 1976.)

The new borders of the state were priority areas for settlement in the 1950s, and Wadi Ara was one of five strategic ‘frontier’ regions targeted for settlement.

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8 This policy had the effect of creating and segregating an ethnic underclass, forging a “geography of dependence” (Yiftachel 1999:375) that underlies relations between Jews in Israel. The settlement of “mizrahim” – Jews of North African or Middle Eastern descent who immigrated to Israel after the founding of the state – in development towns and “frontier” urban neighbourhoods played a significant role in establishing and continuing their unequal and discriminatory position in the state. Yiftachel (1999:381) argues that they are “positioned – culturally and geographically – between Arab and Jew, between Israel and its hostile neighbours, between a ‘backward’ Eastern past and a ‘progressive’ Western future.”

9 Yiftachel describes the development of two parallel processes on the same land, which were fundamental to the establishment of Israel as what he calls an ethnocracy: “the visible establishment of democratic institutions and procedures, and a more concealed yet systematic and coercive seizure of the territory by the dominant ethnic group” (372). Essentially, this was accomplished by granting non-state organizations such as the Jewish National Fund, the Jewish Agency, and the Zionist Federation authority over land, development, and settlement. The resulting institutional and legal land system meant that land could be transferred into the hands of these unaccountable bodies, who could then impose whatever non-democratic limits they wanted on it – such as prohibiting non-Jews from buying it or building a house on it. This ensured that confiscated land became “a joint possession of the state and the entire Jewish people” (373), that it could never be sold, and that all land transfers were unidirectional: “from Palestinian to Jewish hands, and never vice versa” (373).
activity beginning in 1949 (Newman 1995). The frontier “became a central icon and its settlement was considered one of the highest achievements of any Zionist. . . The glorification of the frontier thus assisted both in the construction of national Jewish identity and in capturing physical space on which this identity could be territorially constructed” (Yiftachel 1999:372). “Strategic depth” and “territorial contiguity” of Jews were key imperatives driving settlement in Israel, and areas inhabited by Arabs within the state thus become an internal frontier. In Wadi Ara, this is compounded by its location along the green line, the literal frontier or border. The end result was “the penetration of Jews into most Arab areas, the encirclement of most Arab villages by exclusively Jewish settlements (where non-Jews are not permitted to purchase housing), and the virtual ghettoization of the Arab minority” (Yiftachel 1999:373).

Nor were these imperative exhausted in the feverish settlement of the 1950s and 60s. The 1967 war changed the nature of the green line (see Newman 1995), creating new imperatives for settlements on both sides of it. In 1991 Ariel Sharon, then minister of housing, revived talk of settling the periphery with his “Stars” settlement plan (tochnit yishuwei hakochavim), in which he oversaw the building of eight new settlements, just inside the green line (on the Israeli side), as it runs from Wadi Ara in the north to Modi’in in the south, including the expansion of Katsir-Harish in Wadi Ara.10

10 See Levy-Barzilay 2001. These villages were successfully marketed as an affordable way to achieve the common Israeli dream of a house with a garden and all the peace, quiet, and good air of country living. The villages were located, though, directly across the green line from existing Jewish settlements in the West Bank (or
Land confiscation also continues to curtail the growth of Palestinian towns and villages, albeit less openly and with more opposition than during the years of military rule (see Chapter Five). In Wadi Ara, a military camp was built on land confiscated from the village of Kafr Kara (see figure 2.5). Lands in Roha were confiscated for a shooting range. In 1998 the government attempted to confiscate a further 60,000 dunams of agricultural land in Roha, across from Um el Fachem, for military training. These lands were the last reserves of non-built land for the city, whose 33,000 residents live on only 35,000 dunams (Payes 2005:97). In a preview of what was to come two years later, protesters were brutally repressed by police and army forces (Payes 2005:97, Benvenisti 200:331).

The resulting configuration of Jews and Palestinians in the region is the reason Wadi Ara is known as a “mixed” area. In practice this means it is segregated on a smaller scale: Jewish and Palestinian communities in the Wadi are in closer proximity to each other than they are in much of Israel, but still completely separate. Conventional wisdom has it that as you drive along the highways of Israel, you can tell Jewish from Arab villages in the distance by the roofs: Jewish homes have the sloping terra cotta shingles, while Arab roofs are flat and white, often with protruding electrical wires and other bits of infrastructure to enable the future construction of an additional story – a common adaptation to the combination of patrilocal marriage patterns and the scarcity of land produced by the land policy brought in the infrastructure needed to build new ones). Sharon’s idea was that with time the settlements would grow into each other, blurring the green line that divides them and achieving territorial contiguity as well as a demographic advantage in these border regions.
regime I’ve just described. In Wadi Ara, though, many of the Palestinian villages have adopted the “Jewish” style, and the roofs of Kafr Kara, for example, are mixed (see figure 2.6). As you drive along Wadi Ara road and up the southern slopes in particular, the more reliable way to distinguish a village from a distance is its location: Jewish villages are often perched on the ridges, looking down over the Palestinian villages built on the slope. Two examples are Mei Ammi, which sits atop Um el Fachem, and Katsir, which overlooks Barta’a, Ara, and Ein a’ Sahla. In addition to being closer to the green line than their Palestinian neighbours, forming a buffer that breaks up Palestinian territorial contiguity between the villages of Wadi Ara and those of the West Bank, this location also affords the strategic advantage of height; not coincidentally, both Katsir and Mei Ammi are immediately adjacent to army bases. Another distinguishing feature, particularly in more recent years, is that Jewish villages are the ones surrounded by elaborate fencing, with electrical gates barring their entrances (see figures 2.7-2.9).

2. Givat Haviva: Fieldsite and methodologies

On the edge of Wadi Ara, just south of Wadi Ara road and just west of the newly constructed Trans-Israel Highway (see Chapter Five) lies the campus of Givat Haviva. It is surrounded by cotton fields, kibbutzim (Ma’anit, Ein Shemer, Metzer, Barka’i), and Palestinian towns and villages (Meyser, Baka al Gharbiya, Um el Kutuf). The green line runs just to the east of it, on the other side of the new highway. The nearest Jewish city is Hadera, a half-hour drive west, on the coast, and the nearest Palestinian city in Israel is Um el Fachem, a fifteen minute drive east along Wadi Ara
road. Givat Haviva was founded in 1949 as the national education centre of the Kibbutz Artsi movement (a federation of kibbutzim throughout Israel that is ideologically affiliated with the Labour Zionist Shomer HaTsair movement). It was here, at the Arabic language school, that my fieldwork was based. In this section I provide some background about Givat Haviva in order to understand how it is situated in the landscape of Wadi Ara, who I did my fieldwork with, and how they ended up there.

The layout and physical structures of the campus reveal its kibbutz origins: clusters of low, white-washed, red-roofed buildings are separated by stretches of green lawn, connected by wide dirt paths, with mature shade trees here and there (see figures 2.10-2.12). There are dorms, offices, classrooms and lecture halls, a cafeteria, a library, an archive. In winter the institutional austerity of the buildings is broken by flower beds and cascades of bougainvillea, fuschia and purple against the white walls. A row of pines follows the perimeter of the fence around the property. Entrance is through the front gate and cars are left in the parking lot at the entrance; a guard operates the electric barrier at the turn-off from the road, checking everyone that enters before raising it.

The largest and most active component of Givat Haviva is the Jewish-Arab Center for Peace, founded in 1963 and recipient of the UNESCO Prize for Peace Education in 2001. The center comprises departments of education, community involvement, regional cooperation, and teacher training; the women and gender studies unit; the institute for peace research; and the institute for Arabic studies. There are also the peace library, the centre for holocaust study, the arts centre, and
an archive of the Shomer HaTsair movement. In addition to these core programs, Givat Haviva has been forced in recent years to take on roles that are outside its mandate, essentially renting out its campus or its educational services in order to cover budget shortfalls. This has resulted in some strange minglings along the pathways of the campus.

On a typical day at Givat Haviva in 2004-2005 you could see soldiers in uniform clearing their trays in the cafeteria, their rifles strapped on their backs (the army pays Givat Haviva for the space to run high school equivalency courses for young soldiers); a group of junior high kids sitting in a circle on the lawn, holding multi-coloured balloons (Givat Haviva runs ‘encounter’ programs, promoting dialogue and coexistence, for school children); a group of Palestinian women in head scarves walking along the paths (they are here for an enrichment course for managers of Arab women’s NGOs); teenaged Jewish boys and middle aged Jewish women nodding off over Arabic verb conjugations in the classrooms; and a tour group of North American Jews, many of them donors, snapping pictures of it all. A few years earlier you might also have seen workshops of peace activists from Israel and the West Bank, but that ended in 2000. Shortly after the outbreak of the second intifada Palestinians in the territories declared a ban on cooperation with all groups within Israel, and Givat Haviva suffered serious loss of funding from international NGOs as a result.

The contradictions apparent in this unlikely juxtaposition of people and activities are reflected also in Givat Haviva’s mission statement, as it appears in the English language version of the 2003 and 2004-2005 annual reports:
Givat Haviva implements activities to develop the experience of equality between Jews and Arabs living in Israel, and provides tools to this end. . . Today, after more than 50 years of innovative teaching, we continue to promote the principles on which Israel was founded . . . We believe that in a true democracy, equal rights for all citizens are an essential component. Our mission, therefore, is to contend with those pressing national issues that confront Israel’s collective social conscience.

As was discussed in the previous chapter, true engagement with civic equality in Israel, in a way that meaningfully addresses the current demands of Palestinians citizens, necessitates a critical re-evaluation of “the principles on which Israel was founded.” The most “pressing national issues that confront Israel’s collective social conscience” – those discussed in Chapter One – are side-stepped by claiming to promote civic equality while continuing to promote, uncritically, the founding principles of Zionism.

The ultimate expression of these contradictions at Givat Haviva is found in the institute for Arabic language studies, where my fieldwork was based. The institute runs day-long Arabic lessons at the beginner and advanced levels every Wednesday during the school year, a month-long course in the summer, and a six month intensive program each year, from September to February. I was a participant observer in the weekly lessons from December 2003 to February 2005, in the summer course in August 2004, and in the intensive course from September 2004 to February 2005.
Most of the teachers at the institute for Arabic language studies at Givat Haviva come from Wadi Ara. The teachers of literary Arabic tend to be Jewish Israelis, while the teachers of colloquial Arabic tend to be Palestinian Israelis.\textsuperscript{11}

Most of the Jewish teachers were kibbutzniks from the area, with university degrees in Arabic language and literature and many years of teaching experience. Many of them are ideologically motivated to teach Arabic, believing that learning the language promotes coexistence. The two main Palestinian teachers, Riyad and Fouad,\textsuperscript{12} live in villages in Wadi Ara. Each of them has a wife and two young children. Both are talented, dedicated teachers and both remained something of a mystery to me throughout my time at Givat Haviva. I was unable to interview either Fouad or Riyadh; though they willingly assented to having their classes taped, and while I got to know them both quite well, they both evaded and avoided interviews with me, without ever refusing outright. After repeated efforts, I eventually gave up, attributing their reticence to the sensitivity and precariousness of their position at Givat Haviva, and not wishing to intrude. As a result, I never got to ask them the questions about their intentions and motivations that continue to puzzle me: questions about loyalty, resistance, strategy, and necessity. The reader will get to

\textsuperscript{11} This is a strange and somewhat disturbing pattern, implying that Palestinians are only recognized as experts in their own language in its less prestigious form (the local colloquial dialect), displaying a sort of authentic folk expertise. Where knowledge of Arabic holds the most cultural and linguistic capital, in the literary form, it is Jews who are positioned as experts. (See Eyal 2006 on the history of Jewish expertise in Arab matters in Israel.) The Jewish teachers explained this to me by saying that it is more difficult to teach one’s own language clearly, but my Palestinian teachers were qualified enough to teach literary Arabic in the Palestinian high schools in the area.

\textsuperscript{12} All names have been changed.
know both of them through the pages that follow, but only to the extent that they wished to be known.

The weekly classes and the summer course at Givat Haviva attract students interested in learning Arabic from Wadi Ara, but some come from as far away as Jerusalem and Tel Aviv. Over the course of fourteen months at Givat Haviva, approximately 60 students in the weekly and the summer programs participated in my research (this in addition to the approximately 30 students in the intensive program, introduced below). My classmates in the weekly and summer programs were men and women, young and old, Ashkenazi and Mizrachi, mostly middle class, from immigrants to third-generation Israelis, with a range of political viewpoints from one extreme to the other. Among them were: Rafi, a retired music teacher and biblical scholar from a nearby kibbutz who wanted to learn “the language of the enemy” in order to better understand “the enemy's mindset”; Yosi, a middle-aged contractor from Katsir, father of two, who wanted to learn Arabic in order to be able to communicate with his workers; Boaz, an Israeli doctoral student in Middle East strategic studies at an American university; Efrat, a student of Arabic language and literature at the University of Be’er Sheva who wanted to augment her studies with colloquial Arabic; Chaya, a single mother on welfare from Pardes Chana who was outraged that Palestinian Israelis must learn Hebrew while Israeli Jews can remain entirely ignorant of Arabic; and Ruth, whom we get to know in Chapter Five, a founding member of MachsomWatch – an organization of Israeli Jewish women who monitor human rights violations at checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank.

The motivations of these students for learning Arabic varied from the pragmatic to
the vaguely idealistic, from orientalist curiosity to fear, from neighbourly good-will to radical political engagement. Despite a general consensus that politics should be kept “out of the classroom,” this mix of locations, political orientations, and life stories made for some fascinating conversations.

The make-up of the six month long intensive course is considerably more complicated, and it is here that the major contradiction of Givat Haviva is found. Michal, the course coordinator and head Arabic teacher herself studied Arabic in the intensive course at Givat Haviva as a teenager. In an interview over tea in her home in Ein Shemer, the neighbouring kibbutz where she grew up, she explained to me the complex history of the course. The institute began teaching Arabic to Israeli Jews 47 years ago. In its early years it attracted kibbutz youth from around the country. When Michal took the course herself, some twenty years ago, it was a longer, less intensive program, eight months long, attended mostly by youth from the kibbutzim who wanted something to do before they got called up for the army, or who were simply interested in learning Arabic. The course had a reputation, though, and attracted people from all over the country who wanted to learn Arabic, mostly out of motivations of coexistence – the professed goal of the institute.

Over the years, Michal explained to me, the army took notice of the quality of the graduates of this program. The need for recruits trained in Arabic for jobs in Army Intelligence or Modi’in grew as the number of Jewish native speakers of Arabic in the country naturally dwindled (as immigration from North Africa and the Middle East slowed). The army began to give partial scholarships to cover the cost of the course at Givat Haviva to youth who committed to joining Modi’in on completion of
the course. As Givat Haviva’s economic situation worsened in the 1990s (due to the economic decline of the kibbutz movement more generally), the army’s involvement in the course grew and became formalized under the title of “Project ElAd.” There was a need for strong, well-trained leaders fluent in Arabic and the graduates of this course, according to Michal, were the cream of the crop: highly motivated, intelligent, and knowledgeable, they became officers, commanders, and educators in Modi’in.

Two years before I joined the course, in 2002, with Givat Haviva in the midst of a financial crisis, the army stepped in and changed the format of the course. It is now shorter (six months instead of eight) and more intensive, and the army subsidizes the costs completely for the students it sends. The increased financial support from the army grants it in turn more control. The army now vets and chooses its participants before the course. Army officials come once a month to administer a standardized test and, as of the year I joined, there is a full time madrich or counselor from the army, who deals with motivation and discipline. His presence, and particularly the fact that he is in uniform, meant for Michal that she felt she was always being watched; he “clipped her wings,” she said. I can only imagine that this effect was amplified for Fouad and Riyadh, my Palestinian teachers.

Michal finds this situation increasingly impossible and absurd, a reflection of the “crazy craziness” (ha teruf ha metoraf) of contemporary Israel: “In what other country in the world would there be a centre for peace that prepares people for army intelligence?” At the same time, she says, without the army’s involvement the course would not be able to continue to function and would not be there for the
other participants. After years of teaching Arabic she is no longer at peace with her role, and contemplates leaving: “I ask myself: Is it my role to prepare people for Modi’in? And I think no.”

The “other participants” in the intensive course, those civilians for whom the course was originally intended, now constitute a minority. In 2004-2005, the intensive course consisted of 22 participants in “Project ElAd” and twelve “others,” including one anthropologist. Among these was Yael, a Jerusalem native in her twenties, who married a Swede and moved to Sweden. She returned to Israel to participate in the course because she wanted to apply for an undergraduate program in Arabic language at a university in Sweden. Gadi is a soft-spoken, moderately well-known poet and psychologist, of European origins, living with his family in Jerusalem (his daughter was recently called up for army service). He speaks English, French, and Hebrew fluently, with a faint accent in all of them; despite this, he struggles with the Arabic language. Oshri is the daughter of Israelis, raised in Florida, who is spending a year in Israel before returning to the US for university. Tsachi (in his late 30s) immigrated from the UK to Israel some ten years earlier and now lives in Tel Aviv. He spent some time teaching English in the West Bank and this motivated him to learn Arabic. Nurit, Rina, and Hila, who became my closest friends in the class, will be introduced in Chapters Four and Six.

The 22 participants in Project ElAd were all young men, recent high school graduates, eighteen or nineteen years old. They came from all over the country: Haifa, Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, Rosh HaAyin, Kfar Yona, Afula, Nahariya, Rehovot, Ra’anana, etc. Many but not all of them were from relatively privileged
backgrounds; all but two of them were Ashkenazi (the two exceptions were the sons of immigrants from Morocco and Yemen). As a collective, they were generally referred to as “the boys” (*habanim*) by the rest of us in the class and by the teachers. They themselves often used this name to distinguish themselves as a group from the class as a whole, and I too use this name when I refer to them as a group in the thesis. I do this even though I am aware of the potentially infantilizing effect of this term and its foregrounding of the masculine, because it reflects the terms on which the interactions and groupings that I observed were based. (See Dunk 1991 for a discussion of his use of “the boys” and Paul Willis 1988 on “the lads.”) I make every effort to counteract the potentially homogenizing effect of sometimes referring to these 22 young men as a group by also describing many of them individually, in detail, at the place in the thesis where I discuss each of their particular interactions or comments (see especially Chapters Three and Six). In this way I allow the reader to get to know them as individuals with very different perspectives, opinions, and experiences who are nonetheless part of a well-defined group with its own defining characteristics (which may or may not match up with those of each individual).

Indeed, a large part of the experience of Givat Haviva for these boys was that of “gibush,” or group bonding, an initiation into a sort of quasi-military group identity (on *gibush* see Katriel and Nesher 1986). This was a strange sort of liminal period for them. Most of them had graduated from high school the previous spring (a few were coming to the course after a year of national service – *shnat sherut* –

13 An alternate translation would be “the guys”.

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following their graduation) and all their friends had already gone through the nearly universal right of passage for Jewish Israelis of “giyus” – being recruited or called up to the army.\textsuperscript{14} They were not yet officially called up (they would be a month after completing the course), they were not in uniform nor had they been issued weapons, but their lives were already in many ways not their own.

While waiting at the station in Herzliya for the train to Jerusalem one Friday afternoon, Yaniv patiently explained to me the process by which he and the others had arrived in the course. I was on my way to my sister’s for the weekend; Yaniv was on his way to his friend’s swearing in ceremony at the Kotel. He lives in Rishon LeZion, a predominantly working class town south of Tel Aviv and is the son of Russian immigrants. Yaniv told me that he never wanted to learn Arabic (he took it in Junior High and hated it) but he always wanted to be in Modi’in. Their group of 22, he explained, was selected from about 1000 young men who were invited to the first stage of try-outs for Modi’in, a few years earlier. They were selected based on their physical “profile” (a score out of 100 based on strength, fitness, eye sight, etc. that determines your suitability for various roles in the army), grades in school, the results of linguistic aptitude tests, personality assessment interviews, and a security screening. Theirs is an elite, select group, he explained (and Michal confirmed this).

Yaniv, like the rest of the boys, didn’t know much about what he would do in his service, and he was likely not telling me everything he knew. Whatever it is it will be important and top secret, he told me. There was much speculation on the

\footnotetext{14}{On militarism in Israel see Lieblich 1989, Ben Ari and Lomsky-Feder 1999, Kimmerling 2001.}
subject among the boys. After the course they expected to be called up, then sent to an army base for further language training, specializing in a particular dialect of Arabic, for six months or a year. From there, they would go to work. The general consensus was that their job would be “listening” (ha’azana) – as distinct from “field intelligence.” They had a vague idea that they would sit for hours on end plugged in to ear-phones. But what would they be listening to? They would be following Arabic media, according to some, listening in on wiretaps, according to others. Most of them agreed that they would be working to prevent bombings and to keep Israel safe. Some of them acknowledged that they would likely give information that would lead to people’s deaths. A few of them were relieved that they would not have to be in combat, that they would not have to stand at a checkpoint. Two (Shachar and Daniel, whom we meet in Chapter Three) chose to go to Modi’in despite their combat-ready physical profile precisely to avoid this; ideally they would have liked to refuse to serve but were not willing to take on the consequences. At least one (Benny, whom we also meet in Chapter Three) saw Modi’in as a shameful second best, the most prestigious position he could get with his non-combat physical profile. When I asked Yaniv what they would be doing he winked: “I could tell you but then I’d have to kill you.” They were eighteen and nineteen years old the year I spent with them, and the thought of them being handed automatic weapons in a few months’ time regularly broke my heart. By now, they will be nearing the end of their army service.

Ours was a make-shift community, brought together by the common goal of learning Arabic, despite great differences in motivations and agendas. The diverse
backgrounds and perspectives of these individuals, as well as their movements and interactions, offer a way in to understanding the place where we all came together: Wadi Ara. In the chapters that follow, the reader will get to know many of them in greater detail.

My days at Givat Haviva were spent balancing two different roles, each exhausting and intensive: I was a full-time student of literary and colloquial Arabic and a full-time anthropologist. I conjugated verbs, did homework, and wrote tests and quizzes along with my classmates while at the same time observing, recording, and making note of their interactions and conversations. I sat at my desk in class with my recorder on and with two notebooks open in front of me: one for fieldnotes, one for class notes. I switched back and forth between them, making a note of the time on the recorder whenever the teacher made a comment that interested me, or whenever class discussion or the whisperings around me took an interesting turn.

Class began at 8:30 a.m. and ended at 6:15 p.m., with an hour and a half break for lunch, Sunday through Thursday. Friday mornings we had a test before we scattered for the weekend. The bulk of our schedule was split between literary and colloquial Arabic, with a few hours a week on “The Middle East” and with occasional lectures (e.g., “October 2000”), workshops (e.g., “Arab Music”), and field trips (see Chapter Six). We conjugated verbs, wrote daily vocabulary quizzes, translated passages from Arabic newspapers, the Qur’an, radio broadcasts, and Um Kulthoum songs. Our classrooms were rickety, flimsy structures, cold in the winter months and terribly damp on rainy days. One wet morning in January I arrived late to find everybody milling about in the hallway, giddy at the interruption to routine: our
classroom had flooded overnight. There was a corner in the hallway, stocked with the ubiquitous Nescafe and tea and, if you were lucky and if the administrator was in a good mood, a box of cookies. Daniel kept the corner stocked with wild mint, sage, and lemon grass, for which he foraged on breaks. There was an old, out-of-tune piano in the corner, and Shachar often played during breaks.

Outside of the classroom, I carried my recorder around with me whenever I could, during breaks, on fieldtrips, and whenever I felt it would not be too obtrusive. When I left it behind, I often found myself wishing I had it, and instead took detailed fieldnotes at the next opportunity. I also joined my classmates in their lives outside of Givat Haviva: eating meals, doing homework and studying, going on hikes and bike rides, hanging out in pubs or coffee shops, visiting their homes on weekends and meeting their families. In all I taped approximately 230 hours of talk.

I also carried out open-ended, informal interviews with approximately 25 people. I conducted most of my interviews toward the end of my time in Israel, so they were with people I had come to know well over a period of at least six months before interviewing them. In the chapters that follow I have tried to include, where possible, the context of the interviews or conversations I quote from, as well as personal information about each speaker, in order to avoid the effect of quotes coming from nowhere. In a few cases I interviewed more than one person at a time – friends who were often in conversation with one another, and who were comfortable talking together, with me. While at the time this was more of a pragmatic than a methodological choice, I find that these are some of the richest interviews, since they allowed me to audio-tape conversations between friends that
I was often a part of – but often without with my tape recorder. I hope it will be clear that the questions I asked in my interviews were not imported theoretical concerns; indeed, they were not the questions I came to the field with. I used the interviews to follow up on events I had observed or participated in, to ask about how people understood and interpreted these events, and to ask people to explain their reactions or their points of view.

I cast my net widely, and my notes are filled with observations that have not made it into this thesis. I paid attention to comments about Arabs and Islam, about modernity and backwardness, about women in Arab society (a favourite topic), about the military and militarism in Israel, about the connection between army intelligence and language learning, about homophobia and displays of masculinity. I noted the ways people talked about the Arabic language and about language learning, about their reasons for learning Arabic, about Arab “customs and traditions” (widely agreed to be a necessary part of learning the Arabic language), about Ramadan, the Qur’an, Muslim weddings, Arab food, traditional sayings (another favourite topic), folk tales and songs. I listened when people talked about politics and when they responded to what they had heard on the morning news.

The observations and interactions that form the core of this thesis, though, are those that have to do with place and space, movement and mobility – with how people understand, interpret, and navigate the landscape around them. I listened when people gave directions or discussed the best routes or detours or how to get places. I paid attention to how people navigated when I drove with them, which landmarks were relevant and how they named them, how they identified roads and
valleys and directions. Conversations about fear, safety, or danger caught my attention, as did stories people told about places. I listened when people mentioned the wall, or the new highway, or the checkpoints. I listened to how people talked about places they no longer went. These are the stories and voices you will hear in the coming pages.
Chapter Three

White Spaces on the Map: Geographies of Intimate Distance

1. Introduction

Meron Benvenisti is a familiar voice in the Israeli media, mainly through his frequent opinion pieces in Haaretz newspaper. He writes judiciously, passionately, and always with concern for the historical and contemporary wrongs done to Palestinians in the name of the founding and continued existence of a Jewish state. Even the many who disagree with his point of view are forced to acknowledge his expertise, which straddles politics and intellect in a way that is typical of many Israeli public figures: trained as a geographer, historian, and political scientist (and son of a famous geographer), he was deputy mayor of Jerusalem for seven years in the 1970s.

In his book Sacred Landscape, published in 2000, Benvenisti tries to fill in a picture of the Palestinian landscape lost in the 1948 war. He briefly considers how this landscape looked to the Jewish population in what was then British Mandate Palestine, just before so much of it was destroyed:

[F]ew . . . Jews had ever visited an Arab village, and even those who had done so did not speak Arabic and so could not communicate with the villagers, in any case. In fact, they had no reason to make such a visit . . . Even the insignificant minority who showed an interest in their Arab neighbours hesitated to actually venture into those alien communities for fear of being harmed. On the mental map carried by [Jews], the Arab communities were white patches – terra incognita.
The Jews were, of course, aware of the Arab communities, but these towns, villages and neighbourhoods had no place in the Jews’ perception of the homeland’s landscape. They were just a formless, random collection of three-dimensional entities, totally isolated from the Jewish landscape and viewed as if through an impenetrable glass wall. There – in that other landscape – were houses, orchards, and people who had meaning for the Jews only as the objects of their perceptions and political concerns, but not as subjects in their own right. The attitude of the Jewish population toward the Arab landscape – physical and human alike – was a strange mixture of disregard, anxiety, affection, superiority, humanitarianism, anthropological curiosity, romanticism, and, above all, European ethnocentricity (Benvenisti 2000: 56).1

I read this sitting on a bench in October sunshine in 2003, in Baka, a neighbourhood of Jerusalem, where I had just rented a one-room apartment. I had recently returned to Jerusalem to begin my fieldwork, and was acutely aware that my new neighbourhood had once been part of the lost Palestinian landscape Benvenisti describes. The old stone houses with their high, arched windows that made the neighbourhood so picturesque had been inhabited by Arabs until the 1948

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1 See also Oz Almog (1997), Ella Shohat (2001), Gil Eyal (2006) for descriptions of the ambivalent attitude of Jewish settlers in the pre-state period to their Arab neighbours. Eyal Weizman summarizes this succinctly: “Zionists saw the Palestinians either as late-comers to the land, devoid of thousand-year-old roots or, paradoxically, as the very custodians of the ancient Hebrew culture and language of this land – all this without any sense of contradiction” (2007:44). See also Chapter Six for further discussion.
war. At this point I had started learning Arabic but mostly my days were still absorbed with small sweet pilgrimages to familiar and beloved spots in this city that I had so missed, among them the book store at the Hebrew University on Mount Scopus, where I found this book. The passage resonated for me in a way that at the time was difficult to articulate. I now see that it encapsulates many of the themes which asserted themselves with growing insistence during my fieldwork, and which became the focus of my dissertation: the intimate, daily ways in which Jews and Palestinians maintain their distance; the connection between spatial and linguistic practice; and the role of fear and of erasure in creating and maintaining social boundaries. The image of the white patches on the map is particularly vivid, calling to mind the old maps of explorers, on which the white spaces marked the area of the unknown – *terra incognita* – throwing into relief the boundary between a safe, civilized self and the wild, unknowable other. The ‘whiteness’ of these spaces is racialized in unexpected ways, relying on old oppositions between light and darkness, self and other, even as it reverses them. It is these oppositions that make the image so resonant, in Benvenisti’s description, since the ‘white’ spaces he describes are both obscured and racialized – rendered dark – by ignorance, erasure, avoidance, and fear.²

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² Though Benvenisti does not mention Joseph Conrad, and though I recognize this only belatedly, it is perhaps Conrad’s discussion of “white spaces on the map” in *Heart of Darkness* that gives the image its particular enduring, contradictory resonance: to explore the white spaces on the map one must venture into the heart of darkness. Nesiah (2003:4), in her analysis of Joseph Conrad’s use of the image in relation to international law, boundaries, and territoriality, writes: “Conrad both invokes dualisms and then also rearranges their inherited meanings. Here . . . the familiar positive moral connotations of white in relation to black are invoked in one page, then reversed in the next. Moreover, the transition from white spaces on a
This chapter explores the contemporary relevance of Benvenisti’s observation by describing “the attitude of the Jewish population toward the Arab landscape” (Benvenisti 2000:56) in Wadi Ara during the time I did my fieldwork there. Specifically, I explore how the people with whom I did my fieldwork navigate in, around, and through Palestinian spaces – discursively and spatially. In tracing the contours of this landscape and its various boundaries, as they are understood and experienced by these people, what emerges is a geography of intimate distance, maintained by daily acts of encounter or avoidance. It is a distance maintained in the face of “unavoidable proximities” (Hartigan 1999:86); it therefore requires a considerable amount of interactional work. While these spaces are shaped by various forms of erasure, they are far from being ignored. Israeli Jews return to them again and again, whether directly or indirectly, whether through critical reflection or through fear, as they work out the conflicted meanings of these spaces in conversation with one another (though almost never with the Palestinians who live in them). The historical and geographical context outlined in the previous chapters should emphasize that these discussions and movements are occurring in

map to the heart of darkness is not just (although it is inescapably that too) an allusion to a continent of black people, it is also an allusion to white spaces on a map that are filled up by the darkness of imperialism and all the brutality and plunder associated with it.” See also Anderson (2006[1983]:173-176) on the role of map-makers and explorers in “filling in” the white spaces, making them legible in particular colonial forms.  
3 This formulation is also inspired by Benvenisti (2006), who writes of the “intimate disregard” between Jews and Arabs in Israel: “like that of a man who can ignore his own shadow, but cannot be rid of it.” Rebecca Stein (2008:89) has recently written on issues of interiority, proximity, and small scale in planning Palestinian villages as tourist spaces in terms of a “geography of intimacy.”
4 This is how John Hartigan (1999) describes the spatialization of race in the extreme-poverty neighbourhood of Detroit where he did fieldwork.
the context of a very specific political historical moment and a time of crisis and change. I argue that changing meanings of these spaces in people’s talk and movements both reflect and circumscribe the changing place of Palestinians within the Israeli nation.5

In this chapter I introduce Aliza, Yoav, Benny, Yuval, and Daniel. In sections organized around each of them, I follow them in their movements through the divided landscape of Wadi Ara, as I listen to them explain how they relate to different spaces: where they go and where they do not, how they make these choices, and how they understand the impact of their movements and those of others. Through their movements and conversations, I explore the meaning of the “white spaces” on the map, the boundaries that keep them from entering Palestinian places, and, more broadly, what I call in this chapter the geographies of intimate distance that divide and connect Jews and Palestinians in Israel.

In its focus on individuals, the structure of the chapter is intended to emphasize the highly perspectival and contingent nature of social boundaries (see also Yuval Davis and Stoetzler 2002b). While the next chapter is concerned with how social boundaries change over time, I structured this chapter to focus on how they shift in the perspectives of different people. In this I engage with recent work that tries to capture the dynamism and flux of social boundaries, their situated,

5 It must be noted that this chapter describes Palestinian spaces as they appear to Israeli Jews and not as they are to those Palestinians who live in them. While a few Palestinian voices are heard in the chapter, and in the thesis, I did my fieldwork primarily with Israeli Jews and as such am limited to their perspectives (I discuss this in the Preface). I would suggest, and I hope to explore this in future research, that ‘intimate distance’ would be an accurate way to describe these geographies from the perspective of Palestinian Israelis as well, but both the intimacies and the distance would take very different shape and form.
shifting, and varied nature, and the ways they are configured and reconfigured through daily practice (e.g., Hartigan 1999, Caldeira 2000, Misselwitz and Rieniets 2006, Monterescu and Rabinowitz 2007; see Chapter One).

The people I encountered during my fieldwork were Israeli Jews brought together in Arabic language classrooms. Their movements and fears were as varied as their political perspectives: some spent their time monitoring human rights violations in the West Bank, and others were afraid to go to the market in the neighbouring Arab village. Through the juxtaposition of these radically different perspectives, I hope to complicate my own rubric, borrowed from Benvenisti, adding nuance and colour to “the mental map carried by Jews,” showing instead of a singular “mental map” a variety of situated geographic imaginations.

2. Aliza: “There’s no one to talk to”

On the rare occasions when Ruth, my regular lift, could not make it to our Arabic class at Givat Haviva, Aliza gave me a ride. She would pick me up at the big mall by the side of the highway in North Tel Aviv, near her home in a luxury high rise with a view of the Mediterranean. Probably in her early sixties, Aliza is now enjoying a second career in semi-retirement: she left a high-powered bank job to become a guide with an international touring company. Every so often she would return to class after an absence and tell us about her trip to Berlin, Budapest, one time India. She loved Berlin, but couldn’t wait to leave India as she said she was overwhelmed by the dirt. She would explain how she researches her destinations

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6 See Chapter Two for a detailed description of these students and of their reasons for learning Arabic.
before the trips, downloading maps and historical, archaeological, and cultural material from the internet. The daughter of Iraqi immigrants, she would joke that she is just like the stereotype of an insular resident of Tel Aviv: she can find her way around better in European capitals than in the rural north of Israel. Aliza is immaculately well dressed and manicured, and her car is spotless, spacious, and very air-conditioned.

As we drove north along the shore road, one morning in May, she held forth on why she was having so much trouble improving her Arabic: “The problem is that there’s no one to talk to. (Ein im mi lehader.) Really, there’s no one to open your mouth with.”7 She explained that for Zohar and others in the class who live in the north (around Wadi Ara) there’s so much more opportunity. But for her, living in Tel Aviv, there’s no one around to speak Arabic with. True, she admitted, she is surrounded by Arabic speakers: her cleaning lady, the greengrocer, the car mechanic. But she never speaks with them in Arabic. For one thing, they all speak Hebrew so it feels silly. When she tries to speak to them in Arabic, she freezes. The best way to learn a language is “on the street” (ba rechov), she insisted, repeating advice we heard often from our teachers.8 But the problem is that “there is no Arab street in Israel” (ein rechov Aravi).

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7 My conversation with Aliza was not taped. In this section, then, I am paraphrasing what she said, based on my notes. The parts that are in quotation marks are the only parts where I’m sure I got her wording exactly right. The bracketed italics are the original Hebrew wording of certain key phrases.

8 Riyad, one of our teachers, put it this way: “Here you’re going to learn maybe thirty percent of the language. You’ll get the base. The best is to learn in the street. Go outside, go live with a family for three weeks. Three weeks in a village is better than a year in a classroom.”
As we took the turn-off from the shore road and headed east on a road that winds through picturesque fields and *moshavim* (agricultural settlements), Aliza continued. The last time she actually spoke Arabic with someone outside the class was when she called her son in London and reached a wrong number. The voice at the other end couldn’t understand her, and she could tell it was an Arabic speaker. So Aliza said “wrong number” in Arabic before she hung up.

“*Ein im mi ledaber*” (there’s no one to talk to) was a complaint I heard often from Aliza and other classmates who wanted to practice their Arabic with native Arabic speakers but complained of a lack of appropriate interlocutors. My classmates frequently bemoaned the fact that they did not have an opportunity to speak Arabic outside of the classroom. A few expressed jealousy that, with my Canadian passport and native English, I could go learn Arabic in Cairo or Amman. They wondered why I didn’t, since there I could learn the language in the best way possible: on the street. The absence of “Arab streets”9 remarked on by students in a school located not ten minutes’ drive away from two Arab cities is striking. Likewise, it is remarkable that someone living in a country where at least eighteen percent of the population speaks Arabic as a native language needs to call a wrong number in London in order to find someone with whom to speak.

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9 See Asef Bayat (2003) and Ranya AbdelSayed (2003) for discussions of recent Western preoccupation with the “Arab street” and its (imagined) role in the politics of dissent in the Arab world. Bayat argues that “the ‘Arab street’ is damned if it does and damned if it doesn’t – it is either ‘irrational’ and ‘aggressive’ or it is ‘apathetic’ and ‘dead.’” Either way, the concept “reifies the culture and collective conduct of an entire people in a violent abstraction” (44). It is interesting that for Aliza and others like her, the ‘Arab street’ is also found lacking, but it figures instead – albeit in its absence – as the site of cultural/linguistic authenticity.
Aliza’s complaint, though, is based on much more stringent criteria than linguistic competence; recall that her Arabic-speaking ‘cleaning lady’ does not qualify. It is not just an Arabic speaker that she seeks and doesn’t find, but a particular kind of speaking subject and, by implication, a particular kind of citizen. Her criteria for her ideal interlocutor remain unspoken (implying an assumption that I would understand them and agree with them – an assumption I found myself resenting), but it is safe to say that they are informed as much by race, class, gender, and political ideologies as by language.

In order to understand this, it is necessary to hear an echo at work in her words. “There’s no one to talk to” tastes – to use Bakhtin’s (1981) word – of another context. A common explanation for the collapse of the Oslo accords and the subsequent failure to re-start negotiations is the lack of a liberal, democratic, moderate mainstream among Palestinians. “There’s no one to talk to” is the frequent shorthand explanation for this in certain soft-left liberal circles in Israel – those same disillusioned circles that voted Likud for the first time in January 2003, bringing Ariel Sharon into power (see Chapter One). The pre-condition for negotiating for peace, as expressed by this complaint, is the existence of an ideal negotiating partner – or interlocutor – bearing an appropriate civic and political sensibility. In failing to live up to this ideal the Palestinians prove themselves an

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10 “Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life” (Bakhtin 1981:293). Thank you to Marnie Bjornson for bringing this quote to my attention.

11 Another common way to phrase this is “ein partner” (there’s no partner). Using the English word partner (rather than the perfectly good Hebrew word for it – shutaf) “tastes” of the American involvement both in the negotiations and in interpretations of their failure.
unworthy “partner” in peace. Because this ideal is informed as much by orientalist as by ethnocentric judgments, the Palestinians simultaneously prove themselves an inadequately “civilized” global subject. Those who voice this complaint, then, locate the blame for the current impasse in intrinsically Palestinian failures. In addition to absolving themselves of any guilt, they express at once a willingness to negotiate and their regret at the impossibility of any productive negotiations. Aliza’s complaint that she can’t find someone to speak Arabic with is phrased in exactly the same terms and, in fact, it seems that her interlocutors and those of the peace process are found lacking in similar ways.

As we approached Givat Haviva we passed the road coming from Baka al Gharbiya, a Palestinian town that we had bypassed on our route. Aliza mused, “I wonder why we don’t drive that way – it’s much closer to drive that way.” She then proceeded to answer her own question: “But there they hate Jews.” When I expressed surprise at this judgment, she offered evidence. One time, she told me, she drove derech habik’a (along the “valley road” that cuts through the West Bank) and stopped at a bakery along the way. She chatted with the baker, an Arab man, and asked him where he was from. “From Baka,” he answered. So she told him she’d like to go there, to see what it’s like. His reply: “Ma pit’om!” – an expression of surprise and dismay that could be roughly translated as “What are you talking about!” “I’m scared to go there,” Aliza concluded. “I hear they hate Jews there.”

12 The inadequately civilized subject is, of course, a common trope in imperial/colonial discourse, used as a justification for occupation in a variety of contexts (see e.g., Pratt 1992, Grewal 1996, Rafael 2000; see also Chapter Six).
While Aliza does not make this connection herself, it seems clear to me that her fear of entering Baka (and places like it) provides a ready explanation for the absence of an Arab street in her understanding of Israeli topography. While it is not within the scope of my research to discuss this in depth, I would suggest that the Israeli left’s assessment of their Palestinian interlocutors may be similarly compromised.

3. Yoav and Benny: “Do they have blue ID cards?”

The school bus turned off Wadi Ara road and began a steep ascent along a road that slowly deteriorated as we climbed, until it was just dirt and gravel. At the point where the bus could go no further, we climbed down and clustered around our teacher Riyad, on a sparse wind-swept ridge. It was a Wednesday afternoon in October. On the schedule posted on the bulletin board outside the classroom, the day’s date was blocked off and over it was written Class Trip: Green Line.

The green line is the armistice line of 1949: the border of Israel until 1967, when Israel occupied the West Bank, Gaza, and the Golan Heights (also Sinai but that was later returned) in the Six Day War. While the green line currently marks the internationally recognized borders of Israel, the line does not appear on most Israeli-made maps of the country – including any maps the boys would have encountered in school. This follows a government decision in 1967 to erase it from atlases, maps, and textbooks (see Newman and Yacobi 2005).13

13 In December 2006 (after my fieldwork) Yuli Tamir, Minister of Education and a member of the Labour party, recommended that the green line be included in all maps appearing in new textbooks and curriculum materials. This recommendation
Below us to the north was a panoramic view of the white roofs of the city of Um el Fachem (see figure 3.1). Below us to the south Riyadh pointed to where the wall – here not concrete but a fence, both barbed wire and electric, with swaths of land on either side – cut through the landscape, the hills of the West Bank in the distance beyond (see figure 3.2). While in other parts of the country the route of the wall cuts into Palestinian territory, Riyadh explained, here it follows along the green line. The border here was created in 1949, he continued, when the ceasefire halted the retreating Jordanian army here, on the south side of this ridge, beyond Um el Fachem. This left Wadi Ara (which at the time was populated almost entirely by Palestinians) inside Israel. The inhabitants of the Wadi, including those of Um el Fachem, were subsequently granted Israeli citizenship. They are full and equal citizens, formally entitled to the same rights and privileges as Jews, though the reality is somewhat different, explained Riyadh (see Chapter Two). As Riyadh offered an example of their treatment by the Israeli state, explaining how land was confiscated from Um el Fachem in order to build a military camp over there, in the hills of Ramat Menashe to the north, Yoav interrupted him: “Wait a minute, wait a minute. In Um el Fachem do they have blue ID cards?” (yesh lahem teudot kchulot?) That is, do they carry the same form of identification that all Israeli citizens carry?

In order to understand Yoav’s question it is important to recognize the central place of identity papers (Hebrew: teudat zehut; Arabic: hawiye) in the highly stratified system that regulates who has access to what rights and privileges and was met with an uproar from Likud Knesset members, who accused Tamir of forcing her left-wing ideology on the nation’s children, and rabbinical authorities, who forbade students from using the new textbooks. (See Eldar 2006, Pogrund 2006.)

14 This is a slightly different version of events from what I outline in Chapter Two.
who can go where in Israel.\textsuperscript{15} In particular, Palestinians carry different coloured identity cards which mark their differential status: those living in the West Bank and Gaza carry green cards and have no claims whatsoever to Israeli citizenship; those living in East Jerusalem carry orange cards and are considered residents, but not citizens of Israel; and those who live inside the green line, within the undisputed borders of Israel, carry blue identity cards – the same as any other citizen of Israel. All Israeli citizens are legally obliged to carry these identity cards at all times and present them on demand, as per the Identity Card Carrying and Displaying Act of 1982. On these cards, in addition to sex, place of birth, and names of mother and father, there is a space marked “leum,” which can be translated as nation (though the Hebrew word has multiple overtones). The main options for filling in this space – Jew or Arab – point to the ways categories of identity in Israel overlap in confusing and highly loaded ways.\textsuperscript{16} This belies what Benedict Anderson (2006:166) calls “the

\textsuperscript{15} See Kelly 2006 for an interesting discussion of “the role of identity documents in producing the particular texture of relationships between persons and states in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.”

\textsuperscript{16} Other options include Druze and Circassian, but these are a very small minority. Leum can be translated as nation, but where it distinguishes between bearers of the same citizenship card, it can be understood as referring to ethnic affiliation. Jew, then, is in this context a marker of ethnic or national, not religious identity, and its opposite is Arab, not Muslim or Christian, and certainly not Palestinian. National identity used to be filled in on identity cards by the Ministry of the Interior regardless of the card-bearer’s preference. As of 2005 (after my fieldwork) this category was removed from identity cards. This outcome followed from a dispute not over the questionable ‘nationality’ of Palestinian Israelis but over another fundamental dilemma of Israeli existence, referred to as the “who is a Jew” debate. When the Supreme Court ruled that people who converted to Judaism through a Reform (rather than an Orthodox) conversion be identified as Jews on their identity cards, the Minister of the Interior (a member of Shas, an Orthodox party) decided to remove the category altogether rather than identify as Jews those not considered Jewish by Orthodox Jewish law.
fiction of the census”: “that everyone is in it and that everyone has one – and only
one – extremely clear place.”

When Yoav asked whether residents of Um el Fachem carry blue identity
cards, his question was met with a few snickers (he was notorious in the class for his
frequent questions, often coming from somewhere in the vicinity of left field). But
he is not alone in his confusion over the status of the residents of Um el Fachem and
places like it. A few minutes earlier Lior, a thoughtful and earnest boy who got the
best marks in the class, had approached me and quietly asked: “Is Um el Fachem
Israeli?”

On which side of the green line are Palestinian citizens of Israel located? This
question persisted, even as we stood on a ridge, peering down over the green line as
it clearly and concretely divided the landscape, with the West Bank on one side and
Israel and Um el Fachem on the other side. Beyond geographic confusion, I argue
that the persistence of Yoav’s question reflects a deep ambivalence over whether or
not to include Palestinian citizens of Israel within the imaginative green line that
marks the boundaries of the Israeli nation.

Yoav and his friend Benny were the tough guys in the class. Disappointed
that they were assigned to army intelligence (this was the reason they were in the
course), they made it clear at any opportunity that they had wanted to be assigned
to a combat unit. Benny’s family lives in one of the many dormitory suburbs south
of Tel Aviv, a wealthy one. Yoav is the son of Yemenite immigrants and lives in Rosh
HaAyin, a town on the coastal plane, populated largely by other families from
Yemen. I interviewed them both one day during our lunch break, sitting on desks in
the teachers’ lounge. Benny told me he had never been in an Arab village before the course:

In my whole life I’ve never been in an Arab village. Why not? Because, stam (just because), there’s nothing for me there. (Ein li ma lechapes sham – literally, I’ve got nothing to look for there.) You know, we live apart. Me, the Arab village nearest to me is maybe 100 kilometres away, it’s not close . . . A Jew like me, who lives in the centre, in Gush Dan [the area around Tel Aviv], things like this don’t concern you so much. Arabs. It’s like a kind of bubble. It’s a kind of bubble.

The nearest Arab village to Benny’s home is actually around ten kilometres away, though it is in the West Bank. The nearest Arab village within Israel is twenty kilometres away. I asked Yoav if it was the same for him, if he had never been in an Arab village before the course. He responded with a bit of bravado:

No no no. My dad works with Arabs so sometimes they come eat at my house and stuff like that (shtuyot kaele). I’ve been to Kfar Kasem, Kfar Bara.

Yoav’s dad is a contractor who hires Arabs to do construction work for him. Both Kfar Kasem and Kfar Bara are located within a ten kilometre radius of Yoav’s home.

When I asked Yoav why he had gone to these places, he laughed and answered:

On a driving lesson! No, but also to buy things like coal, firecrackers.

My dad goes there . . . People will tell you: ‘ein lecha ma lechapes sham’ (there’s nothing for you there). But me, my dad, when I came to the course for the first time for instance, we drove through Baka al
Gharbiya. Okay, at first it was by mistake [he laughs] but after he stopped, got out, bought things, felt at home [hirgish babayit], you know.

Yoav’s description of his dad feeling “at home” (babyit) in Baka echoes his earlier mention of his father’s Arab employees eating at his own home. Here the recurrent image of house and home (the Hebrew word for them is the same: bayit) creates a picture of intimate proximity construed as neighbourliness; the other, more threatening side of this proximity, however, soon emerges. I asked Benny if the ‘bubble’ he feels he lives in has anything to do with fear, and he responded: “More than fear it’s lack of knowledge” (choser yeda). Yoav added:

Listen, there’s no fear and all that but one day it’s going to come back at you for sure. (yom echad ze holech lehitnakem becha bedugri — literally, it’s going to get revenge on you for sure.) We’ve heard about lots of people on the news who all they did was go to do some normal business (iska regila), like always, every Sunday sitting and drinking coffee with some Arab (eize aravi) and in the end they got shot. (kiblu eize kadur – literally, caught some bullet)

The implication of Yoav’s warning is that we are perhaps lulled into a false sense of security, that it is our lack of fear that will, in the end, prove dangerous or ‘get revenge’ on us. It is precisely our intimate proximity to Arabs – the fact that they eat in our homes and we feel at home shopping in their towns, the fact that drinking coffee together is “normal business” – that puts us in danger. This is not, it turns
out, an image of neighbourliness but an explanation of why it is dangerous to trust
Arabs. Having never heard of such an event myself, I challenged Yoav on his story:

   Abigail: We’ve heard about this? InSIDE Israel or in the territories?
   Yoav: [No, in Israel -
   Benny: No, in the territories that’s -]

   Yoav: Ya, like, in the territories, you went to some Arab (*halachta le
   eize aravi*) and –

   Abigail: Ok, but to go to Baka al Gharbiya is not to go to, I don’t know,
   Hevron.

   Yoav: Still, listen what, also in Jenin there’s uh -

   Abigail: Jenin’s in the territories.

   Yoav: Um, Jenin! Ha! um, also in Um el Fachem there’s stuff like that
   (*shtuyot kaele*).

Yoav’s confusion over where Jenin is located – whether in the territories or in Israel
– and his uncertainty over which side of the border the violence he describes took
place in (despite my insistence that this distinction is important), echoes his earlier
question about the inhabitants of Um el Fachem. It seems that the crucial historical,
political, and geographical distinction between Palestinians living in the territories
and Palestinian citizens of Israel is not one that is relevant to Yoav and Benny. What
is relevant to them is the *Arab* identity of these people and the places in which they
live, rather than their location on this or the other side of the green line. Um el
Fachem is not distinguished from Jenin because both are understood as equally
dangerous and inaccessible, and equally outside the bounds of the Israeli state –
though one is administered by the local regional council and the other is across a wall and a checkpoint. What matters is that in either place you are liable to be harmed by “some Arab.”

The conflation of these very differently positioned groups represents a curious elision of the internationally recognized border that separates them. Critical Israeli scholars understand the erasure of the green line from state maps as an attempt to incorporate the occupied territories into the Israeli territorial imagination. David Newman (1995:15) calls this a process of “territorial socialization,” meant to create mental images of homeland maps focusing on the area of mandate Palestine as a territorial whole. Yoav and Benny show that they are indeed not clear on the location of the green line, its contours, and which Arabs live on which side; on the maps that I asked them to draw for me at the beginning of our interview, the green line is markedly absent.
The territories of the West Bank and Gaza are not marked off from Israeli territory in any way on either of these maps. Instead, they appear as white, empty spaces encased within the clearly bounded space of Israel. The absence of the green line is particularly glaring given that these maps were drawn after construction of the wall was completed along most of its length, and after we went on a class trip with the explicit purpose of seeing and learning about the green line and the wall. In

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17 Other white spaces include the Negev, on Benny’s map, and the northern Galil on Yoav’s – both known in common Israeli parlance as the “periphery,” and both areas where many Palestinian Israelis live. Wadi Ara itself is filled in because I asked them to mark off Givat Haviva and the places we went on our fieldtrips.

18 Benny’s map, on the left, depicts Israel as neatly enclosed, hermetically sealed within its maximal borders, floating in more white space: none of the surrounding countries are indicated. Yoav’s map indicates Egypt, Sinai (somehow elevated to the
describing how maps anticipate spatial reality Anderson (2006:176) describes the lines of longitude that set sovereignty on many colonial maps as “invisible line[s] which corresponded to nothing on the ground but boxed in Conrad’s diminishing white spaces.” On Yoav’s and Benny’s maps the absence of a highly militarized, increasingly fortified line that has a very concrete reality on the ground is an act of erasure that likewise anticipates reality and boxes in white spaces.

It is more than just erasure that is at work, though. While the green line is erased from these maps, it seems to retain a mobile presence in demarcating internal frontiers, setting the bounds of the imagined national community in ways that conflict with the national territorial imagination. In their confusion over where the green line runs and who lives on which side of it, rather than incorporating the West Bank into Israel, Yoav and Benny seem to expel places like Um el Fachem from Israel, incorporating them into the West Bank. It is as though the green line is both erased and recursively projected within the state, to separate Jewish from Palestinian citizens. Others have commented on the Israeli national imagination that sees the presence of Palestinians as a “‘defiled’ substance within the ‘Israeli’ landscape,” or, drawing on Mary Douglas, as “matter out of place” (Weizman 2007:20). But if these boys expel Palestinian Israelis from the imagined national community, they do so in a way that assumes their belonging to a larger Palestinian nation. In doing so, the irony is that they grant the Arab minority in Israel a Palestinian national identity, an identity that is routinely denied them by the Israeli
As Yoav and Benny – and others like them – engage with the meaning and location of the green line in their everyday lives, movements and interactions form “temporary lines of engagement, marked by makeshift boundaries”; these boundaries are “not limited to the edges of political space but exist throughout its depth,” marking exclusion and inclusion in a variety of often contradictory ways (Weizman 2007:4-5).

4. Yuval: “Good morning, neighbour”

A new student arrived in class one morning. It was October, only the second month of the intensive course, so his entrance interrupted the tedium of going over some very basic vocabulary in colloquial Arabic: What day was yesterday? Tuesday. What was the day before that? Monday. The head of the school brought him in, introduced him briefly to us in Arabic, and left. “How do we greet the new student?” Riyad (our teacher) prompted us. We chimed in dutifully, “Ahalan wa sahalan” – welcome. “Who wants to get to know the new student?” Riyad asked, taking advantage of his entrance to let us try out some of our “getting to know you” questions in a close-to-real-life situation: if not with an Arabic speaker then at least with someone we did not yet know. We stumbled over the questions, making mistakes of tense and agreement, but the questions we asked were determined not

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19 This is a perspective that is not unique to Yoav and Benny but is common among right-leaning Israeli Jews. Stein (2008:56) identifies a similar contradiction in the “discursive shift” that attended shifts in tourist practices in Israel: “In times of peace, the villages of the Galilee were enjoyed as explicitly “Arab” places. At moments of crisis, their threatening status of “Palestinian” came suddenly to the fore. The state-sponsored fiction of a denationalized Arab minority, a population stripped of its Palestinian identity and history, often collapsed under the weight of political crisis.” I would argue that the ubiquity of this perspective does not detract from its irony.
only by our limited vocabulary, it seems, but also by something more fundamental: “What’s your name?” followed by “Where are you from?” Over and over I observed that this is always the second question that is asked when meeting someone new in Israel. The answer carries a wealth of essential information, allowing you to place the new person in many more ways than just geographically.20

The new student, Yuval, said he is from Metser. Since this is a small place, he explained further: “North of Baka.” Riyad, locating Yuval’s home in relation to a more familiar landmark, added: “Kibbutz Metser, near Givat Haviva ya’ni (that is).”

We asked him in Arabic how old he is, his occupation, whether he is married or single, the names of the members of his family. Then Gadi asked him another essential question: “Why do you want to learn Arabic?” Yuval answered in hesitant Arabic, interspersed with corrections and clarifications from Riyad, and from Yael, a student in the class:

Yuval: All the () place (makan). In the Triangle -

Yael: region (mantika)?

Yuval: All the region of the Triangle where I live – me, to my left is Baka, to my right is -

Riyad: Meyser.

Yuval: Meyser.

Riyad: Ya’ni (that is), kif ma btita’la bitshuf Arab. What does that mean?

[He translates into Hebrew.] Everywhere you look you see Arabs.

Yuval: Every morning at three in the morning I hear –

20 For example, Aliza saying she’s from North Tel Aviv tells you she’s wealthy; Yoav saying he’s from Rosh HaAyin tells you he’s most likely of Yemenite origin; etc.
Yael: the mosque?

Yuval: I hear “Ala hu akbar” (God is great).

Riyad: Every morning at three in the morning you hear the call of the muezzin.

Yuval is a member of Kibbutz Metser, a cooperative agricultural community a few kilometres down the road from Givat Haviva. Located just inside the green line, its nearest neighbours in Israel are the town of Baka al Gharbiya and the village of Meyser, both populated by Palestinian Israelis. Metser is located on one corner of an area called in Arabic Il Muthalath, “the Triangle,” one of the regions of the country that is heavily populated by Palestinian citizens of Israel (see maps and Chapter Two). Yuval responded to the question of why he wants to learn Arabic by describing his surroundings, presenting a picture of intimate proximity with his Arab neighbours as his reason. Surrounded by Arab spaces, he feels himself surrounded by the Arabic language and so wants to learn it. While being surrounded by Arabs is often a way to talk about feelings of fear or encroachment, I don’t think that is there in Yuval’s description of his surroundings. Speaking in Arabic of his desire to learn Arabic, he described this landscape in Arabic terms: the landmarks he used (Baka, Meyser, the Triangle region) are not the usual ways to locate Kibbutz Metser – the region is called the Chefer valley in Hebrew.21 In using the signposts of a Palestinian and not a Jewish landscape, Yuval reveals an unusual

21 Describing a place as being located near an Arab place, in a conversation between Jews, is so unusual as to be marked as a statement of some sort. You would usually name a Jewish landmark, even if it were farther away. (See Portugali 1993:160-161 for striking survey evidence of this.) For example, Rina (whom we meet in Chapter Five) always described Tnuvot, where she was living, as being “near Kalansawa” in a conscious and deliberate (and deliberately provocative) reversal of this tendency.
sensitivity to his surroundings, and to the politics of describing this landscape in the Arabic language. Riyadh, though, seemed to pick up on Yuval’s words in another register – as though he was describing feeling surrounded by an unwanted preponderance of Arabs: “Ya’ni, everywhere you look you see Arabs.”

Yuval continued with an example of the ever-presence of the Arabic language in his landscape: the sound of the call to prayer which is broadcast from mosques in Baka, five times daily, including a pre-dawn call. (There used to be a muezzin who would call people to pray over a loudspeaker, but now it is a recording that is played.) This sound, broadcast from mosques all over the country, can be heard from many Jewish towns and neighbourhoods, including from the window of my apartment in Jerusalem. To many it serves as a common intrusion of Muslim-ness in an otherwise Jewish landscape, and a constant reminder of the surprising proximity of seemingly distant Arab neighbours. The auditory mingling also creates an unexpected sense of closeness since, for instance, I never went to see the mosque near me in Jerusalem, where these sounds originated, yet my days were marked by the echoes of these calls, their melody sounding sometimes eerie, sometimes melancholy, sometimes comforting. In Yuval’s account, physical proximity is felt through this audible presence, the foreign sounds incorporated into his daily environment.

Benedict Anderson (2006) describes singing the national anthem or reciting ceremonial poetry as one kind of experience of simultaneity through which the national community is imagined:
How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot they are singing.

Nothing connects us but an imagined sound (145).

The call to prayer can be understood as such an experience of simultaneity par excellence – an “echoed physical realization of the imagined community” that sets both a common rhythm and an awareness of commonality for those it calls, wherever they may be. Yet it does not call all who hear it. If the call to prayer connects Muslims all over the world through the experience of imagined sound, it also forms other connections – and divisions – closer to home.22

Barker (1999) discusses the role of sound in marking and creating degrees of belonging and not-belonging, gradations of inside and outside. The sound of the call to prayer references multiple and conflicting boundaries, reinforcing some while crossing others. Like the sound of the kentongan that Barker describes (the hollow instrument struck by night watchmen in the neighbourhoods of Bandung), the sound of the call to prayer punctuates the nights of all within its range. For those who hear it, Jews and Muslims alike, it “creates an ephemeral order, a tempo in the night”; it thus gives coherence “not just to a temporality but to a milieu in which all the nearby dwellings are drawn together” by the shared experience of this sound (Barker 1999:109). It is this that Yuval responds to, embracing the sound as an experience of audible connection among neighbours.

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22 Anderson references Hegel who observed that “newspapers serve modern man as a substitute for morning prayers” (35). Yet in this context the importance of morning prayers persists, alongside the other “mass ceremony” of reading the morning paper.
Yet the *kentongan*, as described by Barker, has other functions beyond connectivity. It not only draws a line around those who hear it; it also distinguishes between different hearers, marking certain households and demanding particular responses from particular households or individuals. The same is true of the call to prayer: it interpolates only some of its hearers. In calling Muslim listeners to prayer, it requires a response; it activates a relationship; it establishes a presence; it marks out a territory. In contrast, no response is required of Jewish listeners. They may continue about their business, go back to sleep, or most often learn to tune it out, having only the vaguest awareness of its timing or significance. The relationship activated by this sound has no relevance to them; by extension, the territory it marks does not include them. How do Israeli Jews respond to the regular audible reminder of a foreign presence in their midst? Not everyone chooses to construe it, as Yuval did, as a reminder of neighbourly connection.

While Riyad was usually easily distracted from grammar to elaborations of Muslim traditions, he did not take this opportunity to explain the schedule of Muslim prayers. Instead, he moved on and returned to the lesson: What day is tomorrow? Thursday. What is the day after tomorrow? Friday.

But the conversation was not yet over. Ten minutes later, the class had moved on and we were taking turns reading aloud a story from the textbook. We encountered a vocabulary word that we had learned the week before: neighbour (*jar*). Riyad reinforced the word by reminding us of a number of proverbs in which it appears. (He would frequently tell us that the key to Arab culture is in its wealth of proverbs.) What's the proverb we learned about the importance of knowing your
neighbour? he asked us. “Ask about your neighbour before you ask about your house.” (Neighbour – jar – rhymes with house – dar.) What’s the one about not getting involved in your neighbour’s business? “Sabach il cher, ya jari. Inta fi darak wa ana fi dari.” (Good morning, neighbour. You’re in your house and I’m in my house.) Riyadh paused before the end of the line and we chimed in with the rhyming word. Then Riyadh’s explanation of this proverb, in addressing Yuval as an example, suddenly became about a lot more than proverbs. He continued in Arabic:

That’s right. Good morning neighbour, ya’ni (that is), you and Meyser [addressing Yuval and mentioning the Arab village next to his kibbutz], that’s right that you hear Arabic but you are alone and he is alone. We say: good morning neighbour, you’re in your house and I’m in mine. Ya’ni, [translates into Hebrew] you’re in your house and I’m in my house, you’re in your head and I’m in my head. [Ata babyit shelcha ve’ani babayit sheli. Ata barosh shelcha ve’ani barosh sheli.]

Ya’ni, we don’t want to get involved in each other’s business. (Hebrew: lo rotsim lehitarev.)

Coming after Yuval’s description of intimate neighbourliness, of a common milieu bounded by shared sound, this could be understood as Riyadh’s counter-claim regarding the spatial relations of Jews and Arabs in the region: you are in your house, I am in mine; you’re on your own, I’m on my own. Like Yoav in the previous section, Riyadh is here using the image of house and home to assert a different version of neighbourliness, emphasizing separateness despite physical proximity: there may be auditory mingling but we remain fundamentally separate, each within
our own home and each within our own mind-set (“that’s right that you hear Arabic but ...”). This counter-version to what Yuval described as a close-knit, integrated landscape, unified by a common experience of sound, could be read as an assertion of territoriality, a reminder of the very separate experiences and realities of the residents of Meyser and Metser.23

Riyad’s words set up a parallel between house/home (the word for both in Hebrew is bayit) and head: “You’re in your house and I’m in my house, you’re in your head and I’m in my head.”24 “Head” can here be read, following common Israeli parlance, as mind-set or head-space.25 According to this parallel, entering somebody else’s space – their home – could possibly be construed as entering someone’s head – that is, taking on, or at least recognizing, their perspective or point of view. Riyad’s formulation can in turn be read as an assertion of the need to preserve an autonomous space in order to protect ones point of view. Entering somebody else’s home can thus be read as an intrusion, as a challenge to territoriality, or even as a threat to autonomy. I would argue that we can add a third layer to this parallel: language. To speak someone’s language was often described to me as to “enter their head,” to understand their cultural viewpoint; likewise, the link between learning someone’s language and entering someone’s space comes up repeatedly in the dissertation. Whether a visitor is read as a guest or an intruder in

23 It could also be read as a warning (‘don’t get involved’; ‘stay out’), as a reminder that segregation looks different depending on which side you are looking at it from, or as a critique of occupation masquerading as neighbourliness.
24 Thank you to Michael Chazan for pointing out this interesting parallel.
25 “To enter someone’s head” (lehikanes la rosh) is to see things from their perspective. “To be in one head” (lihiyot berosh echad) is to agree, to be on the same page.
one’s home, head, or language perhaps depends on whether or not he or she has been invited in (see also Barker 1999:109-111). That Riyadh switches from Arabic to Hebrew in addressing this comment to Yuval perhaps emphasizes that he is not extending an invitation.

What was not mentioned either by Riyadh or Yuval, but what was understood by everyone in the class to form the subtext of this interaction, is the tragic recent history of Kibbutz Metser. In November 2002 (two years before Yuval joined our class), a Palestinian gunman crossed over from the West Bank one night, entered the kibbutz, and shot and killed five people. In the coverage of this event in the Israeli media, two details were emphasized, making this stand out as particularly tragic among other similar events: first, among the victims were a 35 year old mother and her two sons, ages four and five, who were shot in the boys’ bedroom as she read them a bedtime story; and second, the spokesperson for the kibbutz stated that, in the wake of the killing, the kibbutz remained committed to the ideal of coexistence with its Arab neighbours. Depending on the source, this was presented either as misguided folly or utopian hope, but much was made in the coverage of the history of friendship and cooperation between Metser and its neighbour, Meyser. Meyser shared its well with the new kibbutz when it was in its early years, and since then generations of Meyser children have come to play in Metser’s playground.26 A month before the shooting members of the kibbutz protested the construction of the wall which was to be built some distance over the green line, cutting off the farmers

26 See Chapter Four for analysis of nostalgic narratives of coexistence.
of the village of Kafin, Metser’s other neighbours, on the other side of the green line, from their fields.

The more distant history of the kibbutz forms an important subtext to this story of coexistence, though it is a history that is not included in dominant Israeli versions of the past. The kibbutz was founded in 1953 on land that had been, until 1948, a Palestinian village. It was founded by a group of Argentinean immigrants and its location right on the border, surrounded by Arabs, was not coincidental: it was part of a settlement policy of the time of ‘Judaizing’ the frontiers (see Chapter Two).

This is the context for the two opposing versions of ‘neighbourliness’ presented by Yuval and by Riyad. Understood in these terms, what is at stake in describing Metser as surrounded by or separate from its Palestinian neighbours, connected to them or divided from them, is clearer. The mingling that Yuval describes can be understood to have dangerous consequences – the infiltration of the sound of the call to prayer into a contained Jewish space paralleling a more lethal infiltration from Palestinian spaces. Asserting the separateness of these spaces, despite their proximity, can then be understood as a way of minimizing the

27 Its name, Metser, is a Hebraicization of the name of the Arabic name, Meyser. During the era in which the kibbutz was founded, it was common to incorporate former Arabic place names in naming new Jewish settlements (see Benvenisti 2000 – often the Arabic source was retained in some form, but distorted in order to add some Biblical or nature-related meaning). But the unusual thing is that Meyser is still there, the neighbouring Arab village. It is not clear to me whether the land on which Metser was founded had formerly been part of Meyser or whether a second Arab village had been located on that land.
potential threat presented by Metser’s Palestinian neighbours – a threat which
Yuval did not refer to, but which Riyad appears to have understood as imminent.

5. Daniel: “A little less white”

On a grey day toward the end of December, we went on a fieldtrip to
Nazareth – a city of Palestinian Arabs, the majority Christians, located in the Galil,
north-east of Wadi Ara. The drooping and soggy Christmas decorations added to the
forlorn atmosphere of the quiet streets we explored. After a busy morning we
stopped for lunch at a falafel restaurant. They were expecting us, and brought the
food out to the tables as soon as we arrived: shish kebabs, shwarma, falafel, chips,
fresh pita, many small plates with salads and pickles. They had designated one of
the four tables vegetarian, and I sat there with Nurit, Hila, and Daniel – the only
vegetarian among the boys.

Daniel is a year older than most of the boys, since he deferred his army
service in order to do a year of voluntary “national service” (sherut leumi), but he
often seemed to me far more mature. He spent this year working as a counselor
(madrich) for new immigrant teenagers in a poor northern town. The other boys
would tease him for his “flower child” ways (he kept the tea corner outside our
classroom stocked with wild lemongrass and mint, which he foraged for on the
breaks, and provided me with an excellent recipe for granola) but really he was
deeply respected by all the boys. He is deliberate and thoughtful in everything he
does, and he chooses his words carefully. Deeply conflicted about his imminent
army service, he told me that joining army intelligence was a compromise; the ideal would have been to refuse to serve.

Nurit and I had spent Christmas in Nazareth earlier in the week, going to midnight mass at the Church of the Annunciation, and staying over at a convent (see figure 3.3). Daniel and his friend Niv, who lives nearby in Afula, had driven up for Christmas Eve as well. Nurit and I had tried to meet up with them but didn’t manage to find them in the crowds, so now, over falafel, the three of us compared notes of our experience.

We were surprised and thrilled by our ability to understand the mass and the cardinal’s speech, both of which were in the most formal of literary Arabic. Our attempts to speak colloquial Arabic, however, were less successful. Daniel said that he and Niv enjoyed wandering around the streets, attempting to chat with people in Arabic, until they made the mistake of telling someone that they were learning Arabic for the army – a mistake he wouldn’t make again. He said he’d like to ask other people who went through the course before him how they dealt with this dilemma, how they managed to speak Arabic with Arabs without getting into this explanation. He said he’d like to ask them also how this course changed them. Unable to resist, I asked him how he thinks this course changed him, and he paused reflectively before answering: “I’m a lot less afraid to walk around, let’s say, in places like Nazareth now.”

A few months later I interviewed Daniel at his architect parents’ beautiful home in Binyamina. Sitting in a sunny back room, cross-legged on rugs on the floor, I asked him where this fear came from. This was his reply:
Prejudice and ignorance, at the end of the day (*batachlis*). And it perpetuates itself. I have nothing personal against – there could be an Arab person, one on one, fine. So he’s Arab, okay. I have nothing against him, I’ll talk to him and everything’s okay. No. That’s not entirely true. I do have some (?) twitch, some pinch in the stomach let’s say. If I see (?) a guy who looks like a tough Arab getting on the bus. I’ll still have a thought – let’s say over whether or not I want to hitch hike with an Arab.

Abigail: Would you?

Daniel: I have.

Abigail: With that pinch in the stomach though.

Daniel: Yes. And it gets all mixed up, I don’t know. Beyond that I don’t know.

Even as he admits his fears, Daniel seems to express regret and guilt over them. We went on to discuss how this fear becomes spatialized:

Abigail: It’s become a kind of daily preoccupation, I think, especially living here [near Wadi Ara] or like for me, in Jerusalem, where to go, where not to go, whether to drive through here –

Daniel: It’s more become a kind of taboo already. Like no – you don’t – it’s not – you don’t think ‘wait a minute’ – like for example, my mom loves markets and ‘there's no markets in the area.’ Actually, there are markets really close but we don’t go to them. Going to Faradis or to
Jiser [nearby Arab towns], it’s just not – there’s no such thing for us.

For me at least. I never thought to go to Jiser, to Barta’a or something.

I suggested to Daniel a common explanation for this, telling him that lots of people said to me “there’s nothing for you there” (ein lecha ma lechapes sham). He replied slowly:

I have this feeling that (. ) just a second (. )[he’s thinking] that this thing is erased a little. I don’t need to know about these places, I don’t need to speak this language, I don’t need to know these people in order to live here a good, full, nice life from the day I am born til the day I die.

It’s as if (. ) it’s erased for me. These are areas that (. ) it’s not that I don’t have what to look for there, the question doesn’t even come up for me. There’s not - it just doesn’t come up. I drive by places like this and it’s as if it passes through my head somehow. I suppress it a little.

I ignore it.

Daniel’s words return us to the image with which I opened the chapter, of the white spaces on the map. Indeed, this was one of those exciting moments of fieldwork when theory seems to jump out of the book and into the mouths of informants. I shared my excitement with Daniel, telling him of Benvenisti’s description of the white spaces on the map which so closely resonates with his own. Thinking of what he had told me over falafel in Nazareth, I asked Daniel whether learning Arabic has changed this at all for him. “It’s made it more of an option, lets say. It’s made it a little less white.” He paused. “In the meantime there’s no big change though. It still feels to me very far away.”
6. Conclusion: Situated geographic imaginations

In characterizing “the attitude of the Jewish population [before 1948] toward the Arab landscape – physical and human alike,” Benvenisti (2000: 56) wrote that the white spaces on the map were filled in by “a strange mixture of disregard, anxiety, affection, superiority, humanitarianism, anthropological curiosity, romanticism, and, above all, European ethnocentricity.” The strange mixture described by Benvenisti accurately encompasses the variety of perspectives of the Israeli Jews I did my fieldwork with, some sixty years later. Yet while all these attitudes continue to play a role in the way some Israeli Jews view Palestinian spaces, I have tried to show that how these spaces look depends on who is viewing them. I have tried to sketch the contours of a map that is more active, more social, more varied, and more situated than the “mental map” described by Benvenisti. It may be useful to think, instead of a mental map, of a variety of situated geographic imaginations.

I draw here on Stoetzler and Yuval-Davis’ (2002) concept of the “situated imagination” as something that constructs the meaning of social knowledge, experience, and practice while simultaneously stretching and transcending it. Combining Benedict Anderson’s insights with feminist theories of standpoint and situated knowledge, they argue that the imagination is situated in that “our imaginary horizons are affected by the social positioning of our gaze. But at the

28 Rebecca Stein (2008:8), following Said (1978:53-54, cited in Stein), similarly writes of an “imaginary geography,” but it is understood in the singular, as the dominant regime of intelligibility produced by “prevailing political discourses.”
same time, it is our imagination that gives our experiences their particular meanings, their categories of reference” (327). It is through standpoint that the imagination becomes ideological, in the sense of perspectival, value-laden, and positioned (see Gal 2003). In such a highly polarized context as Israel, where the tendency is to overstate the coherence and uniformity of, for example, “the attitude of the Jewish population,” it is particularly important to emphasize (as I have in this chapter) that “collectivity boundaries are constructed by the imagination in specific ways that are affected and – to differing degrees – determined by the situated positioning – both socially and politically – of those who do the imagining” (Yuval Davis and Stoetzler 2002b:331).

What emerged through the writing as well, though, are some fundamental commonalities that underlie these very different perspectives. The commonality lies first in the constant preoccupation with the white spaces: whether in the form of a presence or an absence, they loom large in all these very different landscapes. Further commonalities lie in the assumption that Palestinian spaces are easily and obviously recognizable as such; in the frequent slippages between bodies and languages and spaces; and in certain recurring tropes and refrains: ‘there’s nothing for you there’; ‘there’s noone to talk to.’ Another commonality lies in the centrality of images of house and home in construing intimacy, enmity, neighbourliness, trust, and danger. In all these discussions of proximity or distance, presence or absence, visibility or erasure, the politics of recognition and disregard are always there in the background. What these stories reveal is that despite all the talk of fear and danger, people’s movements can not, in most cases, be explained as being only about
maximizing personal safety and security. Rather, they are about redrawing social boundaries, re-enacting segregation and exclusion in a time of crisis and radical change.
Chapter Four

Return to the Wadi: Narratives of Nostalgia, Violence, and Fear

1. Introduction: Return to the Wadi

Succot is a week-long holiday that usually falls in October, shortly after the major holidays of Rosh Hashana and Yom Kippur. In Israel, the long, hot summer is finally coming to an end; the first rain has fallen; school is about to start. Secular Israeli Jews are bored and looking for distraction. On October 7-9, 2004, they were offered a novel diversion. Among the list of nature hikes, puppet shows, galleries, and other activities listed in the daily papers, appeared an ad titled: “Return to the Wadi.” The ad, aimed to entice Israeli Jews to spend a leisure afternoon of their holiday exploring Wadi Ara, promised an exhibit by local artists, markets, guided tours of coffee-roasting houses and olive presses, and, the highlight, “twenty houses will open their doors to the visiting public and allow a peak into the Arab way of life.”1

In a 1998 paper on the emergence of rural ethnic tourism in Israel’s “Arab sector” during the years of the Oslo peace process, Rebecca Stein describes how “sites once deemed hostile were repackaged as places of Jewish leisure” (92). Previously, Stein writes (and my fieldwork confirms this), Jewish Israelis might have entered rural Palestinian communities in Israel because vegetables were cheaper in

1 Note the recurrence of the image of house and home here, in the “open doors.” In contrast to some of the uses of this image discussed in the previous chapter, it is here used to convey an invitation and an enthusiastic welcome. See Stein (2008:71-96) on the politics of interiority in Palestinian tourist spaces.
the markets there, or to bring the car to the mechanic. Many, though, kept their distance – taking the long way around rather than driving through. In the mid-1990s these places were being offered up for Jewish consumption as part of a new popular curiosity about the Arab world, which accompanied the then-utopian vision of the “new Middle East.” But these Palestinian spaces were reincorporated into a new state-authorized national geography only in very circumscribed form: as de-historicized, de-territorialized performances of authentic, native, and local Arab culture (see also Chapter Six).

“Return to the Wadi” plays on precisely the trope described by Stein, attempting to repackage sites once deemed hostile as places of Jewish leisure. But there is to this iteration an added element: Israeli Jews are being exhorted not to “come to the Wadi,” but rather to “return.” What is meant by this? Between the time of Stein’s fieldwork and the fall of 2004 the burgeoning industry she describes has all but disappeared. In the intervening years there has been a violent rupture in the “way of life” in Wadi Ara, as in all of Israel. Fear and enmity have replaced any “desire” for things Arab, and the geographies of intimate distance discussed in the previous chapter have replaced the “new proximities” Stein describes. The word “return” is rooted in this current reality of increased fear, distrust, and segregation between Palestinian and Jewish citizens of Israel.

More than that, though, “return” sets up a particular way of narrating the temporality of this contemporary geography, condensing narratives of nostalgia, violence, and fear to produce a particular configuration of past, present, and future landscapes. “Return” implies that people have not been coming to the Wadi; that is,
it suggests that Jewish Israelis are now afraid to go to places where Palestinians live, thereby obliquely referencing a landscape marked by violence. “Return” expresses an invitation, a plea, a hope that they will come. But it also invokes a time in the past when people did come, a happy time when the Wadi was full of guests, when Jews and Palestinians mingled in peaceful coexistence. Implicit in the word is a lament over the loss of this golden past, and a wish to return to these better times. The word expresses a common narrative of contemporary Israeli memory, rooted in changing political and social geographies.

Israelis adjust to their constantly changing reality by constantly revising their personal geographies, making decisions about where to go and where not to go, where they feel safe and where they do not. In Wadi Ara, during the time I did my fieldwork, this was a constant preoccupation for both Palestinians and Jews. As social boundaries are constantly re-shaped through daily interactions and movements, places that last year were part of one’s routine and familiar territory may become, for all practical purposes, gone – cut off by new barriers of fear and perceived danger as much as by new walls and borders. But the places people no longer go have not disappeared from their talk; on the contrary, these places provide a particularly poignant narrative frame through which memories of better days and the experience of drastic change are articulated. The wish for a return to the good old days of the past is repeatedly expressed through the wish to return to the places one no longer goes: the neighbouring Palestinian village, the market in the old city of Jerusalem, the harbour in Akko, the falafel restaurant in Abu Ghosh, Wadi Ara road. In everyday conversation, stories about these places abound –
stories about the ease, familiarity, and comfort with which these places used to be approached and the warm welcome one used to be able to count on. At the same time, and almost in the same breath, these stories are often followed by stories about the violence that now marks these places as off-limits, emphasizing danger, anxiety, and fear as the reasons why “we don’t go there any more.” Together these stories – and particularly their sequencing – resonate with tensions between fear and safety, conflict and consensus, blame and guilt, autonomy and integration. Through their telling and re-telling, people make sense of the experience of drastic change and, more specifically, the changing place of Palestinian Israelis within the nation.

This chapter explores the role of evocations of the past in shaping contemporary geographies. While the previous chapter is concerned with how social boundaries shift in the perspectives of different people, this chapter is concerned with how they change over time and, more specifically, with how these changes are understood, experienced, and talked about. I focus on a sequence of narratives told in an interview with two friends and informants: Nurit and Hila. In analyzing their stories of nostalgia, violence, and fear as one example of a recurrent narrative sequence, I explore how the temporality of the contemporary geography of Wadi Ara is narrated.

2. Nurit and Hila

Nurit and Hila were my closest friends in the class. Both were born in Israel and spent most of their childhood there, but their families left for the US when they
were young. They went to high school there and have degrees from American universities, but both spent a lot of time back in Israel, where their extended families live, over the years. Like me, Nurit and Hila can pass as native speakers of Hebrew or of English, and as either Israeli or North American. Both of them codeswitch with ease, switching back and forth between Hebrew and English depending on whom they’re speaking to, but also, between us, within conversations and even within sentences.

Both Nurit and Hila were learning Arabic to help them with the Palestinian human rights and advocacy work they were involved in. I was privileged to have two such incredibly sharp, critical, engaged women as my friends and confidantes during my fieldwork, and the three of us found comfort in our shared perspective on Israeli society. Nurit and Hila both brought a keen critical eye and heightened sensitivity to the goings on in Israel, like me feeling themselves both a part of and slightly removed from Israeli society. They (along with a few others, most notably Rina and Ruth, whom we meet in Chapters Five and Six) sustained a running commentary throughout my fieldwork on the complex politics behind the most seemingly mundane interactions and movements. I often felt that I was cheating in my conversations with these women – that they were doing my analysis for me. I could try out my emerging interpretations on them and they would disagree vociferously, or provide confirmation, or augment with their own observations. They would point out things that enraged them that I hadn’t noticed, or respond to an unfocused question with an hour-long debate.
Yet, because of the nature of our friendship, I always had trouble pulling out my recorder when talking to them or having a “formal” interview. So one evening toward the end of my time in Israel, we three went out for dinner to a sushi restaurant near Pardes Chana. This was our official interview – though far from a formal one – which they held me to by reminding me to take out my tape recorder and by steering the conversation back to business when we got off too far into gossip. It really ran just like countless other conversations between us, though. They asked as many questions as I did, and the topics were ones we had covered before, and ones on which my thinking has been greatly influenced by their perspectives. On this occasion our conversation was in English, so the transcripts that follow are in the original language.

Much of our conversation revolved around Nurit and Hila’s understanding of the “white spaces” on the map – of the boundaries that had kept us and our classmates from entering places like Baka and, more broadly, what I called in the previous chapter the “geographies of intimate distance” that divide and connect Jews and Palestinians in Israel. Our conversation was focused mainly on Hila and Nurit’s analysis of how these boundaries are experienced and maintained by others: by the other students in our class especially, but also by our friends, family, and acquaintances. What we have here, then, is primarily Nurit and Hila’s voicings of what they see as the perspectives, fears, and prejudices of others. But what we also see is them – and me – delicately staking out our own positions vis à vis these people and each other.
I focus specifically on a part of our conversation that followed the common and predictable sequence of narratives that are condensed by the call to “return to the wadi”: narratives of nostalgia, of violence, and of fear. Through these narratives Nurit and Hila offer some interpretive frameworks through which to make sense of the interactions and movements of Aliza, Yoav, Benny, Yuval, Daniel, and others like them, as well as their own. They both voice and at the same time critique a common way of narrating the temporality of the geographies of intimate distance described in the previous chapter.

3. “He used to go there all the time”: Narratives of nostalgia

Our conversation began with a question from Hila. She asked me what I had been asking others in the class in their interviews, and I replied that, among other things, I was interested in their reactions to our class trips to Palestinian towns and villages (see Chapter Six):

Abigail: I was curious to see what effect going to these places had on them. Because I kind of had a hunch and it turns out I was right, and this is true I think of most Israelis or a lot of Israelis, that like, they just don’t go there, they just don’t go to those places, [Nurit: right] they just don’t – like you could live in Kfar Saba [a Jewish town] and never be in Tira [a neighbouring Arab village], like ever. Ever ever ever. Do you guys have that impression too?

Nurit and Hila agreed, and we began a lengthy discussion of why this is the case. Although my question did not specify a time frame [I said “they just don’t go to those
places” and not “they don’t go there any more”) the discussion immediately turned to the temporality of the geography I had described. A series of narratives followed – of nostalgia, of violence, and of fear – that together attempt to historicize and make sense of this present landscape through telling a particular version of how it came to be.

Hila began with a story about her father who used to spend lots of time in Arab villages for work and had good relations with people there, but now refuses to go into the Arab villages near his home. I quote Hila’s narrative here at some length, because her voice comes through clearly when you listen to the story in full. My own interjections and those of Nurit are inserted in the text in square brackets:

But you know when – when I was growing up my dad – my dad’s company um worked – they had contracts with the electric company in the Ra’anana-Kfar Saba area? And they would basically cut down the trees around the high wires – the electrical high wires because you can't have plants interfering with it, and a lot of the people he worked with um were from the various Arab villages and towns in the Kfar Saba area. And there were, you know really good relations like they would come over to our house – I mean their wives were pretty traditional so they wouldn't travel so much but they invited us to their village and when we came they would like hhh slaughter a la::::mb, which was very traumatic to me as a child hhh. But you know like my mom and I – [Abigail: Where was this?] They were various – they were living in various little places around Kfar Saba I think [xxx]
around Qalqilya. And um – you know and my mom and I would be allowed to be with – with all the men up on the roof where the khafla was (Arabic for party) and the women would be in the kitchen but we would like be able to go in both places – I was young, I was very young. And then recently my dad – when my dad was here in September for the high holidays he learned that, one of these people who he used to work with died recently from a heart attack. He must have been like fifty – like a pretty young man and left you know a wido::w, he had a bunch of kids. So my dad wanted to go to the village and give the wife money? And he was AFRAID! That’s what he told me! He used to go there all the time and he said you know – [Nurit: Really. And this was close, close to where –] Qalqilya, near Qalqilya? [Nurit: Which is close to where you live right? Like –] Ya, it’s not the DISTANCE – [Nurit: It’s just the fact that it’s – ] He said to me – you know he used to go there a lot, he said ‘I really –’ and this is funny because my dad is not known as a philanthropist, he said ‘I really want to go and give her money’ you know, he WORKED for him for like twenty years almost, you know ‘I really want to go’ . . . And he said to me – actually I was there I mean ‘I’ll go with you’ and he was like ‘I’m

2 It is interesting that Hila here uses a landmark that is across the green line, in the West Bank. It is possible (though less likely) that her father’s employees came from the West Bank (see Bornstein 2002 on Palestinian workers in Israel). Because she is vague about both the time period and the exact location of these “Arab villages,” it is difficult to ascertain whether she is talking about Palestinians from Israel or from the West Bank. It is possible that she, at the time, was not herself aware of the distinction, though she certainly is now.
just – I don’t feel comfortable going.’ Which was interesting because for a person who used to go there quite a bit, who worked with – He was always very suspicious, he wasn’t like ‘Oh, let’s –’ you know, it was always like ‘kabdehu vechashdehu’ (respect him and be suspicious of him – a Hebrew aphorism) kind of thing. But. There was a lot more like – you know they would call each other on the phone, there were GOOD like – there was good relations, I was really surprised that he would – . . . But he just said ‘no:, I’m just – I’m afraid to go:.’

Nurit’s narrative sets up a contrast between a time in the past when her father had good, neighbourly relations with his Palestinian employees, when he would go to their villages “all the time,” when she herself felt comfortable and welcome there, and the present, when these good relations have broken down to the point that even her father is afraid to go there. The narrative firmly locates the geography I described in my question as a contemporary phenomenon, a relatively recent one, rephrasing my original formulation – “they just don’t go to those places” – in slightly different terms: “They don’t go there any more.” Though this is not identified in Hila’s story, the implicit break between the good old days of the past, when conviviality was manifest in mobility, and the present, when fear is manifest in segregation, is the beginning of the second intifada: October 2000.

“We don’t go there any more” was a lament I heard often from a surprising variety of people and perspectives.3 In discussing the possibility of an end-of-year

3 Jane Hill (1998) found that, in the Mexicano community where she did her fieldwork, those most likely to repeat the formulas of nostalgic discourse were
trip to Sinai with some students during a break, my literary Arabic teacher Sharon reminisced: “Just to Sinai? We always used to go to Cairo, every year. That was back in the day. It was another era. Nobody believes now that we used to go to Cairo.”

Classmates and teachers who lived in Wadi Ara reminisced about cheap vegetables, fresh coffee beans, and good olive oil in the Arab markets they no longer visited. “The best coffee is in the old market in Nazareth,” one enthused. “But I don’t go there any more.” Another recalled: “On Saturdays the markets in Um el Fachem used to be full of Jews – buying shoes, DVDs, furniture and groceries. This was five years ago, before the intifada. Now we’re afraid to go near Um el Fachem.”

There is a scene in one of our colloquial Arabic textbooks, written in the 70s by one of our teachers, Noam, in which two young Arabic language students from a kibbutz hitch-hike to Jenin in order to have a chance to practice Arabic. The friends they meet there subsequently come to visit them on the kibbutz. The ludicrousness of this scenario taking place today, in the current situation, is pointed out over and over by my classmates as we’re reading these stories, with both uproarious laughter and regret, to the extent that my Noam has said that he will have to make changes in the new edition he’s working on.

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successful men – those whose practices are legitimated by traditions. In contrast, the ubiquity of nostalgia narratives among the people with whom I did my fieldwork was striking: I heard such narratives from both Jews and Palestinians from across the political spectrum. Perhaps it served as a sort of unifying or bridging narrative: the one thing that people could agree on was that the present situation was terrible and the past was better.

4 In the end, even our trip to Sinai proved too ‘dangerous’ an undertaking: after a bomb exploded at the Hilton Hotel in Sinai in October 2004, killing many Israeli tourists, there was no more talk of a class trip to Sinai.
These laments over places people no longer go, while more condensed, follow an identical temporal logic to that found in Hila’s narrative. Like the stories of crime in Sao Paulo discussed by Teresa Caldeira (2000), in which people express nostalgia for the idyllic lives they lead before they were disrupted by crime, these narratives “divid[e] local history into before and after,” simplifying and overstating each: “the before becomes too good; the after becomes too bad.” (28)

This is a compelling narrative, one I often found myself participating in, in conversations among friends, and one I still find myself drawn to as I attempt to reconstruct the events of my fieldwork. But, following the warning of Marilyn Strathern (1995) and the examples of Jane Hill (1998), Renato Rosaldo (1993), Jasmin Habib (2008), and others, I want to shift nostalgia from means of analysis to object of inquiry, while simultaneously interrogating the constructions of places – past and present – which this narrative assumes.

Nostalgia, Strathern writes, “mourns for what is missing from the present, and thus creates representations of the past as the place where what is gone was once present” (1995:111); but nostalgia also participates in “the making of a particular present” (1995:114). Thus, as Jasmin Habib puts it (2008:78), “what is in the here and now is mired in the past and the future.” Nostalgic discourses, according to Jane Hill, act as a pragmatic claim on the present, “using ‘pastness’ as a ‘naturalizing’ ideological strategy” (1998:78). Rhetorically, the claim is that those

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5 The narratives Caldeira discusses temporalize spatial changes following a remarkably similar logic: “The neighbourhood became worse since the crowd from the north started to arrive. . . . This was about fifteen years ago. Now there are too many of them. Gorgeous houses, beautiful houses of Mooca were sublet, and today it is impossible to enter them, they’ve torn them down.”
practices that are most like the past (good relations, going to Palestinian spaces) are the most valuable, yet this narrative both assumes and confirms that the people producing it are not engaging in precisely these practices.

The resolution to this contradiction is contained in the narrative. Narratives such as Hila’s participate in a particular expression of longing identified by Rosaldo (1993) as ‘imperialist nostalgia’: “where people mourn the passing of what they themselves have transformed” (2). The “particular present” this nostalgia participates in making, then, is constructed as regrettable at the same time as the teller’s innocence in bringing about this reality is secured; nostalgia thus “transforms the responsible (colonial) agent into an innocent bystander” (3, my brackets).

Like William Jones, the early anthropologist of the Ilongot whose letters home Rosaldo analyzes, Nurit longs for “an irretrievably lost time, at once [her] childhood and a period of history” (1993:13). The longing for childhood – the most innocent of desires – is thus linked with the desire for a particular political, social, and cultural order and the ideological is thus linked with the sentimental (Rosaldo 1993). Like the pre-colonial Ilongot way of life whose loss Jones laments, the nameless Palestinian village of the past is described in Hila’s narrative in stereotypically ‘traditional’ terms. The khafla, the slaughtered lamb, and the sequestered women are contrasted with Hila’s own freedom and mobility (not only could she visit a Palestinian village, she could be either on the roof, where the party was, or in the kitchen with the women). Hila’s construction of the past friendship between her father and the Palestinian men he “worked with” uses “compelling
tenderness to draw attention away from the relationship’s fundamental inequality “(Rosaldo 1993:16). Given the reality of the Israeli labour market (see e.g. Romann and Weingrod 1991, Bornstein 2002), what I know of Hila’s family’s socioeconomic position, and her father’s later role in the story as would-be benefactor, I’m quite certain that these Palestinian men were Hila’s father’s employees and not his co-workers, though she repeatedly says they worked with him and not for him.

Nostalgia has been identified as a common element in narratives of forced displacement or relocation (see Habib 2008, McCormick 2005), where often an integral part of the expression of longing is the awareness that “this desire does not conform to an actual place in the world anymore” (Habib 2008:76). In contrast, while Hila’s narrative expresses a similar longing for lost landscapes, the villages she remembers still exist; she and her father have not been forcibly displaced, but have made a choice to no longer go there. Narratives of nostalgia of this type can be understood as a strategic way of constructing the present that laments a loss even as it secures the teller’s innocence in bringing about this loss. Implicit in the lament is a shrug of helpless self-righteousness, a refusal to accept responsibility for the choice to stay away from these places, and a denial of the consequences for those who live in them.

Nurit concludes her story with a coda:

And I thought that’s very telling about like even if you were there – you hear stories like well somebody was kidnapped, somebody was shot at or – and that’s enough to sort of colour, twenty thirty years of positive experience that one one bad story you heard.
In identifying the significance of her narrative here, Nurit evaluates the perspective from which she told it, thereby distancing herself from this perspective. The people – identified as “you” – who stay away from Palestinian spaces because of one bad story they heard are here generalized beyond her father, but they seem not to include her (this is confirmed later in the conversation – see below). The nostalgic point of view, then, is not precisely her own but also not precisely one she critiques. Nurit’s coda is also important because it links us to the next narrative in this sequence: the “bad story” she identifies, that reinscribes boundaries and marks once familiar places as off-limits, is the narrative of violence.

4. “You don’t go into those places”: Narratives of violence

Immediately following Hila’s narrative of nostalgia, Nurit agreed with her assessment and built on her point by telling two stories of her own. These are precisely the “bad stories” that played a role in Hila’s own narrative: stories of past violence. In Nurit’s words, these are the events that people “refer back to” in making sense of Palestinian places or, more specifically, in explaining why they don’t go there any more.

The first story is about one of the most horrific and most enduring images in Israelis’ recent memory, yet Nurit, Hila, and I had a considerable amount of trouble naming the event and locating it:

Nurit: I think also for a lot of the boys that I’ve talked to about going – I’ve talked to a few of them about going places, either – even when they went to like Um el Fache::m, places that a::ren’t [xxx] they always
refer back to um (.) that massacre that was? And kind of – you know what I’m talking about? Um, you know –

Abigail: Oh you mean – you mean – what are you talking about?

Nurit: Like it was – um:: (.) I don’t remember where it was but it was like – there were two soldiers, and xxx

[Abigail: It was in Hevron. Hevron –

Nurit: And there was that famous picture with that gu:::y –]

[...]

Abigail: You mean when a bunch of s– I think it was in Hevron, right?

When a bunch of soldiers went into Hevron –

[Nurit: I don’t know, they came down and there was like –

Abigail: – and their bodies – and all that.] Is that what you’re talking about?

Nurit: Ya, and there was some – there was like this famous picture of like – of somebody at the window and they had blood all over their hands

Abigail: Ya ya. It was that. You remember that?

Hila: I think it was civilians

Nurit: It was soldiers. Miluim [reserve] soldiers –

Hila: Right, but I feel like that’s such a different thing –

Nurit: Right, but a lot of the boys I talked to? To them like THAT”S what they refer to, they’re like well – like how they acted, how they killed these people.
Nurit is here referring to the “lynching” of two men, Israeli reservists, in Ramallah on October 12, 2000. The details, as reported in the Israeli media, are as follows: At the height of the initial outburst that became known as the second intifada, two off-duty Israeli reservists entered Ramallah in an unmarked car, in civilian clothes, and were attacked and killed by a Palestinian “mob.” The story was that they had lost their way and ended up in Ramallah by mistake. The gruesome images of the men’s death at the hands of the crowd were captured on film by an Italian journalist and televised in Israel and around the world. The image that Nurit mentions, of the bloody hands in the window, became particularly iconic of the event.

This story, while clear by the end to all three of us, is never directly told. In fact, we all seem to go to great lengths to arrive at mutual understanding of the event without directly stating it, a feat that requires a considerable amount of collaborative inarticulateness: “you know what I’m talking about? Um, you know”; “Oh you mean – you mean – what are you talking about?”; “Is that what you’re talking about?” Ray McDermott (1988) points out that in certain contexts the appearance of inarticulateness represents “not a disability but an invitation to listen in a new way” (40).6 This is an invitation we all seem to heed. In our telling of this event we have ‘forgotten’ some essential details – both the place (Ramallah, not Hevron) and the key word associated with reports of the event (“lynching,” not

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6 “Occasions when people are left without words are systematic outcomes of a set of relations among a group of persons bound in a social structure. The claim is that inarticulateness is not well understood as an individual disability, but better understood as a well orchestrated moment in which inarticulateness is invited, encouraged, duly noted, and remembered, no matter how much lamented” (McDermott 1988:38).
“massacre”) are not named, and it is not until the end of the telling that the protagonists are identified. Further, the act at the centre of the story, the killing of these men at the hands of the mob, is never explicitly stated; instead the icons of this violence (the bodies, the bloody hands at the window) act as effective mneumonic devices, allowing us to jointly remember without ever actually naming the event. Both the details of the event and our highly dysfluent attempt at its collaborative reconstruction are important here; both the horrific resonance of the images and the lack of specificity in the memory are important, since the place of this event in public memory is somewhere in between (see Das et al 2000 on violence and public memory). With the passage of time, the details of location and identity fade but the gruesome images retain their potency.

The second event Nurit mentioned (of which I have no recollection and for which I have been unable to locate a news source) is about “two guys who opened a coffee shop in Tel Aviv who went to buy plates and were also kidnapped and murdered.” When I pressed Nurit for details, she and Hila (who also remembered the event) said it happened in the “shtachim” (the territories); in the “gada” (the bank, ie., the West Bank). Apparently two Israeli men went shopping somewhere in the West Bank in search of the cheaper goods that are available there. In people’s accounts of the years before the second intifada, this is a common reason why Jews would be found in the West Bank, taking advantage of the economic disparity and the then relatively porous borders (see Bornstein 2001, Stein 1998). Car mechanics, 7

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7 The lack of specificity also has the effect of inflating the event: “massacre” implies many deaths, and “a bunch of soldiers” is about more than two.
fruits and vegetables, and black market electronics were probably some of the more commonly sought after goods and services, but a shopping trip for equipment for a new restaurant would make sense in this context. The end result of this familiar and banal expedition into unfamiliar territory is the same as in the first story: they were kidnapped and murdered.

Nurit described the impact of these events on our classmates as follows: “And to them that’s like, that’s it. You don’t go into these places, you’re not wanted there.” These stories, beyond both being about horrific acts of violence have a few things in common. Both tell of people who stray innocently – inadvertently or for a familiar, common purpose – into the territory of the other, and, in both stories it is because they are out of place in these places that they become targets of violence. The stories rely, then, on the assumption of clear, commonly understood boundaries that demarcate self from other, locate who belongs where, and make it easy to identify who is out of place. The invocation of these stories not only assumes but reinforces the impermeability of these boundaries by providing a horrific reminder of the danger of transgressing them: “You don’t go into these places, you’re not wanted there.” Rather than marking boundaries between self and other, these stories of violence rely on social boundaries already there to demarcate what has became not only a space of the other, but now a space of fear.

Allen Feldman (1991), writing on Belfast, describes the demarcation of social space through violence, the memory of violence, and the anticipation of violence. In Nurit and Hila’s stories, violence is similarly “territorialized” (Feldman 1991:34): the violence they describe punishes the transgression of boundaries and the
memory of these violent acts reinscribes these boundaries. Feldman describes a process in which violence is inscribed on a landscape such that certain places accrue a history of violence that marks them as sites of fear. Certain sites are transformed into “repositories of a social imaginary,” turned into “invested surfaces” by the violence that happened there and the memory of it (64). He describes a “cartography of death events” in which “the spaces of the dead” form a permanent geography for the local community (68). The process Nurit describes, where the boys “refer back to” these events when encountering Palestinians spaces, is similar to what Feldman describes, but with a difference: while both Nurit’s and Hila’s stories are very much grounded in place, the particular location (the shtachim, the gada, Ramallah) becomes less important in the telling than the fact that it is Palestinian territory. The sites of these violent acts become places to be avoided, but not only these specific sites.

Veena Das’ (2007) discussion of rumours and fear helps to explain how not only Ramallah but “these places” – read, Palestinian spaces – come to be avoided. According to Das, rumour, as a register of speech, is defined by lack of a signature (that is, it is not traceable to a specific identifiable source) and owes to this its propensity to spread: “Words . . . can also be lethal as in the case of words floating around in panic rumors without being tethered to a signature” (Das 2007:9). The narratives of violence told above do not function as rumours, according to Das’ formula, since they are locatable in terms of source; what is lacking, though, in the circulation of these stories, is the specific site of violence. Fear that lacks a specific location, that is not traceable to a specific identifiable place (like rumours lacking a
specific signature and not traceable to an identifiable source) may be similarly prone to spreading. If over time, in the telling of narratives of past violence, the site of fear loses its specific location the fear may grow to encompass a wider area. The effect is that these iconic places where boundary-marking violence has taken place (eg., Ramallah) cast a shadow far beyond their periphery; in our collaborative telling of these two stories, the entire West Bank becomes implicated.

In *City of Walls: Crime, Segregation, and Citizenship in Sao Paulo* (2000) Teresa Caldeira also argues that narratives of violence “help violence circulate and proliferate” (37). She offers an ethnographic analysis of the ways crime, fear of violence, and the degradation of citizenship rights intersect in changes to the urban landscape. She describes the retreat of the middle class into fortified enclaves, the creation of distance amid shocking landscapes of adjacent wealth and poverty, the disappearance of public space, and the exploitation of fear of crime to justify escalating police violence and the erosion of civil rights.

Caldeira argues that changes to everyday life and the city, wrought by crime and fear, are reflected in daily conversation (19). She analyzes talk of crime as a ubiquitous genre of interaction through which residents of Sao Paulo (particularly middle class ones) attempt to restore order to a disordered universe while simultaneously policing the boundaries of social belonging (72). Through narratives of violence, she argues, everyday conversations play an important role in shaping and transforming social boundaries:

Like other everyday practices of dealing with violence, crime stories try to recreate a stable map for a world that has been shaken. These
narratives and practices impose partitions, build up walls, delineate and enclose spaces, establish distances, segregate, differentiate, impose prohibitions, multiply rules of avoidance and exclusion, and restrict movements. In short, they simplify and enclose the world (20).

The stories Nurit and Hila tell, in making sense of past acts of violence, also establish distance, reinforcing the impermeability of social boundaries by emphasizing the danger of crossing them.

Nurit, Hila, and I clearly participate in the circulation of these stories through conversations such as these. According to Nurit, however, our classmates are guilty of a greater imprecision even than our own: in their imaginative geographies the memory of violence is not confined by geopolitical borders, creeping across the green line and into Palestinian spaces within Israel. It is not just Ramallah, or even the West Bank that they fear, but Um el Fachem and Baka. This comes through clearly in the previous chapter, in the section on Yoav and Benny's confusion over the green line. Nurit put it this way: “It’s interesting that they don’t draw the difference between Um el Fachem when we were there and like Ramallah... It’s like what we did today,” Nurit concluded, referring to the trip the three of us took earlier that day to the Palestinian Israeli town of Baka (see below). “I don’t think they [our classmates] would have gone to Baka.”

5. Strategies of avoidance: Narratives of fear, risk, and danger
Chantal Tetreault (2008), in her article on racialized space in the Parisian suburbs, argues that certain narratives “establish the ways that a particular social group . . . discursively comes to stand in for stigmatized public space.” Parisians speak of la racaille (male street toughs) in a way that indexes a national moral panic about cités (subsidized housing projects). In Hila and Nurit’s narratives what I see happening is more the reverse: stigmatized spaces discursively come to stand in for the people who inhabit them. In fact Nurit pointed out that in assessments of risk, safety, and danger the Arab identity of avoided spaces is often not discussed:

Nurit: I talked to Dafna this past week. She was driving home and it was night and it was raining and I wanted her to drive by Barkai [where Nurit was living] and pick up some stuff and say hello and I was like, well you could go through Wadi Ara to get to Givon [where Dafna lives], cause it’s really close, you go through Wadi Ara and you make a left at Meggido, and she’s like ‘no::: it’s really dark there:::re,’ and it was not talked about, not in the way that – I don’t know.

Abigail: You mean that is what’s going on but it’s not talked about in those terms?

Nurit: Oh I KNOW that she’s scared to go there because it’s like, there were all those mehumot (riots, disruptions) there in the past. I don’t know if she specifically to me – said to me it’s dark there, it’s no darker there than other places.

Nurit here describes a set of circumstances under which her friend Dafna chose not to drive on Wadi Ara road, and suggests that the reasons she gave for avoiding it
were not her real reasons. Nurit at this time was living next door to me, in a trailer in Kibbutz Barkai, right on the edge of Wadi Ara and a ten minute bike ride from Givat Haviva. In her recounting of the conversation, she suggests that Dafna stop by her place on her way home, and suggests an easy route. Dafna refuses, and offers an excuse: “no::: it’s really dark the:::re.” But Nurit rejects this excuse, along with its racialized undertones (“it’s no darker there than other places”), insisting that her real reason is not talked about. In Nurit’s view, at least, Dafna seems to think that it is more acceptable to speak of being afraid of Wadi Ara than it is to speak of being afraid of Arabs. The silence that Nurit identifies (“do you find that it’s not talked about? Not in that way?”) indicates a reluctance among certain people in certain contexts, to name Palestinian citizens of Israel as the source of their fear.

Nurit’s analysis also adds nuance to the more general formulation I made above, based on Tetreault’s argument. If stigmatized spaces come to stand in for the people that inhabit them in these stories, it is only among certain people and in certain contexts. But which people? which contexts? Nurit says: “I don't know if she specifically to me – said to me it’s dark there.” What this suggests is less that Dafna “doesn’t talk about it” and more that she exhibited a heightened sense of awareness of who she was talking to; she doesn’t talk about it with her ‘radical’ friend Nurit, who is not only studying Arabic but living in Wadi Ara. To me this implies not that fear of Arabs is taboo (I heard many people in various contexts talking about this quite explicitly) but rather that narratives of violence and assessments of fear, risk, and safety always bring into play, are positioned in relation to, and throw into relief people’s political subjectivities. Nurit suggests that Dafna did not mention her real
reasons for avoiding Wadi Ara because Dafna knew that her friend Nurit would not agree with or would not like her real reasons. And she was right.

But why exactly does Dafna avoid the wadi, and why do others? Deciding whether or not to drive through Wadi Ara involves complicated assessments of risk, danger, comfort, safety, and convenience that are sometimes articulated as being about fear – and sometimes not. What exactly are people afraid of? Nurit says, “Oh I KNOW that she’s scared to go there because it’s like, there were all those mehumot there in the past.” Nurit doesn’t elaborate on mehumot, but the word, an evocative and ambiguous word, meaning riots or disturbances from mehuma (noise), conjures up those ten days in October, and the period following, when Wadi Ara road was the site of protest and unrest (see Chapter One). While there was action in many other parts of the country, Wadi Ara road, and the Um el Fachem intersection in particular, were seen as the epicentre of protest – perhaps because, as this was an area where Jews did drive through on a regular basis, the protest had its most disruptive effect there. It was during that time that some people began to find alternate routes to avoid the wadi, as much to avoid the traffic jams caused by road closures as for fear of having rocks thrown at their cars. But at the time that Nurit invites Dafna to drop by, in the fall of 2004, Wadi Ara road has been quiet for years – apart from commemorative actions on the anniversary of those days in October. There are no more rocks being thrown, and only the usual traffic jams. But past violence has marked the landscape in a way that refuses to remain in the past, transcending some boundaries – this time temporal ones – as it reinforces others.
Another reason that Nurit and Hila suggest for why people avoid places like Baka and Um el Fachem is the unfamiliarity. After Nurit told the story of Dafna, I reminded her of a recent time when she did drive through Wadi Ara with some friends, and even stopped in Um el Fachem to buy knafe, a sweet cheese-based pastry which, in the bakeries of Wadi Ara, comes out of the oven in sheets in the late afternoon, and is quickly grabbed up.

Abigail: But there was that other time you guys drove through there and you went into Um el Fachem and you got knafe

Nurit: Ya, and they were a little scared, they were really (.) I was there with Sagi [her sister’s boyfriend who had studied Arabic in Tel Aviv] so it was the two of us who can read Arabic and two others who don’t know anything about Arabic. And we go into Um el Fachem and it’s kind of like Baka – everything there is in Arabic all of a sudden and it’s like – you’re in Israel. You pass this place all the time, and to them it’s like – we don’t understand anything that’s going on here.

Hila: [And it’s SCARY when you don’t understand anything

Nurit: It’s SCARY when you don’t understand anything] and it’s scary –

Hila: For all you know it says horrible things about you

Nurit: Exa:::ctly.

To a certain extent, the fear comes from the inability to not so much navigate as interpret an unfamiliar landscape, marked in an unfamiliar script in an unfamiliar language. As Benny, one of the boys discussed in the previous chapter put it, “When
you don’t understand you think every word is *pigua* this, *pigua* that.” *Pigua* is the Hebrew word for a suicide bomb.

At one point in our conversation Hila pointed out how odd it is that there is nobody checking your bag when you go into restaurants in Um El Fachem. I picked up on this later, saying that, in an odd reversal, it’s almost as though people see Palestinian spaces as safer from *piguium*, that they’re less likely to happen in Um el Fachm than in Chadera (a nearby Jewish city). Nurit and Hila both responded in excited overlapping speech to contradict the implication that Um el Fachem is therefore seen as a relatively safe space:

Nurit and Hila (overlapping speech): Right, but the other thing that’s going to happen is you’ll be kidnapped and mur::rdered, you’ll get TARGETTED. It won’t be random but you’ll get targetted, it’ll be specifically against you.

Nurit: It’s like you kno::w that they’ll – I have a feeling it’s like that whole city has been like. um. like instead of having a guard at the door there’s like something in the entrance to the place that like you don’t go – you don’t enter. It’s like if you enter? you’re a:::llready at risk

Hila: It’s assumption of risk

Nurit: Like it’s not – you’re not even supposed to be there. Like the buses is like, you don’t have a choi::ce you have to get to wo:::rk, it’s like, I don’t think people see it as safer.

Abigail: People didn’t stop taking buses, that I know. To a large extent that’s also about money and about who can stop taking buses. People
didn’t stop taking buses and yet, they sure as hell stopped driving on

Wadi Ara or going –

Hila: But that’s something they need to do, they have no nee::d

Nurit: Wadi Ara? You go on Highway 4 [a bypass road]. And you go
around.

Nurit and Hila here seem to create typologies of violence, distinguishing between random violence and targeted violence, violence that transgresses borders, and violence that punishes their transgression. In making assessments of risk and safety, in deciding which spaces to avoid, it seems that these are some of the relevant criteria.

6. Going there: Hila and Nurit’s own boundaries

Nurit and Hila’s discussion thus far focuses on their understanding of other people’s behaviour, other people’s practices of fear and avoidance: when they make statements like “it’s scary when you don’t understand anything,” “you don’t enter,” “you’re not even supposed to be there,” “you’re not wanted there,” the “you” they are referring to does not seem to include them. While I am – nominally at least – interviewing them, what they are sharing with me is their critique of other people’s behaviour, as implicitly contrasted with their own. They position themselves as slightly removed from mainstream Israeli society – as participants in it, but participants at arms length, also critical observers. Our conversation about why Israeli Jews do not go into Palestinian spaces takes place very much in the context of our self-satisfaction at having just that morning gone to Baka, a nearby Palestinian
town. We had wandered along the main street and stopped in a local bakery to buy a cake for our class, to celebrate the end of the course. In explaining why others would have been afraid to go to places like Baka, as we had done, Nurit and Hila are also critiquing this perspective and distancing themselves from it.

Yet this trip was the first time any of us had been in Baka, a town located not even ten minutes away (by car) from Givat Haviva, where we had spent the last six months. We also spoke English or Arabic the whole time we were there, joking that we were “under cover” – presenting ourselves as North American students of Arabic rather than as Israeli Jews. We agreed that this was the best way to get others to speak with us in Arabic, but we still weren’t entirely comfortable with this strategy (see below). Clearly Nurit and Hila are not outside of the dynamics of fear and avoidance altogether and, of course, neither am I. We too make choices about where to go and where not to go, based on assessments of risk, safety, and danger. What comes through in this conversation is that we too draw boundaries, but in different places than our classmates (who seem to represent what Nurit and Hila perceive to be the mainstream Jewish Israeli perspective), and for different reasons. In the first two stories of violence, for example, Nurit critiques our classmates for having an irrational fear of Um el Fachem because of something that happened in Ramallah. In her own assessment, then, she distinguishes between the West Bank as an unsafe space and Um el Fachem as a safe space, while critiquing others for failing to make this distinction.
It is interesting, then, that when I asked Nurit and Hila about their own spatial practices, their own fears, both turned in their answers to the West Bank. I asked them:

How do you guys make those decisions about where to go? Because even though it is about ignorance and racism, there are places where I would be scared to go. How do you deal with that?

Nurit’s response appears at first not to answer my question directly:

Since September when I started learning Arabic – and this is even – I’m not going anywhere, I’m in Givat Haviva learning Arabic, but I’m going to Um el Fachel, going to Nazareth, and meeting Arabic speakers, the reaction I’ve had from people has been so hostile and so hateful. Hateful. Oh ya, people don’t understand why I would like – [Hila: who?] my family, my sisters’ and my roommates’ friends. I find it very tiring to explain to people, or to not lie but not explain everything or not explain my political views because I just don’t want to get into that discussion.

Nurit here makes it clear that learning Arabic, for her, goes hand in hand with “meeting Arabic speakers” and going places like Um el Fachel and Nazareth. These choices are tied to her politics, and even index her politics: learning Arabic, interacting with Palestinians or going to Palestinian places indicate to others a particular political position, one that she feels is outside of the mainstream. Telling people she is going to these places, then, necessitates a justification and discussion of her politics with those whose politics oppose hers, a discussion she finds
exhausting and onerous. She clearly feels that among her family and friends she is in the minority in making these choices, and in her political opinions, to the extent that her position is met not only with a demand for explanation, but also with hostility. This does not stop her from going to these places. During our time at Givat Haviva, in addition to the class trips we took, Nurit did visit places like Nazareth, Um el Fachem, Kafr Kara – trips she often took with me. She did sometimes lie about it – by omission – to her older sister, who had never been to these places and was scared to go, much in the way that teenagers would not tell their parents that they had done something their parents would consider dangerous. She never spoke of being afraid of these places, though she did feel a certain amount of discomfort going there.

The wish to avoid “that discussion,” however, did stop her from going to the territories. Immediately after the above quote she continued, now turning more directly to my question:

Nurit: So for example, in November, my friend who's living in Jaryis [a village in the West Bank], when everyone was going for the olive harvest she was like ‘you should come, everyone’s going’ and for me that was a conscious decision of, I really don’t want to deal with everyone, with my sister, with my aunt, and telling them this is where I want to go.

Abigail: Like it’s hard enough telling them you’re going to Um el Fachem, let alone –

Nurit: Exactly. And it's disappointing that I think that way.
Hila: To who?

Nurit: To myself.

The friend Nurit mentions is from her undergraduate program in the US, a young American woman who was living and volunteering in a village in the West Bank.

The olive harvest every year attracts activists and supporters to the West Bank to assist in the picking, but also to help prevent attacks from settlers, which are particularly common during this time (see Meneley 2008). Even though I explicitly asked about fear, and even though her earlier stories seem to imply that there is something to be legitimately afraid of in the West Bank, Nurit did not talk about fear as her reason for not entering the territories. Instead, she said that she made a “conscious decision” not to go in order to avoid having to deal with the fallout that would come from telling her family “this is where I want to go.” If going to Palestinian places in Israel is a marked choice indexing an unwelcome political position, then going to the territories is all the more so.

Nurit often spoke of going to the territories, debated whether or not to go, but never went, during the time I spent with her at Givat Haviva. She continued her explanation by giving another reason; again it is not about fear:

Also knowing that I would enter with my American passport, not my Israeli passport, not speak Hebrew, not tell anyone that I’m Israeli most likely and kind of – how do I feel about that like knowing that – I don’t know I didn’t – I think that part especially makes me very uncomfortable. Also like today [in Baka] like we didn’t feel comfortable – we wanted to speak Arabic but we didn’t know what
their reaction would be . . . I think that’s something that – I don’t know.

I don’t know if in my head I decide ahead of time that we – I – won’t be
welcome. I don’t know. Maybe I do.

While Nurit is able to go “under cover” as an American in order to feel more free and
more welcome speaking Arabic in the bakeries of Baka, she does not do this without
a certain amount of guilt and discomfort. It is also one thing to passively project an
identity by speaking in English, but another thing entirely to actively deny her status
as an Israeli citizen by crossing between Israel and the West Bank on her American
passport. (Unlike me, both Nurit and Hila have dual citizenship and carry both
passports – they can pass with these official markers of identity as well as with
language.) Having experienced this same discomfort, I would say that it partly
comes from denying a part of your identity – the same discomfort felt by others who
“pass” in other contexts (as white, as straight). It is also, though, guilt and regret for
acting on the assumption that the other part of your identity should be hidden – that
is, that it won’t be welcome. Whether we go to Baka or to Ramallah, we are highly
aware that people’s reaction to us will be in large part based on our identity, and
“we [don’t] know what their reaction [will] be.” To go as Americans is to assume
from the outset that the reaction to Jewish Israelis would be a negative one.8 That
this is an assumption that she is not comfortable with is shown in the hedging and
self-interruption in Nurit’s last line – it sounds like a painful confession to make: “I –

8 Also, oddly, that the reaction to Americans would be more positive. Although this
did not strike us at odd at the time, in retrospect it is surprising given the common
perception of anti-American sentiment (largely due to support of Israel) among
Palestinians specifically and in the Middle East more generally.
I think that’s something that – I don’t know. I don’t know if in my head I decide ahead of time that we – I – won’t be welcome. I don’t know. Maybe I do.”

Unlike Nurit, Hila did sometimes go to the West Bank. A month earlier (on January 9, 2005) she had spent the day of the Palestinian elections with a democratic process monitoring group, traveling around the West Bank. Immediately after the above exchange, she answered my question by recounting her experiences on that day:

But that question that criteria of how you decide whether to go somewhere or not. I mean – I don’t know, when I decided to go with that group to Ramallah for the elections and they said ‘lets meet in Ramallah in the morning,’ I was like, in my mind I was like ‘Oh no.’ And not because – I knew I would have to go there at some point but I thought it would be with them, and I’ve never been there before and I was just thinking ‘No no no no, I don’t want to do that!’ hh but I also just didn’t want to be like a baby, you know. And maybe that was like their way of testing me too you know, who knows. Maybe somebody could have come picked me up but they wanted to be like, ‘would she do that.’

Like Nurit before her, Hila responded to my question about her personal boundaries by turning immediately to the West Bank, leaving Palestinian spaces in Israel completely out of the discussion of places she might possibly be afraid to go. She tells a story of a situation where she is reluctant to go somewhere (“No no no no, I don’t want to do that!”) but goes anyway. She is going to Ramallah, a major West
Bank city and the site of the lynching described earlier by Nurit, but she seems to imply that it is not Ramallah itself that is potentially dangerous but the circumstances under which she was asked to go there: alone, early in the morning, to a place she’d never been before. In fact, her willingness to go to Ramallah seems to establish some kind of ‘trial by fire’ wherein she can prove, through her lack of fear, her appropriate political credentials.9

In her continued narration of the events, she seems at pains to establish that, though she was “IMMENSELY uncomfortable,” this was not caused by anything particular to Ramallah, to the West Bank, or to Palestinian places more generally. Rather, she establishes a number of other, more general reasons for her fear:

Hila: . . . Maybe somebody could have come picked me up but they wanted to be like, ‘would she do that.’

Abigail: And you weren’t so comfortable but you did it anyway.

Hila: I did it anyway and it was very uncomfortable.

Nurit: You went as an American?

Hila: Well I didn’t have to show any – I was going to but ya – well theoretically yes. And it was IMMENSELY uncomfortable. I didn’t really know how to get there. I mean I had been there before but not alone and it was really early in the morning and figuring out which bus or which little mini-bus – and I told you I ended up hitch-hiking with some really nice guy who was a Palestinian who was going down

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9 Compare this to Nurit’s friend Dafna who also recognizes that to acknowledge fear is to mark your political stance in some way.
the road from A-Ram to Qalandiya, which is just an ill advised thing
to do anywhere in the world. But I didn't want to be late. So he took
me in his car and we're chatting, and this would not be something I
would do if I were –

Nurit: You actually hitched? Like you stuck out your hand?

Hila: No, I just stood there looking desperate because the little mini-
van that went by was like 'We're not going to Qalandiya' and I was like
'Aaah!' and I was like – I said, 'I need to go to Qalandiya' and he's like
'Oka:yo.'

The drive from Jerusalem, where Hila was coming from, to Ramallah is a distance of
fifteen kilometres. Due to a variety of military and bureaucratic obstacles along the
way, for a driver with the right permits, on a good day this could easily take two
hours (on the mechanics and dynamics of the Qalandiya checkpoint see Hammami
2006). Though Hila has a car, you can't drive across in a private vehicle without a
special permit, so she would have most likely caught a sherut, a mini-van taxi, at
Damascus Gate (the old city of Jerusalem) that would take her to the checkpoint at
A-Ram, on the northern border of Jerusalem. From there she would have to cross
the checkpoint leaving Israel on foot, showing her passport to Israeli border guards,
if they asked, and answering their questions. With her American passport she
would not need a permit to pass. From the checkpoint at A-Ram, she would have to
go down the road a bit to Qalandiya, where she would go through another
checkpoint entering the West Bank, and then could catch a taxi or a servis, a similar
mini-van taxi, to Ramallah.
Coordinating the logistics of all these rides (“figuring out which bus or which little mini-bus”) across a heavily militarized international border, in unfamiliar territory, alone, early in the morning, and with the pressure of arriving in time to meet up with the group is plenty of reason to cause Hila “IMMENSE” discomfort. Add to this the fact that she hitch-hiked that short distance between A-Ram and Qalandiya. The general situation of hitch-hiking, and not the respective identities of herself and her driver as an Israeli/American Jew and a Palestinian, seems to be what made this potentially dangerous; Hila emphasizes that hitch-hiking would be “an ill advised thing to do anywhere in the world.”

Yet Hila’s identity does come into play here, though she only discusses it when pressed by Nurit and me. In the quote above, Nurit asks if Hila went “as an American” – in the context of this conversation that would mean both using her American passport and speaking English. Hila seems reluctant to answer, or at least doesn’t get into it at that time: “Well, I didn’t have to show any – I was going to but ya – well theoretically yes.” Later, when she told the story of hitch-hiking, I also pressed her on what identity she was travelling under, by asking her what language she was speaking. Despite Hila’s insistence on generalizing in her telling, emphasizing conditions that would be fearful “anywhere in the world,” both Nurit and I seem to think that what language she was speaking, what passport she was traveling under are essential pieces of information in order for us to be able to correctly interpret her interactions and experiences.

Nurit: ... and I was like I said, ‘I need to go to Qalandiya’ and he’s like
‘Oka::y.’
Abigail: In what language?

Hila: I just said ‘le qalandiya?’ [to Qalandiya? in Hebrew] and he said ‘okay.’ There’s basically just one road that goes down – I mean there’s a fence down the middle it’s not like you can – but maybe he was gonna – who knows where he was gonna go but he’s like ‘Okay.’ So he drove me down all the way down to the machsom [checkpoint]. And we were chatting and I was speaking in Arabic and he’s like ‘Oh! you sound like a Jewish person when you speak in Arabic!’ and I said ‘Oh, is that a good thing or a bad thing?’ and he was laugh[ing], like ‘ha ha ha ha.’ And you know, ‘where are you from,’ you know, ‘the US,’ and like he has family in Chicago, so then we spoke a little bit of English and a little bit of Arabic, and then I wanted to pay him but – but the point was that I was in a hurry so I didn’t really, I wasn’t really processing the risk in a way that perhaps I would do otherwise. And then I crossed and then I got into some taxi that would take me where I needed to go, but the whole time because I was in a hurry I wasn’t really processing the risk but –. When you think about it, it’s a city you’ve never been to – I mean anywhere in the world that’s pretty scary but –. Not knowing how people will react to you? And in Ramallah it’s not like, I mean they know some people there are Israeli but it’s not, it’s sort of like the polite thing to do is not speak Hebrew there – even if you speak English with a heavy Hebrew accent it’s better.
Hila here acknowledges that her personal identity was a factor in how she felt, and in fact was brought up obliquely by her driver, the kind Palestinian man who, she seems to imply, may even have driven out of his way to help her out. He says: “Oh! You sound like a Jewish person when you speak in Arabic!” Her coyly evasive answer (“Is that a good thing or a bad thing?”), I think, reveals the same uncertainty that Nurit mentions, not knowing whether or not she would be welcome as an Israeli Jew, “not knowing how people will react to you.” Again, though, she seems to suggest that it is not that she is afraid to speak Hebrew and present herself as Israeli, but rather that it is “the polite thing to do” not to enter an occupied city speaking the language of the occupier.

Hila continues:

So how – what made me think – I went there because I had a reason to go, and because I knew that there would be someone presumably meeting me there but you know, there were a few moments when the person I was supposed to be meeting wasn’t there and I was waiting and waiting and waiting and I was thinking ‘Uh oh’ hhh. ‘What am I going to do,’ you know. There were those moments. And I was trying to call and the phone was switched off and you know. There was that moment of panic of ‘Wait a minute, what do I really know about this organization?’ There are places you’re not supposed to go.

The only time in her story when she does begin to consciously “process the risk” results in a moment of panic. Despite all the effort she and Nurit have made to
distance themselves from the fear that they see as characterizing the mainstream Jewish Israeli perspective, Hila acknowledges, “There are places you’re not supposed to go.”

7. Conclusion: Returning again to the Wadi

The “Return to the Wadi” campaign, designed to draw Israeli Jews back to Wadi Ara in the fall of 2004, was led by the mayor of Um El Fachem, Sheich Hashem Abd el Rachman. He came to his position with the primary goal of changing the image of Um el Fachem in the eyes of the Israeli public. “There was a time when Wadi Ara road was almost empty,” he is quoted as saying, in an interview published on the website of the regional council (Kochavi 2005, my translation). He points out that, in addition to the fear that kept people away, there may have also been an element of boycott: for a period phone and electric companies and other essential services refused to enter the area, or entered only with armed security accompaniment. Local merchants were hard hit by the loss of their Jewish clientele. Palestinians lost or found it hard to find employment in the centre of the country. These economic consequences are obscured in Israeli Jewish laments over the vegetable markets they no longer visit, and responsibility for this situation is shirked in stories about the violence that keeps people away.

The temporal framework set up by this sequence of narratives – of nostalgia, of violence, and of fear – belies some harsh political realities, implicitly placing the blame for increased segregation precisely on those who are punished by it. It acts as a “strategy of innocence” (see Pratt 1992), a way to evade responsibility. It is also a
way to avoid talking about what is really at stake. Teresa Caldeira argues that, beyond its role in shaping social boundaries, talk of fear also offers “a language in which to talk and think about many other destabilizing processes” about which, unlike crime, there is no consensus (39). In Sao Paulo talk of fear offers a way to talk about anxieties caused by economic uncertainty, poverty, inflation, unemployment, disruptions to class relations, and political upheaval: “Discussions about fear of crime reveal the anguish produced when social relations can no longer be decoded and controlled according to old criteria” (51). Caldeira’s insight here alerts us to the ways that talk of fear can mask a range of other anxieties in a context of conflict and change. Foremost among these here, I would argue, is the anxiety and vulnerability produced by challenges to the definition of the Israeli national community.

The nostalgia, then, is for more than cheap vegetables in the market of Um el Fachem. It expresses a longing for a time when Israeli Jews felt safe in Palestinian spaces, but it is also – although it does not explicitly express this – a longing for a quiescent minority who aspires to integration and not autonomy. It is a longing for a social and spatial order that, protected by a patina of hope and optimism, under the guise of coexistence, did not require too many painful concessions from the Israeli Jewish majority. After all, this golden past was the era of the Oslo process, a fundamentally flawed process from which Palestinian Israelis were altogether excluded (see Chapter One). The golden age invoked by this narrative is one in which the recollected freedom of movement was one-sided – in which Palestinian spaces were made available to Jews for consumption, and Palestinians were
accepted in Jewish spaces, only in very restricted circumstances, which placed Palestinians in very specific subservient roles (see Chapter Six). Despite the rhetoric, during these years an astonishingly high level of segregation was maintained and actively enforced by the Israeli state as well as by the spatial practices of its citizens – a segregation that excluded Palestinians from a large part of the economic and political benefits of their citizenship (see Chapter Two).

I was unfortunately unable to attend the Return to the Wadi event, and therefore cannot comment on the sorts of encounters it enabled. Sheich Hashem, though, was pleased: “On Succot visitors came and saw that Um el Fachem is different from the monster of public perception. They will tell more Israelis and, just as they stopped coming during the time of crisis, so the visits are being renewed.” A year later, in the fall of 2005, and again in 2006 when I visited Israel, people were indeed returning. Wadi Ara road was once again full. But there is to this return an element of capitulation: a sacrifice of political momentum for economic reality. While relative quiet now prevails, it is a forced silence. As Israeli Jews return to the Wadi, critique of state policy and demand for change retreat from the public realm and return to the privacy of Palestinian spaces.
Chapter Five
Erasure and Disclosure on the Trans-Israel Highway

1. Introduction: “In spite of everything”

The history of the Palestinian citizens of Israel has been characterized as a series of “distortions of omission and commission” that eradicate Palestinian presence in the landscape, reinscribing Jewish claims to land over Palestinian ones in ways that are at once material and discursive (Slyomovics 1998). This chapter explores a very specific and very recent set of “distortions of omission and commission” – those found in the Arabic place names on road signs on the new Trans-Israel Highway.

While the construction of new walls in Israel was receiving much attention at the time of my fieldwork, new roads were also being constructed. Like walls, roads enable and inhibit movement, structure licit and illicit traffic, make connections and enforce difference, solidify and make manifest state power (Campbell 2006; see also e.g., Roseman 1996, Thomas 2002, Wilson 2004). As such, Campbell (2006) suggests that paying attention to the “concrete histories” of these structures can illuminate the material and cultural processes through which their meaning is produced and through which they in turn produce meaningful worlds – worlds made as much from the daily practices of people who navigate along them as from mortar and asphalt or engineer’s plans.

For instance, Adeline Masquelier (2002) describes how in a postcolonial context roads may serve as maps that support social memory, bearing or becoming connections to the past through the “sedimentation of collective and personal
histories” along their length (833). In the community in Southern Niger where she worked, recollections of being conscripted for road work form some of the most salient memories of the colonial period, and the road becomes a site where the past – often in the form of spirits – “disrupts invades, but also explains the present” (832), condensing historical experiences of violence and dislocation as well as contemporary ambivalences about the experience of modernity.

This chapter is also concerned with the “sedimentation” of the past along a road, but in this case rather than serving as a map to support social memory, the road becomes an important site for the contestation of past and present landscapes. Highway 6 literally reconfigures the map of Israel, altering scale and distance in true postmodern fashion, compressing both time and space (Harvey 1990). A sophisticated marketing campaign boasted that the road “brings the periphery closer” and, indeed, for certain privileged people in the rural north the road does enable new experiences and new possibilities.¹ It is less the implications of this road for mobility that concern me here, though, and more its implications for visibility.

As a new road opens up routes for travel, drivers on it are not only able to go places they had not been before; they are also able to see, through the windows as they drive, sites they had not seen before. Familiar vistas and landmarks take on new forms and meanings when seen from new perspectives – atop a new bridge or tunnelling through a hill. New landmarks and new vistas come into view. Signposts

¹ For example, I was able to commute to Arabic classes in Wadi Ara once a week from my home in Jerusalem; friends of mine who lived in Emek Yizrael were thrilled that all of a sudden an evening concert of the Israeli Philharmonic in Tel Aviv was a possible outing – now an hour drive away instead of two.
not seen before are made suddenly relevant by new proximities, as drivers navigate unfamiliar territory to arrive at familiar destinations. My argument in this chapter is that even as the construction of Highway 6 in many ways brings a Palestinian presence in the Israeli landscape into view, it simultaneously works to obscure it. The road, then, both reveals and conceals, both discloses and erases, making visible the “sedimentation” of the past while simultaneously working to distort or conceal it beyond recognition. This chapter explores the role of the road signs along the length of the highway in mediating these processes.

Three weeks after I began my fieldwork, in the dim light of an early Wednesday morning in November 2003, I found myself waiting on a quiet street corner in Jerusalem for a woman I did not know to take me to a place I had never been. Ruth turned out to be a compact, matter-of-fact, grey-haired woman who, I gradually learned, is passionate about classical music, ‘proper’ Hebrew grammar, her grandchildren, Palestinian human rights, and opposition to the Israeli occupation. Now in her retirement, after a long and varied career in health sciences, she devotes all her time – except Tuesdays which are devoted to her newborn grandson and Wednesdays which are for Arabic lessons – to MachsomWatch: a feminist human rights organization that she was instrumental in founding in 2001. The women of MachsomWatch volunteer for rotating duty at checkpoints between Israel and the West Bank, where they stand in protest of the occupation while monitoring the actions of Israeli soldiers, ensuring that Palestinian human rights are protected. But all this I was yet to learn on that morning in November. As it was Wednesday, Ruth was giving me a lift to the first of our weekly day-long Arabic
language classes at Givat Haviva. (Someone at the school had suggested I contact her for a ride from Jerusalem.) Class began at 8 and we had over a two hour drive north and west ahead of us. I was early, which was good. Ruth is not a woman I would want to keep waiting.

It was a calm morning, according to both the radio traffic reports and the news, and we were hoping we were early enough to avoid the daily traffic jams on the way out of the city. We were, and as we left the city behind and began our descent along the busy, winding, four-lane highway that cuts through the wooded hills around Jerusalem in the direction of Tel Aviv, Ruth said that the drive should only take a little over an hour; we would be taking Highway 6, she informed me, “in spite of everything.” She said this with chagrin, and perhaps a little guilt. I was, of course, immediately intrigued.

I have heard this same tone often, and used it myself, when talking about taking roads that cut conveniently through the West Bank; in this case it’s a tone that acknowledges your recognition that you are compromising – or at least suspending – your principled objection to Israeli presence in the Palestinian territories, making an exception to accommodate the most direct route for a particular journey. “In spite of everything” means that you are aware of the objections to Israelis driving on these roads, and even agree with them, but are choosing to over-ride them in this particular case for the sake of ease. It’s similar to the tone environmentally conscious consumers will use to apologize for the presence of styrofoam take-out containers in their garbage, acknowledging that ease in this particular case has overcome principles. But Highway 6, the new road that I
had been hearing about but not yet driven on, did not pass through the territories. What was there for a conscientious, politically active grandmother to feel guilty about?

Soon after the hills gave way to coastal plane, just before the turn-off to Ben Gurion airport in Lod, the Tel Aviv-Jerusalem Highway we were on widened and merged with Highway 6; all we did was follow the white sixes painted on the road – over a few lanes, around a bend and under a bridge – and we were heading north on the brand new highway. We were among the first to drive on this section of the highway, which had been completed only a few weeks before. The lane markers were bright and clean against the dark new pavement and the scars in the hillsides and rock formations where the road had been carved out looked fresh. Only a few other cars were on the road this morning, though it was approaching rush hour, and as we sped north, cutting out the necessity of continuing out of our way west to Tel Aviv, to pick up the coastal highway north-bound, it was easy to see the appeal of the new highway. It took me a while longer to understand the “in spite of everything.”

Over the next sixteen months of my fieldwork I was driven (often by Ruth) or drove (I was lucky to be able to borrow my brother’s car on occasion) back and forth on this road at least once a week. When I was driving I often gave a lift to two other fellow students – friends and informants. Like Ruth, Rina and Nurit are sharp, critical, informed, and politically engaged Israeli Jewish women, who were learning Arabic both as a political statement and as a tool to help them in the Palestinian human rights and advocacy work they were all engaged in. (I describe Nurit in more detail in Chapter Four and Rina in Chapter Six.) As we drove along it, the road, the
landscape it cuts through, and the signs that frame it were often topics of
conversation.

While the majority of the signs on Highway 6 follow Israeli law in including
all place names in each of Israel’s three official languages – Hebrew, Arabic, and
English – we noticed an astonishing amount of variation in the Arabic language
content. Arabic place names often appear in distorted or mistaken form, and on
many signs they do not appear at all. For over a year, as our ability to read the
content of the signs became more fluent, the four of us engaged in an ongoing
conversation, trying to interpret their meaning in the context of the political
economic circumstances of the road’s construction and the ongoing history of
dispossession of Palestinian citizens of Israel. We enlisted our classmates and
Arabic teachers to help us interpret the language of the signs as well as the
Palestinian landscapes they both reveal and erase. In particular I talked about the
road at some length with Nir, one of the few boys in the class who had their driver’s
license and access to a car. Nir lives in a small town just west of the highway, on the
road to Netanya, and its construction significantly changed his options for travel. An
intense and serious young man, a bit of a loner, he had developed an insightful
critique of the road’s semiotics, which he shared with me in a long and rambling
interview one afternoon in February. It was Nurit who set me the task of getting to
the bottom of what was going on with these road signs. She suggested the
methodology and acted as photographer for a while, but my brother completed the
project with me. On my last week in Israel, on a grey day in February 2005, I drove
the length of the road – dangerously slowly – as he hung his head out the window and, with my digital camera, snapped a picture of every sign on the road.

Before I get to the pictures, though, I begin by looking at the specific historical and political economic conditions of the road's construction and the fierce opposition, on environmental and social grounds, with which it was met. I then examine a less commonly voiced critique of the road, based on its impact on Palestinian citizens of Israel, placing it in the context of the ongoing “Judaization” (making Jewish) of the landscape of Israel. I then focus on the experience of driving on this road, looking at the road signs themselves – or, more specifically, at Ruth, Rina, Nurit, and Nir’s interpretations of the road signs – examining how they participate in this process by both obscuring and revealing Palestinian presence in the landscape of Israel, before and after 1948.

2. Highway 6

*Kvish Shesh* (Highway 6), also known as *Kvish Chotse Yisrael* (the Trans-Israel Highway), is a private express toll highway that runs from the north to the south of Israel. It was opened in stages, beginning in 2002, and currently runs from Wadi Ara in the north to the Maachaz junction in the south, a total of 121 kilometres. Further extensions are currently under construction, both northward and southward, and extensions beyond that are in the planning stages, for a projected total of 300 kilometres. According to its website (www.kvish6.co.il), the road entails twelve interchanges, two tunnels of approximately half a kilometre each, and about 100 bridges. The road is presented on the website as a faster, more comfortable
alternative with better traffic flow than any other road in Israel. Highways 2 and 4 (which run parallel to it, closer to the coast) are notoriously congested, particularly as they pass through Gush Dan, the built-up centre of the country around Tel Aviv, which Highway 6 bypasses. At 110 kilometres per hour, Highway 6 has the added advantage of the highest speed limit of any road in Israel.

Since the beginning of the state (and even before) the development of a network of roads has been an inseparable part of the Zionist project, combining ideological elements of modernization, settlement, and territorial expansion.2 Roads in Israel, as in other colonial or state-building contexts (see e.g., Thomas 2002, Roseman 1996, Wilson 2004), serve as an expression of economic development, but also as a clear and assertive symbol of the state and its institutions (Rabinowitz 2002:23-24). But the construction of Highway 6 also represents a radical change in the political economy of development in Israel. In the context of extreme neo-liberal restructuring which has been overtaking Israel since the 1990s, corporate interests, privatization, and consumerism seem to have taken precedence over – or at least dovetailed nicely with – nation-building imperatives in the construction of the highway. As Rabinowitz (2002) argues, under cover of saving the country from choking by traffic congestion, the road represents a retreat of the state from national infrastructure to make way for private real estate and development profiteering on a massive scale.

Highway 6 first appeared on the planning maps in the mid 1970s. The idea

2 In the next few paragraphs I rely primarily on Dan Rabinowitz’s (2002) insightful article, published in Hebrew. I draw as well on Garb 2004 and the websites of the highway and the construction company, Derech Eretz.
was for a third major national highway, a north-south traffic artery, the two previous ones being Highway 2, which runs along the coast, and Highway 4, which runs parallel and slightly east of it. The planned route would bypass the heavily populated centre of the country around Tel Aviv, clearing up chronic traffic congestion on 2 and 4, and connect the “centre” of the country to the “periphery.” In 1992 the road came back on the table. By this time privatization, which began in Israel in the 1950s with industry, continued in the 70s with housing, and reached municipal services in the 80s, had reached the biggest pot of all: national infrastructure (Rabinowitz 2002). In that year and in 1994 laws were passed in the Knesset to pass over construction and operation of a new trans-Israel highway to two private companies.

The road was built on a model new to Israel: Bid, Operate, Transfer (BOT). A private company (Derech Eretz) built the road on its own budget in return for the right to operate the road and profit from collection of tolls for a pre-set number of years, at the end of which (in 2027), the right to operate the road is returned to the state. The conditions in the company’s contract include no limits to the tolls other than pure market interests, and a public subsidy of up to 80% of the difference if projected profits aren’t reached in any given year, in the event that the anticipated number of drivers isn’t met. This in effect means that the best situation for the road’s operating company is to keep the tolls high and the number of drivers low.

In another convenient twist, it turned out that while the road was sold to the public as benefiting the periphery, the central part of the road, bypassing Gush Dan, was the first to be built. This section of the road represents massive real estate and
development interests for the companies behind its construction. The road in effect connects office towers to industrial zones to shopping complexes, many of them on land owned or developed by the companies building the road. Rabinowitz (2002: 27, my translation) sums up the effects thus:

Israel, a serious contender for the world crown in increasing the gap between rich and poor, has found a new and inimitable path – a sort of fail-proof scheme – for “transfer payments” of staggering size from tax payers to local financial barons, with a half-way stop in the government budget.

The road met with fierce opposition at every step of its construction – from law-suits to massive protests to tree-sits (Garb 2004, Movement to Stop the Trans-Israel Highway 2002, Rabinowitz 2002, Humphries 2001). Opposition has primarily been framed in environmental terms. The most vocal opponents focused their objections around the themes of “leisure, aesthetics, and nature” (Rabinowitz 2002), emphasizing lost green space and parkland, urban sprawl, and pollution.\(^3\) The environmentalists also pointed out that the road would encourage private transportation over public; the money, they argued, should have been spent on developing trains as viable public transportation.

But the road also met opposition, albeit less vocal, on social grounds. One of its primary objectives, according to its proponents, was to “bring the periphery closer” (*lekarev et ha peripheria*) by shortening the driving time to and from the centre of the country. The poor of the periphery would benefit from the

\(^3\) See McElhinny 2006 on strategic framing of environmental disputes.
construction of the road, while the road itself would encourage the spread of population and industry from the crowded centre to the east, north, and south. The opposition between “periphery” and “centre” is a key organizing trope in Israelis’ understanding of their geography (see e.g., Yiftachel and Meir 1998), and one that is crucial to understanding the context of Highway 6. As you go further north or south from the populated, urban centre of the country (around Tel Aviv and Jerusalem), the thinking goes, the settlements, primarily rural and agricultural, are poorer, more isolated, and less developed. The periphery is populated by immigrants – mostly from North Africa (especially Yemen and Morocco) – though these “immigrants” may have arrived as long ago as the 1950s. The periphery, accordingly, carries the racialized connotations of the wild frontier: primitive and backward, yet idyllic in its natural simplicity. The periphery is always understood in opposition to the sophisticated, modern, urban, cultured centre which is, not surprisingly according to this logic, where Jews of European descent (Ashkenazis) are more concentrated.

This opposition between centre and periphery is crucially linked to settlement policies which, since 1948 and up to the present day, follow state imperatives of laying territorial and demographic claims by creating “facts on the ground” – building new Jewish settlements as a way to establish Jewish control over more and more land (see Chapter Two, Yiftachel 1999). The settlement of immigrants in the more remote areas of the country – i.e., closer to its borders with Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Egypt, as well as with the West Bank and Gaza – thus serves the double purpose of “developing the periphery” while simultaneously extending Jewish presence in the landscape as an irrevocable fact. In “bringing the
periphery closer” Highway 6 participates in exactly the same projects.

Those who oppose the road on social grounds ask who benefits from it. They point out that, despite protestations to the contrary, it is a road for the rich; the poor of the periphery do not have private cars, or cannot afford the steep and mounting tolls. It is those who live in the central suburbs and work in Tel Aviv or those with real estate along its length who stand to benefit most from the road (aside from the private companies that own and run it). As a result, it serves to widen the already large gap between rich and poor in Israel.

3. Highway 6 and Palestinian citizens of Israel

The group of people that is most affected by the construction of this highway, however, remains hidden in even these critical discussions of poverty and the racialized periphery among the Israeli left. Correspondingly, while the international academic community has paid much attention to the ways that the built environment regulates and constrains Palestinians in the region, critique has focused largely on the construction of the wall and of ‘bypass’ roads in the West Bank (e.g., Weizmann 2007, Lagerquist 2004). There is a group that is left out of both these discussions: Palestinian citizens of Israel.

The construction of Highway 6 is playing its role in the continuation of the history of dispossession, forced underdevelopment, and land confiscation that has characterized relations between the Israeli state and the Palestinian minority. In October 2001, in Tira and Taibeh, construction of the highway on Palestinian land was stopped by Palestinian protesters. It later resumed under armed guard. A few
critical analysts have publicized Palestinians’ critiques of the highway in Hebrew and English: Dan Rabinowitz is an ethnographer of Palestinian citizens of Israel, and Isabel Humphries works in Nazareth for an NGO that represents the rights of Palestinian farmers. Humphries (2001) points out that of the 20,000 dunams of land appropriated for the highway, 17,000 were Palestinian owned. Land was confiscated mostly in the area known as the Triangle from nine different Palestinian villages. Though they were compensated, the compensation process was discriminatory (with differing modes of compensation for Jewish- and Palestinian-owned land) and coercive. Palestinian farmers were devastated by the break-up of already small pieces of land and cut off from their water sources. In a cruelly ironic twist, some Palestinian villages were awarded, as compensation for land that was confiscated for the highway, pieces of land that before 1948 had belonged to the village (Humphries 2001).

Development of the highway ensured not only that Palestinians suffered disproportionately from land confiscation, but also that they would not benefit economically from its development. Six regional industrial zones were built or are being built linked directly to the highway – none is in the jurisdiction of an Arab municipality (Rabinowitz 2002). Critics of the highway point out that the road breaks the territorial continuity of Palestinian communities in the Triangle, while encouraging Jewish residential development (Humphries 2001). The most sinister effect of the highway pointed out by its critics is the increased capability for swift military mobilization the length of the country, near the green line but also near the most heavily populated Palestinian areas in Israel (Humphries 2001).
But the highway also participates in Judaizing Israel in more subtle ways. People driving on it are brought into contact with landscapes they would otherwise not see, and part of the road’s construction project was to package and present these landscapes in specific ways. I turn now to a discussion of the road signs on Highway 6 and the ways they mediate competing ways of seeing and knowing the landscape they frame.

4. Sign language

While road signs may be dismissed as “purely” semiotic texts, my contention here is that, in mediating the experience of driving or being driven on this highway, these seemingly innocent texts participate in the very material processes I have been describing up to now. They shape the ways we see the landscape we drive through but not, of course, in a passive way. It is the historic and political economic context in which they are found (which I have described in the previous sections), and the people who read them and navigate by them that bring meaning to them. It is for this reason that I focus not on a textual analysis of the signs themselves but on an ethnographic description of how they are read, questioned, joked about, ignored, justified, explained, and critiqued by drivers and passengers on this road. In focusing on Rina, Nurit, Ruth, and Nir I provide only Israeli Jewish perspectives – and by no means typical or representative ones. All four are educated, relatively privileged, Ashkenazi Jews, though their ages range from 19 to 72. Their critical

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politics place these four in the minority. But also – and relatedly – their ability to read the Arabic on these road signs is unusual among Israeli Jews. But it is this unusual perspective that allows me to interrogate the links between learning language and learning particular ways of seeing and knowing a landscape and its various histories.

The road signs were the object of our rapt attention from the beginning because, as we learned the Arabic alphabet, we slowly were able to discern more and more letters, then words and names on the signs as we drove past them. In the first few months, with mounting excitement, we would call them out as we passed. Ruth had a dangerous tendency of inadvertently slowing down to give us more time to decode an approaching sign. It was Nurit who first commented on the inconsistency in the Arabic language on the road signs: most of the time place names appeared in three languages, but sometimes there was only English and Hebrew. The Arabic simply wasn’t there. She wondered if there was a pattern to it. Rina, with characteristic acerbic wit, proposed that perhaps place names only appeared in Arabic on exit signs and not on any other signs on the road; the implicit message: Arabs out!

Driving Nurit and Rina home one night, as we turned off the highway toward Rina’s home, Nurit pointed out the sign to Baka al Gharbiya, a large Palestinian town adjacent to the highway.
Whereas in other areas of the country, she said, you can completely ignore or forget the fact that Palestinians live here too, while driving on Highway 6 you pass by signs for Baka, Tira, and Taibeh; you see the roofs of Baka al Gharbiya and the spires of the many mosques of Qalqilya.
In our interview, Nir confirmed Nurit’s suggestion that the road brings many Israelis into contact with Palestinian spaces they would not otherwise see. He lives in Kfar Yona, a community a few kilometres to the west of Highway 6, on the road toward Netanya. He explained to me how the new highway changed his orientation, all of a sudden creating a reason to drive east from Kfar Yona, when before his community was on the eastern edge of his known and necessary territory. He explained it like this:

Look, that whole area there was an area we didn’t deal with (lo hayinu mitaskim ito). We used to deal with it just farther west – [Abigail: Even though it’s five minutes from your house?] Yes. I never went east from Kfar Yona because in that direction there’s nothing, just a few Palestinian villages and that, we only ever drove in the direction of Netanya and Tel Aviv, which is the opposite direction. Until they built Highway 6 and now we pass right by that area when we drive on the road. But before that we never got there, it didn't interest us.

Before the construction of Highway 6, Nir continued, the only time they headed east was to buy vegetables in the market in the Palestinian town of Qalquilya. Not actually in Qalquilya, he clarified; just at the entrance to the town.

But even as Highway 6 exposes people like Nir to places like Baka, Tira, and Taibeh, it is in the signs to those places that we find an interesting resolution to the question that Nurit originally raised: when do the signs only have English and Hebrew, no Arabic? It turns out that often – though not consistently – it is signs that indicate Palestinian towns or villages that were missing the Arabic.
When I pointed this out to Ruth, it so infuriated her that she handed me her cell phone and told me to dial the number for complaints and comments directed to the company that operates Highway 6; the phone number was posted on many signs along the length of the road. While she drove, I spent half an hour on hold. In the end the operator who answered told us that complaints “of that nature” must be filed by fax.

While place names do not appear on some signs in Arabic, on other signs the Palestinian towns or villages themselves do not even appear. Here is a sign at what was, at the time, the northernmost exit of the road. It points to the Jewish cities of Afula, a half-hour drive away, and Tveria, an hour drive away, while Um El Fachem, one of the largest Palestinian cities in Israel and ten minutes away, does not appear.
This is the turn-off to Road 65, which is known almost universally as Wadi Ara road, named for the valley it runs through. But that name does not appear anywhere on the signs. Wadi Ara was the name of a Palestinian village destroyed in 1948 that stood, as far as I can tell, exactly on the land Highway 6 now cuts through. Kibbutz Barkai, where I lived for six months, is also built on land that belonged to this village before the 1948 war. While no one I spoke with knew about the village, its name is retained in the name of this valley. And while this village is gone, Wadi Ara remains an area populated by many Palestinians with Israeli citizenship. In addition to Um El Fachem, the major city, the towns and villages of Kafr Kara, Ara, Arara, Barta’a, Musmus, and more line this road; none of these names appear on the sign for the turn-off. The signs obscure both current Palestinian presence in the landscape of Israel and what Meron Benvenisti (2000) calls the landscape’s “buried history.”
Similarly, the Kesem interchange, one of the largest and most complicated of the highway’s interchanges, presumably derives its name from the nearby Palestinian Israeli town Kafr Kasem. The name was distorted to a slightly different sound with a completely different meaning: Kasem in Arabic means part or section, while Kesem in Hebrew means magic or enchantment. How does this name appear on the sign? The Hebrew is transliterated into Arabic letters, retaining an inaccurate approximation of the Arabic sound with neither meaning. The Arabic is distorted beyond recognition, with two of four letters different from the name of the town. (This is similar to writing Ceysem instead of Kasem.) This is so bizarre as to appear deliberate, since the Arabic letters do not even correspond to their Hebrew counterparts.

Also note that Kafr Kasem, immediately adjacent to the interchange, a town of 16,000 founded in the seventeenth century, does not appear anywhere on the road signs. Kafr Kasem is infamous for the massacre of 43 of the town’s inhabitants, Israeli citizens, by Israeli Border Guard forces in 1956. This is a tragic defining moment in the relations of the Palestinian minority with the state, and a source of deep collective shame for Israelis. This sign, then, means you can drive by the Kesem interchange without having to think about or take notice of the presence of Kafr Kasem or its troubled history.

Highway 6 plays a role in hiding and revealing Palestinian spaces outside Israel as well. For a stretch it follows right along the green line, bringing the West Bank into view in a way it seldom is to the majority of Israeli Jews, yet also simultaneously obscuring it. The green line does not appear on any maps of the
company. The sign indicating a turn-off to a Jewish settlement in the West Bank such as, for example, Ariel, is not distinguished in any way from the sign indicating a turn-off to a nearby town within Israel.

When I asked him whether he had ever been to the West Bank Nir explained it like this:

Well, look. Generally speaking. Once I dropped a friend off in Ariel (a settlement in the West Bank). I drove on Highway 6, then you turn off onto 5 and somewhere along there you're in the shtachim (territories). I wasn't really sure if I was there or not. [Abigail: Did you pass a checkpoint?] I don't think so. Was I actually in the
shtachim? Not sure. Look, shtachim, not shtachim – it’s like Europe.

France, Germany, after the unification of Europe now it’s like a sign 'welcome to Germany’ and you drive right in. Look, my house is right near Tul Karem (a Palestinian refugee camp in the West Bank). If you keep driving on the road from my house past Highway 6 you get to Tul Karem. The only thing that separates us is a sign that says 'army checkpoint ahead’ and I never went past it. I imagine there’s a checkpoint somewhere ahead and that’s it.

That the highly militarized, increasingly fortified and increasingly impenetrable border between Israel and the West Bank can be compared to (what are here construed as) the casual, porous borders of the European Union is a testament to the careful planning that went in to constructing the highly stratified system of access and mobility that structures this border (see Weizman 2007). In linking up so seamlessly with the limited access roads that lead through the West Bank to the settlements, Highway 6 contributes both to the infrastructure of the occupation and to its concealment from the majority of Israeli Jews.

The ultimate expression of the infrastructure of occupation – the wall separating Israel from the West Bank – was under construction at the same time as Highway 6, and for parts of the drive along the new road the wall is immediately adjacent, bringing it shockingly into view.
But even with this most concrete of objects there is some sleight of hand at work. In the first few months of 2004, driving along the road with Ruth, we watched in some confusion as week after week dirt was piled up like a rampart in front of the wall surrounding the refugee camp of Tul Karem. Even when we saw workers planting flowers and bushes we were confused. Then we saw the final result: with flower beds reaching almost to the top of the concrete wall, it is easy to pass by and not realize what you are seeing. Ruth calls these the gardens of Tul Karem.
5. Conclusion

Lest we get the mistaken impression that road signs are closed semiotic texts removed from the social context in which they are found, I conclude with a few disturbing images (and one hopeful one) of social interventions in their meaning.
These signs are not found on Highway 6 but are within a five minute drive of the turn off at Wadi Ara road. These signs show graffiti covering up and erasing the Arabic writing – an intervention that seeks to wipe out Palestinian presence in the landscape by obliterating the Arabic language on the road signs. This final image, though, is my favourite. It is a sign that simply points north. Someone has whited the Arabic out, but someone else has come along and written it back in.
Chapter Six

Fieldtrips and Other Encounters

1. Mukeble, December 3, 2003

During my second week of Arabic lessons at Givat Haviva, shortly after I arrived in Israel, my class went on a fieldtrip to the village where our teacher Riyad lives: Mukeble. Mukeble is in Israel and its residents are Israeli citizens, but it is right on the border with the West Bank and a five minute drive away from Jenin, a city in the northern West Bank that was the second most common starting point for suicide bombs within Israel in 2003-4 (after Nablus). The proximity to the West Bank added to the discomfort many of my classmates felt visiting an Arab village.¹ It became clear in conversations during recess in the week leading up to the trip that most of them had never set foot in an Arab village before. The fieldtrip presented a dilemma to some of my classmates who, during our breaks, discussed whether it was safe and weighed the objections of family members (“my husband thinks I’m crazy”; “I didn’t tell my parents”). On the day of the trip we gathered at the school and then set out in a number of separate cars. As Riyad gave the drivers instructions for how to get there, general discomfort emerged in rather tense but boisterous joking, met with loud laughter: “So, you go right, then left, then straight,

¹ A significant part of the fear many Israeli Jews have of Wadi Ara comes from its location along the border with the West Bank and the supposed permeability of this border (see Chapter Two). Much was made, in the media and in conversations among my classmates, of the ease with which terrorists were supposedly able to pass from Jenin into Wadi Ara, undetected, and from there into the rest of Israel. See also the section below on Barta’a.
and if you get to Jenin you’ve gone too far!” “How do you get there? First you drive to Jenin . . .”

As if to confirm their fears, traffic soon slowed to a standstill on our way, on Wadi Ara road. While there is bumper-to-bumper weekend traffic along Wadi Ara road every Thursday and Saturday evening, this traffic was unusual for this spot on a Wednesday morning. We turned on the radio and heard immediately: hatra’ot in Wadi Ara (high alert - due to information that a bomber had infiltrated the area). Right away we noticed the signs: temporary checkpoints at every entry point to the road; police cars and border police jeeps everywhere; sirens, and the sounds of helicopters overhead. At one spot right before Um el Fachem we saw a steady stream of cars turning off the highway onto a dirt path, heading south up a steep, rocky, thorny hillside and escaping the traffic jam. Clearly they knew something we did not. Ruth, who was giving me a lift, pointed it out: “You see? They know the roads. They know the area. They know how to get around this. Just like the mechablím (terrorists), they know the roads.” We, who did not, continued to sit in traffic, arriving in Mukeble an hour and a half late. Ruth (whom we met in Chapter Five) is implying that the kind of local knowledge of the landscape that the Arab inhabitants of Wadi Ara use to escape a traffic jam (navigating unmarked dirt roads) may be precisely what allows Palestinians from the territories to cross borders, bypass checkpoints, and infiltrate Israeli territory.

The infiltrator probably came from Jenin. According to Riyad, Jenin used to be the nearest city to the village of Mukeble: where he often went on weekends to visit friends and family; where teenagers went to hang out; where people from his
village went to do their shopping. (Also groceries were much cheaper there than in Israel - many Jewish Israelis would go to the markets there to shop). Riyad told me he hadn’t been there since September 2000. Whereas he used to cross the green line two or three times a month, he said, he hasn’t crossed since then nor have most people in the village. As Israeli citizens they are no longer allowed in Jenin (it’s area A, where Israeli citizens aren’t allowed) but there are also two small villages directly across the line (Jalame and A’rana) that used to be neighbours – you can see the houses from the yards of the houses in Mukeble – that are in area B (joint Palestinian and Israeli control, where Israeli citizens are allowed). Most people in his village haven’t been there either since 2000. Riyad said it’s just not worth the harassment and humiliation of having to cross through the checkpoint.

Our instructions were to pull over at the bus stop at the entrance to the village (still a landmark, though no bus reaches Mukeble any more; service to the village was stopped in 2000), where Riyad met us in his car, and led us in to the village. We parked at the community centre and went in. The building was undergoing renovations, or rather it appeared to be in a permanent state of undergoing renovations. We gathered round a plastic table laden with pita, labane sprinkled with zaatar, and tea. Balancing plastic plates on our knees, we tried to chat in Arabic with a man whom Riyad introduced as his best friend and a member of local government, Tawfik. Tawfik then led us into the village’s museum, a large, sparse room in the community centre with pictures on the wall showing Mukeble

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2 Mukeble is just the other side of the Gilboa mountain from the kibbutz I lived on as a child - maybe a 15 minute drive away. My father remembers driving to Jenin from the kibbutz with harvests of olives because the olive press was there. This was in 1982-1983, before the first intifada, but he says they used to carry guns with them.
and its residents over the ages. He talked to us about Mukeble, in Arabic, which Riyadh translated into slower, simpler Arabic that we were able to understand.

The introduction to the place began with an explanation of its name: Mukeble. Its root (k b l) forms a number of words: to greet a guest with honour; to face east; the future. The origins of the name may lie in the village’s reputation for being hospitable, he explained, a reputation it still has today. Also the village is located on the route pilgrims used to travel from the Galil to Jerusalem, and was a resting point where many travelers were greeted. Riyadh’s family, on his father’s side, has been here since the time of the Ottomans, some 300 years. His mother’s family arrived during the time of the British mandate. They were Bedouins, forcibly settled by the British: each family was given 80 dunams of land and instructed to farm. Tawfik’s family arrived in 1948 – part of a large number of internal refugees displaced during the war and officially designated “present absentees.” His family left their home in the village of Sidniyali on the coast (which is now the wealthy Jewish suburb of Herzliya) and arrived here, where they knew people, and stayed. Other members of their family continued on to Jenin. “It’s our luck that my parents decided to build their house here, and not 300 metres to the south,” Tawfik told us.

When the war was over, they were living inside the green line – the newly formed armistice lines – and were therefore granted Israeli citizenship; their family members who had ended up in Jenin were not.

After taking our leave from his friend, Riyadh lead us on a guided tour of the village, stopping every few houses to be offered refreshments by various of his relatives and close friends: cold water (brought out in small glasses on a large tray,
not nearly enough for this hot December day), orange pop, hot sweet tea with mint, freshly brewed strong black coffee with cardamom, even the freshly roasted coffee beans which Tawfik’s mother handed out, dropping a few fragrant beans, still warm, in our out-stretched hands. She had been sitting in the shaded area in front of her house, peeling and finely chopping an enormous pile of cucumbers when we came by, and enthusiastically invited us in to eat (all 15 or so of us). We declined this invitation, as we had many other similar ones. We visited the mosque, and the site where a new mosque is being built; the elementary school and kindergarten, where children stared and waved; the old chan (camel stables), now converted into rooms with stunning high domed ceilings, but crumbling walls; Riyad’s family's sheep barn, where we patted the new lambs; and the slaughter house (I stayed outside). Then Riyad took us to see where the wall would be built. We stood in a field behind his family’s barn, the dry dark soil crumbly in our sandals, and looked where he pointed. “Over there [on the horizon] is the refugee camp this side of Jenin. Over there are the villages of Jalame and A’rana. See where the fence passes?” (A few minutes of pointing, orienting, describing ensued, until we were all able to make out what looked from the distance like a simple wire fence, though it was probably either barbed or electric, or both.) “That's the green line. That's where the wall is going to pass through here. It’s supposed to be built some time in the spring [of 2004]. Just at the end of my father's fields. Here the wall will follow the green line.”

On our way home, after more coffee, sweets, and home-made date-filled cookies served to us while we sat in a wide circle of plastic lawn chairs on the shady terrace of Riyad's mother's home, after meeting his two young children and his wife,
and being proudly shown her paintings hanging in their living room and their beautifully tended garden, as we walked back to where the cars were parked, Ruth asked to be shown the machsom. The word machsom comes from the root ch s m, meaning to seal or to block. It is usually translated as a checkpoint, but refers to any barrier, of variable permeability, set up by Israeli security forces to control movement into, out of, and within Israel and the territories. In this case it refers to a checkpoint where movement between Israel and the West Bank is controlled. Most of the class passed up the opportunity and continued to their cars, choosing not to see, while a smaller group of us continued on foot with Riyad to the outskirts of the village.

We stood at the side of a one-lane road, a few hundred metres away from the checkpoint itself. All we could see of the machsom was concrete barriers, a short line of cars on the far side, and a number of soldiers in the dark green uniform of the border police. Riyad explained that this area was being prepared to be a border crossing, for a future time when there are two countries to cross between, and an international border between them. When better days come, he said, this will be just like Taba and Aqaba (the international border crossings to Sinai and to Jordan from Eilat, in the south of Israel). This will bring employment and money to Mukeble and to the other nearby villages, he said. Already a wide corridor had been flattened between the fields, and early signs of construction were evident, though on this day in December 2003 (and still today) this activity seemed overly optimistic.

As we were discussing better days, a man who had clearly just passed through the checkpoint on foot from the West Bank into Israel approached us along
the road. We could not see what had gone on at the checkpoint, but as he
approached the tension was visible in the set of his shoulders, in his gait. When he
came closer the tightly controlled anger was only too clear on his face. He stopped a
few paces away from us and let out his anger, in perfect Hebrew: “Go there, go! See
for yourselves how a person is brought low. (eich mashpilim ben adam – how to
humiliate a person.) And I’m with a blue teuda, just like yours.” He waved his Israeli
identification papers in our faces, blue because he is an Israeli citizen. On them, I
know, is written, Ezrahut (citizenship): Israeli; Leum (nation): Arab. “That’s how it
is, this is equality in Eretz Yisrael (the land of Israel).” He spat on the ground, and
continued on his way. Not one of us said a word.

2. Encounters

While the preceding chapters have been concerned with the many ways Jews
and Palestinians in Israel maintain their distance, this chapter asks what happens
when they meet. I am not concerned here with daily sorts of mingling in
bureaucratic settings, in the workplace, or through shopping and exchange of other
services. Based on my observations, I would hypothesize that the situation in Wadi
Ara is quite similar in these respects to mixed cities such as Nazareth and Jerusalem,
as described by Rabinowitz (1997) and Romann and Weingrod (1991), respectively.
Many Palestinians in Wadi Ara, as in Nazareth and Jerusalem, must enter Jewish
spaces daily to access essential services provided by the state or for work. Riyadh, for
example, lives in Mukeble but works in Afula and Givat Haviva. The encounters I
examine in this chapter are unusual in that they take place in Palestinian spaces.
Israeli Jews have historically entered Palestinian towns and villages in Israel only rarely and only under a highly proscribed and limited set of circumstances (see Chapter Three, Stein 1998); as I document in the previous chapters, even these limited ventures were all but eliminated during the time I did my fieldwork, as fear marked Palestinian spaces in Wadi Ara as off-limits to most Jews. In this chapter I examine a particular set of events carefully and self-consciously orchestrated to enable Jewish Israelis to travel to Palestinian spaces. Because these movements are far from everyday acts, and because they take place in this context of fear and distance, the events are highly structured to make them feel both safe and intelligible to the participants. I argue that what gave shape and meaning to these experiences – and what ultimately limited their possibilities – was the trope of encounter.

At least once a month, members of the Arabic language classes at Givat Haviva would leave the classroom behind and spend a day traveling to Palestinian towns and villages in the area. The express purpose of these fieldtrips or tiyulim (singular: tiyul), as they were called in Hebrew, was to have a chance to speak Arabic with real live Arabic speakers while simultaneously learning about Arab culture through visiting Arab people in Arab places. I participated in eleven day-long tiyulim with three different classes at Givat Haviva over the time I was there. The tiyulim were an integral part of the curriculum, something Givat Haviva was known for. Since it was unusual in this regard among Arabic language schools, the staff of the Giva were quite proud of it, often pointing out how lucky we were to be able take
advantage of the location of the school – in Wadi Ara, surrounded by Palestinian villages.

The trip to Mukeble was my first tiyul, and the above description of the day (taken largely verbatim from a write-up of my fieldnotes\(^3\)) is remarkable to me now for the way it highlights a set of elements which I now recognize as so definitive of our tiyulim as to be clichéd: the fear and danger; the brave venture into unknown territory; the warm reception, generosity, and hospitality, as evidenced by an abundance of food and drink (all delicious, exotic, and authentic); the rural setting with connotations both idyllic and backward; the revelation of forgotten history and alternative geography; and the interruption of politics, in the form of confrontations with the border, in its various forms. My immediate reaction to the experience is now tempered by the awareness that this same combination of elements was repeated with eerie similarity on almost every subsequent tiyul. It is also now coloured by recognition of the resonances that animate these common elements, and that give shape and meaning to these encounters. Why did Riyadh meet us at the bus stop just outside the village, rather than at the community centre in the village? What is the place of Sidniyali – the former home of Tawfik’s family, emptied and destroyed in 1948 – in my classmates’ imaginative geographies? How were Riyadh’s friends and family positioning themselves, as they offered us warm hospitality and traditional Arab delicacies? How did my classmates see and understand the border – both the fence that passed along the green line where the wall would soon be built and the scene at the checkpoint? This chapter aims to answer these questions.

\(^3\) I was not yet taping so my observations are entirely from notes. During subsequent tiyulim I carried my recorder with me.
The *tiyulim* from Givat Haviva are predicated on a number of assumptions about language learning: that language is inseparable from culture; that Arabic must therefore be taught along with Arab ‘customs and traditions’ (*awdat wa takalid*); that the best way to learn a language is ‘on the street’; and that Jews, in the normal course of their lives, have no opportunity to speak Arabic ‘on the street’ (that is, that the streets they inhabit are empty of Arabs – or at least the right kinds of Arabs – see Chapter Three). At the same time, the *tiyulim* are also predicated on a number of related, though less explicit, assumptions about space and identity in Israel: that Arab and Jewish spaces are separate and mutually exclusive; that both Arabs and the Arabic language are located exclusively in Arab spaces; that Jews do not go to these spaces in the normal course of their lives; and that exposure to these spaces – and the people who inhabit them – is somehow mutually beneficial. Our *tiyulim* were meant not only to improve our language skills but also somehow to promote harmony and understanding – to facilitate encounter.4

I use the word encounter as a translation of the Hebrew word *mifgash*. The most common way that the *tiyulim* were described and understood by everyone involved was in terms of a *mifgash*. Michal, the Jewish head-teacher and organizer of the *tiyulim* described with some passion what for her was their goal in an interview (February 10, 2005):

> [My goal is] that they’ll get a different impression of – that they’ll have more real CONTACT (*maga*) with the Arab population, that they won’t

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4 The idea of furthering harmony and understanding through improving language skills can be compared to ideologies of linguistic diversity and multiculturalism in the Canadian context (see e.g., Heller 2006).
think all Arabs are attackers, murderers, rapists and – and – and suicide bombers, which is what most of them think and it’s not TRUE . . . What’s important for me is that they’ll see that people live – they’re like us! They think like us! Their children want the same thin::ings we want, they look like US – they LOOK like us! What’s the bi::g – And a lot of people think otherwise. And - (. ) Most people think otherwise! . . . The Arabs in Israel are a minority that wants kirva (closeness, integration), they want to be a part of. And there is no other way to say this, without an encounter (mifgash), there’s no way. There’s NO WAY. The only thing – the single thing that helps to catch this? is to be inside. Is the encounter in the villages . . . The encounter lowers the fear, to a certain extent. To a certain extent. It’s one of the most important things . . . So literally (beferush) one of the most important goals of the course, for me, is to create this encounter (la’asot et hamifgash), to have them be on the ground (lehachnis otam lashetach), so they can get to know, so they can see. That people are no di::fferent, that they want the same thin::ings. What do they want? [in one breath] They want quiet, the want to live, they want to love, they want to teach, they want to learn . . . And that they’re very similar. Very similar (. ) And that they’re not primitive! Write it down! That there are amazing people – smart, bright, genious, and enlightened . . . There’s no end of amazing Arab people in Israel.
Michal, then, explicitly designs the *tiyulim* to counter the assumed status quo of fear, distance, and ignorance. By bringing us into contact (*maga*) with Arabs in Israel who will in the process reveal themselves to be “amazing people,” she hopes to disprove stereotypes and dispel fear by showing us the real situation, on the ground (*ba shetach*); all this is achieved simply by enabling an *encounter*. Our other teachers, the tour guides, and my classmates, like Michal, also overwhelmingly described their goals for or experiences of the *tiyulim* in terms of encounter.

The word *encounter* resonates with centuries-long histories of movement and travel, invoking the complex and overlapping routes (cf. Clifford 1997) of explorers, colonialists, settlers, anthropologists, tourists and other travelers as they intersect with ‘the locals.’ These routes are densely inscribed in particular forms over the territory or Israel and Palestine. Representations of encounters between travelers and locals in colonial and post-colonial contexts, from early explorers and settlers to contemporary backpackers, have been extensively critiqued for the ways they often work to silence, immobilize, de-historicize, and naturalize ‘the locals’ as they absolve the traveler of any role in the conquests and dominations which enable his movement (e.g., Pratt 1992, Shohat 1987, Grewal 1996, Deloria 1998, Adams

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5 On histories of travel to Israel/Palestine see Stein 2008, Chapter One. Following Stein, I situate the movements discussed in this chapter in relation to recent large-scale histories of movement of Palestinians and Israelis (as described in Chapter Two of the dissertation). These include waves of Jewish immigration (*aliya*) before and after the founding of the state; the displacement and exile of Palestinians in the 1948 and again in the 1967 war; and further Israeli military incursions into and settlement in Palestinian territory from 1967 until the present day. Particular Israeli Jewish genres of leisure travel (the *tiyul* and ethnographic tourism) are discussed below.
Meanwhile, anthropologists have expended much ink and much angst over the complicity of the ethnographic encounter, of ethnographic representations, and of the traveling anthropologist in such imperialist histories and trajectories (e.g., Asad 1973, Clifford 1988, 1989, 1997, Narayan 1997, Ong 1995, Behar and Gordon 1995, Gupta and Ferguson 1997). The intimacies of all these encounters, as Talal Asad writes of anthropological fieldwork, are enabled by the power structures in which they are embedded, even while these same structures ensure the intimacy should be “one-sided and provisional” (Asad 1973:17). Further, these inter-related histories of encounter each resonate with intimations of the other, so that they form a set of nesting frameworks which inform how each encounter is structured and experienced: the tourist in relation to the anthropologist in relation to the colonialist, and the other ways around. As Sara Ahmed (2000:8) writes, “encounters are meetings . . . which are not simply in the present: each encounter reopens past encounters.”

While each of these encounters is informed by the paths of other travelers, though, they are far from being the same. Caren Kaplan (1996) argues that the ubiquitous traveling subject has become a trope in cultural theory, variously used to illustrate ideas of transience, flux, flow, or hybridity, in the name of the postmodern, the global, the diasporic, or the transnational. She cautions against using “laundry lists” of travelers in our analysis (“tourists, immigrants, refugees, exiles, guest workers”) which tend to obscure the varied historical conditions and relations of power that enable and constrain different forms of movement for different people in

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6 I use the masculine pronoun here advisedly, to index the ways such histories of encounter are gendered (cf. Grewal 1996, Shohat 2006).
different times and places. Rather than dismissing figures such as the exile, the nomad, or the tourist for their imprecision or overuse, however, Kaplan interrogates how they operate as tropes in the field of criticism; she follows them as a set of “charged metaphors,” tracing their circulation in cultural theory. She demonstrates how the temporal and spatial dimensions of these terms are “linked elements in colonial discourses of travel” (103), asking, for example, “how does the metaphor of exile work in particular kinds of cultural criticism and to what (or whose) ends?” (103)

In this chapter I ask: How does the trope of ‘encounter’ work in this particular set of interactions, and to what ends? This question obviously builds on Kaplan’s work by adding encounter to her list of charged metaphors of travel, but I trace the concept as it circulates not in cultural theory and criticism but in practice, paying attention to the ways it shapes experience and not just analysis. I aim to examine a set of interactions understood and described by those involved as ‘encounters’ without taking for granted either the tropes of travel that underlie them or the specific histories and power relations they obscure. I argue that the encounters enabled by our fieldtrips are over-determined by a series of prototypical encounters, both specific to Israel and influenced by the global context, that structure and constrain the possibilities available to participants and give shape and meaning to our experience: the genre of tiyul, the experience of the ethnographic tourist, and behind all these, the colonial encounter. These frameworks provide tightly scripted roles for my classmates and for me: pioneer, tourist, anthropologist/orientalist, occupier/colonizer. The corresponding roles for those
Palestinians we met are even more tightly constrained. I argue that the trope of
encounter here works to “reopen the prior histories of encounter that violate and fix
others in regimes of difference” (Ahmed 2000:8). I ask: What sorts of parameters
constrain these encounters, what sorts of interactions do they enable, and what
sorts of citizens do they presume?

In what follows I present ethnographic descriptions of three *tiyulim* I
participated in to Palestinian cities and villages in Wadi Ara and the surrounding
region: Nazareth, Um el Kutuf, and Barta’a. Each ethnographic description is
preceded by a discussion of the particular trope that most clearly animates the
fieldtrip that follows: *tiyul*; ethnographic tourism; colonial encounters. The
organization of the chapter, linking a particular trope with a particular *tiyul*, is for
heuristic purposes only, and the reader is invited to trace linkages and overlaps
across the various sections. The ubiquity of these tropes meant that I could have
chosen to highlight each of them in many different *tiyulim*.8

My analysis is based on fieldnotes, audio-recordings, and conversations with
participants on the day of the trip, as well as follow-up interviews and discussions

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7 I provide more detail in the section on *tiyul* than in the sections on the other two
tropes, since it will be new to readers less familiar with the Israeli context.
8 There were additional tropes I have had to leave out for lack of space; the most
prominent among these is the “coexistence encounter” or “encounter for peace.”
The prototype here is a type of event common during the Oslo years but very rare by
the time of my fieldwork: workshops set up by NGOs (Givat Haviva and Neve Shalom
were prominent among these) that brought together Jews and Palestinians with
the express purpose of getting to know ‘the enemy’ and talking about the political issues
that divided participants (see e.g., Bargal and Bar 1994, Kahanoff 2003). While the
field of coexistence initiatives has been extensively and insightfully critiqued for the
ways such encounters mask power imbalances behind a rhetoric of mutuality,
equality, and cooperation (see e.g., Rabinowitz 2001), I have not seen the particular
resonances behind the idea of ‘encounter’ called into question, in the way I do here.
leading up to and after the trips, in class and among friends. In contrast to many studies of tourist sites in Israel (e.g., Katriel 1997, Abu el Haj 2001), my familiarity with the participants – they were my teachers and classmates / informants over a period of many months – meant that I was able to move beyond a focus on the tour as text to include differing reactions, interpretations, intentions, and motivations of the participants (see also Habib 2004). I also analyze these three tiyulim in the context of other trips I participated in over the course of sixteen months at Givat Haviva, including the trip to Mukeble (described above), hikes in the hills around the campus, and trips to Um el Fachem (twice), Sakhnin (twice), Shfa’amer, Kafr Kara, Deyr Hannah, Kawkab Abu-el-Hije, Arrabeh, and a Bedouin village called Sawaed il Chamra (see figures 6.9-6.12).

3. Tiyul

The tiyul – more than a hike and more than a field trip – is a uniquely Israeli genre of leisure travel with a long history closely tied to the changing imperatives of a fledgling nation-state. In The Sabra: The Creation of the New Jew, Oz Almog describes its origins:

Taking schoolchildren on nature hikes became integral to the pedagogical philosophy of most teachers during the period of the First Aliya [the first wave of modern Zionist immigration to Israel, 1881-1903]. The purpose of these trips was to teach in an enjoyable and entertaining way and relieve the monotony of classroom study, while allowing students to stretch their limbs, and also strengthening the
ties between teachers and pupils. In addition the trips fostered a link between the students and their surroundings, provided access to examples of the... material being studied in school (largely in natural history and geography), allowed students to “discover” natural phenomena for themselves, and improved their Hebrew language skills (2000:164).

By the 1920s, Almog argues, the tiyul had become a fundamental element of Zionist education, and a defining feature of the image of the sabra – the hegemonic ideal of the native-born Israeli.

If Zionism was the new secular religion among early immigrants to what was then British Mandate Palestine, Almog argues, then yediat ha’aretz (knowledge of the land) replaced knowledge of the Torah (the Jewish bible) as the definitive and ideal education for the ‘new Jew.’ Yediat haaretz combines specialized forms of knowledge about the landscape of Israel, drawing on local ecology, archaeology, history, geology, geography, and bible. Tiyul provides the primary way of inculcating these forms of knowledge but also of displaying them and enacting them. One can display mastery of yediat ha’aretz while on tiyul by knowing where to find and how to identify the wild herbs that grow along the path and using them to brew tea; by surveying the landscape, often from a look-out spot (tatspit), and pointing to

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9 The tea or coffee break is a highly ritualized part of the tiyul, rooted in the idealization and mystification of Bedouin customs. The gaziya (portable gas burner) and finjan (small, long-handled pot with a spout) come out of the knapsack, small shotglasses are pulled out of a tea towel, fresh wild herbs (mint, za’atar, sage) are produced, having been picked along the way, and are boiled for a sweet, aromatic tea in the open air. The alternative is dark strong coffee (called “Turkish” or “Arab” coffee) flavoured with cardamom and served sweet in the same shot glasses. Both
the place where a biblical battle took place, or a battle during the 1948 war, or (ideally) both; by identifying trees and crops and rock formations, as well as naming valleys and rivers and landmarks. Shaul Katz (1999) describes yediat ha’aretz as a “para-canonical” form of knowledge, one that combines the localization and particularization of scientific knowledge with modifications of the historical sequence of events, giving “new weight and new meaning to sources of knowledge of different status” (96, my translation). Meron Benvenisti (2000) more pointedly describes yediat ha’aretz as “a mechanism of indoctrination by means of which a Zionist ideology was implanted in the heart of the Jewish child” (57).¹⁰

The tiyul was and continues to be a way of forging an emotional and an ideological connection to the landscape. Simultaneously an expression of anti-bourgeois ethos¹¹ and a negation of the landlessness of diaspora Judaism (two central tenets of early Zionism), early tiyulim represented a voyage of national awakening and a ritual of conquest for immigrants, who wanted to “reach new places and new heights on which the foot of man had yet to tread” (Almog 1997: 91, my translation). Tiyul played a role in strengthening collective identity and national belonging for early immigrants while simultaneously forging a connection to the land and a claim to the land.

¹⁰ Benvenisti’s critique is particularly poignant given that his father, David Benvenisti, was the author of one of the most popular texts for teaching yediat ha’aretz (Benvenisti 1946).
¹¹ This is in contrast to other contexts, where hiking can be interpreted as a display of bourgeois sensibility (see Bourdieu 1984, McElhinny 2006).
While the genre of *tiyul* originated as fieldtrips for schoolchildren more than a century ago, its relevance in contemporary Israeli society has not waned. In addition to continuing to play a central role in primary and secondary school education, Israeli Jews are likely to go on *tiyulim* through youth groups, in the army, through environmental organizations, such as the Society for the Protection of Nature in Israel (SPNI), and as a popular leisure activity with family and friends.\(^{12}\)

Orit Ben-David (1997) analyzes contemporary adult *tiyulim* undertaken through the SPNI as secular rituals, integral to the “civil religion” of contemporary Israeli society. She found that contemporary *tiyulim* continue to inculcate a Zionist ethos: “In the act of hiking both the individual and the group mark out territory, claiming possession by use of the body – that is, by the act of walking” (Ben-David 1997:140; see also Katz 1985, Katriel 1995).

It felt quite natural to me, then, to find the *tiyul* featuring so prominently in our language lessons at Givat Haviva. Our fieldtrips were called *tiyulim* and they served the same primary functions as the early *tiyulim* described by Almog: an escape from the classroom, a chance for students and teachers to bond, and a way to bring to life the material of our lessons by encountering their subject matter in the real world. The difference was that the subject matter of our lessons – the Arabic language – was absolutely not a part of the Zionist canon. What was surprising, then, was the way our *tiyulim* both relied on and subverted the classic genre by specifically and exclusively choosing Palestinian places as our destination.

\(^{12}\) On any summer weekend the more popular hiking trails are so packed with families that narrow parts of the trail create a bottleneck and you end up waiting in line to pass through.
In written accounts of the early pre-state tiyulim, as analyzed by Oz Almog, hikers encounter a landscape devoid of inhabitants: “[t]he Arab villages and their inhabitants are hardly mentioned at all. The Arab village appears mainly as a lifeless landmark, or a place to stop to get food and water, or a dangerous place that one must beware of” (Almog 1997:303). The presence of Arab villages in the landscape was antithetical to the entire idea of the tiyul; after all, the Zionist grand narrative required a land without people for a people without land (see e.g., Zerubavel 1995). Accordingly, often the landscape “is described as virgin land, upon which no one lived until the arrival of the Jews” (Almog 1997:303). This is, of course, a strategy not unique to the Israeli settlement project; the descriptions of early 20th century tiyulim analyzed by Almog are remarkably similar to the travel writings of late 18th century European imperialists in Africa, as analyzed by Mary Louise Pratt (1992), in which “the landscape is written as uninhabited, uppossessed, unhistoricized, unoccupied” (50). Similar strategies of erasure are revealed in Vicente Rafael’s (2000:60 ff) discussion of the “colonial picturesque” in the letters of American women in the colonial Philippines.

Contemporary tiyulim continue this sleight of hand although, since 1948, it has become easier; many of the Palestinian villages ignored on the hikes Almog describes are now only visible as ruins – if at all – having been destroyed in the 1948 war. While Palestinian presences – past and present – in the landscape of Israel

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13 See also Ella Shohat (2006), Gil Eyal (2007), and Meron Benvenisti (2000:58ff) for descriptions of the ambivalent attitude of Jewish settlers in the pre-state period to their Arab neighbours.
14 See Falah 2005 on the destruction and designification of the Palestinian landscape.
are ignored or erased, it is precisely past Jewish presences in the land that *tiyulim* highlight, in order to emphasize a continual connection to the land. As I mentioned above, pointing out Biblical mountains and Talmudic caves, telling tales of Jewish battles, prophesies, and tragedies, are a key way to display *yediat haaretz*. The *tiyul*, then, much like the road signs on Highway 6, relies on a particular kind of selective vision, highlighting certain presences in the landscape and erasing others, skipping over recent history to select the parts of the past that fit the narrative.15 (Abu El-Haj, 2001, describes a similar dynamic with contemporary archaeological practice in Israel.)

What does it mean, then, to go on a *tiyul* where an Arab village or a Palestinian city features not as a blight in the landscape, something to be erased or ignored, but as the destination? What does it mean to go on *tiyul* with our Palestinian teachers as guides? Shaul Katz (1985) analyzes the role of the *madrich*, the Israeli teacher-guide who leads the *tiyul*, arguing that he [sic] is more than a "teacher of the way" (*moreh derech*). He is "an encourager of faith" (69); "he is the navigator, in an environment new to the participants, and he is the interpreter of the scenes and their meanings, above all their national meanings" (63). What sort of encounter is produced, then, what faith is being encouraged and how is the new environment interpreted, when the teacher-guide is a Palestinian citizen of Israel?

15 For example, many hikes along wadis in the Golan Heights begin with a short walk across the plateau before a steep descent into the wadi; on one hike, the trail across the plateau leads right through the burnt-out ruins of a cluster of stone houses. I have been told that the houses belonged to the Syrians who lived there before the Heights were captured in 1967. While no mention is made of these on signs or in pamphlets or guide-books describing the *tiyul*, a bit farther along the trail the hiker encounters a sign that proclaims: "On this spot, in biblical and Mishnaic times, there was a Jewish village called Dvora."
Our class tiyul to Nazareth and a conversation on a bus a few weeks later provide some insight into these questions.

4. “Names without places”: Nazareth, December 30, 2004

Nazareth is about a half-hour drive from Givat Haviva: east along Wadi Ara road, past Megiddo, then north into the hills, just before Afula. On the day of our fieldtrip to Nazareth, we picked Fouad up at a gas station just outside the city. “Good morning, and welcome to the city of Nazareth,” he began. As the road wound up a steep hill, the buildings around us became denser and the billboards, still for familiar Israeli products (Elite chocolate, Tnuva dairy), showed more Arabic script. Nazareth is a city of 70,000 inhabitants, Fouad continued; one third is Muslim and the majority are Christian Arabs.

We got off the bus at our first stop, still on the outskirts of the city, and climbed up a hill that has a panoramic view of the Yizrael valley to the south, and the city of Nazareth spread out before us to the north. We are located, Fouad told us, 400 metres above sea level and the mountain we're standing on is called Jabl il Kabse – the mountain of the jump.¹⁶ On this quintessential tiyul spot – the tatspit (lookout) – Fouad began his description with a typical tiyul narrative: the biblical story that happened in the place we were standing, and that explains the origin of its name. But the story he told is not from the Torah, the Jewish bible, but from the life of Jesus.

¹⁶ mons saltus Domini in Latin.
*Jabl il Kabse*, Fouad explained in Arabic, gets its name because it was here that the people of Nazareth tried to throw Jesus from a cliff, as punishment for blaspheming by presenting himself as the messiah.

But here the miracle took place. He [Jesus] arrived here [pointing at the ground], and the miracle was that he jumped from here to Jabl Tabur. Look there – [*talau hon*, pointing to the hill in the distance]

Abigail: Oh! That’s the Tavor?
Fouad: Yes. That’s Jabl Tabur.
Yoav: Wo::w!
Isaac: In one jump? [in Arabic]
Fouad: In one jump!

Fouad locates us firmly in the landscape of the tale he is telling, pointing to the ground where Jesus stood and to the distant hill-top that he jumped to, and linking this to the landscape we know by identifying the Tavor mountain, a familiar landmark, by its Hebrew name, albeit with an Arabic accent (see figure 6.1). Here he is acting, in Keith Basso’s (1996) terms, as a “place-maker,” telling an ancient story in the spot that it took place, speaking as a witness to the scene and thus “forging ancestral worlds in which others can participate . . . creating in the process a vivid sense that what happened long ago – right here, on this very spot – could be happening now” (32). But the story he tells is not the story of his audience, who do not recognize Jesus as their ancestor. My classmates choose not to participate in the

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17 This must be apocryphal (or maybe in the Quran?), since according to the bible the miracle was that Jesus escaped unharmed: “he walked right through the crowd and went on his way.” (Luke 4:21-30)
“possible world” he has fashioned. Rather than contemplating this place-world as an “image of the past that can deepen and enlarge our understanding of the present” (Basso 1996:32), their response is a series of irreverent jokes met with laughter, the break with Fouad’s place-world emphasized by switching from Arabic into Hebrew:

Isaac: He must have taken quite a running start!
Daniel: Two jumps max, eh?
Yoav: Superman!

After the general hilarity died down, Fouad continued with the story: “So look there, there is Jabl Tabur, otherwise known as Jabl i’ Tur. Jabl i’ Tur is mentioned three times in the Qur’an… The Arab village under it, does anyone know its name?” No one does. It’s Daburriya, named after Dvorah, the Hebrew prophet in the bible.

Fouad continued in Arabic, pointing to each landmark in turn (see figures 6.2, 6.3):

If we look in front of us here we see a mountain which is Jabl il Jalbua.
The mountains of Gilboa. Here we have the Jalbua. And across from us here, look at the area where we are, we are around – we can see from here a third of Israel! We can see from here all the way to the mountains of Jordan. There, those far mountains, those are the mountains of Jordan (ajbal il Urdun). The valley we see in front of us – does anybody know this valley? What’s it called?
Yael: That’s Sahel Yizrael. [She uses the Arabic word for valley with the valley’s Hebrew name.]
Fouad: It’s called Marj Ibn Amer (the valley of Ibn Amer) in Arabic.

Why is it called that? Because around the time of the Ottomans there
lived a Bedouin tribe here named Ibn Amer, the tribe of Ibn Amer. And the valley was named after them. And today of course its name is Emek Yizrael (the Yizrael valley). That village under that mountain there, not under Jabl i’ Tur, under that mountain which is Jabl i’ Nasira (the mountain of Nazareth), that’s an Arab village called Iksal. Iksal. The valley that is found near Iksal, from Daburriya - that is between Jabl i’ Nasira and Jabl i’ Tur, is called Sahl Iksal (the valley of Iksal).

And the valley of Iksal connects with the valley of Ibn Amer.

Fouad pointed out the city of Afula, below us to the east, and the city of Um el Fachem, far in the west, on top of a hill he named as Jabl Iskander. We turned toward the city of Nazareth and he pointed out Jabl i’ Daule – the mountain of the state, a hill in the city of Nazareth where city hall, the court, and other state buildings are located – and the two Nazareths: Upper Nazareth, where the Jews live, and Lower Nazareth, where the Arabs live.18 Behind Nazareth, to the south-west, he pointed out Migdal HaEmek, a Jewish development town, and the adjacent industrial zone.

After posing for a group picture against the panoramic backdrop (see figure 6.4), we climbed back on the bus and continued with the trip: lunch at a humus and falafel restaurant (see Chapter Three); a visit to the Church of the Annunciation; free time in the shuk; a visit to the mosque. But the part of the trip to Nazareth that made the biggest impression on me was not the city itself; it was standing on that hill outside the city and seeing the surrounding landscape through Fouad’s eyes.

What Fouad was doing on that hilltop was placing us into an unfamiliar version of the landscape around us. Through gestures, names, and stories, he was interpreting the landscape around us from an entirely different perspective to what we were used to. While the genre of tiyul often relies on Biblical stories to create place-worlds, it is not those of Jesus that are usually emphasized for a Jewish audience. The villages of Dabburiya, Iksal, Zalafe – while their names appear on maps and road signs, they are not landmarks that any of my classmates navigate by; it is safe to say that no one in the class had ever been to them or had their presence pointed out. On the other hand, Sahl Iksal, Marj Ibn Amer, Jabl i’ Tur – none of these names of hills and valleys appear on any official maps of Israel, nor on road signs. All these places now have other names, Hebrew names: Ya’ar Churchill, Emek Yizrael, Har Tavor. When Fouad says that these places are “also called” by their Arabic names, what other landscape is he pointing to? What history is elided when he says “now this valley is called Emek Yizrael”? Soon after our trip to Nazareth, a chance encounter on a bus provided some insight into these questions.

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A week later, I was sitting on the bus to Tel Aviv, on my way back to Givat Haviva from a weekend at my sister’s in Jerusalem. The clouds were thick and low over Abu Gosh and, as we began the descent from the mountains, it started to pour. I had my headphones on, and was re-playing the tape of our trip to Nazareth, jotting down a rough topic transcript in my notebook. Fouad’s voice in my ears named the hills of Nazareth as the Judean mountains gave way to the coastal plain outside the bus window. The first half hour or so of tape boiled down to a list of hills in my
notes: Jabl il Kabse, Jabl i’ Daule, Jabl Tabur. I wrote the names down, in Hebrew and in Arabic, making a note of the time on the tape when they came up.

I noticed that a man in the dark green uniform of the Magav (border patrol), sitting in the seat behind me and across the aisle, was straining to look over my shoulder. He was maybe in his late 40s with dark skin, close-cropped graying hair, a small, neat moustache. I glanced back at him, and he caught my eye and took the opportunity to ask me (in Hebrew): “I noticed that you’re writing in Arabic – are you translating from Hebrew to Arabic?” I told him that I was translating in the reverse direction. Visibly excited, he asked me where I was studying Arabic. When I told him Givat Haviva he answered, cryptically, “Of course.” Getting more excited, he pointed to my notebook: “I’ve noticed that you’ve written Nazareth wrong. It’s like this. May I?” He took my notebook and pen from me and wrote the word in, his fluid Arabic script next to my cramped, awkward, and apparently mis-spelled attempt. He dotted it with a flourish and sounded it out carefully for me, emphasizing the proper spelling. “I’Na::sira”. He read off the page, further down: “Jabl i’ Daule”. “Do you know where that is? It’s at the traffic light on the way in to the city, on the road to Afula.”

The usual exchange ensued, each of us attempting to locate the other socially and to settle ethnic ambiguities by asking geographical questions. I asked him if he was from Nazareth and he said no, he’s from Shfar’am, but he knows the whole country. He asked me where I was from and I confused him by telling him Canada. “But from what eda (nation) are you?” he pressed. “You’re Jewish, right?” Yes. He asked me where I’m coming from and I told him my sister’s in Talpiot (a
neighbourhood on the southern edge of Jerusalem). “That’s right near where I work,” he said. “I work in Beit Lechem (Bethlehem).” Given his border guard uniform, I understood this to mean that he was probably stationed at the checkpoints between Bethlehem, in the West Bank, and Jerusalem. “That must be hard,” I responded, inadequately.19

I turned back to my notebook and plugged in my earphones, but he continued to lean out into the aisle and glanced over my shoulder as I wrote down the next place on the tape: Migdal Ha’Emek.20 “Do you know where that is?” he asked. “Do you know what they call Migdal HaEmek in Arabic?” Confused, I offered the Arabic word for ‘tower’ and ‘valley,’ a literal translation of the name of the town. “No, no, no.” He reached for my notebook and wrote there in the margins: Mjaydal. I sounded it out, still confused, and ventured to point out that it sounds like migdal. He shrugged and handed the notebook back to me, in a way that made me feel like I had missed the point, like I was not understanding something, but he didn’t want to say.

I went back to listening and writing in my notebook, wishing we could continue our conversation. As the bus pulled into Arlozorov train station in Tel Aviv, I turned around to thank him, but he had already moved toward the back doors. The station was busy and clouded. Giant puddles wet the cuffs of my pants

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19 On Palestinian soldiers in the Israeli army see Kanaaneh 2005.
20 This Jewish town of approximately 25,000 is a short distance south-west of Nazareth. It was founded in 1953 as a ma’abara, a camp for absorption of immigrant refugees from North Africa and the Middle East and became an ayarat pituach, a development town. Its name means “tower of the valley.”
when I stepped off the bus, but the rain had stopped. I hurried toward the next bus that would take me north to Wadi Ara.

Later that evening, I stopped short in the middle of reading an article that I had brought back with me from Jerusalem. The article was by Dan Rabinowitz, an ethnographer of Nazareth, and I had brought it to show Nurit, since I thought we could both use it to fill out the picture of the city that Fouad had presented on our tiyul. In the middle of a description of the demographic composition of the city, the following detail caught my attention: “[In 1948] Palestinian internal refugees fled into Nazareth . . . the largest contingents came from three adjacent, fairly large villages destroyed by the Israeli forces: Saffuriya, Mjaydal, and Ma’alul” (Rabinowitz 2001:101, citing Emmett 1995). Mjaydal! Where was this village? What was its relation to Migdal HaEmek?

In Sacred Landscape, in a chapter called “The Hebrew Map,” Meron Benvenisti describes in fascinating detail the process through which, immediately following the war of 1948-49, Hebrew place names were self-consciously and deliberately selected to replace Arabic ones.21 Combining two classic nation/state-making endeavors – cartography and the codification of language– replacing Arabic names with Hebrew ones on the map of Israel was a way to solidify recently established “facts on the ground,” adding the appearance of scientific authority and historic legitimacy to the territorial gains recently made in war.22 “After all,”

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22 Benvenisti quotes from a letter from the prime minister (David Ben Gurion) to the chair of the Negev Naming Committee, dated November 1949: “We are obliged to remove the Arabic names for reasons of state. Just as we do not recognize the Arabs’
Benvenisti writes, “naming is a declaration of exclusive proprietorship, and making such a claim over one’s homeland is the essence of nationalism” (47).

In a particularly fascinating twist to this process, the various naming committees, even as they dismissed the old Arabic names as “primitive” (Benvenisti 21), could not resist drawing on the wealth of ecological, historical, and even biblical information contained in the Arabic originals in devising the Hebrew names that would replace them. While some retained the meaning of the Arabic name in a new Hebrew word (e.g., the settlement of Alona – from the Hebrew word for oak (alon) is situated beside the Arab village of Sindiyanni, which means oak [Benvenisti 35]) others merely echoed the sound of the Arabic word, while changing the meaning completely, or even inventing a Hebrew-sounding name with no meaning at all. Thus, according to Benvenisti (39,52), Jabal Kharuf (Sheep’s Mountain) became Har Harif (Spicy Mountain), Khirbat ‘Aris (Ruin of the Bridegroom) became Horbat Arissa (Ruin of the Cradle), and Tel al Asmar (Black Tel) became Tel Ashmar (which has no Hebrew meaning). In this way, “thousands of names changed meaning, erasing an entire universe and replacing it with ‘similar sounds’” (39).

“Do you know what Migdal HaEmek is in Arabic?” With Benvenisti’s analysis of Hebrew place names in mind, the question all of a sudden took on new meanings, new resonances. Perhaps Migdal HaEmek followed the pattern described by political proprietorship of the land, so also do we not recognize their spiritual proprietorship and their names” (14).

23 There is a certain tinge of orientalist nostalgia to Benvenisti’s description of the local Arabs’ “intimate, unmediated” (50) relationship with the land as expressed in their place names: “Committee members were unable to ignore the extraordinary descriptive aptitude, the beauty of expression, and the sense of rootedness of the Bedouin . . . – qualities that were revealed in the Arabic names describing natural phenomena, morphological formations, plans, and living creatures” (21).
Benvenisti: when it was built in 1953 it took its name from the sound (rather than the meaning) of the Palestinian village it replaced, so that Mjaydal became migdal – though the Arabic word for tower (burj) is completely unrelated. It follows that Migdal HaEmek must have been built on or near the ruins of what until 1948 was Mjaydal. At this point this was just conjecture – a few incomplete pieces of the puzzle fallen into my lap – yet it felt somehow complete.

It is only now, three years later, that my guess is confirmed, far from the hills of Nazareth and in the most mundanely academic of ways. I finally follow the lead to the book Rabinowitz cited, *Beyond the Basilica: Christians and Muslims in Nazareth*, by Chad Emmett. In a chapter describing the settlement patterns of internal refugees who ended up in Nazareth, this is what Emmett had to say about Mujeidil (an alternate transliteration of Mjaydal):

> The [second] largest and [most] cohesive of the refugee communities [in Nazareth] are the people from Mujeidil, a village several miles southwest of Nazareth along the main road to Haifa that in 1945 had a population of 1640 Muslims and 260 Christians. All that remains of the village today are the shell of the Greek Orthodox Church and a Roman Catholic Church ... The Jewish town of Migdal Ha Emek now stands adjacent to where the village once stood (Emmett 1995:157).

Emmett’s description confirms that my guess, based on the tenuous link in the names, turns out to have been right. But just as this question is answered, another question opens up. Further in the passage Emmett notes that “families from Mujeidil who accepted government offers were for the most part required to settle
on land in Shefar’Am” (158). Shefar’Am was the home of the man on the bus! What is his personal connection to Mujeidil? He is too young to have been born there, but was this perhaps his parents’ home? Were they exiled from there in 1948? Was it the name of a disappeared village that would have been his home that he wrote in the margins of my notebook? This is pure speculation on my part, and there is no book in the library that can answer this question.

The name Mjaydal, written in the margins of my notebook in Arabic scripts by a man whose name I do not know, recalls the words of the Israeli novelist S. Yizhar: “Names without places hover for a while like bubbles, stay for a while, then burst” (quoted in Benvenisti 2000: 42). Hovering there in the margins, this name without a place gently and insistently leads to the past, seen through coordinates that most Jewish Israelis would prefer to ignore. But it also demands a more active participation on my part than simply listening in order to understand – a more involved understanding than simply being able to decipher the language. While the name Mjaydal was offered as an Arabic translation, knowing Arabic was only the first step toward understanding its resonances. The name in the margins of my notebook quietly pointed me in directions that I had to want to follow in order to recognize the name for what it was: in Benvenisti’s words, a “signpost of memory.”

24 I recognize that my narrative here participates in its own trope: the story of mystery, discovery, and revelation in searching out a Palestinian past is not uncommon among left-leaning Israeli Jews. It is, of course, as problematic a narrative in its own way as those that erase this past, since it often is more oriented toward assuaging the guilt of the conqueror than toward righting historical wrongs. See, for example, Hoffman (2002) for a particularly compelling account of the author’s search for the Palestinian family who were the owners of her house in Musrara, a neighbourhood of Jerusalem, before 1948.
I see Fouad’s litany of Arabic place names in a similar light. For those who had the patience and the will to listen (and look) closely, what Fouad was doing on that hilltop outside Nazareth was quietly pointing out both a presence and an absence, both the contours of a thriving Palestinian city, in the heart of the Galil, and the “signposts of memory” that surround it. Marj Ibn Amer, Sahel Iksal – these are names without (officially recognized) places; more than just Arabic names for valleys that now lie in a Jewish state, they are signposts of memory, marking the traces of a pre-1948 Palestinian landscape. Fouad was pointing out the coordinates through which he sees the landscape, all the while framing our experience within a genre that relies on the erasure of precisely these coordinates. These coordinates cannot be found in any Israeli map or textbook; they are not pointed out in guided hikes of the SPNI. New generations of Israeli Jews do not even have to make an active choice to ignore the presence of the non-places Fouad pointed to. More than just the existence of this alternate landscape, though, Fouad was quietly pointing out the history that keeps it hidden. As much as a lesson in language and geography, this encounter was a lesson in a different kind of history, one that positioned us in the uncomfortable place of conquerors. For those of us participating in this tiyul, it was an encounter with a different kind of knowledge of the land.

For many of my classmates, unfamiliar both with the area and with Fouad’s perspective on its history, restless and bored, the lesson may have been so subtle as to have been missed. And certainly I am making no claims regarding Fouad’s subversive intentions; like the man on the bus, he was doing no more than pointing
us in a direction. While the genre of *tiyul* provided the structure and dictated the contours of our trip to Nazareth, it was the fact that we were learning the Arabic language that brought us to this particular place, with this guide, and that enabled us to see the landscape through his eyes, to sound out the names that mark its hidden past. But to *recognize* them as more than a lesson in local vocabulary required more.

5. Ethnographic tourism

I turn now to a more recent phenomenon in which our *tiyulim* participate. While Israeli tourists have in recent years been more likely to end up in Nepal or Peru than in Wadi Ara (see Noy 2007, Noy and Cohen 2005), and while tourists from all over the world flock to Israel and Palestine for a variety of purposes (see Bauman 1995, Bowman 1989, Clarke 2000, Klein 2002, Habib 2004), a recent form of rural ethnic tourism, in Israel for Israelis, provides crucial context for our *tiyulim*.

Rebecca Stein’s work (1998, 2001, 2002, 2008) describes the emergence of Jewish Israeli tourism in Palestinian areas of the country. Stein conducted fieldwork in the Israeli ministry of tourism in the mid 1990s, a time when the ‘Arab sector,’ and specifically the villages of the Galilee region in Northern Israel, were being reconfigured as a tourist destination for Israeli Jews. Stein situates this phenomenon in the particular logic of the Oslo years, arguing that “peacetime

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25 Fouad’s intentions, like Riyad’s, remain opaque to me. That the motivations and intentions of my Palestinian teachers remain a mystery is an enduring frustration of my research and writing processes (and a source of much speculation among Rina, Nurit, Hila, Ruth, Michal, and I), but the absence of their perspective is particularly regrettable in this chapter. See Chapter Two for further discussion of this issue.
discourses [had] shifted the contours of Israel’s ‘imaginative geography’” (1998:108). As it suddenly became possible to travel to Amman and Cairo (or, more commonly, Petra and Sinai), these places were perceived as suddenly closer, more visible and available: “Distances and differences that were once legible only through the coordinates of enmity were now possible to remap through the idiom of leisure travel” (2002:273). Palestinian spaces in Israel followed suit.

Previously, Stein writes (and my fieldwork confirms this), Jewish Israelis might have entered rural Palestinian communities in Israel because vegetables were cheaper in the markets there, or to bring the car to the mechanic. Many, though, kept their distance – taking the long way around rather than driving through. In the mid 1990s these places were being offered up for Jewish consumption as part of a new popular curiosity about the Arab world, which accompanied the then-utopian vision of the “new middle east.” Stein explores what is involved in making these spaces “visible, intelligible, and consumable” (2001:12) for Jewish tourists, describing how “sites once deemed hostile were repackaged as places of Jewish leisure” (1998:92). But these Palestinian spaces were reincorporated into a new state-authorized national geography only in very circumscribed form: as de-historicized, de-territorialized performances of exotic, authentic, native, and local ‘Arab’ culture.

This image of the native is, of course, a familiar one, informed by particular histories of producing particular kinds of native subjects through other encounters; I call this trope ethnographic tourism to draw attention to the way it participates in “the desire for the exotic, a disdain for the ‘natives,’ a search for the ‘authentic’
Other” (Grewal 1996:1) common to both certain kinds of ethnography and certain kinds of tourism, as well as to the links and overlaps between these endeavors.26 Our class tiyul to Um el Kutuf provides insight into the kind of Arab subject that is produced through this encounter.

6. “A remainder of long, long ago”: Um el Kutuf, November 8, 2004

After turning right out of Givat Haviva, the school bus passed two kibbutzim in quick succession: Ma’anit on our right and Ein Shemer on our left. At the front of the bus, Michal introduced Abu Furuk, a resident of Um el Kutuf who would be our guide on a visit to the village. She told us he has vast knowledge of the history and geography of the area, as well as of Arab folklore and traditions. “He’s like an encyclopedia,” she enthused. Abu Furuk took the microphone from her, greeted us with sabah il her (good morning), and described our itinerary, in slow and simple Arabic, as follows:

Our itinerary, first of all a visit to the museum [of Arab heritage] in Um el Kutuf and I’ll explain to you about it. We’ll be there about an hour. After that we’ll continue to [the other side of the village] where we’ll see the well where they used to store rainwater before the houses were connected to Mekorot [the national water supply]. We’ll also see the tabun, the ancient oven, and we’ll see how they baked pitot and

bread in this ancient *tabun*. After that we’ll go to the *madafe*
[traditional guest house] where guests were welcomed and there
you’ll hear an explanation of the customs of coffee drinking (*a’adat*
*shirib il kahwe*) among the Arabs (*‘ind il Arab*)... I wish you all
*insha’ala* [God willing] an enlightening trip.

The village of Um el Kutuf is one of Givat Haviva’s closest neighbours, no more than
ten kilometres away, yet Abu Furuk’s introduction makes it clear from the beginning
that what we were on was less a visit to our neighbours than a visit to the past. We
were going to see artifacts of a bygone way of life, remnants of customs (“folklore
and traditions”) both ancient and timeless, housed not just in the museum but in the
entire village and in Abu Furuk himself. The time period we would be visiting is
unclear: it is both vaguely pre-state (before the village was connected to *Mekorot*,
the national water supply), and at the same time ancient (*kadim*). Similarly, the
inhabitants of the village – past and present – remain unclear, identified only as
‘Arabs.’ The specific identity of those who used the tools in the museum to farm the
land, those who baked bread in the ancient oven, drank water from the well,
welcomed guests and drank coffee in the guest house, as well as those who now live
among these relics of the past, remains unclear.

After less than three kilometres, the bus turned right at an intersection with
signs pointing to Um el Kutuf and Charish. The road wound upward for about 2
kilometres through low hills of dry, scruffy bushes. On our left we passed the cow
barns of Kibbutz Barkai; part-way up the hill we passed the unmarked turn-off to a
*Magav* (border patrol) army base. Um el Kutuf is surrounded by Jewish kibbutzim
and moshavim, most of which (Barkai, Charish, Ma’anit) were founded after 1948, some of them (Barkai) on the grounds of Palestinian villages emptied in the 1948 war. Its Palestinian neighbour to the south-west (Kaf’in) is cut off now by the green line. Once part of a rural Palestinian landscape that extended into what is now the West Bank (see Chapter Two), Um el Kutuf itself appears in this relatively new configuration as a bit of a relic.

As we climbed off the bus at the crest of the hill, Yoav (whom we met in Chapter Three) asked loudly: “What is this, have we arrived at the same place we went to on the last trip?” The last trip we were on was to Um el Fachem, a bustling city of some 40,000 inhabitants, a far cry from the bucolic landscape before us, but Yoav is not alone in his confusion. Again and again in my interviews with my classmates they were unable to distinguish between the different fieldtrips, mixing up Um el Fachem with Sakhnin, collapsing a few of the itineraries into one trip, unable to locate the different sites on the map. This may indicate a failure on the part of our teachers and guides but more than that I think it indicates a stubborn inability to differentiate between Arab spaces: city or village, north or south, what is most relevant and what comes to define these spaces uniformly is their Arab identity.27

The day was overcast, very humid, hazy, and hot, with the feeling of impending rain in the air; we were still waiting for the season’s first big rain. The village, spread out before us, was picturesque, with neat houses arrayed across two

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27 The implications of this conflation of Arab spaces, as discussed in Chapter Four, is the extension of threat, danger, and the possibility of violence to all of them.
hilltops and a mosque in the shallow valley between them, part-way down the slope. We gathered around Abu Furuk in the shade of the museum courtyard, as he began his talk, not surprisingly, with an explanation of the origins of the village’s name. *Kutuf*, he explained, means a bunch of grapes (*eshkol anavim*). In the seventh century, before Islam, the inhabitants of the village were Christian. They planted many vineyards and there were lots of wine presses here. *Um* means both mother and bounty (*shefa*). So, Um el Fachem is named that because there was a bounty of coal there; Um el Kutuf gets its name from the bounty of grapes. Abu Furuk explained that the main family in the village is the Kabha family – the same family that lives in a number of nearby villages in Israel and the West Bank. There are approximately 700 people in the village and their ancestors came from Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Most of them work outside the village – in Chadera, Tel Aviv, and Haifa – but some of them work in the village, as shepherds and agricultural workers, tending the olive trees. He explained that there are no longer vineyards in the village because when the Muslims came they uprooted the grapes (because wine is forbidden in the Qur’an) and planted olives instead. In 1949, he explained the *muthalath* (triangle) region, from Kafr Kasem to Salem and Zalafe, was handed over to Israel, without war, by the Jordanian king, according to the Rhodes agreement. Michal translated this into more familiar geography, using Jewish landmarks rather than Arab ones: from Petach Tikvah to Megiddo. Everyone in this region, he added, is Sunni Muslim.

But this brief description of the contemporary livelihood of the villagers and the recent history that shaped their place in the nation were immediately subsumed
by the more distant past, as Abu Furuk invited us to enter the museum. I was left wondering: what does he mean by “without war”? Abu Furuk explained that the museum commemorates the lives of farmers, shepherds, and craftsmen, their way of life and the tools of their trade. It contains items he gathered himself over the past 25 years. We left our bags outside and entered the dim, dusty, and cluttered interior. One by one, Abu Furuk held up and explained a series of objects, arrayed along the walls and on tables in the centre of the room: traditional Palestinian garments with elaborate embroidery; the yoke that cattle wear; the tool that donkeys pull over a pile of wheat to separate grain from chaff; saddlebags for a horse and for a donkey; a sewing machine; carpenters’ and shoemakers’ tools; a primus stove; shoes made out of car tires. “I remember these,” he said. Poor people and farmers used to wear them because it was cheap. This was before the establishment of the state (lifhei kom hamedina).

This display of implements is familiar to me, from a very different context: I have seen similar agricultural implements on display at the “early settlement” museums at kibbutzim I visited. The primus stove in particular is a familiar icon of early Zionist mythology (see Katriel 1997). Tamar Katriel, in her ethnography of kibbutz settlement museums in Israel, writes that the ubiquitous Traditional Agriculture Corner where such tools and implements are displayed “collapses the pre-Zionist past – alternately inhabited by timeless Arabs and textualized Jews – into a moment of stasis filled with authentic, picturesque and now obsolete tools and implements indexing a time-before-time” (Katriel 1997:126). The iconic Arab of this display, Katriel writes, is valued for his antiquity and his role as custodian of
the land, at the same time as he (it is always he) is presented, along with his tools, as a backward relic beside the more modern and enlightened technology introduced by the Zionist pioneers.

Rebecca Stein (1998) analyzes a visit to a similar museum of Palestinian heritage in Sakhnin (which I also visited on another tiyul). She found that by recontextualizing these familiar cultural artifacts in an explicitly Palestinian history and geography, from an explicitly Palestinian point of view, the curator was able to refuse the “ahistorical homogenization of Arab cultures and the reductive translation of Palestinian as . . . Arab,” and thus to challenge the national terms of authenticity and even the authenticity of the nation state (110). While the artifacts in the museum in Um el Kutuf are almost identical to the ones in the Sakhnin museum, Abu Furuk presents them as a catalogue of objects from a vague, unspecified past, lacking any specifically Palestinian contextualization. As such, his display shows none of this challenge or refusal. Instead, the images and tropes he relies on fit rather precisely with the role for the Arab prescribed by the dominant Zionist narrative, as described by Katriel.28 The contrast between Stein’s interpretation and my own emphasizes that the political valences of similar cultural texts, the ways they are presented and received, can be very different at different historical moments. (I elaborate on this point below.)

As we left the museum and set out to walk from one hilltop to the next, the sun came out through the haze. Confused by Abu Furuk’s explanation of the fate of

this region – handed over to Israel “without war,” I hurried to catch up with Isaac, whose exceptional knowledge of history I had noticed and counted on before. Isaac generally kept to himself, but managed to maintain the respect of his peers; he had a reputation for being someone who knows everything without being a know-it-all. He explained to me what happened in 1949 (Wadi Ara was handed over to Israel as part of the armistice agreements signed in Rhodes – see Chapter Two). As others joined in to the ensuing discussion, as we walked between hilltops, we attempted to locate this landscape in our own understanding of contemporary history and geography, to match the vague timeline and contours Abu Furuk had sketched with the ones we were familiar with, and to locate Um el Kutuf in them. Isaac reminded us of the strategic importance of Wadi Ara, as a route to the north of the country, and pointed out that this is why (in his opinion) it will never be handed over to the West Bank as part of a “transfer” deal:29 “Think to yourself that the border runs for you ON Wadi Ara, you wouldn’t be able to use this route, if this was the border. . . . They wanted this land, they’re not going to return it.”

As we neared the other half of the village, climbing up the second slope, Netanel joined us as we walked, and pointed to the surrounding hilltops. “If this was a settlement,” he said, “you’d have Jewish houses here and here and here. That’s

29 Isaac is referring here to the plan proposed by Avigdor Lieberman, member of Knesset (and now foreign minister), to “transfer” the territory of Wadi Ara, along with its Palestinian inhabitants, to the Palestinian Authority as part of a future peace deal. While the plan was initially perceived as extreme, Rouhana and Sultany (2003) point out that the Jaffee Center survey of February 2002 showed an increase in support among Israeli Jews for statements calling for the expulsion of Arab citizens: one-third of the Jewish population supported their transfer, while two-thirds supported encouraging them to emigrate from Israel (12).
how you rule over territory.” *(kacha mishtaltim al shetach.)* Netanel is red-headed and freckled, a joker, well-liked by the rest of the class. The oldest of six boys, he was raised in a national religious family (*kipa sruga*) in a settlement just over the green line in the Jerusalem area. He “took his kippa off” (i.e., abandoned the religious way of life) a year ago and explained to me that now he only keeps those *mitsvot* (commandments) that have to do with being a good person, not a good Jew. His younger brother, he explained to us, is currently living in a “hilltop” settlement in the heart of Hebron, one of the most dangerous and most controversial of all settlement areas in the West Bank. The bare hilltops around us reminded him of the landscape around his brother’s home, he said, and of their strategic importance. Isaac agreed: once you grab the hilltops it’s impossible to remove you.

At the end of our climb, we once again gathered around Abu Furuk. He showed us the ancient *tabun* – an outdoor communal oven built of stones, “the last traditional one that remains.” Every day the women would bake bread outside, he explained, as he showed us how it works. We walked by the sheep pen and the cow barn and he told us what they’re called in Arabic. He showed us the well, dug in soft stone, seven feet deep. It took them six months to dig, he said. Michal explained that it’s actually not a well but a reservoir for rainwater as Abu Furuk dipped a bucket in and we all took sips from the cold, clear water.

Finally Abu Furuk showed us in to the *madafe*, the traditional guest house, where we sat in a circle on cushions on the floor, grateful for the shade. Madafe, he explained, comes from the word for guest: *deif*. It had been a long hot morning, and

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30 See Benvenisti 2000:97ff on the *madafe*. 
people were getting restless, so Michal tried to maintain order and get our attention:

“People, listen. It’s very interesting to hear about this place, it’s really an institution. The madafe is an institution in the village – in the old village, today it doesn’t exist. It’s really a remainder of long long ago.” (ze beemet she’arit shel paam paam.)

The guest house served a number of functions, Abu Furuk explained, while the whispering and giggling continued: it was a sort of court house, where the sheikh would settle disputes; it was where traveling bureaucrats of the Ottoman empire would gather the villagers to do their business (paying taxes, registering a new-born child); it housed travelers and guests. (“There were no restaurants and hotels, and guests could not sleep in a family’s home because the whole house was one room: mother, father, children, horses, all in one room. So the guest would sleep in the madafe.”)

But the main function of the madafe was a kind of coffee house. “Every morning the sheikh would take the mortar and pestle and pound the coffee beans with this mortar and pestle” – he demonstrated, the brass ringing out with a rhythmic beat and his cadence slowing down to match the beat – “would pound the coffee” – he pounded some more – “and all who heard the sound of this pounding were invited to come drink bitter coffee [coffee without sugar].” This was clearly the highlight of his performance, and the rhythmic clanging matched by his dramatic intonation finally – if briefly – caught the attention of the group. Abu Furuk continued: “And now I will explain to you about the customs of coffee drinking among the Arabs.” As he proceeded with an elaborate explanation of the various ceremonial cups of coffee with which Arab hosts supposedly entertain their guests
(the first for the host, the second for the guest, the third for war, and the fourth for fun), he lost his audience once again. We had already heard this explanation countless times and with varying details, from other tour-guides, from each of our teachers, and from our text-books. For a group of people most of whom had rarely – if ever – shared a conversation over coffee with a Palestinian man or woman, we knew a lot about the “customs of coffee drinking among the Arabs”!

Michal joined in to set the scene and explain the importance of such customs of hospitality: “Back then, it wasn’t like today. People weren’t mobile like they are now, there wasn’t as much movement, driving here and there to visit friends. You would sit in your house, in your village –” Yoav interrupted Michal to ask an important question: What time period are we talking about? While it was Yoav who earlier asked if we had arrived at the same place as our last tiyul, the answer to his question, from Michal and Abu Furuk, shows that this time his confusion was justified:

Michal: Fifty years ago! Right? [Before fifty -

Abu Furuk: More, more than fifty.] More.

Michal: More than fifty [years.

Abu Furuk: More] than fifty years.

Michal: Maybe 100 years, [sorry.

Abu Furuk: Around] 100 years, ya’ani, during the time of the Ottomans. [switches to Hebrew.] The Ottomans ruled – how many years did they rule here in Israel? 400 years. Approximately 1517 til 1918. [back to Arabic.] And this long period that we’re talking about,
with the Ottomans here, people’s lives were simple lives (*chayat basita*).

Michal: What does that mean ‘simple lives’? [Translates into Hebrew.]

Michal and Abu Furuk jointly present a picture of an antiquated yet timeless way of life, its timelessness clearly emphasized by the fact that each is describing a different era in identical terms. The essential here is the simplicity of these lives, their rootedness in nature and in their surroundings, the authenticity and quaintness of their customs. This is a joint performance of ‘the Arab’ as a subject without history, without territory, without national identity (never Palestinian), instead possessed of authentic, exotic, native, and local customs and traditions. Above all, this is an Arab without politics – the only politics involved in the day came from our own conversation, outside the framework of the guided tour. We were left to puzzle out on our own the place of this village and its current inhabitants, themselves apparently “remainders of long, long ago,” in the contemporary landscape of Israel.

This performance is, of course, a familiar one in the Israeli context (see Stein 1998, Almog 1997, Katriel 1997, Lavie 1988)31 but this particular iteration must be understood in the context of the moment in which it arises – a moment in which fear and enmity have replaced “desire” for things Arab, and in which greater distances than ever before have replaced the “new proximities” Stein describes. It returns now because in the intervening years other images, scarier ones, have taken its place. If this encounter is intended to bring us into “contact” with Palestinian Israelis, so that they can dispel

fears and prejudices (as Michal asserted), then we can understand the Arab presented by Abu Furuk and Michal as a reassuring replacement to the rioting, stone-throwing, Palestinian flag-waving spectre that, since October 2000, haunts the Jewish Israeli imagination. We can understand their joint performance as part of the effort of creating the kind of minority needed for Jewish Israelis to maintain their national self-image, keeping it intact in the face of challenge and upheaval (see Chapter One).

7. Imperial encounters

In Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation Mary Louise Pratt makes a similar link between the creation of a “speechless, denuded, biologized body,” in representations of the natives of southern Africa in late 18th century European travel writing, and the need for a “deracinated, dispossessed, disposable work force” in Europe at the time such accounts were being circulated for European consumption (52). Her study explores how travel books written by Europeans about non-European parts of the world “created an imperial order for Europeans ‘at home’ and gave them their place in it” (3). She argues that empire “becomes dependent on its others to know itself” (4) and, more broadly, that “subjects get constituted in and by their relations with each other” (8).

This is an argument that hits particularly close to home for anthropologists, concerned as we are with our role in representing others in the context of (post-) colonial orders. Johannes Fabian (1991:209) reminds anthropologists that “our ways of making the Other are ways of making Ourselves. The need to go there (to
exotic places, be they far away or around the corner) is really our desire to be here (to find or defend our position in the world).” Pratt’s and Fabian’s insights build on a common consensus emerging from studies of travel, movement, and representation in colonial and post-colonial contexts, Edward Said’s (1979) central among them: that through encounters we bring the other into being, and in doing so we define ourselves.

In the case of our tiyulim, the natives are no longer colonized but rather minoritized, the needs have changed along with the context, and the scale of travel (our destinations are no more than half an hour away by bus) complicates the idea of home and away, but the fundamental dynamic remains the same. My argument is that through the venture into Palestinian spaces Jewish Israelis create a national order, one that is profoundly shaped by imperial legacies, and affirm their own place in it. Like the colonialists, orientalists, and anthropologists, it is themselves that they seek, more clearly delineated and more comfortably ensconced in their own borders, reflected back at them in the encounter. Our trip to Barta’a and the green line provides insight into this dynamic.

8. “Animals in cages”: Barta’a, October 13, 2004

Shortly after I joined the intensive class, in the fall of 2004, our teacher Fouad took us on a tiyul in Wadi Ara that was designed to show us the border between Israel and the West Bank, the green line, in its various permutations. On the class schedule posted on the bulletin board outside our classroom, Wednesday afternoon was blocked off and “Tiyul: Green Line” was written in. The first stop on our trip was
the village of Barta’a, fourteen kilometres down the road from Givat Haviva, on the southern slopes of Wadi Ara. Barta’a is both an ideal and a bizarre place for thinking about borders because the green line runs right through the centre of the village. After the 1948 war, the village was split in two, with a militarized international border running right through its centre: the western half of the village was thus in Israel while the eastern half was in the West Bank, then under Jordanian rule. David Grossman (1992) describes how families were split in two, unable to cross the border to see each other, as the two halves of the village became Barta’a East and Barta’a West, two separate villages in separate countries, with very different trajectories (see Chapter Two). In 1967, when Israel invaded the West Bank, the nature of the border changed, becoming more permeable as East Barta’a also came under Israeli rule, but the residents of the eastern side of the village never received Israeli citizenship and their lives continue to be very different.

Construction of the wall in the region in 2003-4 once again reconfigured the contours of the village. Instead of running along the green line, through the centre of the village, the wall was built to the east of Barta’a East, encroaching on land from the West Bank and enclosing both sides of the village within Israel. The residents of Barta’a East, however, have still not been granted Israeli citizenship. Thus they, along with a number of other villages along the length of the wall, are trapped on the wrong side of the border, lacking the proper status and papers to enter Israel but cut off by the wall from the West Bank. For many in our class, however, this trip along the border was less about the predicament of those trapped by the wall’s construction than it was about the implications for their own safety. Our foray into
Barta’a, far from an attempt to cross boundaries, seemed almost an exercise in patrolling the border, a search for reassurance of its impermeability. Our encounter with the border merely reflected back at us our own concerns and anxieties.

As the bus turned right off Wadi Ara road, heading south toward Barta’a, Fouad pointed out the window at the concrete blocks, spray-painted in neon colours, at the side of the road (see figure 6.5). “There, you see?” he announced over the loudspeaker, continuing his running commentary in Arabic on everything that passed by our windows. “We’re passing through the machsom (checkpoint). But there’s no machsom there today, ilhamdulila (praise God). It’s peace. During the first intifada the Magav (border patrol) would be here all the time, anyone who passed had to show I.D. Now the situation is quiet.” Fouad here presents the concrete blocks in the road as relics of harder days, no longer needed in the peace and quiet of today. But this version of the situation was not maintained for long, as the absence of a machsom later returned, compounding rather than alleviating anxieties about the border.

“No we are in Barta’a,” he said, as the bus wound through the dense, crowded streets. He pointed out the signs by which we could tell that we were in Barta’a West, still in Israeli territory: yellow license plates, a crowd of students in uniforms coming out of an Israeli school, road signs and advertisements in Hebrew alongside Arabic. He pointed ahead of us, out the front window of the bus, a few hundred metres downhill: “Look ahead, to your left, where that big truck is standing. That’s the wadi (valley) that forms the border between Barta’a East and West.
There’s no metal, no fence. This wadi is the whole border. When you pass over the wadi you’re in Barta’a East” – that is, in the West Bank.

Fouad told the bus driver to pull ahead a little, and we stopped at the edge of a square right in the centre of the village, and in the low point of the shallow valley that forms the border. “Here, this square, this is the real dividing spot. Here, you see where those people are standing?” He pointed to the far side of the road, where vendors stood, selling cucumbers and tomatoes, pirated DVDs, cell phones and lighters, from makeshift stalls or the trunks of their cars. “The sellers selling their goods there. They’re from Barta’a East.” Fouad pointed out the license plates, which had changed colour, and the signs, now only in Arabic. He encouraged us to try to decipher the signs, and pointed to one that advertised sales in honour of Ramadan. My classmates, who had previously been chatting amongst themselves and not paying much attention to Fouad, fell silent. From the back of the bus someone asked “Fouad, if I get off the bus here I’m in Palestinian territory?” Someone else called out “What, and there’s no border or anything?” Fouad explained that while the green line runs along this wadi, the ‘separation fence’ runs behind Barta’a East. Someone asked Fouad if we were going to get off the bus and he said no, “I don’t want to take any risk.”

Rina: Wait a minute, wait a minute, we can’t get out?

Nurit: We can’t go to see it?

Fouad: Just from here.

Rina: Just from here?

Fouad: No no, there’s no need.
He changed the topic quickly, telling a story about a doctor who found, in 1949, that the new border cut right through his clinic. What did he do? He built two doors: one on the east side and one on the west, one for the Palestinian side and one for the Israeli side.

The bus turned back west, climbing out of the valley, and within a few minutes we left the town of Barta’a behind – never having gotten off the bus or spoken to a single resident. (More on this below.) We pulled over by the side of the road at a lookout spot and gathered around Fouad. Again, as on the hill outside Nazareth, Fouad interpreted the landscape for us: “Everything we see on the horizon? That’s the West Bank. We’re looking south-east now, look. Here, if you look on your right [below us], that village, that is Barta’a West, the Israeli Barta’a, where we were. What we see there, where you see that green mosque, that’s where we were, that’s Barta’a East, that’s the dividing line.” (See figures 6.6-6.8.) Yoav asked, “So there’s no fence between Barta’a East and West?” “No, but in the distance – see what looks like a dirt road there?” A few minutes of pointing and orienting followed. “That’s the separation fence. It runs behind Barta’a East.” Yoav was the first one to comment on the impact of this bizarre situation on the village’s residents: “Wait a minute, if they can’t get into Israel and they can’t pass the fence then what, they’re stuck in the middle?”

Hila (whom we met in Chapter Four) asked how the residents of East Barta’a are able to access medical care, whether they go to the hospital in Jenin or in Israel, but her question was barely heard amid a chorus of very different questions: “But there’s no machsom. What’s stopping them from going right into Israel?” “So they
can just come into Israel?” “I don’t understand - there’s no border here, there’s no machsom, what’s stopping him [someone from East Barta’a] from doing what I did today? Why can’t he just do, just like I did, just as I went in, go out?” The view of Barta’a East, a section of the West Bank, included on the Israeli side of the wall provoked a profound anxiety among many in the class: if the residents of Barta’a East, West Bank Palestinians, are not separated from us by a wall then what is to prevent them from infiltrating beyond Barta’a West and into Israel itself?

Fouad’s answer did not turn our attention back to the predicament of those trapped by the rapacious Israeli border, nor did he question the underlying assumption that the residents of East Barta’a are a threat that needs to be contained and prevented from penetrating into Israeli territory; rather than questioning these fears, he attempted to alleviate them. He explained that while there is no machsom at the turn off from Barta’a onto Wadi Ara road, as there once was, the situation now is even more difficult for those trying to enter. There are sudden, surprise machsomim along the roads, and anyone with a Palestinian from the West Bank in his car is liable to be stopped by the police at any point. “Today it’s safer to take drugs in your car than it is to take someone from the West Bank. Why? They screw you! Jail! Fines! Everybody knows this. That’s why nobody would do this. The only place you can pass through now [from the West Bank into Israel] is Jerusalem.” (At this time the wall in the area of Jerusalem had not yet been completed.) Fouad explained that if someone wanted to get from the neighbouring village of Ya’abad (he pointed to Ya’abad, over there in the hills, to show us how close it is) into Israel - “for work, not because they want to blow themselves up” – they would have to
travel all the way down to Jerusalem, pass over the hills there, and then travel back up. “Because no one from here would take the risk and take him across in his car.”

There followed a series of questions about mobility and constraints on movement, which Fouad patiently answered: What happens to someone caught with someone from the West Bank in his car? Are Israeli Arabs allowed into the West Bank? How do they pass back into Israel? Do they have a separate line-up from those without blue (i.e., Israeli) identity cards? How long is the line-up? Once someone from the West Bank passes in, how do they get back? Fouad had defined the hypothetical person from East Barta’a that we were talking about as someone who is trying to work in Israel and the questions ostensibly remained on this track, but it is not difficult to discern that other person, the bomber, behind these questions.

We stood on this hilltop, looking back at the green line as it passed through a spot we had just come from, yet we could barely make out its contours; its invisibility was compounded by the wall running clearly visible behind it. As we viewed the border in a variety of forms and from a variety of angles and perspectives, as we asked detailed questions about the ways it regulates lives and restricts movement, our trip seemed to me less an attempt to confront its role in segregating and incarcerating those on the other side than an exercise in alleviating our own anxieties about its permeability. The extent of the anxiety that drives these questions about the border reveals both a reliance on the border’s impermeability and an obsessive fear of the possibility of leakage, penetration, or infiltration. In turn, this obsession with contamination and containment (pace Mary Douglas 1991)
reveals a compulsion to assert an intact national whole in the face of challenge and threat.\textsuperscript{32}

* 

Later in the day, at the Babur restaurant, we sat at plastic tables on the patio, eating the usual humus, pita, and salads for dinner, the sun still strong in the west. At the end of a long afternoon \textit{tiyul} we were tired, even though it was more of a bus ride than a hike: we sat on the bus in the centre of the village of Barta’a as Fouad pointed out the window; we got off the bus briefly at two lookout points, one overlooking Barta’a and the green line and then one overlooking Um el Fachem and the green line (see Chapter Three); last, we were treated to a tour of a locally owned and operated olive press. Rina, Nurit, Hila, and I invited Fouad to sit at our table, and Rina, not one to hold back, immediately vented the dissatisfaction that had been simmering amongst the four of us all day.

Rina is in her 70s, a tall, gaunt woman with boundless energy, nicotine-stained fingers, unstinting generosity, a fierce intelligence, and biting acerbic wit. She has lived and worked in Israel, London, and Mexico City as a dancer, editor, and film-maker. Born in Jerusalem to German immigrants, she left the country in the 70s because she felt her continued presence amounted to tacit consent to the occupation. She, along with Ruth, is active in \textit{MachsomWatch} and is learning Arabic.

\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Teresa Caldeira (2000:91) writes that the outcome of a “theory of contagion” – the belief that ‘evil’ can spread, infiltrate, infest, contaminate – is that “people intensify their private measures of enclosure and control, of separating and building barriers, both symbolic (like prejudice and the stigmatization of some groups) and material (walls, fences, and electronic security devices).”}
for her work at the *machsomim*, as well as for a future film project. Rina’s indignation added a strident edge to her characteristically dramatic tone:

“I’m sorry, but this the last time I take a trip like this! I felt like we were looking at animals in cages! Only the bars were missing! What is this? Why weren’t we allowed off the bus? Next time we go on a trip it’s to the *shuk* (the Arab market) or nothing!”

Fouad protested: “I took you to the most *amiye* place there is – the olive press!” *Amiye* (in Hebrew *amami*) could be variously translated as folksy, authentic, local, salt-of-the-earth. It is also the word used to distinguish colloquial Arabic from literary (*fuscha*). Fouad appears to have misunderstood Rina’s complaint, and is defending the tiyul he planned and led against a charge of inauthenticity, offering up the olive press as an alternative to the shuk, the iconic locus of true, local, authentic, colloquial Arab culture.

But it is not the authenticity of the shuk but its opportunity for interaction that Rina was missing: 33 “No no no. I want to go somewhere we can *interact*, talk to people. Why weren’t we allowed off the bus?” Fouad paused, nodded, and said quietly: “There is a thing called risk.” (*Yesh davar she kor’im lo sikun.*) The word he used is *sikun* which could be translated as risk, danger, or threat. While Nurit, Hila and I, up to this point, had been sitting back and allowing the more outspoken Rina to voice our complaint, this statement roused all of us to loud protesting cries of “What risk? What danger?” “What are we afraid of?” Fouad’s tone was both

33 See Chapter Three for a similar ambiguity regarding the role of the “Arab street” – the shuk may be a substitute for this. See Stein (2008) on the shift in locus of authenticity for Palestinian hosts of Israeli tourists from ‘cultural performances’ to ‘the everyday.’
conciliatory and conspiratorial: “Yes, I know. This is the paradox. I think you’re safe here, I know you’re safe here, but at the same time, if there’s the tiniest chance – ” He didn’t finish the sentence. Earlier, on the bus, when Rina had demanded to know why we couldn’t get off, he put it this way: “Just like the owner of a mercedes that doesn’t want to get a scratch on it keeps it off the road, we don’t even want to take one percent of risk so we stay on the bus.” It is unclear whether the precious cargo for which Fouad bears the weight of responsibility is the busload of Israeli Jewish students, the fragile understanding he is trying to cultivate in them, or his own precarious position as cultural mediator. On the one hand, on the rare occasions on these trips when we ran into someone Fouad knew, his discomfort was palpable; he was, after all, a Palestinian man leading a group of Israeli Jews, many of whom would soon go into Army Intelligence, through Palestinian towns and villages. On the other hand, were something to happen to any of us on one of these trips, more than just his job would certainly be in jeopardy.

Fouad followed up with a story to explain why he would not let us off the bus. Two years earlier, at the height of the intifada, the class was on a tiyul in Jat, the town adjacent to Baka. They were walking through the market and some kid threw a cucumber and it hit one of the students. (Hila pretended to be shocked and appalled: “Oooh! Intifada!”) The students complained that people were throwing stones at them, continued Fouad, and ever since then “I don’t want to take any chances at all. Even though I know you’re safe. Even in Um el Fachem – especially (dafka) in Um el Fachem the infamous – nothing bad could possibly happen to you.”
Months later, on another tiyul (this one to Sakhnin), I heard a different story from Michal. She told us that in the early years of the second intifada they went on a tiyul to Um el Fachem. She had been worried, and spent weeks deliberating, going back and forth on whether or not to go, but in the end decided to go. They arrived at the high school to the sound of chanting from the windows: “We don’t want Jews!” A few stones were thrown. But in all this, she said, they went in, they talked to some students, there was “a real encounter.” Still, since then they stopped going to Um el Fachem on tiyulim, choosing instead Druze or Bedouin villages, places where they would be welcome.34

Whatever the case – cucumbers or stones – the timing of our trip is such that our class is making the first tentative forays back into territory that for the past four years has been off limits for Givat Haviva. Fouad is obviously hyper-aware of the precariousness of this arrangement, and his is the impossible – paradoxical – task of ensuring our safety while simultaneously convincing us that we have nothing to fear, of showing us the impact of the border while simultaneously convincing us of its impermeability.

34 Michal explained that, in addition to the issue of safety, “it’s very sensitive to go around in the Arab villages with the boys. To come in the current situation, with our complicated situation – it’s complicated. We used to go around freely, no problem, but back then the atmosphere was completely different.” Our trip to Sakhnin, in November of 2004, was also the first trip back to that city. Michal explained that the spokesperson of the municipality used to show us around Sakhnin, and people would try to embarrass him over us: “We’d be sitting at a restaurant with him and all of a sudden some journalist would come in and start asking ‘Wait a minute, what are they learning Arabic for, what are they going to do with this Arabic?’ And he would start shaking! So we tried to find places where they wouldn’t have to lie about who they are, where they could say ‘yes, we’re going to Army Intelligence’ and people would accept them.”
Rina had always been uncomfortable with our role on the tiyulim. On the day I first met her, a month before our trip to Barta’a, when I visited the intensive class to see if I would join them, she skipped class to sit with me on a bench in the sun while she chain-smoked furiously and complained to me about the tiyulim. “I don’t know whether to go or not,” she complained. “It’s embarrassing. It seems to me like the worst kind of ethnographic tourism. It’s like all those museums of ‘Indian’ culture I was forced to visit when I lived in Mexico.” The scare quotes around ‘Indian’ were audible. She lowered her voice and arched an eyebrow: “They call this class ‘The Orientalists,’ you know. It’s a little strange, isn’t it?” This irony had not been lost on me either. Students in the six-month intensive Arabic course were labeled – anachronistically? euphemistically? – mizrachanim, which means literally those who study or specialize in the east, but which would be translated into English as “orientalists.” Soon after I joined the class, I found myself in the absurd position, as I pulled into the driveway of Givat Haviva, of rolling down the window, waving reassuringly to the guard at the gate who questions everyone who enters, and declaring “I’m an orientalist!”

But beyond the discomforts of the ethnographic tourist (discussed in the previous section), what Rina objected to so strenuously on this trip to Barta’a (and Nurit, Hila, and I along with her) was that “one percent” of danger or risk that Fouad was acting on, even as he insisted that we were absolutely safe. The tiyulim were expressly designed to alleviate our fears, to convince us that we would be safe, comfortable, and welcome even in Um el Fachem “the infamous.” This was certainly

35 On the complicated valences of the label mizrachanim see Eyal 2006.
Michal’s goal, and one that Fouad seemed to share with a personal zeal. But his actions seemed to contradict this message, revealing a deep anxiety about our safety and reinforcing the assumption that we needed to be kept separate and protected. Why, after all, should we not get off the bus? Why, indeed, did every tiyul begin with meeting our guide just outside the city or village we would be visiting, reinforcing the feeling that this was strange, foreign, possibly dangerous territory that we could not – should not? – enter unaccompanied? 36

While less extreme than keeping us on the bus, this arrangement seemed to send a similar message. Did our guide meet us every time at the very edge of our comfort zone – often the gas station or bus stop at the turn off from the main road to the Palestinian town or village – in order to help us navigate unfamiliar (and admittedly – to my eyes – maze-like) streets, or to act as protector and ensure our safety? Either way, this arrangement ensured that our ‘encounter’ with these spaces is framed by a confirmation of their impenetrability, foreignness, and possible danger. Fouad’s and our other guides’ actions here seemed to reinforce the very boundaries we were attempting to cross by tacitly confirming, rather than alleviating, the anxieties and fears that underlie them. It is this tacit confirmation that Nurit, Hila, Rina, and I objected to.

In the end, our ‘encounter’ with the town of Barta’a was as limited as our ‘encounter’ with the green line: just as we were not allowed off the bus, we were not asked to overcome our fundamental insularity, our existential fears. Rina was right:

36 This pattern was followed on two out of the four tiyulim described in this chapter; on the two other tiyulim our guide boarded the bus with us at Givat Haviva (so we again did not enter our destination unaccompanied).
we encountered the inhabitants of Barta’a only as “animals in cages,” and while some of us challenged the assumption of danger behind these dehumanizing arrangements, others took the opportunity to test the strength of the bars, seeking reassurance that they would keep us safe. Returning to the idea of colonial encounters, we can understand talk of fear in this context as a kind of “anti-conquest” rhetoric, like the rhetorical “strategies of innocence” Pratt describes that allowed European bourgeois subjects to “seek to secure their innocence in the same moment as they assert European hegemony” (9). Even as we are confronted by evidence of the way the Israeli government restricts freedom of movement not only for Palestinians in the territories but for Israeli citizens like Fouad, we understand it in terms of the danger they present to us – risks to our own safety. This allows us to “secure our innocence” even as our presence asserts and extends Israeli domination. Our trip to Barta’a leaves us more firmly entrenched than ever within boundaries of our own making. In this as in all the other tiyulim, we are ultimately unable to move beyond the limits that constrain the possibilities for these interactions. Unable simply to meet on some sort of common ground, unable to confront our own culpability, we remain always within the bounds of ‘encounter.’
In this dissertation I have traced how changes in spatial boundaries, worked out through daily movements and interactions, map on to changes in the boundaries of national belonging. Critical research has shown that the place of Palestinians in Israel has been historically and continues to be shaped by violent state intervention (e.g., Morris 1988, Lustick 1980, Dalal 2003), and by discriminatory policies, laws, and allocation of resources (e.g., Kimmerling 1983, Yiftachel 1999, Rouhana and Sultany 2003). My research extends these literatures by exploring the crucial role of spatial practices of citizens in maintaining – and sometimes challenging – this geography of inequality, both through segregation and through particular forms of encounter. As narrower limits have been imposed on the citizenship of Palestinians in Israel since October 2000, Jews have increasingly kept their distance from Palestinian spaces in the country. I have explored this dynamic by describing how increased hostility, fear, and distrust become spatialized, how narratives of the past shape contemporary geographies, how competing ways of navigating and interpreting the landscape are mediated, and how particular forms of encounter are framed. My argument is that these changing spatial and linguistic practices have played a crucial role in reconfiguring the place of Palestinians in Israel.

The processes I describe here did not begin when I arrived in the field, nor did they end when I left. The implicate relations between Jews and Palestinians in Israel continue to shift, as do the boundaries of Palestinian citizenship. In December of 2006 the Higher Arab Monitoring Committee released a document called “The
Future Vision of the Palestinian Arabs in Israel,” in which they demanded, among other things, cultural, religious, and educational autonomy and a more egalitarian division of public space (Benvenisti 2006). In February 2007 Adalah, the Legal Centre for Minority Rights in Israel, released a proposal for a “Democratic Constitution” which defined Israel as a “binational and multicultural” rather than a Jewish state (Stern 2007). In the face of these further challenges to Israel’s self-definition, Israeli Jewish public opinion has arguably become even more extreme. In the elections of February 2009 voters granted the Yisrael Beiteinu party, lead by Avigdor Lieberman, fifteen seats in the Knesset, making it the third largest party, ahead of Labour. The party’s platform includes a demand to add an oath of allegiance to Israel’s Citizenship Law. If Lieberman is successful, taking an oath of loyalty to Israel as a Jewish state would become a condition of citizenship for Palestinian citizens (Ravid 2009).

The boundaries of citizenship continue to be challenged and enforced within a matrix of presence and absence, recognition and disregard, and the spatial practices of citizens continue to play a key role. In October 2008, Palestinians living in the mixed city of Akko were attacked by Jewish residents of the city, and days of riots ensued. Newspapers reported that the attacks began when a Palestinian man drove his car into a Jewish neighbourhood of the city, on the eve of Yom Kippur, when many Jews in Israel refrain from driving (Khoury et. al. 2008). The violence can be read as a reaction to the threat posed by a perceived assertion of Palestinian presence within the Jewish space and time of the Israeli nation.
In December 2008 Baruch Marzel, leader of the right-wing extremist Jewish National Front party, planned a march through the city of Um el Fachem. His intention was, with his presence, to stake a Jewish claim to this Palestinian space within the Israeli nation: “We will prove with this march that Um el Fachem is also our Israel” (Marzel quoted in Perkal 2008). Despite a Supreme Court ruling that it was legal and could go ahead as planned, the march did not take place. A coalition of Jewish and Palestinian NGOs and local governing bodies organized an event on Saturday December 13, two days before the march was scheduled (Ashkenazi and Stern 2008, Roffe-Ofir 2008, Heider and Dichter 2008). The event was designed to pre-empt the planned march, showing that there is no need to symbolically “conquer” Um el Fachem in order to prove that it is part of the state of Israel. 600 people, mostly Israeli Jews, visited Um el Fachem on that day, exploring the city in mini-buses, visiting the art gallery, and meeting residents of the city. By opening its doors to Jewish visitors, the residents of Um el Fachem demonstrated that they already consider themselves part of the state of Israel; by visiting the city, Israeli Jews expressed solidarity with Palestinians and recognition of their status as equal citizens. Imagine how different the events of October 2000 might have been had 600 Israeli Jews joined Palestinians in protests on Wadi Ara road.

I have argued that Israeli Jews, by staying away from Um el Fachem since October 2000, have played a role in constricting the limits of Palestinians’ citizenship. The events of December 13, 2008 show that the converse may also be true: in their daily practice citizens may create spaces of recognition and inclusion.
In the words of two of the organizers of this event (Heider and Dichter 2008b), “citizens can change and influence reality” simply by the act of going there.
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Figure 6.4. Class picture.
Figure 6.5. Road to Barta’a, no machsom.

Figure 6.6. Barta’a, green line
Figure 6.7. Barta’a, green line, zoomed in.

Figure 6.8. Barta’a, green line, zoomed in closer.
Figure 6.9. Other *tuyulim*: Hiking near Um el Kutuf.

Figure 6.10. Other *tuyulim*: Making cookies at Aishe’s house in Kafr Kara.
Figure 6.11. Other tiyulim: Um el Fachem.

Figure 6.12. Other tiyulim: Principal’s office, high school in Um el Fachem.
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