The struggle over narratives; Palestine as metaphor for imagined spatialities[1]

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This chapter starts from the premise that powerful epistemic and discursive entities have prevailed in the production of knowledge of the world divided between the Global North and the Global South (Resende 2014). In such a configuration, any discussion of the Global South, as an imagined spatiality often defined by its perceived differences from the Global North, must also address how this imagination is interlinked with narrative, as image and discourse, and, as such, ask how narrative plays a role in the emergence and persistence of particular epistemic formations that are also sustained by material and structural conditions of power and resistance. Nowhere is such a proposition more relevant to explore than in debates about the almost 70-year-old Palestine-Israel conflict which, this chapter proposes, offers us the possibility to interrogate the role of narrative in the construction (and subversion) of difference, otherness and power relations and allows us to situate localized discursive and power struggles over historic Palestine within a series of global processes and practices that have shaped the way we map and imagine the world.

Drawing on this broad proposition, this chapter interrogates how mediated dominant narratives of the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians in mainstream media and public discourses in the Global North and elsewhere have taken hold and persisted for almost 70 years. Specifically, it addresses how persistent and recurring visual and discursive narratives (in language and image) of Palestine and the Palestinians have served to support an implicit exceptionalism rooted in the claims of the Zionist movement and, thus, have constructed particular ways of seeing, or not seeing, Palestine, and certainly not from the viewpoint of its people, 'the narrated.' In situating the struggle over the right to narrate and the struggle over narrative with reference to the ongoing Palestinian-Israeli conflict at the centre of the discussion, the chapter elaborates on the assumption proposed at the outset then moves on to address some examples of Palestinian self-narration and self-representation in film, documentary, photography and in digital media. While these self-narrations do not explicitly refer to the conflict, it proposes that it is in the act of telling that self-narration becomes inscribed as a political act, underlining its potential to disrupt dominant discursive and visual fields and to generate new ways of knowing and seeing the 'narrated', or the spoken for.

By locating Palestine and its representation as central to the broader narratives and imagined geographies of the 'Global South' and by implicitly implicating media in these processes, this chapter begins with a broad contextualisation of the debates around the emergence of exceptionalist discourses around Palestine rooted in the historical dominance of the Israeli narrative before addressing some of the mediated processes and practices through which Palestine and the Palestinians have been talked about and visualized. The chapter then addresses the ways in which ordinary Palestinians on the margin are creating a broader range of narratives that challenge the status quo and that produce meaningful representations and knowledge about themselves as agents and actors in the construction of alternative spatialities and imaginaries. In conclusion, the chapter suggests that such narratives of everyday lives can question the taken-for-grantedness of powerful epistemic and discursive entities and challenge the constructed divisions between the Global North and the Global South.

Exceptionalism and Palestine

For decades and until very recently, much of the literature on Palestine/Israel has been dominated by an implicit exceptionalism rooted in the claims and narratives of the Zionist movement (Collins 2011), serving to limit our understanding of and knowledge about Palestine and the Palestinians and their protracted conflict with Israel. Recent critical inter-disciplinary scholarship (see for example, Swedenburg and Stein, 2005; Khalili 2010) has shown that this state of affairs is partly the outcome of structural inequalities and conditions imposed by the settler-colonial practices of Zionism since the creation of the Israeli state in 1948 and partly a result of the Zionist movement's narrative about itself. As some scholars have suggested, this narrative has been normalized and taken for granted in mainstream Western public and media discourses to the extent that it provides a restricted, if not biased, vision of the conflict. For example, Matar suggests that normalization is achieved through the "establishment of patterned processes of thinking aimed at exacting disciplinary power that are then normalized in public and media discourses, making them sound natural and unproblematic" (Matar, 2016:176), while Gil Z. Hochberg claims that a partitioned vision is evident in the inequalities inherent in the visual narratives, produced in film, photographs and images, of the conflict. As she notes, this vision "isn't only an outcome of different national, ethnic, and historical epistemes produced as 'the visible', but further relies on two distinct configurations or politics of the visual representation. Central to this regard is the question of the parameters placed on the legitimacy of displaying and circulating certain images in public" (Hochberg 2015: 9).

Israel's settler-colonial project, as several studies have shown, incorporates a set of political, economic and social structures and practices that form the basis of the current

relationship between Israeli Jews and the Palestinians (Makdisi 2010). Indeed, as Salamanca et al. write in their special issue on Israeli settler-colonial practices, "from the earliest Palestinian accounts to the vast majority of contemporary research, the crimes committed against Palestinian society by the Zionist movement and the state it built have been well recorded. Zionism is an ideology and a political movement that subjects Palestine and Palestinians to structural and violent forms of dispossession, land appropriation, and erasure in the pursuit of a new Jewish state and society. As for other settler colonial movements, for Zionism, the control of land is a zero-sum contest fought against the indigenous population. The drive to control the maximum amount of land is at its centre" (Salamanca et al., 2013: 1). Such practices are central to what post-colonial critic Achille Mbembe (2013) has called a state of permanent war, or the sustenance of necropower, where the technologies of destruction have become more tactile, more anatomical and sensorial and where the choice of the sovereign power is not simply the gauging and determining of what *kind* of life its subjects will live, but to take life away. For Mbembe, the most proficient contemporary execution of necropower is found in the Israeli occupation of Palestine: where vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of living dead (ibid).

Media and Zionism's exceptionalist claims

The role of media in supporting, enhancing or legitimizing political, social and cultural practices in diverse contexts other than Palestine/Israel has been amply discussed in the field of media and cultural studies. But the debate about whether this role can be ascribed to the 'concentrated symbolic power of media institutions' (Couldry, 2000: 192), to global capital, to the relationship between political entities and the media, or the ability of some entities to cement their control through the media remains open and unresolved. For Nick Couldry, media power is not a tangible reality, but a social process organized around distinctions between a manufactured 'media world' and the 'ordinary world' of ordinary people. One of the "key roles of media is precisely to make this distinction seem entirely natural through legitimising their symbolic power as key institutions through which we can make sense of the world," (Freedman, 2014: 14). To comprehensively discuss the multiple debates in this field is beyond the remit of this chapter, but what most scholars agree on is that the media are to a certain extent implicated in the ways we come to understand the world as a web of narratives in which power and knowledge, as Foucault has argued, are part of one system.

In the context of Palestine/Israel, there is no doubt that how much we see or how much we hear about the conflict through Israeli or the mainstream Western media is inextricably linked

to the ways in which particular narratives produce common assumptions which embed themselves in the media, the academy and in other places. The power of narrative, in this sense, is its ability to act as a prism through which political relations are seen, thus restricting our vision of what we can see and learn. There is no doubt that addressing how epistemic systems are constructed via narrative (discourse and image) must take into account the asymmetric power relations and complex dynamics of economics, political and cultural interactions that have shaped the histories of Palestinians and Jews. But there is also no doubt that in order to understand how these systems come to take hold of our imagination of spatialties and temporalities, we must acknowledge that what we know and what we see are the outcome of the repetition of specific narrative tropes that are sustained through particular "configurations of space and various processes of differentiations along national, ethnic, racial, religious, gender and sexual lines" (Hochberg 2015: 5).

Even a cursory consideration of the majority of news stories and images of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the mainstream Western media and public discourses over any period of time underlines how our knowledge of the conflict is limited and, therefore, how the media have been implicated in the re-production and the dissemination of narratives constituted by what Resende has called 'geographies of power' (2014) and control. Some of the images and narratives that are familiar to us as audiences include, among others, the now familiar photos and stories of sobbing Palestinian women, armed Palestinian militants, the aftermaths of suicide bombings on Israeli streets and stone-throwing Palestinian youth, often juxtaposed against images of Israeli citizens going on about their daily lives in relative normality. Given the repetitive nature of these images and the dominant narrative frames they construct and disseminate – for example, the angry, extremist, terrorist, militant and subjugated Palestinian - a restrictive narrative framework is constructed in which Israel's settler-colonial practices and occupation can only be seen through the recurrence of violence and in which the Palestinians are recognized through a narrative frame of destruction and violence. Furthermore, these restrictive narrative frames do contribute to the production of other narratives that, as Resende (2014) has argued, not only nourish the geographies from which they are derived, but also sustain the maintenance of the imaginaries within which they inscribed. It is a matter of understanding, in this sense, that we are speaking of a world as being narrated from the perspective of the episteme of power (ibid), and certainly not from the perspective of the narrated.

The right to narrate

Who has the right to narrate, whose stories and memories enter the history books and whose are dismissed as merely myth or unimportant are at the core of the Palestine-Israel conflict, its global narration and appropriation, and to how it is understood and how it is to be dealt with culturally and politically. For the Palestinians, the right to narrate was evocatively noted by Edward Said in his article "Permission to Narrate" (1994) in which he endeavoured to probe the potential power of telling, partly out of despair over the international response to the well-documented Israeli carnage of Lebanon in June 1982. In different ways, Said has consistently underlined the dynamics between narration and the power/knowledge nexus, particularly in his books *Orientalism* (1977), *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), *Covering Islam* (1981) and *The Question of Palestine* (1979), which constitute a seminal contribution to the expanding scholarship addressing the power to narrate as a crucial instrument of power colonial entities used to marginalize, or silence, the colonized.

Writing about marginalization and misrepresentation in the former colonies in the Global South, cultural critic Stuart Hall also drew attention to one of the most dangerous and violent consequence of colonial practices - the power of the colonizer to subjugate the controlled or the colonized through the production of knowledge. As he writes: "They (the colonizers) had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as the 'Other'... It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the 'Other' of a dominant discourse. It is quite another to subject them to that knowledge" (Hall, 1994: 394). Implicitly referring to how power is indirectly exercised through conditions of domination or through coercive consent, political scientist Charles Tripp, writing within a different historical moment, echoes Hall's sentiment in reference to the dominant Israeli narrative of Palestine, noting how this narrative had moulded the imagination of its subjects, particularly the Palestinians, because it was interwoven with and reinforced "the material forms of power that are part of the landscape of domination" (Tripp, 2013: 253).

Since its creation and building on the meta-narrative connecting the birth of the nation with the struggle for national and (Jewish) survival, Israel has managed to mould the imagination of its subjects, the Palestinians, through seeking to prevent them from narrating their own stories and speaking for them. Of the many practices used to silence Palestinians, either in the Occupied Territories or on the global landscape, none have been as harsh as Zionist/Israeli measures of control in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, Jerusalem, and for Palestinians within Israel, but none has been as potent as Israel's ability to propagate its version of reality in the mainstream media, particularly as historians "are forced to tell the story of the powerless (…) in the words of those who victimized them" (Khalidi, 2007:35).

In these contexts, any analysis of media's role in the production of knowledge and in the dissemination and normalization of exceptionalist narratives about Palestine/Israel cannot ignore the Zionist movement's persistent endeavours to intervene in, and to instrumentalize, culture, creating countless media genres, images and stories, productions and publications that have legitimized its story about itself and limited the potential to look beyond them or cast a different light on various events and truths. In his book "The Idea of Israel", Israeli historian Ilan Pappe argues that Israel's privileged place in the West is the result of Israeli-Zionist continuous efforts to manage and market an image of Israel as a state of what the West aspires for in the East – that of a modernizing and modern state championing Western-centric discourses of progress and civilization (Pappe 2014). As he writes, the narratives adopted by Zionist leaders and activists in the past and Israeli Jewish intellectuals and academics in the present, have presented Israel as the inevitable, successful implementation of the European history of ideas so that the "idea must be packaged as a narrative, a story that begins with the birth of the state and its raison d'être. The nation is born as an ideal that becomes a reality that must be maintained and protected" (Pappe, 2014: 45).

The reasons why these narratives took hold for over almost a century in the Global North and elsewhere are many, but there is no doubt that the control of the production of knowledge about the conflict took place within particular territorial boundaries or particular bounded spatialities and in extra-territorial geographies and global contexts. As Said has argued, Israel's narrative about itself underlines "Zionism's sense of "the world as supporter and audience" that made the Zionist struggle for Palestine, one which was launched, supplied and fuelled in the great capitals of the West," so successful (Said, 1978: 4) and the West's compliance and collusion. In a globalized world, this has meant that the imagination of Palestine and the Palestinians has as much to do with the relationship between structures and power as with the degree of visibility and access ascribed to the two parties in the conflict, the narrator and the narrated. But more importantly, what this also means is that ongoing violence that Israel carries out against Palestinians outside of highly mediated and visible bouts of violence, reported by the media, tends to remain invisible. As a result "everyday life under the Israeli Occupation fails to *appear* violent unless it is presented as a sudden (and often uncontextualized) eruption of what is quickly reframed and labeled exceptional and scandalous" (Hochberg, 2015:14).

The role of the Western mainstream media in making visible and legitimizing Israel's exceptional narrative about itself and the Palestinians has been discussed extensively in diverse studies on media representations and dominant frames (see Philo and Berry's *Bad News from Israel* (2004) and *More Bad News from Israel (2011)* and Friel and Falk's research (2007) on the US

media's reporting of the conflict). Other scholarship has discussed dominant frames that depict Israel as the "righteous victim" of Palestinian violent actions and Israelis as victims suffering from long-term persecution, including by Palestinians (Pilecki and Hammock, 2014), ignoring socio-political contexts or tightening control as a result of increased militarization, securitization and sovereign power. What the majority of this literature shows is that the media are a set of institutions that have been implicated in the transmission of ideas from the past often and their adoption as commonsensical, taken-for-granted hegemonic knowledge about the world. As Gramsci, has argued, hegemony is never absolute and fixed (1971), or as Williams has suggested: "We have to emphasize that hegemony is not singular; indeed that is own material structures are highly complex, and have continually to be renewed, recreated and defended, and by the same token that they can be continually challenged and in certain respects modified" (Williams, 2005: 38). As such, it is relevant to pay attention to discursive and visual narratives that trouble hegemony and subvert normalization practices. It is with this in mind that I turn to discussing some examples of emerging Palestinian self-narrations in diverse media and cultural spaces and what these mean.

Narrating the Everyday

If visibility and narration are at the heart of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, as argued above, then the diverse contemporary narration and memorialization of the Palestinian *Nakba* (catastrophe of 1948) and other important events in the conflict, represent a discursive and visual strategy through which to counter the Zionist narrative of 1948 and to combat perpetrator-induced amnesia vis-à-vis Palestinian claims for justice and recognition (see for example, Abu-Lughod and Sa'di, 2007; Matar, 2010; Matar and Harb, 2013). Critical interdisciplinary scholarship has also begun to address Palestinian cultural production and digital media (Khalili, 2007, Hanafi, 2005; Aouragh, 2011, Tawil-Souri 2014), underlining the subversive potential of film, literature, comedy, music and satire and other cultural forms to disturb, disrupt and mobilize.

Hand in hand with this important shift in scholarship has been an exponential rise in self-narration by diverse actors, from film-makers, to artists, from activists to ordinary Palestinians in the margins or on the fringes of the mainstream. For example, in his films, *Chronicle of a Disappearance* (1996), *Divine Intervention* (2002) and *All that Remains* (2009), Palestinian director Elie Suleiman has consistently sought to tell the story of ordinary and forgotten Palestinians living within the Jewish state of Israel and in annexed Jerusalem. Other films, such as *Intimacy* (2007) and *Checkpoint* (2007), also tell stories about the daily lives of Palestinians under occupation, thus making clear that occupation is not a normal condition of life. While these new forms and genres

will not liberate an occupied land, they can "lay the groundwork for different ways of looking at power preparing through narrative and the imagination the resistance that may in the future materialize to shake a complacent order" (Tripp, 2013: 315) especially when combined with other developments, such as the growing global solidarity movement in support of Palestinian rights.

What is more relevant for the purpose of this chapter are the many creative ways in which ordinary Palestinians (the narrated) are telling their stories, or part-stories, in art, film, graffiti, news and music in digital media platforms, underlining the centrality of narrative to the power/knowledge nexus and, also, the ways in which these platforms, in their accessibility and reach, can function as spaces for what Zayani has called "digital cultures of contention" (2015: 12) that intervene politically. In what follows I focus on some narrations of the everyday, which as Michel de Certeau has suggested in the *Practice of Everyday Life*, is concerned with the way subjects negotiate their position of power, and therefore knowledge, within a particular episteme and system of power. Reiterating Foucault's conceptualization of disciplinary technologies in the production of knowledge, de Certeau focuses more on 'the network of an anti-discipline" that technologies of power (including media) create to help address how marginality is renegotiated and how subjects who are dominated re-appropriate spaces, discourses and practices using what he calls the "art of the weak" (de Certeau, 1984, xiv). In this regard, the social practice of narrating, irrespective of the genre within which the narration is produced or the shape or the form the story takes, becomes an act of political agency that is inscribed in the narrating act. What is of interest in such articulations is that they draw attention to the potential of narrative to disrupt dominant discursive and visual fields and to generate new ways of knowing and seeing the 'narrated', or spoken for.

The examples I use here range from documentary and satirical graphic novel turned animation production to a variety of online output. The examples I use are: *Flying Paper* (2013), a documentary film that tells the story of a group of children in Gaza who proceed to break the Guinness record in the number of kites flown simultaneously in the same place; *The Wanted 18* (2014), an innovative and satirical graphic novel authored by Amer Shomali and turned into a part-animation part-documentary which uses the personal stories of 18 cows bought by Palestinians to produce milk during the first Palestinian intifada (uprising) in the West Bank town of Beit Sahour to bypass Israeli control; *Open Bethlehem*, a non-governmental organization that launched a campaign to free Bethlehem from the encirclement by the Separation Wall which initially started as a film directed by Leila Sansour; *Dear World*, a Facebook campaign launched in 2012 to showcase stories written in a letter format and addressing the question of what it means

to live one's life as a Palestinian and *Love Under Apartheid*, an online campaign launched in 2012 to order to make visible personal stories of Palestinians unable to exercise the right to love because of structural conditions and constraints of Israeli Occupation.

I begin with the Facebook page "*Dear World*" launched in 2012 explicitly to publicize and disseminate stories of Palestinian everyday lives in order, as it states, "for people to understand us [Palestinians] and relate to us through our stories." The stories are written in the form of an open letter in which diverse Palestinians in different locations tell stories, or part stories, of daily experiences marked by separation, displacement and a quest for belonging. The everyday comes across as an existential condition of spatiality and temporality, which comes across clearly in the post by Bassam Jamil, a young Palestinian from the Yarmouk refugee camp in Damascus, who tells the story of his continuous displacement following the outbreak of the Syrian civil war in 2011. He writes,

> My name is Bassam Jamil, I am a Palestinian young man from the village of Hittin in Tiberias but was born in Damascus in 1984. I first learnt that I, along with my family, and our next door neighbours, were refugees after the expulsion of our grandparents from our homeland Palestine…My peers and I belong to the third generation of refugees. I lived many events in my life which I consider unfamiliar or let's say does not meet the standards of the free world especially during my childhood and adolescence. We had to leave to any place away from the death and nights of anxiety and horror. I left Damascus to Lebanon four years ago, and the reality there was not much different from that of Damascus, as in Lebanon we live half a life with no dreams or sense of safely for a better tomorrow. I am not sure if it was the sense of belonging to a homeland that they try every day to prove to us that it's nothing more than a borrowed homeland…"[2]

Most posts, including Bassam's, begin with a partially set phrase "Dear World, my name is […], I am a Palestinian […]" underlining the quest for belonging in contexts defined by continuous conflict and forced displacement. Similar posts and videos circulated by the online *Love Under Apartheid* page tell of the segregation of couples and families imposed because of the imposition of the Israeli citizenship law. The stories, in videos and text, speak of people unable to be together and unable to exercise the basic universal human right - the right to love. Other narrative tropes, including control of Palestinian everyday space and time, come across in the *Open Bethlehem* campaign which tells stories of people living in the shadow of the Separation Wall Israel build to 'deter terrorist acts'.

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[2] Bassam Jameel, posted 4 June 2016 on https://www.facebook.com/frompalestinedearworld/.

Interestingly, the popular narrative trope of 'victimization' used in the Palestinian national story and which has tended to normalize images of suffering and destruction is not at all evident in any of the stories. Indeed, none of these self-narrations in the various case studies position the Palestinians as the ultimate sufferers in the ongoing conflict with Israel because, as the *Dear World* Facebook page makes clear, the goal is not to look for pity but "for people to understand us [Palestinians] and relate to us through our stories." As such, while some themes emerging from these self-narrations could be theorized as resistance, assertion, empowerment and defiance against a background of desperation, erasure, loss, violence, and crises, what comes across in most of these self-narrations is their attempt to summon audiences as involved co-witnesses of everyday social and political environments. In this sense, involvement, as Paul Anderson (2013: 478) argues, demands,

> not a spectator, but a witness; others who will *identify* [my emphasis] with the speaker…Witness is a kind of sociability where the audience lend their affect in order to realise the speaker's voice [….] The laments can only be performed effectively if the audience share the quality of empathy; in that case, they do not simply hear the speaker's narrative; they *witness* the speaker's radical and painful identification with their environment. What is then generated by this act is not simply critical or oppositional consciousness, or even a shared sense of victimhood, but a compelling sense of involvement: witnessed, echoed and re-enacted.

The overarching theme that comes across all the examples are 'everyday practices', such as, for instance, flying kites in Gaza trying against the backdrop of rubble and destruction; coping with everyday life as in *The Wanted 18* and with separation of families and couples as told in the many stories ofn the *Love Under Apartheid* campaign, all of which serve to contest the exceptionalist discourses about the Palestinians. In *The Wanted 18,* the 'cow' metaphor is used as a narrative mode and symbol through which everyday Palestinian lives become visible; the *Flying Paper* tells a poignant narrative of Palestinian lives through a seemingly ordinary, yet deeply personalized and moving story of Gaza's children who irrespective of the siege manage to enjoy their childhood and break the Guinness record in the number of kites flown simultaneously in the same place and time. The fact that this childhood is not an ordinary one is then obvious only from a few yet no less influential statements throughout the film such as, "If you fly kites about two kilometres that way, you get killed." - "We are not safe here. The Israeli checkpoints are only 700 metres away from us." Or "During the days of war we used to see tanks over there where we were flying kites yesterday." What remains important though is the fact that the latest Palestinian production offers promising efforts to counter the Israeli discursive practices and reinstate the Palestinian voice as an alternative to the current regime of representation that has long attempted to silence the Palestinian other.

Importantly, these narrative modes, this chapter argues, can subvert dominant frames of what Hallward (2009) has called 'commonplaces' – the frequently cited words, phrases or events used to allude to Palestinians. The subversion of 'commonplaces' is also evident in the opening scene of *The Wanted 18* when one of the cows is heard stating: "They are Palestinians. They do not work, they prefer to riot" – phrases often been used by Israel and its media to refer to the subjects it controls. This is also apparent in a particularly funny section when the cows are referred to as "security threats" (a term Israel uses to refer to Palestinians it wants to target) that must be contained. In the first scene, the concept of security threat remains within its political context as an army officer talks about the intifada in a live interview; however, in the second scene of the film, the concept is completely detached from its usual usage and placed into the everyday life of farming and cow milking which suddenly strips it off its political acuteness and exposes its exaggerated nature vis-à-vis the Palestinian case. Furthermore, these examples underline the potential of narrative to challenge and disrupt prevalent regimes of representation even under conditions.

Importantly, in alluding to, while not clearly mentioning, Israeli settler-colonial practices, these narratives reflect a longing for normalcy, which as Salim Tamari notes, is simply a desire for solace in the midst of a prolonged conflict (Tamari 2013) or a constant search for an opening to live a natural ordinary life that is not interrupted or disrupted, as it has been since 1948, by persistent violence, dispossession, and death. Ultimately, these narratives humanize the Palestinian 'Other' through stories of the everyday that are often touching personal snapshots of Palestinian children's lives, such as in *Flying Paper*, or community life, such as in *The Wanted 18, and* which enable the audience to relate to the Palestinians' lived experiences. They narratives underline how subjects negotiate knowledge and marginality through what de Certeau has called "art of the weak" (1984, xiv). *The Wanted 18* negotiates marginality through using the 'cow' as a metaphor for how ordinary Palestinians negotiate structural power, but also produces knowledge about ordinary lives in conflict. The *Flying Paper* underlines how the 'art of the weak' is used as a strategy through which ordinary, yet deeply personalized and moving narratives of a group of children in Gaza negotiate their restricted spaces, enjoy their childhood and manage to break the Guinness record in the number of kites flown simultaneously in the same place and time. It would be wrong to assume that the broader circulation of such marginal voices and narratives have transformed relations of power, but as Tripp has suggested in his study of resistance and power in the Middle East, a "….steady erosion that can take place as established authorities find themselves outflanked, superseded, mocked and derided" (Tripp, 2012: 261).

Conclusion

This chapter began with the premise that any discussion of the Global South, as an imagined spatiality often defined by its perceived differences from the Global North, must also address how this imagined spatiality is interlinked with narrative, as image and discourse, and, as such, ask how narrative plays a role in the emergence and persistence of particular epistemic formations that are also sustained by material and structural conditions of power and resistance. It then used the Palestinian-Israeli conflict to address this premise and to consider the ways in which narrative, as Homi Bhabha (1994) has suggested, not only raises important issues on otherness, power relations and contradictions/paradoxes, but also re-inscribes the political in the narrative act.

In supporting the proposition set out at the beginning, the chapter addressed how the Zionist movement's narrative of itself has prevailed in the production of knowledge of Palestine and the Palestinians and how the media, as the space in which struggles over narrative are played out within and across borders, have played a role in normalizing this powerful episteme and, thus, in helping maintain the geographies and imaginaries within this episteme has been inscribed. This chapter advanced the argument that in order to understand how these systems took root and became normalized, we cannot simply analyze the conflict in terms of forcible seizure of land, competing national narratives, the removal of people or structural practices of settler-colonialism, but must recognize "that the conditions through which the geographical arrangement of space and the classification of distinct identities in this conflict are themselves created and solidified through particular visual and discursive practices and distribution of visibility that tend to remain invisible (Hochberg, 2015: 7). This argument is reflected in the ways in which Zionism sought to construct an exceptionalist narrative about Palestine and the Palestinians along with its narrative about itself, which was reinforced and reproduced through the media, through acts and publications. The power of such a narrative is that it "can act as the prism through which political relations are seen…Although by no means universal, a dominant consensus emerges, shaped by the institutions of knowledge, buttressed by prevailing political ideologies" (Tripp, 2012: 253). As the chapter has shown, however, ordinary Palestinians have been engaged in alternative modes of narrating and telling stories about everyday lives, producing alternative ways of knowing and seeing that will ultimately help in de-colonising the imagination and subverting powerful epistemic entities.

The argument made above is not intended to provide an overarching view of the conflict, but to highlight the role of the various powerful forces that have been involved in the creation and sustenance of exceptionalist arguments based on the Zionist narrative about itself and to

draw attention to the possibility of subverting these systems through narrative practices. As such, in the case of Palestine/Israel, as in the case of other conflicts involving occupation and ongoing violence, questions concerning the political function of narrative must be considered along with other structural conditions. The role and power of media cannot be ignored, but likewise neither can issues related to inequalities and structural relations of power. In fact, in order to challenge these inequalities, there is a need to focus more closely on how power is reproduced and maintained through narrative as well as in the operations of the state.

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Websites and filmography

OPEN BETHLEHEM campaign page:

- http://www.openbethlehem.org/our-vision--mission.html

DEAR PALESTINE

- Facebook page: https://www.facebook.com/frompalestinedearworld/

LOVE UNDER APARTHEID Available from:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ACfs8b7qv50