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4
Border Zones: Theatrical Mobilizations of 'the Middle East' (2004–2008)

It is November 2007 and I am in the passenger seat of a European-made car with bright yellow Israeli license plates. We pull up to a sign welcoming us to (and forbidding others from crossing) the Te'enim Passage by the West Bank village of Shoufa (Figure 4.1). Unlike most checkpoints, which are located within the Occupied Palestinian Territories, this one controls entry into Israel's 1948 borders.[1] A uniformed, armed, barrel-chested man with salt-and-pepper hair, his stocky figure enhanced by a bullet-proof vest, approaches the driver – my friend and fellow theatrical facilitator, Chen Alon. The guard checks the Israeli ID card proffered, which prominently notes Alon's Jewish identity, and asks in Hebrew, 'Why don't you drive through the Jewish lane?'[2] Alon feigns surprise about this distinction between the lanes, which he terms 'an apartheid scenario'. It is one that eases access for Jewish settlers, those who 'live in the region and are Israeli citizens', and their non-Israeli Jewish friends and relatives, who 'have the right to make Aliyah [immigrate]' to Israel.[3] They travel on the Israeli-built 'bypass' or 'settler' road through the West Bank, one that cuts off Palestinian residents of Shoufa from those who live in Tulkarm.[4] The 'Jewish lane' additionally separates out Arab citizens of Israel (20 percent of the population) and the few West Bank Palestinians with Israeli-state granted permission to cross through the passage.[5]

'There's a Jewish lane?' Alon inquires with raised eyebrows. The guard shifts his stance uncomfortably. 'Not officially, but *you* can go. It's for the, uh...' His voice trails off as he lifts his gaze to the top of a nearby hill, leaving us to fill in the unspoken ellipses: 'the settlers'. Alon looks into the guard's face, 'Do you think it's right?' The guard seems taken aback. 'Personally?' He hesitates, then answers firmly, 'No.' He shrugs his shoulders, 'But this is the policy. Next time you can go in the Jewish lane.' Alon gestures towards me, 'But she is not Jewish.' At his prompting, I hold

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Figure 4.1 Sign posted in Hebrew and Arabic by the Te'enim checkpoint reading: *Welcome to Te'enim Passage. This passage is only for Israelis. It is forbidden to carry a person who is not Israeli through this passage. 'Israeli' refers to Israeli residents, someone who lives in the region and is an Israeli citizen, or who has the right to make Aliyah [immigrate] to Israel according to the 1950 Law of Return*

Photo and translation: Chen Alon.

up my US passport – which contains no information about my (secular Christian) religious or (Croatian-American) ethnic identity – and the guard looks pained. Though we are breaking the posted law forbidding non-Israeli, non-Jewish passengers, the guard waves us on benevolently. 'It's okay. Next time you can go to the Jewish lane.' Shaking his head with a faint smile, Alon drives us back towards Tel Aviv as he translates what has just taken place. 'You know the irony,' he adds, 'the border guard has an accent. He isn't Jewish. He's Arab – probably Druze [an off-shoot of Islam].'[6]

We drive on, musing on the events that occurred earlier in the day at the first meeting of the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv theatre group, a branch of the Palestinian–Israeli nonviolent alliance organization, Combatants for Peace, and a culminating case study in this chapter.

Events in the region often operate as microcosms of political power and struggle that index social and spatial dynamics. These dynamics include: oppositional victim narratives; asymmetrical control of resources, territory and movement; the complex relationship of religion to nationality;

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as well as (sometimes violent) resistance to partnership with Israelis on the part of many Palestinians. They all help to constitute 'Israeli' and 'Palestinian' identity.[7] The contested triangle of land between the Jordan River, the Mediterranean Sea, and the Gulf of Aqaba serves not only as a stage *for* conflict, but also spatially stages the vectors *of* that conflict, particularly control over boundaries of land, identity, historical narratives, and acceptable political action. That is, conflict centers not only on the land *per se*, but on who locates and controls territorial boundaries and passage through them, and what (often depersonalized) logic sustains that control.[8]

The checkpoint scenario concretizes these logics. The Te'enim Passage sign focuses on the 'law of the land' in determining who is welcome/forbidden to cross. Identity groups are quite carefully never named by type or ethnicity (such as Jewish, Arab, or Palestinian) only by area (citizens of Israel) and legality (those who *could* immigrate to Israel because of the '1950 Law of Return'). The appearance of balance between Hebrew and Arabic languages makes less visible these relationships of mobility, constraint, and definition.

Yet, the checkpoint is also a locus of encounter, where one can 'check-in' with questions about the occupation, as Alon twice chooses to do. He elects to travel through the slow lane rather than simply passing through. And he chooses to open up the resultant encounter to the moral contradictions of the occupation, asking directly about the 'rightness' of separation. It is an action that signals a much wider expanse of political activism – beyond mere opposition and towards engagement. This action, and my presence in the car as a reflective passenger, also signals the relationship that Alon and I have sustained over the past several years as partners in theatrical facilitation and in working out its impacts. These conversations and the events that produced them challenge the idea that the 'Middle East conflict' is static, polarized, and intractable, though it is often figured through a discourse of separation.[9] Perhaps unsurprisingly then, the checkpoint is a trope that reappears in almost all of the theatrical case studies elaborated upon below.

The charged checkpoint scenario is theatrically attractive not only for the way it can highlight hegemonic logics, but also because it offers possibilities for repersonalizing and thus subverting those logics. Such localized subversions – whether in theatrical representation or through an event such as that described above – might not measurably impact the political and ideological systems and legitimate fears that sustain checkpoints. Those systemic and affective transformations require more

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Figure 4.2 Map of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, courtesy of Hudson Map, based on most updated (2004) information provided by the UN cartographic department. This map does not indicate Israeli settlements or bypass roadways that break up the contiguity of the West Bank territory. The Separation Barrier remains under construction and it is thus difficult to definitively mark its path. Though different sources suggest slight alterations in its route, the path of the Barrier is clearly circuitous and does not directly trace that of the 1949 armistice border or Green Line. For updated information about the barrier's path and settlements see: http://www.mideastweb.org/thefence.htm

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efforts than a single conversation or theatrical workshop; they require long-term political mobilizations that reframe the logic of separation and the relationships of domination/resistance. But the encounter at the Te'enim Passage signals how interventions that catch individuals 'off-guard' can sustain mobilizations through everyday actions. Alon's interventions here also operate as Boalian Jokering, destabilizing received understandings through questions rather than statements: 'Do you think it's right?' draws out a considered reflection rather than a rote response. This chapter assesses the effectiveness of several encounter-based theatre projects in eliciting similar shifts in consciousness, building relationships, and precipitating daily and direct actions that can transform the conflict scenario that now largely defines 'the Middle East'. To be quite clear, from my point of view, the transformation of that scenario must continuously work against subjugation and oppression through violence by *any* means – physical or structural – and towards the mutual liberation and security for everyone currently living in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories. I do not hold a particular vision of what that transformation might look like, for I understand this as an ongoing and quite difficult process that must contend with multiple colliding truths and the undoing of their certainties when detached from responsibility for the other.

While numerous 'social theatre' projects – Palestinian and Israeli – have dramatized and attempted to reconcile or resist aspects of the conflict with mixed groups of participants,[10] I focus in this chapter on projects that use theatre as a *process*, one that mediates encounters between Israeli and Palestinian participants.[11] The four projects I assess differentially illuminate, contest, and expand the spatial and relational dynamics in the Middle East region; the projects focus variously on constructions of national identity and on political actions practiced in resistance to the Israeli state and Palestinian Authority. Those with the most impact, I argue, operate as social movements, reframing the political scenario through affective relationships based on alliance rather than separation.

As in the Balkans, I propose that theatre offers a site for face-to-face nonviolent encounters with the Other, prompting a development of ethical relationships. These relationships allow for the mutual analysis of more easily perceivable acts of aggression (situational violence) as well as less-obvious forms of systemic oppression (structural violence). While recognizing how experiences of victimization define the national narratives of both Palestinian and Israeli participants,[12] the most overtly political projects I examine reframe the struggle in the

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region as one based on civil and human rights rather than on possession of property, historical legacy, and/or the manipulation of national narratives as rationales for physical or structural violence. All of the theatrical mediations I discuss provide alternate spatialities that, through embodiment and affect, illuminate and complicate the oppositional construction of national identity in the region. Some of the processes also generate new modes of being together. And one, Combatants for Peace, activates a human-rights based nonviolent political alliance that may most directly transform the conflict scenario.

In the four theatrical case studies that follow, I explore the dynamics of spatial and narrative control that define the contours of the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, while citing embodied challenges to those narratives, and locating the projects within their institutional frames of operation. 'Image theatre in Jerusalem' details a workshop I facilitated with graduates of the US-based Seeds of Peace program. I focus on the construction of national narratives and identities among Jewish Israeli, Arab/Palestinian Israeli, and Palestinian participants through an extension of Augusto Boal's image theatre techniques, while also acknowledging the viewpoint of third-party facilitation. The next section on School for Peace stereotype skits sustains an exploration of identity while adding an assessment of intergroup encounter, located within the theoretical frameworks articulated by the School for Peace and introduced in Chapter 1. I then detail the work of an Israeli–Palestinian interactive theatre group, Viewpoints, funded by the Peres Center for Peace. This section assesses how emotionally compelling, theatrically sophisticated, and humorous scenarios stage and deconstruct narratives of the Other, for and with Palestinian and Israeli youth. Finally, the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv theatre project of Combatants for Peace examines how long-term political alliance and democratization remodel intergroup encounter.

The documentation of projects deliberately moves from one that is US-sponsored, to two that are Israeli-based or sponsored, to a self-organized Palestinian–Israeli alliance. I concurrently shift from projects I facilitated to those I mainly witnessed. The tactics of engagement range from intersubjective and intergroup encounter (contact), to consciousness-raising, to mutual power analysis, to mobilizing alliance, to direct political action – describing a loose developmental arc for conflict transformation similar to the processes proposed by John Lederach (1995) and Harold Saunders (1999) cited in Chapter 1. While cumulatively examining nation formation and the effectiveness of relational alliance in diminishing political oppression and violence in the region, I also detail how the processes, perhaps unsurprisingly, constrain, react

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to, and often mirror 'external' events and structures. In few places are relationships of space, identity, and control more evident than in Jerusalem, where in 2004 I facilitated a workshop with graduates of the US-based Seeds of Peace program.

Image theatre and nation formation with Seeds of Peace

It is a hot day in mid-July 2004 at the Seeds of Peace Center in Jerusalem. It has been a particularly tense summer at the Center, reflecting the separation that has increasingly defined social and political interactions. In addition to the separate languages, educational systems, national myths, commemorative rituals, and determined forgettings that together sustain distinct and often oppositional identities,[13] the Israeli state and Palestinian National Authority were not speaking to each other, and neither were some of the Seeds of Peace kids. Thus, while Israel built a lengthy and contentious separation barrier,[14] a few Palestinian Seeds stopped attending year-round facilitation sessions.

This particular Seeds of Peace program moved towards re-encounter. The Seeds youth would be working on three separate community-based programs, but before commencing these projects, they met together at the Center. There I led an adaptation of Augusto Boal's image theatre technique that clarified how Seeds of Peace youth deployed and related to various national narratives. The image work rendered a discourse of separation open to discussion, analysis, and even contestation. But what had generated and sustained this discourse in the first place? And how did our presence and our performances at the Center in Jerusalem complicate it?

Separation Barriers

Like the Old Bridge in Mostar and the dismantled wall in Berlin, the barrier within and beyond Jerusalem functions as an iconic marker of separation and control in a city that defies clear divisions (Figure 4.2). As in Mostar, however, walking within the city can rewrite official efforts to stabilize those divisions. While the Old City includes Armenian, Christian, Jewish, and Muslim quarters, a cosmopolitan blend of residential and visiting pedestrians blurs any clear territorial boundaries. Additionally, sites that bear great significance for those of Christian, Jewish, and Islamic faiths, are located next to or even atop one another. Throughout the Old City, the chimes of church bells mix with wavering calls from Muezzins. There is no easy way to divide this city.

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Figure 4.3 A few miles of the separation barrier as viewed from Jerusalem
Photo: Sonja Arsham Kuftinec.

Yet until 1967 a barrier stood between East (Arab) and West (Jewish) Jerusalem, one removed with great celebration on the part of Jewish Israelis at the conclusion of the Six-Day War to mark what was, for them, the city's reunification.[15] A ring of settlements constructed around East Jerusalem later solidified this reunification. A Museum on the Seam now stands near the former East/West border, built within an old army turret, and housing exhibitions that continue to ask questions about the significance of borders, fences, and military control. My friend Tomer – a docent at the Museum, former Israeli Defense Force officer, and Seeds of Peace alumnus – took me on a tour, and we stood atop the roof as he pointed out the variety of religious, ethnic, and social communities in viewing distance: ultra-Orthodox, Arab, Middle-Eastern Mizrachi and European Ashkenazi Jewish, low-income rental and high-cost homeowner neighborhoods were all in close proximity to one another.[16]

Seeds of Peace youth who reside in Jerusalem have expressed varying attitudes towards the more recently constructed separation barrier. Jewish Israelis speak with relief of their ability to walk through the city with a greater sense of security, while Palestinians feel cut off from relatives in the West Bank or imprisoned within the city. For

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most Israelis, the 'security fence' operates as a measure of safety; they note that suicide bombings have decreased since its construction. For Palestinians, the 'apartheid wall' or 'annexation barrier' serves as yet another sign of Israeli control over territory – particularly over borders and movement.

These differential responses to the separation barrier also indicate how Palestinians and Israelis define themselves, in part, through spatial metaphors of mobility and constraint.[17] In her discussion of spatialities in Jerusalem, geographer Wendy Pullan underlines the power of architectural divisions like the barrier to structure politicized space. According to Pullan, walls generate the appearance of spatial division as rigid and absolute in ways that estrange those 'on the other side'.[18] Such enforced obligatory estrangement prevents everyday contact, fostering constructions of ingroup/outgroup enemy stereotypes.[19] As political theorist Maia Hallward notes (2006), most Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories know of Jewish Israelis only as soldiers and settlers. Jewish Israelis often know Palestinians only through images of Keffiyeh-clad young stone throwers or faceless suicide bombers who threaten normal social life with random acts of death and destruction. While less defined by enemy stereotypes than Palestinians, Arab citizens of Israel are often Othered as more 'primitive' by Jewish Israelis (as are Middle Eastern Mizrachi Jews by European Ashkenazim).[20] These large-group stereotypes remain difficult to overcome. Within Israel, Arab and Jewish youth tend to live in distinct regions or neighborhoods, and are mostly educated through separate school systems. Israeli state and Palestinian civic organizations resist encounter, either through unilateral detachment on Israel's part, or through the official non-recognition of Israel by Hamas, resistance to negotiation by former PNA leaders like Yasser Arafat, or the 'anti-normalization' rejection of contact dictated by many Palestinian organizations.

Yet spaces of relational encounter can supersede the polarization of bounded territories, especially when such encounter-spaces engage rather than ignore the occupation and the security threats posed by violent resistance. The uneasy coming together of Seeds of Peace youth from all parts of Jerusalem and beyond attests to the capacity for individuals to redefine social space, in part due to the Center's own physically (and philosophically) complex location.

Since 1996 Seeds of Peace has run follow-up programming throughout the Middle East, and from 1999–2004 at the Jerusalem Center for Coexistence. Within the contested space of the city, the Center negotiated a complex set of historically-produced geopolitical relationships.

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Unlike Arab/Palestinians living within the 1948 borders of Israel, Palestinians living in East Jerusalem are not citizens of the Israeli state, though they do carry Jerusalem IDs that allow them greater mobility within Israel than West Bank Palestinians. At the same time, a number of Jewish areas have been constructed in and around East Jerusalem – thought of as neighborhoods by most Israelis and settlements by Palestinians. The Seeds of Peace Center was located in an Arab-owned building, in French Hill, a Jewish neighborhood/settlement in East Jerusalem. This location made it theoretically safe and easy for all sides of the conflict to reach. However, Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza must receive permission from the IDF to travel to the city, and must pass through a number of checkpoints. For these and other reasons, some Palestinian Seeds chose their own policy of effective disengagement from the Israelis.

As noted, the strategy of the Center, led in 2004 by US and regional staff members, had been to organize a policy of gradual re-engagement. The 'Spread the Word' symposium I worked with focused on community-based projects, and took place in the middle of the summer following separate 'uni-national' meetings of Palestinians and of Israeli citizens – both Jewish and Arab. In contrast to this uni-national meeting, and to camp policy which selects delegations based on states, the Seeds of Peace summer programming in Jerusalem worked to negotiate differences among three distinct constituencies: Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem; Jewish Israelis; and Arab citizens of Israel, who also refer to themselves as Palestinians or 1948 Arabs.[21]

The Spread the Word program developed and supported community-based activities for each of these groups. Each group of Seeds' graduates, aged 16–18, would work with an older Seed of Peace on projects specific to that group's community, reflecting differing concerns about identity and occupation. The Jewish Israeli group, most of whom identify as secular, met with more Orthodox religious youth for a two-day facilitated encounter, a way for them to explore the relationship of religion to nationality and what it meant to be 'Jewish' in Israel. The Arab/Palestinian Israeli group documented the oral history of Arab villages in Israel, looking at their own conflicted identity within the region. The Palestinian group volunteered at a local children's hospital, working with those most directly impacted by the conflict. Prior to their separate departures to begin their community projects, the three groups met together at the Center, connecting for the first time in six months for a facilitated workshop designed to elicit and examine national narratives.

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Imaging identity in Jerusalem

The workshop (approximately 20 youth, evenly divided among the three subgroups) began with warm-up activities in English.[22] The warm-ups intentionally resituated the youth as multiethnic 'Seeds of Peace', emphasizing a more expansive superordinate identity designed to reduce conflict affiliation.[23] The youth then returned to their community groups and I facilitated the image theatre activity.

As noted in Chapter 1, image theatre asks that participants embody concepts and experiences in a silent, energized, but motionless symbolic sculpture. Boal proposes that these embodiments uncover essential truths about society and culture, while creating a separate aesthetic space for reflection (1995; 2002). Images also offer a screen onto which a participating group can project a variety of ideas and interpretations, each animating their various world views. While Boal focuses his work on more consistently homogenous 'oppressed' groups, I have found that the work can be adapted in conflict situations to articulate community difference without degenerating into accusatory debate.

The youth participants thus worked in their subgroups to develop one or two images of their self-defined community's strengths and challenges.[24] The groups could choose to have individuals sculpt others, or could work more collaboratively and conversationally.[25] The images and the discussions they provoked tangibly reflected the different existential situations and intergroup relations in the room and in the region, highlighting the difficulty of sharing a 'weakness' or 'problem' in front of a perceived 'enemy'.

The Jewish Israeli group presented two highly concretized images, proposed and developed by different individuals in the group. The images focused on religious/intergenerational differences and socioeconomic disparities within Israeli society. The images suggested openness to communicating contradictory world views within their community.

Facilitation theory focused on intergroup rather than interpersonal relations asserts that Israeli–Palestinian encounters tend to reflect social group identification and power asymmetries. Jewish Israelis generally articulate a more differentiated sense of their society, emphasizing interpersonal relations rather than political concerns, while Arab/Palestinian Israelis and Palestinians present a more unified political front (Suleiman, 2000).[26] Not surprisingly given these findings, while the Jewish Israelis developed individually-produced social images reflecting difference and dissent, the Arab/Palestinian Israeli and Palestinian groups each created politically informed images with which their entire group (at least publicly) concurred. Differences in these images signaled

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some of the complexities of nation formation among Palestinians as a whole.

In their very name, and in contestations over what they should be called, the Arab/ Palestinian Israelis suggest a complex and conflicted identity, and this group generated a single image reflecting that tension.[27] The seven participants stood in an outward-facing circle with one hand reaching behind them to connect with each other. The group's expressed intentions and the other groups' projections again surfaced the tendencies enunciated in social identity theory. A Jewish Israeli participant proposed a reading emphasizing interpersonal relations within the group: 'They share something, but they're apart.' In contrast, a Palestinian woman provided a more political historical analysis, linking the group to the Palestinian nationalist aspects of their identity. 'It's the Palestinian diaspora, but they are still connected to their roots.'

In contrast to either the Palestinian Israelis' collective search for their identity, or the multiplicity of views of their community expressed by the Jewish Israeli group, the Palestinians' images proved the most unified in their construction (at least as presented to the group), and the most provocative. These images were also the only ones to directly engage the Palestinian–Israeli conflict.

While an array of responses emerged to the first image, conflating land and collective resistance with a Palestinian national identity,[28] the second image of Palestinian 'weakness' provoked even more differentiated yet respectfully attended reactions. In this image, four participants faced each other in a circle while one stood outside with his fist raised. Both witnessing groups of Arab/Palestinian and Jewish Israelis saw the image as representing an extremist suicide bomber breaking the unity of the more peaceful Palestinian majority. When asked to discuss their own image, however, the Palestinians attested that the man with the raised fist represented not a martyr/extremist, but rather a collaborator with the Israelis, undermining Palestinian unity from within.[29]

This second image pointed towards the conflicting world views in the room and the distinct existential situations of each group. The groups produced not only different images, but also radically different interpretive frameworks. Yet, resultant discussions that elaborated upon these differences proceeded without volatility, perhaps because the image theatre process emphasizes that decodings serve as projections rather than authoritative definitions.

I argue that this revelatory moment would not have occurred in either a nontheatrical facilitation setting or in a more conventional

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image theatre workshop that assumes a relatively homogenous group of 'oppressed' participants. By developing group images within an aesthetic space, and analyzing those images through projections as well as verbalizations, the responses catalyzed a sustained and mutually engaged discussion among individuals in the differentiated groups. As the youth participants stepped back to reflect on the session as a whole, their comments suggested a critical capacity to reflect metatheatrically on the power politics alluded to in the images.

As many of the Israeli participants remarked, unlike the other images that largely reflected internal group dynamics, the Palestinian images emerged in relation to an external force, the Israeli state. One of the Palestinians responded that the group did not feel comfortable revealing internal weaknesses (such as political corruption and nepotism) to the community they see as their oppressors.[30] A Jewish Israeli woman added that the images reflected the political reality of power asymmetry in the region: Israelis generally have the security and civic space to examine the internal dynamics of their community while Palestinians under occupation have more difficulties doing so. Public critique of the Palestinian Authority, or work with Jewish Israelis, can be seen as betrayal, and met with verbal and physical threats.[31]

The young woman who spoke of power asymmetry also cited the privilege of disengagement – that outside of a violent moment of crisis, it is easier for Israelis to 'forget about' the Palestinians.[32] Though impacted by internal civic dynamics, for Palestinians in the Occupied Territories daily existence – freedom of movement and association, access to resources like water, electricity, and farmland – remains primarily controlled and defined by the Israeli state and enforced by its security apparatus.

Within the workshop, the Jewish Israelis saw their existential situation as one in which they had the opportunity to publicly enunciate more complex images of their society. Acknowledging this distinction established space for more authentic dialogue. Noted one Palestinian participant, who had previously avoided contact with Israelis, it was a conversation he had been waiting all year to have.

This kind of conversation, he later explained to me, had moved away from rehearsed arguments, oppositional narratives of identity, and unilateral detachments, to an investigation of difference in perspectives and viewpoints. Each group experienced raised consciousness about the ways that they constructed their social identity and how others understood (or misunderstood) that construction. The aesthetic space provided an alternative spatiality, one that allowed

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distinct groups to examine together the discourse of separation. This coming together across difference animated a relational space that overcame estrangement while acknowledging material and existential disparities in the region, at least for an afternoon. In contrast to the lived realities of all three groups, within the framework of the workshop, no one group had the power to define another's existential situation.

Institutional frameworks: the political economies of Seeds of Peace

Lest I overstate the transformative potential of this one-time exercise, I should note several limiting factors embedded in the context. The encounter was conducted by a US facilitator, in English, within the framework of Seeds of Peace, an organization that tends not to be self-reflective about its location within a global political system. Seeds of Peace can indeed be easily critiqued as yet another example of 'benevolent' US political-brokering, unconscious of its many biases.[33] Seeds of Peace certainly operates within a network of post-Cold War interventions that cast the United States as global facilitator (or disciplinarian). Nevertheless, I propose that the dispersed nature of the organization and its commitment to working with Middle Eastern as well as US staff allow it to foster more radical political interventions. Though SOP as an organization emphasizes interpersonal contact (the initial curve of the 'arc' I sketched out earlier), many of its members go on to enact more complex, politically engaged practices.

Ned Lazarus is one of these members. Lazarus co-founded the Seeds of Peace Center for Coexistence with a Palestinian partner, Sami al-Jundi, a former Israeli political prisoner.[34] The long-term partnership between Lazarus and al-Jundi models an alliance-based approach to coexistence that has gradually infused other parts of the organization. Since retiring from Seeds of Peace and beginning doctoral studies, Lazarus has engaged in theoretically informed critical reflection on his work in the organization. In a conference paper analyzing the organization's political economy (2007b), Lazarus notes that the program's focus on identity as the crux of conflict unwittingly obscures structural issues of power relations and resource control. For example, by providing scholarships to campers who cannot afford dues, Lazarus suggests that Seeds of Peace frames economic disparities 'as a matter of fundraising rather than as part of the conflict' (2007b: 14). That is to say, when detached from an analysis of how and why resources are distributed within the region, scholarship funding may preserve rather than transform the status quo.

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At the same time, Lazarus notes that the organization serves to transform the structural position of individual Seeds within global flows of resources and capital, furnishing its graduates with access to higher education and professional opportunities in the United States, and empowering them as potential leaders of political movements in their societies. Lazarus points to the relationship between experiences of personal transformation (contact and consciousness-raising through SOP) and processes of large-scale political change. In some ways, SOP youth can be figured as what Antonio Gramsci terms 'organic intellectuals', individuals who have the potential to disseminate transformative frames to unify a political block. Indeed, many of the Seeds graduates with whom I've stayed in touch have begun to do so, working with organizations like Peace Now and the Israeli Defense Force in Israel and the Freedom Theatre of Jenin as well as running for city council in an Arab Israeli village. It is too early to assess the efficaciousness of these political movements, and in the next chapter I introduce Wesley Days's praxis of disorientation – one that implicitly critiques Social Movement theories and a Gramscian framework of analysis. At the same time, I suggest the effectiveness of developing critical consciousness about the conflict scenario as a step towards its transformation.

Additionally, almost all of the facilitators at the Seeds of Peace summer camp are now graduates of the program. Most undergo a year-long training in Jerusalem informed by the intergroup power analysis advocated for by another organization dedicated to Palestinian-Israeli encounters, the Israeli-based School for Peace (SFP). Run out of Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam (Oasis of Peace), the only Arab–Jewish intentional community in Israel, the School sometimes adopts theatrical tactics to raise consciousness about the power dynamics operating in the region, while modeling an everyday practice of coexistence and power sharing.

Intergroup encounters at the School for Peace

My taxi crawled up the steep hill by the Latrun Monastery towards Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam in April 2006. Located between Jerusalem and Tel Aviv, this Oasis of Peace is an intentional community founded in 1970, and currently populated by a strictly equal number of (mostly secular) self-defined Arab and Jewish Israeli citizens. The residents work together to challenge the prevailing discourse of separation in the region through civic partnership, running a bilingual primary school, and struggling to recognize and critically engage each other's collective traumas and commemorative celebrations. Lauded outside of the

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region for its community-building labors, the Village has been critiqued within Israel as an unsustainable model of coexistence, requiring a kind of political moderation that does not reflect the realities of the region.

I had been here briefly in 2004 with Seeds of Peace (SOP), which had rented conference facilities, but this was my first time exploring the village itself. Along with a group of American and British 'Friends' of Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam, I spent five days touring the site and the region. In the village, we listened to a jazz concert performed by Jewish and Arab youth, attended an ecumenical spirituality conference, and visited bilingual schoolrooms and living rooms. We traveled to the West Bank to hear from nonviolent activist groups, and through Israel to hear from mayors of Arab and Jewish towns working together to ensure the equitable distribution of civic resources. I was most interested in the day we spent in a session with the School for Peace (SFP), a program founded by residents of the Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam village. Though not directly connected with Seeds of Peace, the School had trained a number of SOP facilitators – much to the dismay of the Israeli Ministry of Education, which sends delegations to the camp, and considers the School for Peace program far too radical.[35]

This radicality is in fact grounded in the School for Peace's expressed assumptions of a power imbalance between Jewish and Arab Israelis, and a desire to deliberately adjust that imbalance. Citing postcolonial critic Frantz Fanon, School for Peace facilitators Rabah Halabi and Michal Zak position themselves as 'non-objective' but 'fair' researchers, asserting that 'objectivity will always be against the weak' (2006: 7). The School for Peace was established in 1979 as an educational program associated with the Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam village, designed to 'implement the founding principles of the community' by encouraging an awareness of the participants' role in the conflict, exploring identity through interaction with the other, towards the goal of creating a more just society (Halabi and Zak, 2006: 12). The School offers short-term workshops as well as graduate classes run through social psychology departments investigating intergroup relationships through analytic models grounded in postcolonial and feminist frameworks. To date, facilitators within the School have co-published a number of articles in academic journals, a monograph assessing the efficacy of youth encounters (Halabi and Zak, 2006), and an edited anthology on Israeli–Palestinian dialogues (Halabi, 2004).

Sessions are grounded within three basic assumptions: that encounter occurs between groups rather than individuals, that the facilitated session operates as a microcosm of external political dynamics, and

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that participants carry within them deep-seated but flexible narratives of their sense of self and Other (Halabi and Zak, 2006: 12). The encounter session is designed to illuminate and question these narratives, and to grapple with the dynamics of power within and outside of the room. Led by pairs of Arab and Jewish Israeli facilitators, sessions run from three days to several months and always include a balance of Jewish and Arab participants. The sessions have an arc that includes getting acquainted, discussing cultural and political issues, and either running a simulated negotiation process or deepening investigations of difference through various prompts, including theatrical representations.

Like most coexistence group work at SOP, the School for Peace encounter model privileges the elicitation of consciousness focused on identity, power, and privilege. But where the image theatre encounter I led at SOP worked with three regional groups (Jewish Israeli, Arab/Palestinian Israeli, and Palestinian), the School focuses only on distinctions between 'Jews and Arabs' and mainly within 1948 Israel. However, the session I observed included youth from 1948 Israeli as well as from the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Choosing how to reference the groups here becomes tricky. I try to respect SFP terminology ('Jewish' and 'Arab') while acknowledging how the youth themselves self-identify, more often as 'Israeli' rather than 'Jewish' and as 'Palestinian' rather than 'Arab' or 'Arab Israeli'; the lack of consistency in self-identification in and of itself complicates the 'intergroup' premise of School for Peace. In choosing terminology in this case, I work to retain some semblance of clarity while acknowledging multiple and colliding truths about how a 'group' is defined in intergroup dialogue. This definition becomes especially important because of the underlying premises that guide School for Peace sessions.

According to the social identity theories informing SFP methods, when individuals clearly demarcate their group they are better equipped to conduct a 'genuine intergroup dialogue' which is a 'necessary condition for coexistence' (Nadler, 2000: 29).[36] SFP grounds their encounter sessions in a belief that collective identities are constructed in part through stereotypes of the other.[37] Dramatizing these images in representational skits performed for each other raises awareness of the stereotypes – what SFP terms 'symptoms' of the conflict – allowing each side to examine and confront their beliefs through dialogue with the Other. This dialogue reflects, and – via the facilitators' challenges to the group – eventually reflects *upon* the asymmetrical power that School for Peace facilitators believe to be inherent in the conflict. Transformations occur

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on an individual level towards the goal of building a 'humane, egalitarian and just society' (Halabi and Sonnenschein, 2000: 49). Thus, SFP shifts a discourse of separation to one of group identification and power asymmetry, and at the same time foregrounds the possibility of recognition, alliance, and transformation, possibilities that are daily activated in Neve Shalom/Wahat al Salam.

During a late summer seminar at the SOP Center in Jerusalem, I observed two SFP facilitators, Jewish and Arab, conduct a training session for future facilitators (older Seeds from Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank). The first session began with stereotype skits; each group of Jewish Israelis and Palestinian Arabs had about 20 minutes to collaboratively develop short scenarios depicting what they perceived to be a 'typical' situation of the Other in action.

The Israeli group resisted the idea of the exercise, generating what they termed a *reductio ad absurdum* scenario of provocative Arab stereotypes: patriarchal Arab family with silent mother and daughter, hookah-smoking father, a son asking to attend a demonstration, and grandpa waving the key to his old house. This scenario significantly shied away from the stereotype of Arab as terrorist, focusing on and critiquing gender relations and claims to land. The Israelis alluded to but did not directly reference themselves within the scenario, yet in their scenario presented the differences and assumptions that tend to generate anxieties for Israelis.

The Palestinian group presented a more immediate everyday political encounter; they located their scene at a checkpoint. In this scenario, Israeli soldiers searched fearful Palestinians, demanding to see identity cards, and humiliating the Palestinians in a variety of ways while allowing a gum-chewing, cell-phone chatting Israeli teen to flirt her way past the soldiers.

Some more-or-less typical differences emerged in the scenarios including an emphasis on Western/exhibitionist versus traditional/repressive values as animated by the women's behavior in each scene, and the depiction of Israeli males as soldiers. Yet, a resultant discussion focused less on decoding these scenarios than on the response of the participants and the ensuing group interactions. The facilitators pushed the group to reflect on their process and how it mirrored the external conflict. Thus, though the Israelis had been playing what they felt to have been a sophisticated joke with the exercise, generating clearly cartoonish character archetypes, the Palestinians still felt misrepresented; they felt that the joke had been communicated at their expense. The Israelis were taken aback by this response. One

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Israeli member of the group who had read Halabi and Sonnenschein's article on the SFP method marveled at how the group dynamics had played out. As he noted, and the group largely concurred, the Israelis had avoided power analysis while the Palestinians avoided considering the Israelis as individuals.[38]

The facilitators and the group structure may have guided these results, in which individuals in the room represented one of two collective identities, Jewish and Arab from SFP's point of view, Israeli and Palestinian from the youths' point of view, according to the language used in the session. The strengthening of these identities in relation to each other was an expressed goal of that session.[39] SFP grounds this strategy in years of self-reflective work, and it is far more radical in its goals than most Israeli Ministry of Education sponsored encounters. As many SFP facilitators have themselves argued, however, three conundrums emerge from SFP practice: (1) The model does not allow for multiple points of views about the conflict within each society, or a multiplicity of imagined identities, instead relying on a polar image of oppression. (2) The deliberate reproduction of stereotypes may result in concretizing them, rather than problematizing them. (3) An emphasis on awareness does not necessarily lead to social transformation. As my Israeli colleague, a former Seeds of Peace and School for Peace facilitator, put it to me, 'OK so they are now aware racists? Aware occupiers?'

Making power inequities visible should not eclipse the deeper transformations required to actually change those dynamics. Yet, it's important to note that the example I cite occurred within a process of facilitator training. Though most participants, as Seeds of Peace graduates, were already aware of existential differences between them, they rehearsed the scenarios as a step towards becoming partnered facilitators of others' awareness. SFP considers this process of awareness as one of many steps on the arc towards longer-term social transformation.

Both Seeds of Peace and School for Peace emphasize ongoing work on raising consciousness of how group identities are constructed and sustained as ways of grappling with power relations. In their long-term work, they each propose a shift from 'problem-solving' and 'conflict management' towards conflict transformation, eliciting rather than eliding multiple narratives on the core issues of the conflict. Both organizations also provide some models for more effective alliance and longer-term political impact, though in the first case a third party frames the coexistence narrative, and in the second, partnership persists almost entirely within the 1948 borders of Israel. Examining and sustaining

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relationships between Jewish Israelis and occupied Arab Palestinians reveals a different set of possibilities and challenges.

The next two sections move beyond the 1948 borders of Israel in many ways, first examining how polarized encounters can be extended through theatrical practice with youth, and then looking at how the conflict itself might be reframed through long-term political alliance with adults. Both sections examine the use of personal narrative and relational affect in addition to images and grounded scenarios. And both expose the limits of theatre in generating alternative spatialities that challenge and yet remain impacted by the political context.

Viewpoints on theatrical encounters

The scene I am reviewing on an archival video takes place in an Israeli high school classroom in 2004.[40] Leather-bound books, cheerful plants, and colorful construction paper collages line the walls. The students clad in jeans and T-shirts gather, chatting in Hebrew. One young girl leaps into the room, her hair flying wildly, before she plunks down beside a quiet, freckle-faced boy. They are there to witness Viewpoints, an Israeli–Palestinian interactive theatre group (unrelated to Ann Bogart's viewpoints work) that will present a variety of scenarios generated by members of the company – two Palestinians, two Jewish Israelis, and one Arab/Palestinian citizen of Israel, who serves a typical role as mediator, translating between Hebrew and Arabic.

Viewpoints is a theatre project of the Israeli-based Peres Center for Peace. Founded in 1996 by former Israeli President Shimon Peres, PCP situates itself as a non-partisan, non-profit, and nongovernmental organization. The Center supports a number of joint Palestinian–Israeli projects designed to develop an 'infrastructure for peace and reconciliation' through 'socio-economic development' and 'people-to-people' initiatives (Peres Center). Supported by individual fundraising within and outside of Israel, the Center carefully positions itself as an advocate for sustainable peace and mutual development without any reference to the Israeli occupation. While adhering to PCP's operational and philosophical framework, the Viewpoints theatre project more directly addresses the occupation, the fears and security concerns that sustain it, and the uncomfortable and traumatizing actions that result from associated prejudices. The company does so by producing a polyvocal and interactive set of narrative scenarios associated with the conflict.

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In 2002, a small group of Israeli and Palestinian actors gathered outside of the contested territories in which they lived, working long, difficult days on the island of Malta with Hebrew Theatre director Igal Ezraty. Over the next several years, as the company toured to schools, new actors added their own narratives, developed from moments of transition, trauma, and questioning in their life stories. This generative process mirrored the dynamics of the conflict. As Palestinian actress Ihsan Turkiyye reflects, 'We have sometimes a misunderstanding between the actors. It's difficult when it's competing groups. Everyone wants to show that his people are nice and full of morals. But the reality is not like that.'[41]

Turkiyye's capacity to articulate this more complex 'reality' and its set of 'colliding truths', represents a significant shift in her own viewpoint, one that unfolded over several years in dialogue with Israeli actors. It is a shift from what social psychologist, Herbert Kelman, refers to as 'negative interdependence' – identity constructed in opposition to an Other group – towards more positive, expansive, and relational formulations (1999: 583). The resultant capacity to attend to the narrative of the Other is reflected in some of the scenarios selected for the show. These scenarios serve as both the culmination (for Viewpoints actors) and foundation (for youth spect-actors) of an interactive process initiated by Chen Alon after he joined the group. The theatrical encounters attest to how polarized identities can be examined, leading to a confrontation of political inequities, and within the Viewpoints company, to alliance-based partnership.[42]

The various phases of the Viewpoints project – from actors generating scenarios, to the performance of an interactive forum scene with separate groups of Palestinian and Jewish Israeli students, to the development of longer-term projects with these youth – move from witnessing to intervention to direct encounter. The process generates situations that allow for redefinition and emotional identification with the Other, raising consciousness about the power relations in the region while activating political alliance within the Viewpoints group.

Generating scenarios, concretizing traumas

The scenarios developed within Viewpoints from the personal experiences of the actors serve two main purposes: they expose the humanity of both the oppressor and oppressed while offering internal critiques that complicate assumptions about homogenous 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' cultures. Both types of scenarios provide a concretized experience of personal revelation for youth audiences. As an example of internal critique,

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Ihsan Turkiyye developed a scene that focused on gender politics within Palestinian society. Turkiyye vividly describes the generative event:

> I made a scene from when I returned to Palestine after living in Lebanon. It was in 1994 and I took a taxi from East Jerusalem to Gaza. Really – you could do this then! But I have a Lebanese accent, so I was like a tourist. The driver he is touching me, putting his hand on my knee, and the Israeli police stop the taxi because it's swerving – the driver has his hand on me and not the wheel. So we make the scene, and in it I say everything is ok to the police, not to betray the Palestinian. Then in the theatre, I ask the children directly, 'Should I have told the police about him?' Even the Palestinian kids they say, 'Tell him, tell him. You have to tell the police, even though he [the police] is your enemy.' So you see, we make scenes that show more complications within our societies, also that have something about other oppressions.
>
> (2007)

As Turkiyye notes, this scene expands the dynamics of oppression beyond the Israeli–Palestinian binary while demonstrating a capacity for ingroup critique. Her narrative also conveys the humor and vivacity that texture its theatrical retelling. Viewpoints scenarios emerge from traumatic events, but the company does not simply relate these events as documentary monodramas. Actors deploy humorous exaggeration, metaphorical imagery, quick-change characterizations, and ongoing transformations of theatrical props. The suitcases that carry those props re-emerge as bus seats, storefront counters, and stones. These aesthetics not only serve to engage youth audiences, but also to make various ideological assumptions transparent through their exaggeration, and animate an underlying philosophy of transformational possibilities. As the show progresses, the actors begin taking on roles of the 'Other'; a Jewish actor relating his surreptitious visit to a mosque, motivated by curiosity, physically transforms to become the blind Arab who unknowingly guides him through. Palestinian actors perform as IDF soldiers; Jewish actors become Palestinians at home; and Palestinian citizens of Israel express their fear as Israelis riding on a bus with an Arab. Through this tactic, the actors actualize the goal of seeing through the viewpoints of the Other, without simply collapsing all difference.

The second group of scenarios focuses more directly on this politically informed humanization of the Other as generated through individual

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transformations. The scenarios adopt *commedia* masks to symbolically portray these rehumanizing situations, with the revelatory moment conveyed through an unmasking. Some of these moments seem more revelatory than others, raising questions about whether humanization necessarily leads to ethical actions and systemic transformations.

Ihsan Turkiyye narrates an experience in which an Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldier invaded her home in Ramallah, a West Bank city. The soldier sniffled with an oncoming cold, and she spoke with him as a mother to a son, offering him an aspirin. From Turkiyye's point of view, the action humanized both herself and the soldier, exemplifying Freire's theory that the oppressed and oppressor both desire to be liberated from their roles towards the goal of being more fully human (2003). Yet, Turkiyye could only depict a transformation from her perspective. The incident did not necessarily transform the IDF soldier's subsequent actions, nor did it automatically alter the larger system that sanctions Israeli military actions. Israeli soldiers who invade Palestinian homes generally believe that they are acting in an internally consistent moral manner to defend their nation and state. So, the singular moment of interpersonal humanization might not trigger an ethical response in Levinas's terms – one that demands infinite responsibility to the other, though it could catch the soldier 'off-guard'. The event inspiring Chen Alon's scenario catalyzed a longer-lasting political transformation.

Alon's scenario also focuses on internal critique, but from his self-identified position as the oppressor. He narrates the transformation he experienced while serving in the Occupied Territories as a combat major. I describe the scene below as I experienced it, to convey the narrative as well as transformational aesthetic choices that inform its retelling.

Three actors clad in black and wearing leather character masks hunch together. Alon, in a half-mask, clasps his hands sternly behind his back and calls out in a commanding tone: 'Soldier, get ready!' He alters his posture and confides to the audience, 'I want to be a combatant. I want to be an officer in the Israeli Defense Force.' Again, he shifts his stance. 'Day: today I saw a three-year-old child looking at me with hatred. Night. My platoon and I are sieging a Palestinian house. The family is probably sleeping.' The other characters stand in an image of sleep and Alon continues. 'We don't ask questions. The Shinbet [internal security forces] know what they are doing. The goal: to arrest the wanted man. To prevent the next terror attack. Is he there?' The masked Palestinian characters awake, startled, and raise their hands into the air. 'No, he's not there. The instructions were very clear: if the wanted person is not at home we should arrest another family member to put pressure

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on the wanted man to turn himself in. The mother held her son very closely' – we see a male actor pulled between the masked soldiers and a Palestinian actress playing his mother – 'and refused to let him go. We had to separate them but the mother didn't free her arms.' The other actors are now tensely extended. 'The guys raised their guns. I did the same.' The actors stretch even further. 'And then I felt it happen.' Alon reaches behind his head and pulls off the mask. 'My mask came off.' He pauses, looks searchingly at the mask in his hand, at the mother, and again at the mask, the persona of a soldier.

A number of theatrical aspects of this scenario strike me beyond its content. The shifts between temporalities, between narration and enactment, draw the youths' attention to how power is constructed and occupation depersonalized. Alon begins by physically taking on the persona of his former self. The Commander ordering his soldiers to 'get ready' has a *gestus* – a stiff wide stance with hands behind the back – that signals how that order requires no justification other than underlying assumptions about chain of command and that 'the Shinbet know what they are doing.' Alon's narrative also foregrounds a dialectic other than that between his past and present self. The contrast between 'day' and 'night' resurfaces the emotional realities of soldiering that are often repressed. The reference to the three-year-old child and the family in the 'house' that is under siege both repersonalize the impact of Alon's actions. The theatrical representation also spatially centers Palestinian bodies as actors and characters. Alon stands on the margins of this focusing image. Though mediated through the process of memory and retelling – as indicated by the character masks – Palestinians still remain level with Alon – even foregrounded – as independent subjects impacted by the story he is narrating. Their humanization, as 'mother' and 'son' as well as targets of a siege, contributes to Alon's unmasking. It is theatrically compelling and significant that Alon's mask 'came off' as a sign of raised consciousness produced through an internal contradiction; the ethical impact of his actions exceeded the intentions of Israeli security. Yet, the scenario also figures Alon as the agent of the mask's removal. Alon did not simply 'become humanized'; he was provoked by a Levinasian response to the Other-becoming-other in a way that was then *acted* upon. Shortly after the event depicted in the scenario occurred, Alon refused to serve any longer as a soldier in the Occupied Territories. The scene thus ultimately brings together the role of action in theatre and political activism.

The focus on the actor as theatrical and political agent is a distinguishing feature of both Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed and of

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the Viewpoints theatre project; according to Alon the generation of theatrical scenarios from personal trauma transforms a therapeutic effect into a political action (2007b). The enacted story of his transformation from soldier to political activist echoed and modeled his conversion from a more conventional actor to an activist-oriented theatre artist.

In developing this scenario, Alon critiques Freire's position that the oppressed must liberate the oppressors. 'As a former oppressor, I believe passionately in the need for the oppressors to release themselves from their role. In my personal liberation from this role, I experienced no less than gaining my life back' (2008a). According to Alon, this liberation of both oppressors and oppressed produces a more genuine dialogue on power relations that ultimately moves towards equalization. Though the scenarios offer differential reflections on ethical actions, by first working out their traumatic situations of rehumanization with each other, the Viewpoints company generates a model for political alliance, while also representing more nuanced and theatrically engaging portraits of the Other for youth audiences.

In the second stage of the work, the youth experience for themselves what it feels like to actually embody the Other within an interactive forum theatre scenario. The scene takes place at a checkpoint within the West Bank where two Israeli soldiers must determine whether to allow a pregnant Palestinian woman and her husband to cross from a village in the West Bank to a nearby hospital in Ramallah. Separate audiences of Arab/Palestinian and Jewish Israeli youth see the scene play out, and then, as in forum theatre, they can stop and intervene in the action. They first replace their group – the Israelis act as soldiers, the Palestinians as the couple – then they are invited to take the place of the Other.

From spectator to spect-actor

In this second stage of the Viewpoints presentation, separate youth audiences of Israeli and Palestinian students move from spectators to spect-actors, from Boalian-defined empathy (feeling for another) to sympathy (feeling with another) (1994: 42–3), and from unawareness to Freirian *conscientizacao*. Freire describes this kind of consciousness as one that arises from a dilemma, recognizing contradictions between, for example, state rhetoric and action (2000 [1970]: 109–14). As one Israeli student noted reflecting on the checkpoint scenario in the archival video I watched, 'it's a no-win situation.' She recognized the responsibility of the soldiers for both the security of Israeli citizens – the Palestinian woman may, in fact, be carrying a bomb – and

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the health of the pregnant woman. According to Viewpoints actors, the forum scenario allows the Israelis to experience that there's no way to be a 'good' occupier. At the same time, the scenario does not resolve the dilemma of how an ingroup may defend itself without violating the outgroup's right to mobility.

The Viewpoints company proposes that oppressors will transform and individuals will change only when confronted with a contradiction that holds up the difference between their sense of a coherent ethical self and actions that betray that sensibility. Alon notes that this is a military tactic, to 'put someone in a dilemma where both choices are bad' (2008a). Viewpoints deploys the tactics in a more emotionally engaged and positive manner, to unhouse the youth from received habits of thinking and being. This activated shift of feeling-towards-judgment, articulated in Chapter 1, also indicates a reframing: from 'tolerating' an idea or a person to more fully integrating the being of the Other in relationship with the self. Moving from Other to other.

It is a principle of relationship proposed by philosopher Martin Buber (who had advocated early in the twentieth century for a multiethnic Israeli state). Across several works Buber suggests that social relationships should be predicated on conditions for authentic encounter that involve engaging with the other as a subject of relationship rather than an object to be understood or defended against (1992 [1965]; 2002 [1947]). To try and frame that shift away from an objectified understanding of the other, the Viewpoints performance includes theatrically sophisticated dilemmas derived from real-life moments of Israelis as occupiers, Arab/Palestinian Israelis as assimilationists, and Palestinians as patriarchs.

For the Jewish Israeli youth, participating in the checkpoint scenario heightened their internal conflicts through the activation of emotionally engaged sympathy. A male student who had played the pregnant Palestinian woman reflected, 'As a spectator I thought, "it seems so easy" and on stage I realized that they should let her through. She suffers. They have to let her pass.' As a spectator, the student had empathized with the woman in a way that naturalized her passivity. He expresses this relationship in the language of 'thought' and aesthetic distance. From his visual viewpoint, the Palestinians at the checkpoint had 'nothing to do.' Placing himself *within* the situation as a spect-actor offered another point of view: taking action led to feeling in more immediate sympathy with the dilemma of the Palestinian woman in a movement that shifted the student's consciousness. According to Alon, 'He felt intuitively in his flesh and blood how frustrating it is to be on

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stage without being able to take an action; a feeling heightened by his stage partners' expectations for action. He feels the gap between witnessing and experiencing. He feels for the first time the lack of ability to take an action in this specific violent situation' (2007b).

The kinds of feelings evoked within the Israeli students resonate with Augusto Boal's critique of Aristotelian empathy.[43] According to Boal, when we feel *for* a character (em-pathy) rather than *with* that character (sym-pathy), we remove ourselves from the necessity of investigating causality, and from taking action to transform the conditions that lead to suffering, moving from judgment towards action (1994: 42–43). The forum theatre allows for the rehearsal of actions that ideally transfers outside of the aesthetic space. While I don't know whether the Israeli students I viewed on the archival tape followed up with more directed actions, their reflections indicated at least a shift in understanding the differential existential conditions of Palestinians and Israelis. 'I think it's very hard for the Palestinians', shared one young male, 'The checkpoints. The permits. And we come and go so easy everywhere.'[44] In a step towards generating a less ideologically polarized identity, and in moving from the personal to the political, the student began to see the occupation from the viewpoint of the Other. He also acquired more information about the occupation and the checkpoints, such as their location *within* the Occupied Territories, information that Alon argues is not available in mainstream media. Alon proposes that when the oppressor group has this information, most will likely remain silent and passive, but 'some of them will not like it and will talk about it on Saturday night with friends, some will protest, some will decide to disobey and some will find a way to struggle with the oppressed, to show solidarity and create alliances' (2008c).

Yet, the limited encounter of a one-time workshop again raises the question of effectiveness. Is the student simply another more 'aware occupier'? 'I do not underestimate the power of the media and myth in my society and don't overestimate the power of TO,' responds Alon. 'But I believe in humanization as a step towards the process of showing that violent struggle is not moral, and that it is as counter-productive to Israelis as to Palestinians' (2008a).

Another point of view on the scenario might help to clarify the limitations and possibilities of Viewpoints with youth. Across the border in the Occupied Territories, where mobility is indeed more constrained, viewpoints on the checkpoint scenario were quite different. The Jewish Israeli youth reflected on what was a new and affective sympathetic experience for them, leading to a less polarized identity position.

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Palestinian youth in the Occupied Territories, however, had a harder time rehearsing what was, for them, a more familiar scenario, and with sympathizing with the Israelis. While the encounter with Israeli actors working in political alliance with Palestinians did disrupt a discourse of oppositional separation, the theatrical experience produced a great deal more tension than in Israel, reflecting the realities of the occupation.

Across the border: El Khader, West Bank

It is late November 2007. I am sitting in the passenger seat of a van that is waved through a checkpoint with barely a lift of the armed soldier's head to glance at our Israeli license plates. We leave the smooth, paved bypass roads, built for Israeli settlers and passing through Palestinian farmland, and swerve onto bumpy tar towards El Khader, a small town in the West Bank near Bethlehem. There is tension in the air, much of it emanating from Chen Alon who is again sitting beside me. This is Alon's first time in the village since he demolished a house here six years ago. It was the moment of his unmasking, the decision not to serve anymore in the Territories. It is also the first time that Viewpoints has performed in the West Bank, as other performances were with Arab citizens of Israel and Palestinians from the Occupied Territories who had been brought to East Jerusalem. For most of the kids in El Khader, it is also their first encounter with Israelis who are not soldiers.

We enter a room on the ground floor of the town hall. I am taken aback by the bareness of the space. There are no books, no décor, and not much furniture. Stamped onto the cracked plaster walls are signs indicating that cell phones, cigarettes, and guns are prohibited. A few staff members lean against the walls smoking and chatting on their cell phones. This makes me nervous, though the actors continue to rehearse. A group of children shuffle quietly into the room. The girls giggle beneath their hijabs as they file into the front row seats. The boys, their hair slicked back or gelled straight up from their scalps, sit in back, their faces eager and open. Just before the show is scheduled to begin, the Mayor of El Khader calls the actors upstairs to his office.

'He wanted to make sure that this is not "normalization"', Ihsan Turkiyye later clarified for me. 'He said it's a great opportunity to have a Palestinian and Israeli group to perform for us. He emphasized that the Palestinians are living the occupation every day and it makes life difficult but that we, the Palestinians, are willing to open a new vision for peace education.' Given Israeli sponsorship by the Peres Center for Peace, it seemed that the Mayor needed to assert Palestinian authority and agency. In order to maintain his political position, he also needed

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to ensure that Viewpoints did not activate a 'collaboration' project legitimating the status quo situation of occupation. Turkiyye assured him that 'the show is within the Palestinian pro-peace policy,' and that it was 'designed for Israelis to recognize the pain of the occupation.' With Turkiyye's tactical framing, and the Mayor's seal of approval, the show proceeded.

The Palestinian youth leaned forward in delight, visibly and viscerally reacting to the show. 'We make it more funny so the kids don't get bored', explains Ihsan afterwards. The actors are physically agile and clown playfully with each other. But I also hear laughter of recognition when Ismael al-Dabbagh depicts a frightened Palestinian driver, and thick silence during Alon's scenario. The boys and girls willingly participate in the forum scenario facilitated by al Dabbagh (the Viewpoints joker always comes from the same identity group as the audience). Unlike the Israelis, however, the El Khader youth did not try to intervene in order to 'improve' the checkpoint scenario. In fact, when playing Israeli soldiers, they put more pressure on the pregnant couple. 'They repeat what they experience', noted Turkiyye. Al Dabbagh later translated for me what the youth expressed about their intervention experience. 'One boy said, "That's how the soldiers behave with us. It doesn't matter how I behave. The solution is not with us, it's to end the occupation."'[45] 'In fact', added Alon, 'what is needed is to create a new reality, rather than only to transform the present situation.'

The Viewpoints actors try to model this new reality. And though the El Khader youths' actions and comments suggest despair, the youth also expressed amazement at seeing Israelis who were not soldiers, and who desired to end the occupation. 'I explained to the kids afterwards that when I was their age I was taught that they – the Palestinians are my enemy', adds Alon. 'I told them that I'm now interested in understanding what causes transformation in beliefs and thoughts, as well as the situation of oppression and occupation, through theater' (2007a).

Even in one-time performances, the embodied encounters with Palestinian and Israeli actors and with the Viewpoints scenarios ruptured stereotypes and inspired sympathetic identifications among both Israelis and Palestinians in their separated spaces. An even more powerful encounter emerged when the youth confronted each other directly.

In 2007–08 the Peres Center for Peace (PCP) sponsored two integrated projects that moved beyond witness and intervention to direct encounter. In the first pilot project, Palestinian and Israeli high school students met separately in a parallel process, followed by a day-long binational workshop. A year later, PCP initiated a four-month project

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between Palestinian youth in El Khader and Hebron and Israeli youth in Yeruham, a largely Mizrachi Jewish town in the Negev Desert. Rather than responding to scenarios they had created themselves, Viewpoints actors facilitated workshops in which Palestinian and Israeli youth first developed their own scenarios and then encountered each other, planning to meet together every three to four weeks. The long-term project of direct encounter illuminated more complex relational dynamics than the one-time forum theatre. The project also showed how the external conflict was mirrored in and set the limits for what could be accomplished through youth encounters.

The limits of encounter: on the road to Yeruham

Another road trip through Israel in the fall of 2007. We drive three hours south from Tel Aviv through the Negev, passing numerous 'unauthorized' Bedouin villages and army training posts. The driver again is Chen Alon, who points to where he trained as an officer, Military Base Number 1. It is 'hardcore', he notes, the 'West Point' Academy of Israel. As we drive, Alon sets the scene in Yeruham.

In the 1950s, still reeling from the Holocaust, Israel initiated a proactive immigration policy. The policy was designed to help Mizrachi Jews living in Arab countries like Iraq, Yemen, and Morocco – who often suffered from discrimination – by transferring them to less-populated (and less desirable) Israeli areas like the Negev desert. This movement also served the dual purposes of claiming territory and generating cheap labor for new industrial production in the increasingly less socialist state. Many European Ashkenazi Jews saw the new immigrants as culturally 'underdeveloped', and Jewish Israeli society remains highly stratified, with Ashkenazim serving as the political and cultural elite while Mizrachim and Arabs remain in low-income brackets (Wurmser, 2005). In part to distance themselves from the Arab population, and to displace anger at the left-wing 'pro-Arab' Ashkenazim, the Mizrachim largely identify with right-wing political parties.[46] So, Alon explained that he understands the perception that awaited him as a 'lefty' Ashkenazi from urban Tel Aviv temporarily touching down in the desert to tell the Mizrachim that 'they must make friends with the Arabs.'

In fact, a few weeks prior to our journey Alon had asked the Yeruham Community Center director, a Moroccan émigré, if the Center youth might want to participate in the PCP theatre project. 'To tell you the truth', the director had admitted, 'I don't trust the Palestinians. But I'll put the project to the kids and see if they want to do it.' Alon had

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convinced the director to allow him to share some theatre activities and talk directly with the youth. This evening was his audition for the project with the youth and staff from the Center.

We soon reach the Center, an old warehouse transformed by the Yeruham municipality with vibrant murals, a café, music and theatre rooms. Alon leads an hour of gentle theatre activities, after which a small group of youth, aged 14–17, sit down and burst into anxious Hebrew. After several minutes they gesture towards me; I sense that they are indicating that I don't understand the discussion. But I think that I do. 'You had a great time tonight and you want to do more theatre, but not with the Palestinians', I propose, and they nod in agreement. I hesitate about how to share the feeling I get from them, beneath their words. 'But you are taking a long time to say this. So I think that there is fear of the Other, but underneath that fear there is also curiosity.' As this comment is translated, the youth nod more reflectively. Alon adds that the process will change them – not necessarily in any political direction – but the encounter will change them. The tone of the discussion shifts as it models Alon's promise; there is no attempt to debate, convince, or discipline the youth. They stay in dialogue and eventually they change. They say yes, they will encounter the Other. But only once – they commit to meet with the Palestinians only once.

'When I began my process', reflects Ihsan Turkiyye, 'it was also with this sense of curiosity to know the Other. So this was the first thing – it wasn't about peace.' Adds Alon, 'I suspected the same feelings were happening with the kids' (2008a). In preliminary uni-national sessions separate teams of Israeli and Palestinian facilitators worked with each group, exploring the imagination of the Other through image work. The youth in Yeruham had a fantasy of the Palestinians as primitive and even monstrous. At the first session I attended, one of the girls expressed that she was afraid if she went to the bathroom during a binational meeting, that one of the Palestinian boys would knife or rape her. This kind of statement is not surprising in the context of the conflict with its spatial separations and related psychological demonizations.[47] In *Community: Seeking Safety in an Insecure World*, Zygmunt Bauman notes the relationship between spatial and psychic distance and the production of strangeness. 'The unknown, in some ways, is not human, since humans we know of are always "specific"' (2001: 149). The Yeruham youth knew *of* the Palestinians without actually knowing them, and in some ways, without wanting to know them. The dismantling of the stereotype of the enemy would involve bringing the Arab Other closer to the self. This move potentially threatened a collective

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identity as (Jewish) Israeli, an identity already frayed by an internal and internalized sense of otherness as 'Arab' Jews, a hybrid category outside of official intelligibility. Israel scholar Dan Bar-On broadly names this tendency to avoid deconstructing stereotypes as a wish to maintain a monolithic self-image, thus sustaining the notion of the self as victim of the other, and not incidentally, sustaining the larger conflict (1995).

Yet, in the first binational encounter, the Yeruham youth experienced a rupture of the demonized image. Using Boalian theatre games to avoid a focus on language, the youth played together, and through play, decreased the distance from the Other. They were stunned by small details, such as the fact that the Palestinians wore jeans and T-shirts, unlike the Bedouin Arabs that they knew from the desert. One girl admitted, 'Some of the boys are even cute', thus shifting the image of the Other from monstrous to flirtatious (which created great anxiety for the director of the Center). This encounter may have reduced the demonized image of the Other for the Yeruham teens, but according to Bauman, it might have done so more as a tribute to Israeli generosity rather than to the Palestinian rights (1993: 156). In later encounters, participating youth experienced more of what Alon calls 'critical equal participation', described more fully in the next chapter. Yet, the political situation, language differences, difficulties of Palestinian travel, threats from Palestinian radicals, and the Yeruham teens' anxieties all combined to prevent a deeper encounter from developing.

Before the second binational session a suicide bombing wracked Dimona, a town near Yeruham, and many of the Israeli youth chose not to attend the meeting. Somewhat curiously, they did not name the bombing as a direct cause (a few of the girls said they had a manicure class). By the end of that session, however, one of the few Yeruham teens that had attended moved from a position of defensiveness towards apology for the absence of the Israelis. In one encounter he had expanded his sense of identity, coming to see the situation from the perspective of the Palestinian Others.

Still, the project suffered from the deep-seatedness of the conflict, the visible situational violence in places like Dimona and Sderot in southern Israel, and the less visible structural violence in Gaza and the West Bank. Further political unrest led to the cancellation of a third binational session. And midway through the project one of the Palestinian facilitators dropped out. He explained that he had been offered a job that demanded his full commitment, but the project facilitators surmised that Palestinians who suspected him of 'collaborating' with the Israelis had also harassed him.[48]

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The project was indeed entirely Israeli-sponsored, and operated within a program, the Peres Center for Peace, that on its website situates itself as dedicated to coexistence, contact, capacity-building and cooperation without ever mentioning occupation. According to Alon, this framing is necessitated by fundraising: mainstream Israelis will support a 'peace' that connotes mutual understanding and the cessation of Palestinian violence, but are less inclined to examine the structural and systemic violence imposed on Palestinians by the occupation. Yet, the spatial dynamics of control in the region required the Palestinian youth and facilitators to always travel to Israeli territory through a number of checkpoints. The Palestinian facilitator, who I'll call Ali, noted to me that the Israelis could not really understand him, because they did not know what it meant to work within Israel without a permit from the Palestinian authorities. 'I was thinking of Boal's quote of Che Guevara', Alon reminisced in contemplating this dilemma, 'He says, "solidarity is running the same risks." We didn't do that with the project. So we are in danger of maintaining the facilitation inequality' (2008a), a situation that I address more directly in the next chapter.

In the meantime, the Yeruham youth continued to express reluctance towards encounter. At the final binational session, which I attended, only three of the Israeli youth joined over 20 Palestinians from Hebron and El Khader. I did witness a process of limited transformation even within this one session. One Israeli girl at first would not even shake the hand of the Palestinians, but towards the end of the session she was in dialogue with a group, speaking directly to one boy in English. In a final summation the teacher of the Palestinian girls from Hebron addressed one of the Israeli boys as being 'like her son.' And one of the Israelis – a settler who as part of her military duty worked with the teenagers in Yeruham – noted that 'something had penetrated' her about the process. In a final uni-national summation, the Yeruham youth noted a shift in attitude towards the Palestinians; one arrived at through direct and indirect encounters. Reflecting on their earlier assumptions, they noted this increased capacity to contain more complexities and ambivalences about the Other.

The youth also reframed theatre as an alternative space, not simply as a site to be witnessed, but as a medium through which they could learn about and transform themselves in relation to an individual other rather than an enemy Other. When efficacy is understood as examining oppression rather than simply building community, then conflict transformation work is grounded in an ethics of sympathy rather than empathy, and of intersubjective or intergroup encounter

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and *conscientizacao* rather than individualized understanding. As the Viewpoints actors themselves propose, this is a more challenging kind of encounter that can lead to transformative political alliance.

Towards alliance

By all accounts, the encounter project with youth achieved limited success, and perhaps fittingly so. Peace and conflict scholar Mohammed Abu-Nimer notes that dialogue or contact can sometimes substitute for transformative actions, assuaging the consciences of the oppressor group while operating as a safety valve for the oppressed (1999: 152). Viewpoints actors have instead worked to reposition the terms of collaboration and alliance. The actors feel that their capacity to work together in a way that does not try to smooth over dissent and disagreement remains crucial to their political work. They seem to model what Martin Buber (1967) and Carl Rogers (1959) describe as authentic dialogue based on an awareness of the other's reality that does not try to impose one's own, but rather engages in a mutual process of unfolding. The development and selection of particular kinds of theatrical scenarios in Viewpoints generates a space for this unfolding, thus creating a foundation for multiple viewpoints within a framework of an agreed-upon political alliance. The theatre thus operates not only as a medium but also as a model for progressive political partnership with a clearly agreed-upon internal goal of ending the occupation as a step towards the mutual liberation of both Israelis and Palestinians.

This kind of long-term alliance, emerging from sympathetic relationships and committed to political and theatrical moderation, remains crucial for Viewpoints' company members in the current political climate. The last few years have seen the rise of Hamas, leading to territorial and ideological divisions in Palestine alongside political stagnation in Israel. Within this climate, and in subtle contrast to its absence from the Peres Center for Peace mission, the Viewpoints actors insist that they will continue to focus on the occupation and its reverberation for all Israelis – Jewish and Arab – and for all Palestinians, within and outside of the Occupied Territories. Working out a response to this crisis requires a long-term process of common struggle between radical moderates from both sides, working in a theatrically sophisticated form that demands sympathy for each other and against stagnation, hopelessness, and oppression. 'We need to build even stronger alliances', note both Alon and Turkiyye. 'This is the key to end the political oppression and develop the humanity of both sides, as partners in an ongoing process rather than as enemies in an ongoing conflict' (Alon, 2008a).

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Fifteen years ago, argues Alon, 'you couldn't find one political movement that was a joint movement. But the most influential political movements these days are alliance-based' (2007a). While Viewpoints is not currently touring, Alon continues to work in partnership with another political organization, this one dedicated to reframing the struggle in the Middle East from one that is identity-based to one grounded in the development of equal human and civic rights: the nonviolent Palestinian–Israeli activist coalition Combatants for Peace (CFP).

Founded jointly in 2005 by Israelis and Palestinians who had once used violence against the other side – as soldiers or resistance fighters – CFP consists of a loose group of about a hundred male and female members who self-organize into regional subgroups with Palestinian and Israeli leadership. One of these groups uses theatre as a medium for interaction. In March 2008 the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv subgroup invited me for the third time to a meeting in Shoufa.

Mobilizations with Combatants for Peace

Five Israeli members of Combatants for Peace converge outside of Tel Aviv for the drive towards Tulkarm in the West Bank. Three women in jeans, their midriff and shoulders carefully covered, and two men, dressed in their everyday clothes, pile into Idan's car.[49] We drive for almost two hours through the farmlands of Israel's Arab triangle. We talk about Idan's current theatre project, which he developed with and about a Palestinian Combatant for Peace, Bassam Aramin, whose ten-year-old daughter was killed last year by Israeli border police. The Jewish Israeli actor who will play Bassam, Shlomo Vishinski, lost his own son, an IDF soldier, in Gaza. Idan, Aramin, and Vishinski all hope that the performance will expose the less-polarized dimensions of suffering in the region.[50]

We are a little lost, but drive on, past orange trees lining what now appears to be more of a dusty walking path than a road. You can't really mapquest Shoufa; Israeli maps are vague about Palestinian roadways and, on principle, the group wants to avoid the settler bypass roads. Eventually, we find our way across some porous borders and creep up a steep dirt hill. We pass what stands for public transportation around here, a taxi-van full of villagers. Because of Israeli barriers and security concerns, residents of Shoufa can no longer drive the three kilometers to Tulkarm, instead having to travel an additional 20 kilometers around an Israeli-only road.

'It's a problem,' sighs Nour, a phrase he repeats often as the head of the Palestinian steering committee of the CFP theatre subgroup.

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Sometimes IDF soldiers turn the group's members from Tulkarm back. Other times there are not enough funds to cover transport. This imbalance in resources and resultant Palestinian frustrations echoes the external situation, and has led to a rift within CFP. Drawn together over six months by affective connections, image theatre explorations, and direct political actions, the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv subgroup has weathered this crisis within CFP better than most. The steering committee is meeting today to consider a separation from the larger organization – a secession that Israeli members are hoping to avoid, but don't want to dictate.

We park the car on a patch of grass by the meeting site, where the material differences between life in Tel Aviv and the Tulkarm area are everywhere visible. We walk past some trash waiting to be burned and a noisy chicken coop waiting to be dinner, and enter into Ibtesam's concrete-walled living room for the meeting. 'You are welcome here', she murmurs, smiling widely beneath her hijab. She seats us on sofas lining the walls beneath visible electric wires. I look about, noting the photo of Yasser Arafat dominating an inner room; it is far more prominent than those of family members. The kids themselves are seated among us, serving sweet tea and snacks on plastic stools. There is no private meeting space for this activist encounter; the home is its locus and the family is involved.

Despite these and other cultural and material differences, despite the separations sustained by the IDF and by Palestinian resistance to Israeli partnership, CFP generally works in partnership, modeling participatory democracy and political alliance through a variety of events and actions. These events inspire, situate, and legitimate CFP's agenda for a spectrum of relevant audiences, including with the organization itself.[51] Members share personal narratives of political transformation to build and sustain relationships. Their public forums and lectures educate mainstream audiences. Alternative memorials, such as one created for assassinated Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, draw a progressive but still Zionist Israeli audience. CFP members also confront oppositional extremists on both sides of the separation wall by harvesting olives or dismantling roadblocks together. In short, CFP uses some familiar tools of nation formation to generate alternative narratives grounded in democratized alliance.

CFP members organize these events as former combatants who have adopted tactics of dialogue, storytelling, and indirect confrontation to challenge a discourse of separation while posing ethical dilemmas to the mainstream population. In Social Movement theory, Robert

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Benford and David Snow refer to these indirect confrontations as resonant 'injustice frames' (2000: 615). As with Alon's question to the Druze border guard about the maintenance of 'Jewish lanes' (asked upon our return from the first meeting of the theatre subgroup), CFP members use cognitive and emotional tactics to confront differences between collective self-image, policies, and practices. These CFP tactics strive to 'out-legitimize' an oppositional framework that sustains the current conflict, dramatizing inherent social contradictions until they can no longer be sustained by the populous.[52] Thus CFP members hope to 'mobilize potential adherents', 'garner bystander support', and 'demobilize antagonists' (Snow and Benford, 1988: 198). Without abandoning attachments to identities as 'Israeli' and 'Palestinian', they work to expand those identities to include the relational perspective of the Other, and to accept the internal complexities within each identity position.

In their essay on collective action frames, Snow and Benford adopt the military terminology of 'deployment' and 'mobilization'. This seems appropriate in relation to CFP, whose members consciously revise the strategies and tactics learned as combatants: as occupying soldiers who have justified their actions within the terms of defensive democracy and as resistant activists who have rationalized violence without seeing it as a tool of oppression. Somewhat paradoxically, their status as (former) combatants within militarized societies earns CFP members credibility across a range of audiences. Their rhetorical adherence to 'Israeli' and 'Palestinian' national identities additionally anticipates a 'counter-framing' that might situate them as 'traitors'. At the same time, nonviolent tactics and alliance-based actions reframe relationships between the two states and peoples. This reframing sustains a focus on both resources and recognition through popular participation – mobilizing alternative narratives, generating new spatial and personal relations, and modeling partnership – moving from national sovereignty towards civic democracy with the ultimate goal of establishing a sustainable two-state solution to the conflict.

These goals can, of course, run up against the political realities that sustain separation, such as the difference in resources leading to the previously mentioned rift within CFP. Yet, theatrical practices informing storytelling, encounter, and direct action – particularly within the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv subgroup – strengthen CFP's alliance-based actions, generating affective attachments that expand relational identities and imagine new ways of being together.

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Storytelling and personalization

Storytelling in CFP challenges two dominant modes of polarization achieved through spatial separation and militarization. Robert David Sack (1986) proposes that territoriality works through depersonalization deferring personal agency to some impersonal 'law of the land,' as the guard did at the Te'enim Passage. Militarization also depersonalizes the Other to shore up a construction of mutual victimization and defensiveness. Both modalities sustain patriarchal and hierarchical cultures. As noted, however, the combat status of CFP members impacts their capacity to reframe the conflict and move the mainstream. Both Israeli and Palestinian societies are deeply ingrained in a culture of the leader as warrior. Both idealize the soldier/martyr through private images and public spectacles.[53] Sharing narratives as former combatants resists depersonalizing patriarchal structures through a relational, affective frame of storytelling. Instead of linking to collective national narratives that emphasize often oppositional victories and traumas (Volkan, 1999), CFP members relate moments of revelation that shifted their points of view, expanded relational identities, and moved them towards nonviolent struggle.

As in Viewpoints, these stories repersonalize and reframe the struggle, generating a foundation for alliance-based actions. Israeli narratives, like Chen Alon's, tend to focus on moments of recognizing oneself as an oppressor. Palestinian revelations typically occur in Israeli prisons through daily contact with sympathetic guards or through educational reading groups that often examine Hebrew literature on the Zionist armed struggle (Palestinians sometimes refer to Israeli prison as the University of the Occupation). The CFP website features Suliman al-Khatib's narrative. At age 14, al-Khatib stabbed an Israeli soldier in the West Bank and was sentenced to prison. While working in the prison library, he began reading the history of the Jewish people. 'In fact', he notes, 'I acquired my entire education and constructed my worldview in jail. I never went to university, but I did attend the learning groups in jail every day. This is when I started having new thoughts about the conflict and the means for resolving it.'

Al-Khatib's narrative anticipates and publicly counters an oppositional frame that positions Palestinians as less educated and more violence-prone. At the same time, both narratives work to generate new collective attachments and identities as nonviolent activists within CFP. Where the use of personal narrative employs theatrical components of embodied dramaturgy and witness, the more direct

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use of theatre with the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv subgroup offers a site to examine the effectiveness of movement and relationship-building towards direct action, particularly in the face of internal organizational crisis.

Theatrical encounters in Shoufa

It is November 2007 and I am in Shoufa to witness the first meeting of the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv theatre group. The Israeli women attending have joined the organization recently; for most of them, this meeting will serve as their first encounter with Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Unfortunately, about half of the Tulkarm CFP members are not allowed through the checkpoint to Shoufa; no official reason is given for this. Chen shrugs his shoulders towards his co-facilitator, Nour, and mouths 'security' in their common language of English. For the bulk of the workshop, a young Palestinian Israeli, Reema, will translate between Arabic and Hebrew. I witness in her body and on her face the struggle of mediating between these two languages and narratives, these two imbalanced components of her own identity. Other recognized systemic imbalances also mark the session. Nour and Chen planned the meeting together, but as the theatrical practitioner, Chen will conduct most of the exercises while Nour will help to frame discussions. Together we proceed to an empty house under construction to conduct the workshop.

Nour opens the session by speaking about the purpose of CFP: to work in partnership to stop the occupation in order to lay groundwork for two mutually secure and independent states. Chen then frames the theatrical workshop in relation to these goals, emphasizing that this is not 'reconciliation' theatre that builds emotional attachments but reduces the desire to act to transform the political situation. Rather, it is a process of democratization to work on concrete problems. He points out the absence of some Palestinians, and his presence as the main facilitator. 'We're not faking equality. We are not trying to show to ourselves or to the world that the situation is symmetrical. We are trying to use our influence to change the situation.' I recognize that within this situation, as an American, I represent a potential for such change. At Nour and Chen's urging, I talk briefly about theatre as a social technology that can move beyond spoken language, and also help to set up some of the activities. But I am here mainly as a witness, to communicate what I observe in dialogue with the group.

We warm-up together, learning names through play. We stretch each other's bodies, stretch beyond what is comfortable, learning to relate physically. During one exercise, Motassim puts my hand on his arm to

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feel the bullets lodged inside. The conflict is both viscerally embodied and physically reframed. Chen invites Palestinians and Israelis to partner as Reema translates his instructions; the group then works in silence with their bodies. They create images of oppression – the Israelis are more abstract, while the Palestinians recreate specific events related to prison experiences. Chen moves beyond the images themselves, asking the group to propose with their bodies what sustains the oppressive situations. He then invites individuals within the images to move towards their desires, and we discuss the relationship between individual and collective liberation. The session concludes with binational groups creating dynamic images of what the theatre group as a whole could do together. One small group proposes Arab language lessons for Israelis. Another moves tightly together towards the window's light. A third marches together, pushing an obstacle of chairs out of their way. These are proposals that diagnose, rehearse, and model the possibilities for alliance towards actions, some of which will be activated in the following months. As well as generating proposals, the images activate relationships. A final conversation within the group illuminates what has happened for them in their few hours together, particularly in the creation of alternative social and spatial realities.

Figure 4.4 Combatants for Peace in 'the bubble' at Shoufa
Photo: Reut Mor.

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'The difference from outside melted', observes Idan, as we sit mixed together in a circle. 'Games erase barriers', offers Yifat, noting in particular the obstacle of language. Another Israeli woman adds the importance of viscerally experiencing the borders that still exist. 'It does feel more mixed now, but there is fear to confront. Some difficulties we will have to dismantle together.' The Palestinians concretize the discussion of barriers and borders, emphasizing the way that the asymmetrical control of space and movement produces separation. 'It's difficult to get to Israel and for you to come here', reflects Motassim, 'I would really like just once to be by the sea.' As Reema translates this desire, it takes hold of her body; Motassim's emotions appear on her face and tears well in her eyes. 'I hope we will together dismantle the borders created by the occupation', Nour gently states, looking towards Reema.

We sit in silence for a moment.

Then the conversation moves from possible actions to reactions, to movements into and of the public sphere, to enlarge the audience for the work. 'We work here as one group', Nour reflects, then reminds the group of the work left to do. 'We want to show good will and talk to other Palestinians about what we create here. And we ask the Israelis for the same.' A number of participants agree that the theatre work will eventually be enhanced through performance of actions with and for a larger public. But they also articulate the importance of what has been, perhaps ephemerally, generated together. 'The feeling in this room is different from outside', reflects one Israeli woman, Karin. 'Tel Aviv is a bubble that allows the Israelis to ignore the occupation. The bubble of the workshop creates a space of coexistence, that lets us imagine a future together beyond the occupation.' As Reema translates this reflection, the Palestinians nod. Karin has expressed a resonant feeling in the group, one that Jill Dolan might term a performative utopia.

Dolan describes these performatives as moments within theatre that animate 'fleeting intimations of a better world ... one in which hope and a reanimated, more radical humanism imagine social relations as equitable' (2005b: 2). She clarifies that the utopias evoked are not specific and static visions, but partially grasped processes, 'a never finished gesture toward a potentially better future' (2005b: 5). Dolan's depiction is exemplified through theatrical events that bring together and activate spectators through the experience of common witness. The activated future vision in Shoufa seemed particularly significant in that it was both felt and embodied through acting *together* in ways that embodied the interchange of participation and witness. CFP members additionally distinguished between two 'bubbles': one that protected Israelis

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from confronting the consequences of the occupation, and one that modeled a different way of being together in a site of egalitarian regard. The affective connections produced by the second bubble pierced the first, while sustaining ways and means for more productively constructing alternative future life worlds together, thus expanding the second bubble. This feeling of coexistence grew from a mutual witnessing of traumas, and a mutual commitment to nonviolent actions that would develop the security and humanity of all those in the room and in the region. Performing those actions, however, heightened some of the growing tensions within the CFP organization.

Activating images and performing actions

In May 2008 CFP members proceeded to animate one of the images of collaborative action produced at the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv theatre workshop. A group of Palestinian and Israeli women and men walked together from Shoufa towards Tulkarm in order to remove some of the concrete barriers of occupation: IDF created roadblocks. The action was significant for a number of reasons. By acting together to remove the barriers, the CFP members challenged a spatial and relational discourse of separation within the public sphere. Placing female and male bodies together in physical alliance also animated alternative spatial relations that challenged the masculinized and patriarchal militarization of both cultures. This alternative framing also activated a different set of power relations. As Maia Hallward notes, nonviolent theory conceptualizes power more dynamically than through mechanisms of repression and resistance. Working from a Foucauldian analytic perspective, she suggests that creative activist collaborations function not only negatively (countering, resisting, or rejecting domination) but also positively, altering power structures to produce new relationships of knowledge-sharing and collaboration (2006: 21–2). But even as the Tulkarm-Tel Aviv group pursued such positive power strategies, some of their interventions produced tensions within the larger CFP organization.

Initially, the Israeli CFP members had been communicating with the IDF commander, negotiating what kind of resistance would be allowable. After successfully dismantling the first barrier 'against all odds' (Alon, 2008c), They had agreed that the CFP members would walk around the final road barrier rather than attempting to dismantle it. But the Palestinians wanted a more direct action, and more say in decision-making. They had also earlier expressed concerns about their appearance together with Israelis being read as 'collaboration'. The Israeli members of the theatre subgroup had thus agreed that the Palestinians

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would determine the limits of their public work together. The Tulkarm/Shoufa members had asserted the need to mark their presence together with the Israelis within the Palestinian public sphere. They then asked to activate again what had been rehearsed together in the theatre workshop, to remove the final road barrier. In doing so, they provoked the IDF soldiers and border guards, who rained rubber bullets onto the group. The theatre subgroup's action thus raised the ire of some members of the larger CFP organization who felt that though the actions were nonviolent, they had provoked violence. The subgroup insisted that they had simply revealed immanent systemic violence.

The dispute over tactics remains in process, and as Benford and Snow argue, such ongoing discussion is part of how movements continue to generate collective action frames. For the moment, the theatre subgroup continues to meet in stronger alliance than some other members within CFP, but also continues to remain under the larger umbrella of the organization. Due to its international reputations and contacts, CFP has enabled extended mobility and travel of its Palestinian members. This, in turn, has developed the capacity of Palestinian leaders, as Israeli CFP members have begun to refuse invitations to speak and attend workshops internationally without equivalent invitations for their Palestinian partners. The theatre group in particular has succeeded in generating not only new frames activating 'critical equal partnership', but also supplementary identities as democratic activists. 'People want to join', asserts Nour, 'because they see what we are doing. We are part of a group and not just individuals resisting something.'

Mobilizing relations, performing democracy

Civic democracy involves far more than collective national attachment to a sovereign state, more than the election of representative leaders. Democracy must be practiced, mobilizing alternative visions of what can seem like an intractable, polarized conflict scenario. Genuine peace in the Middle East region requires ongoing alliance and mobilization rather than separation and a status quo stability that sustains unequal power relations. This requires social transformations within both Israeli and Palestinian societies while reframing the conflict from a discourse of mutual victimization and oppositional identity to a struggle for mutual liberation and security. The framing of separation resists this mutual struggle. According to Palestinian scholar and activist Edward Said, 'Rising beyond the endless back-and-forth violence and dehumanization admits the universality and integrity of the other's experiences' that allows the 'planning of a common life together' (2001 [1997]: 205–9).

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This planning requires recognizing the full humanity of all those living in the region, while confronting complicity with structural and situational violence. It is a transformation energized from the grassroots. 'It is important that our activity is actually against both our administrations', asserts Chen Alon. 'The essence of theatre is action, and we are saying to the people don't wait for the leaders to make peace, don't wait for the leaders to change the situation. As citizens we are responsible to change the situation and the best way to rehearse change is in theatre' (2008b). I end with my own glimpse of what this change could look like: a non-facilitated event presaging a reality of mutual exchange and Levinasian regard that could someday happen without the presence of a facilitator or the structure of a workshop.

An alternative spatiality

It is November 2007 and I am in the passenger seat of a van carrying many people who cannot make Aliyah according to the 1950 Law of Return – Palestinian actors from Viewpoints. We are driving from the performance in El Khader towards a *hafla*, a party in Tel Aviv. I almost miss the border as a security guard waves us through. 'It's all about the soldier's mood', laughs our driver, Achmed, at my surprise. Ihsan is telling jokes about the occupation. 'You know we are happy with the settlements near Ramallah', she concludes, 'they stop the bombings and keep the electricity on!' We pull up to a building in central Tel Aviv where Chen's partner, Mory, welcomes us all through the passage to their apartment. She checks the gifts proffered from the West Bank: wine, nargila, a Bob Marley CD, home-cured olives, nana from the garden, honey-sweetened kenafee pastries. She asks in English, 'Why don't you all go into the living room?'

Chen places the food around a centerpiece on a low table: a model of the Al Aqsa mosque carefully rendered by Palestinian political prisoners out of paper mache. The Tulkarm theatre group members had presented Chen with the piece at their last meeting; it is a gift passed on to someone who fights against the occupation. Around the mosque there is kubbe and hummus, wine punch with cloved apples. There are games and music and dancing. We play a game called 'the wind blows' in which one person stands in the middle of the circle and calls forth commonalities that others might share. Anyone who shares that trait must run to a new location in the circle. We dash around maniacally when Ismael calls out 'for all those who passed through a checkpoint today.' Ihsan and Mory belly dance by the balcony where Achmed smokes

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nargila with Ya'ara. Ali, who has not yet left the PCP project, dances with me to the music he has brought. In his gold chains and Adidas sweatshirt worn neatly over jeans clasped by a Bob Marley belt-buckle, he embodies a set of contradictions: the soccer-coach and reggae lover who studies Shakespeare and critical media. He shares his dream to stay in the region making visible the discursive formations of media culture through Chomskian analysis. He shares his dream to leave as soon as possible and come to America. We stop talking and murmur bits of the song's lyrics together about remembering, mingling, good friends lost, bright futures, and pasts that can't be forgotten. We are beyond storytelling. Beyond tactics of encounter, consciousness raising, and intersubjective ethical relations. We are creating a new reality.

But at midnight, when their permits expire, the Palestinians will depart, like a bevy of Cinderellas. Until that time we dance together at this *hafla*. It is a participatory performative utopia rehearsing a subjunctive 'what if' kind of history. 'Never underestimate what a relief a good time loaded with fun, fantasy, and imaginary escape can bring', I remember James Thompson and Richard Schechner reflecting in their thoughts on social theatre (2004: 15). When that 'good time' is produced *with* 'the Other' rather than on the other side of a separation barrier, the momentary event becomes more than a blinkered escape or a naïve bubble. It produces and rehearses an alternative future reality, a relational *feeling* and experience of difference that enacts new possibilities as it sustains future actions.

Still, we are not yet beyond borders; this subjunctive reality cannot be an unquestioned dramaturgy of hope. Everything is not right. Everything might not be all right. There are many people left out of the room. Others who will leave and not return. I will depart tomorrow having witnessed a great deal without full comprehension, trying to stay alive to the ongoing process, to my responsibility that should never be 'fully exhausted' according to Levinas (Benson and O'Neil, 2007: 45). It will be fairly easy for me to pass through security at the airport. It will remain a privilege for me to decide when and how to focus on 'the conflict'. It will remain my responsibility to witness to what I see, struggling to frame the relations of hope and despair, to move beyond a discourse of intractability without falling into an illusion of mere coexistence. I contemplate all of this several months after the *hafla*, remembering Ihsan Turkiyye's words:

> It's not so easy to make a 180 degree change…I don't believe anybody who comes and says, 'Hey, I want to make peace with you!'

PROOF

> No. I think he is a cheater. We are human beings and we have to go through a process, and in this process, you will cry, you will curse yourself, you will curse everybody. You will curse that you were born in this world, that you were born in this country. But in the end of this process, you will see the change.
>
> (2004)

Of course, not every process works in every conflict situation, particularly depending on how the terms of success are defined. Simply to encounter, and even to 'humanize' a perceived enemy Other in a facilitated situation does not transform the conflict scenario, and in fact, may preserve the status quo. But each of the theatrical encounters I have discussed here situate various possibilities and limitations for transforming the conflict scenario in the developmental arc that I initially cited. This arc requires the ongoing conscious contact and potential future political organization among Seeds of Peace, the power analysis and intentional living promoted by the School for Peace, the intergroup encounters and dialogic politicized partnership of the Viewpoints actors, and (most important in my estimation) the alliance-based political mobilizations enacted by the Combatants for Peace. At their best, each process moves beyond an empathetic 'humanizing' encounter that runs the danger of sustaining oppressor/oppressed power dynamics. At their best, each process recognizes and flexibly responds to the limitations of their effectiveness when impacted by the external conflict while still struggling to transform and reframe that conflict scenario. I am grateful for all the partnerships that I have experienced and witnessed within these models, knowing that the work is still in process and will continue to be deepened in practice and theory.

In the next chapter, I continue to assess the effectiveness of theatrical facilitations by examining the situational impact of four distinct modes of praxis, most of which I have observed and reflected upon in dialogue with the facilitators I cite. I conclude this study by evaluating how each addresses the terms of theatre, facilitation, and nation formation in the Balkans and Middle East.

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