Voicing the silence: the naturalisation of violence under the rule occupation

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ABSTRACT

This article addresses the relevance of Israeli soldier narrations in which they bear witness to human agency under conflict and adversity to call for the end of the occupation of the Palestinian territories. The soldiers, members of the NGO Breaking the Silence, speak up about the occupation, showing the conflicting experiences of military and civilian life in a society that normalises the denial of military human rights violations. By asking Israeli society to listen to their stories, the soldiers' accounts show how the historic military power in the Occupied Palestine Territories (OPT) has evolved into a naturalisation of violence that generates a radical configuration of intractability, which has transformed the perception and meaning of violence. By framing the soldiers' accounts in the space fragmentation and securitisation practices, the article argues how the asymmetrical use of force is exerted to manage and control the lives of the Palestinian population. The speech act addresses the ethics of doing something to make a difference in the conflict and the wish to renew social bonds, redefine pride and shame and return a sense of honour, loyalty and self-respect.

KEYWORDS

Testimony; violence naturalisation; everyday life; performativity; asymmetric use of force

Introduction

> It's very important to shed light on the terrible banality of the occupation and what it does to us as a society, as human beings.
>
> (Major Engineering Corps, 2008, BtS, 2018, p. 21)

Social studies of intractable conflicts focus on how these enduring situations cast doubt on the likelihood of peaceful solutions because of the appeal to national unity, patriotism and self-sacrifice. In this regard, scholars of different disciplines consider the Israel-Palestine conflict a paradigmatic case of lasting hostility evolved under an occupying regime (Gordon, 2008; Halper, 2015; Hanafi, 2009; Mbembé, 2003; Tawil-Souri, 2011; Weizman, 2007). The area has become a social laboratory of protracted conflict perceived as irresolvable, demanding extensive investment (military, technological, economic and psychological), that is zero-sum in nature (neither side will consider compromise and/or concessions) and crucial for the social actors to be perpetually involved (Reykowsky, 2015, p. 9). In Daniel Bar-Tal's works, this is interpreted as a psy- psychosociological infrastructure that consists of shared beliefs, ethos of conflict and collective memory (1998a, 1998b, 2013). The ethos of conflict paved the way for the perception of the occupation as a normal condition by applying the colonisation principle to manage the everyday lives of the subjugated population. By the mid-1990s, the principle was expanded to include the exploitation of the territory's primary resources, land and water (Gordon, 2008). The effects of space fragmentation and surveillance

structures (human and technological) have ruled Palestinians' mobility, generating ontological insecurities in their daily routines (Tawil-Souri, 2019a). This article questions whether the military occupation has evolved into a naturalisation of violence generating new configurations of intractability. It is the ethos of the intractability encompassing the psychosocial fabric with the outcome of a lasting colonisation and failed separation process. The soldiers' narratives collected by the NGO Breaking the Silence (BtS) contribute to discerning the occupation and the daily routines based on violence. Why do Israeli veterans break the silence under such circumstances? Why don't they attest a sorrow or express regret to Palestinians? Why is their testimony reported only to Israeli society? As I will argue in the following pages, veterans' accounts fail to provide apologetic speech towards the Palestinians. I consider these testimonies performative in portraying the reality of occupation, by shedding light on the process of violence naturalisation and thereby questioning discordant voices in the dis- course of militarism, national security and intractability patterns. Narratives such as these by BtS soldiers go through a disruptive process; the speech act opens the locked door of institutional and cultural denial (Cohen, 2001; Grassiani, 2013; Helman, 2015) and interrogates society about the moral price paid for engaging in the occupation regime. To break the silence about the army's behaviour in a society with a hegemonic military culture is extremely disruptive. That is why I will explore the two dimensions of the speech act: the individual pattern and the collective action. The stories of violence uncovered by soldiers' narratives voice the 'grammar of human suffering' (Giraux, 2014, p. 13), the fear and humiliation that tempers Palestinians' capacities to cope with life under an occupation that impacts their agency and resistance (Griffths, 2017).

In what follows, I will analyse the framing theoretical approach and the methodology adopted to analyse the repository memories of BtS. The interviews collected in the field- work and the ethnographic observations of the educational tour organised by BtS in the city of Hebron and the South Hills of Hebron scrutinise the listening, the visuality, and the walking in the space of naturalised violence. To understand the process of BtS, it is crucial to first examine territoriality and securisation practices. The space transform- ation and the intricacies engendered in everyday life are relevant in catching the role of the army as a ruling power and occupying force. For the sake of clarity, I will analyse the meanings of soldiers' accounts through the lens of four theoretical paths that con- tribute to showing how oral history, biographical trajectories, the social theory of emotions and performativity contribute to answering questions about the meaning and effects of speaking out. To shed light on the terrible banality of the occupation and ground the soldiers' narratives in the place that, more than any other, contributed to breaking their silence, in the last paragraph I analyse the theatre of naturalised violence in the city of Hebron.

Theoretical framework and methods

Sociologists and anthropologists have thoroughly investigated the role of the military and the social bond between society and the army in Israel (Ben Eliezer, 1998; Ben-Ari, 1988; Cohen, 2008; Kimmerling, 1988). As Ben Eliezer emphasised, militarism is Israel's hallmark. In his view militarism is a cultural phenomenon, impacting the decision-making process in which organised violence, or war, becomes the usual response/solution to political problems (1998, p. 8). Across the years, military practices have become part of the social and national ethos, attesting to the legitimacy of military solutions to national problems. Militarism is not interpreted as love for war but rather as concrete 'practices and interactions that render military solutions legitimate, self-evident, necessary and desirable, so that it becomes integral to the formulation of national policy' (Ben Eliezer, 1998, p. 223). The military ethos is deeply incorporated in the social fabric and the hegemonic discourse of national security, which fosters a military mindset extended to the whole society. The Israeli scholarly tradition on military studies cannot be outlined in the body of this one article. Even so, it is worth mentioning that Cohen framed this area of research in three waves: late '60s focus on national security decision-making, early '80s Israeli Defence Force (IDF) decision for war and

peace and the 2000s, which introduced advance methodological breakthroughs and opened up a new research agenda (2008, p. 7–12). The studies on BtS are inscribed in this new wave.

Research on BtS testimony has achieved worthy results. The anthropological approach in Grassiani's work (2013) focuses on the morality of the soldiering experience by examining the moral orientation of microethics and their impact on the emotional, physical and cognitive levels of operational dynamics. Katriel has investigated veterans' narrations in terms of memory-based moral activism by renegotiating public memory, acting as an agent of memory and activism (Katriel, 2011). This dual dimension of soldiers' defiant speech is studied later through a cultural-rhetorical lens to examine the transformative potential of radical political utterances (Katriel & Shavit, 2013). Rebuttals are also considered a discursive practice of self-legitimation in response to accusations levelled at the military power (Katriel, 2018). An anti-denial social movement frame was employed, shedding light on the creative reinvention of pragmatic agency through the disembedding and reembedding repertoires of contention (Helman, 2015). From the gender perspective, female soldier testimonies, which come notably later than men's, are analysed as an initiation of gendered citizenship (Lomsky & Sasson-Levy, 2018, p. 3). These relevant contributions set up the initial point of reflection to explore BtS transgressive speech and to appraise their contribution to address a broader conceptualisation of intractability and substantiate the process of violence naturalisation.

Concepts of defence, love for the homeland, national loyalty, patriotism and self-sacrifice are not simply military rhetoric in Israel militarism has recast them in values embedded in the society. This configuration of militarism contributes to the psychosociological structure of conflict intractability, perpetuating the hegemonic discourse of security. In this regard, this article analyses the accounts collected by BtS from soldiers who operated in the West Bank and Gaza. These soldiers' testimonies are performative in challenging the Israeli master narrative. They offer chronicles that portray the reality of occupation based on personal experience and, according to their political statement, they've chosen to take responsibility by speaking publicly in favour of building a different future. Criticism arose in the political arena when radical Israeli groups of the peace camp, along with Palestinians, remarked that the elusive critiques on the colonial nature of Zionism, the failure to support the boycott divestment and sanctions movement (BDS), and for not demanding proceeding to IDF officials for the violations of the human rights.

Thompson's work on the formation of the working class in nineteenth-century England (1968) drew attention to the social history of everyday life and, later on, to the relevance of oral history as a source of knowledge (1990). Contributions to the emerging awareness of subjectivity in history point out the conscious and unconscious levels of meaning in personal experience, both lived and remembered, and particularly the impact of culture and ideology on an individual's memory, which could affect the silences, diveergences, conflicts and apologies of personal narratives (Passerini, 1987). This perspective intersects with Becker's anthropological views regarding the trajectory of personal accounts in disrupted lives, referring to people who undergo experiences that dramatically change their biographies. Disruption is a key concept in understanding narratives; it underscores the difference between 'the known' and 'the unknown' and responds to a need to create biographical continuity (Becker, 1997, p. 3). The stories of disruption are tales of difference, attesting to the pain and conflicting emotions from crossing the red line of testimony. The decision to speak responds to a personal need that generates meaning in one's comprehension of human experience 'as well as the ways in which they understand who they are and what they do' (Becker, 1997, p. 191). The direction traced by Becker's work highlights the moral concern of disruption: 'the narratives reflect people's interpretations of these moral ideologies and their efforts to live up to them' (1997, p. 17).

Breaking social norms or patriotic values involves considering the imagined judgements of others that 'move[s] us to pride and shame' (Cooley, 1922, p. 184). Scheff con- siders shame to be the 'premiere social

emotion' because it is dependent upon society's evaluation of embarrassment, humiliation, rejection, failure and inadequacy (2003, p. 39). Such entangled feelings encompass 'a threat to the social bond' (Scheff, 2000, p. 97) and are relevant to the effects of breaking social rules, unravelling the need to recognise social transgressions and restore social bonds. The social dimensions of shame—particularly how some experiences uncover emotions, such as the senses of hon- our, pride and self-respect—are crucial in emotion management. Specifically, the distinction between shame and guilt is crucial; 'guilt is usually extremely specific and therefore close to the surface; it involves specific acts done or not done. Guilt is about what one did, shame is about the self, what one is' (Scheff, 2000, p. 92).

As I will argue in the following pages, what is relevant in the case of BtS testimonies is the dialogic relationship between shame and pride in the attempt to establish a new social bond for a society based on a military mindset. Shame carries the fear of testimony— related to the hegemonic discourse of security's national ethos—and the consequential embarrassment of being distinguished as a traitor, while pride carries the responsibility of one's moral duty to speak up on behalf of building a new future. The management of these tangled emotions goes further than individual patterns and enters into the subjectivity of history through performativity. Butler agrees with the social science viewpoint that performativity generates ontological effects. In fact, the 'speech act brings about certain realities' and directs attention to culturally constructed categories (2010, p. 147). She develops a linguistic definition of performativity, further pushing the interactionist approach towards the social construction of identities.

Interesting considerations for our discussion come from Butler's comments on Murayama's (1963) work in post-war Japan on the topic of taking responsibility for building a future. The speech act that breaks existing norms—in the Japanese case by publicly criticising members of the former regime as war criminals—'establishes the subject in a new form through the performative agency, which involves an ethic of doing' (2010, p. 155). Performativity can contain an element of subversion by casting light on subjects that have been intentionally obscured by the public sphere or patriotic values. More specifically, I find a valuable insight into the 'ethics of doing' in Erving Goffman's (1971) interpretation of public relations. Referring to Goffman's work, Kampf suggests that the speech act can be a ritual of apology, a kind of reconciliatory gesture or a form of remediation and responsibility used by the offender to restore credibility (Kampf, 2012, p. 3). As I will argue in the following pages, BtS testimonies are more articulate accounts. The soldiers' discursive strategies are used as self-explanation and justification. For that reason, they can be defined as perpetrators (Grassiani, 2013, pos.2261). The utterances justifying misbehaviours following the army chain of command orders mini- mise the moral agency in a mixture of distancing and implicatory denial (Cohen, 2001, quoted by Grassiani, 2013, pos. 2331). Nevertheless, it is important to remember that from the individual perspective, remedial activity responds to a change in the meaning by transforming an offensive action into an acceptable one (Goffman, 1971, p. 109), which helps ease the feelings of shame.

Primary and secondary sources of information are used in this paper.[1] The primary sources include participant observations of educational tours organised by BtS in Hebron and the South Hills of Hebron, undertaken between 2012 and 2017. Before and between the BtS tours, I conducted exploratory research in Hebron, doing ethnographic observation in the old city and conducting interviews and informal talks with Palestinians. Regarding the BtS tour, the ethnography was very much about observing the two interweaving narratives displayed on the tour (i.e. testimony and education) through which the fabric of the verbal and visual elements created a memorable narrative to advocate for the end of occupation. From the mid-1990s, anti-occupation groups have been offering political land tours in order to highlight the intricacies of Israel's land grab.[2] Conversely, international tours of the West Bank contribute to the depiction of the occupation as normal (Yang, 2019). Early practices of walking were adopted by participatory methods in the global south, such as exploratory transect walks to increase the awareness and empowerment of economic and social change (Chambers, 1995). Walking or place-based interviews are

increasingly accepted in social science, notably in geography where this method had a seminal impact. Anthropology studies (Ingold & Lee Vergunst, 2008) exhort one to explore diverse walking practices as a technique of ethnographic research as relevant as talking. Bates and Rhys-Taylor (2017) remind us that the early works in this tradition refers to de Certeau's (1984) idea that walking is a practice of power and resistance. It is in this direction that the peace camp groups have adopted the practice. The tours, perhaps unintentionally, disclose additional information. Multi- sensory experience, elements of a tactile, environmental order, sounds, silences, colours, smells and emotions are instrumental to capturing the embodied relationships between individuals and the materiality of ground (Mason, 2020). The discovery of spatial mobility and barriers document the embodiment experience of the archetypal Palestinian 'colonisation of mind' that symbolises the limited agency quenched by the occupation (Abujidi, 2014). More than any testimony, the educational tour casts a light on Palestinian agency. The act of listening, seeing and walking effectively demonstrate how acting autonomously and making free choices are, for Palestinians, determined by the occupation ethos in terms of reordering social relations, downgrading living standards, severing personal ties and trust, growing hostility and hate (Griffths, 2017).

My position as foreign researcher with fieldwork background on political violence and military narration on security gives me an accountable understanding of the general environment. My previous scrutiny in Hebron was firmly discouraged by Israelis activists of the peace camp movement, for whom I had previously done fieldwork. 'What are you going to do alone in Hebron?' he chided me. 'Don't you know that it's a very dangerous place?' I deduced then that Hebron hit a raw nerve. It wasn't simply fear of the hostile environment, or worry for my security, it was the litmus test of this dead-end situation. This boosted my research inquisitiveness, to look more closely at the hidden conundrums. Understand that what was said—the utterances of BtS—was not less relevant of the place (where) than how it was said.

My positionality produced advantages and disadvantages. Being an outsider not involved in the colonial relationship, I was perceived as more objective, but also naive and unknowledgeable. My sometimes uncertain Arabic and elementary Hebrew, remind both Israelis and Palestinians, that I was a foreigner. From the BtS side, my positionality was not problematic; my participation was welcome, being the NGO practicing a policy of international campaigns to extend information. My fieldwork patterns move in the direction traced by Vidich and Lyman (2000):

> qualitative ethnographic social research [...] requires one to virtually abandon all established and preconceived values, theories, perspectives [...] to understand the mechanisms of social processes, and to comprehend and explain why both actors and processes are as they are ... (p. 56)

Nevertheless, Hebron's instability was my Damoclean sword, as tension from time to time surfaced. A Palestinian correspondent for the international press guided me on my first journey to Hebron. I openly and honestly made clear to my informants that I was a scholar doing research contributing to the understanding of the occupation and that my attitude in the fieldwork was to listen and learn. However, the multiple subjec- tivities, gender, class and Western culture emerged from time to time. No matter how deep my knowledge of the occupation, I was largely perceived as an outsider.

Occupation and the asymmetric use of force

International and ethnic conflicts over the past 20 years have increasingly involved civilian costs in terms of human loss and territorial destruction. The relevant literature, of the well-known Mary Kaldor definition of new wars (2012), calls attention to the need for scrutiny of the asymmetrical use of force and the rise of conflicts based on non-conventional warfare between state and non-state actors. In this discussion, I refer not only to the disproportionate possession of sophisticated weapons, but also to a more dispersed battleground of low-intensity military engagement in proximity to civilians and the

growing vulnerability of unarmed citizens (Walby, 2012). IDF veterans' reflexivity about asymmetric power in everyday life is at the core of the testimonies collected by BtS:

> It's problematic that I, as a 19–20 year old kid, control the lives of so many people, and that I have disproportional authority. And honestly, I'll tell you the truth, I also have no idea what to do with it. I would check people without knowing why I'm doing it. This is the whole situation where people are, every day, under this military rule, and their day-to-day lives are determined by it. That's what's problematic. That's it, at large. That's what bothers me in the conflict, that's what bothers me in the territories. (First Sergeant 188 Armored Corps, 2017; Breaking the Silence, 2018, p. 7)

Soldier responsibilities and general inexperience in carrying out their duties, due to their very young age, breed feelings of dominance and power followed by harsh reactions, only to impose a discipline and reminder of who is in power (Grassiani, 2013, pos. 1455). Research and humanitarian accounts have documented how the Palestinians, living in the OPT, have experienced the asymmetrical use of force by the Israeli military.[3] Pales- Palestinian life, property and political rights are infringed upon by the frequent actions of the Israeli military forces (Weizman, 2007, p. 4). Human rights organisations and Israeli NGOs have documented the disproportionate use of force that has neglected to follow the rules of international law. The B'Tselem reports contain documented information about the unfair, and inhumane behaviour of the IDF in dispersing non-violent demonstrations and protecting settlers' unlawful seizures of Palestinian land. In so doing, the IDF has implemented what B'Tselem calls a 'routine founded on violence',[4] as documented in a citizen journalism project.[5] After 50 years of occupation, these overriding mili- tary actions have become a normal condition. This paragraph analyses how the occupation entangles three main issues: territory, human rights and the exercise of bio- political power to compartmentalise the everyday life of the Palestinian population.

Zureik's early work on internal colonisation (1979) points out the intersection of violence, territory and population. Retrospectively, the outcomes of 50 years of occupation are closely linked to these three intertwined spheres. The former Israeli Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, epitomised the translation of the military mind to territorial civilian control (1951). The strategic convergence of power and military knowledge rationalises the land occupation, as they apply the military matrix to settlement architecture in line with their defence doctrine (Weizman, 2007, p. 65). This strategic application of military-minded architecture across the Israeli frontier has led to the confinement of everyday life, entrap- ping Palestinians in an endless process of land seizure. The territorial strategy of land- grabbing has generated an 'archipelago' (Weizman, 2007, p. 17) encircling the sub- urban Palestinian villages and farmland. Geographers have underlined that the aim of this strategy is to split and paralyse the West Bank and show the force of the occupying power[6] (Leuenberger & Schnell, 2010; Portugali, 1993; Yiftachel, 1999).

Geographical discontinuity is crucial to understanding the effects of territoriality on the population and the implications on everyday life. The fragmentation of space results in family separations, inaccessible farming and the uprooting of trees and crops. The activities of the ruling military have turned the living space into a militarised landscape, wherein Israel acts as a sovereign power (Zureik, 2016, p. 57). The multi-layered system of restrictions imposed by colonisation over a half-century of militarised occupation has shaped a unique architecture that has completely altered the physical and social landscape of the OPT. Extending territorial control means expanding control of the population, through practices that restrict residents' mobility and access to water and land. Palestine is considered the best example of late-modern colonial occupation, which differs in its combinations of discipline, biopower and necropolitics, and is inter- preted as a form of 'subjugation of life to the power of death' (Mbembé, 2003, p. 27).

The civil–military matrix is associated with semantic replacements like attributing Hebrew names to Arab villages or adopting biblical names. Also writing and composing songs about places and finding archaeology and historical evidence to assert space 'to dispossess Palestinian territory' (Feige, 2001, p. 24). In the early days of the new state, cartography was used tactically to fabricate the Israeli map, thus providing evidence that the land belonged to the Jewish people and therefore could be legitimised in the official Hebrew map of Israel (Benvenisti, 2000). The return of biblical semantics (Eretz Israel, Samaria and Judea to define the West Bank) following the 1967 occupation is encouraged and today perceived as a neutral label, even among Israeli social groups close to the peace camp.

Barriers, walls and checkpoints have increased, and military forces have become more visible in the OPT. The checkpoint architecture varies from control towers, cement blocks (the so-called 'flying checkpoints'), metal turnstiles, razor barbed wire, closed-circuit television (CCTV) cameras, automatic turnstiles and 24-hour surveillance (Tawil- Souri, 2011, p. 8). ID regulation and control reflects the unbalanced use of power as an instrumental tool of coercion in everyday life and is one of the major ways used to restrict mobility and punish those who dare attempt to move beyond their borders (Abu Zhara, 2008, p. 177). The ethnic/religious settlement expansion has fostered land fragmentation in the West Bank and territorial securitisation by building a surveillance system manned by the IDF. The regulation and control of Palestinian mobility hamper the mundane aspects of daily life and outline a 'new mode of population management', employing disciplinary punishments and detentions for 'transgressors, or sending them back to the end of the line' (Kotef & Merav, 2015, p. 30). Checkpoints regulate the speed of movement, modelling people experience with time and space (Abourahme, 2011). A double regime has arisen: a democratic one for the settlers and a military one for the Palestinians entrapped within the physical barriers and the 'bureaucracy of the occupation', a governmental machinery of mobility prohibitions managed by the military forces. As colonisation creates a multidimensional space, a 'hollow land' (Weizman, 2007), in the same way 'time is hollow', is defined by long queues, segregated roads ... and waiting (Tawil-Souri, 2019b). In the unpredictability of daily routines time is fragmented, diluted by multiple devices 'and technics that make this possible: clocks, time- tables, soldiers' work shifts, maps, databases, X-ray machines, turnstiles, barricades, scanners, and so on' (Tawil-Souri, 2019a). Waiting in a confined space, a liminal area where daily routines collide with the apparatus and make the checkpoints places with 'exaggerated corporality' of embodied practices (Hammami, 2019).

Dystopian lives, the social estrangement of military experience

The first impact of the BtS testimony was in 2004 with a photo exhibition in Tel Aviv displaying original images shot by anonymous, low-ranking soldiers in Hebron.[7] Previously, IDF soldiers had raised their voices about military behaviour (Munk, 2012).

After the 1967 war, a group of veterans spoke publicly about the Six-Day War, describing their regrets and moral misgivings, engendering negative reactions in the Israeli society.[8] Unlike previous groups, the veterans' BtS testimonies are not uniquely related to a war campaign but are focused on routine securitisation practices in the OPT. Until 2009, the BtS testimony did not cause remarkable reactions. The first Gaza war marked the difference, public criticism following the war made it possible to reveal Israeli rules of engagement (ROE), usually a classified record. Detailed, cross-checked documentation was collected by the BtS of testimonies from soldiers involved in Operation Cast Lead. The report offers details of the practice known as the 'Neighbour Procedure', whereby civilians are forcibly enlisted to get wanted persons out of a house, as well as the use of white phosphorus ammunition in high density inhabited areas and more, generally describing a deterioration of the moral war code. In the BtS' view, concerns about infra-structure destruction and civilian losses are not due to individual soldiers but a direct result of IDF policy, notably, of the ROE (BtS, 2009, p. 6). Quoting sources from the Israeli Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Oren

observes that the ROE applied in Gaza is such that the 'civilian objective loses its immunity to attack if it is used by the enemy for a military activity'. Considering the non-traditional war theatre in Gaza (no uniforms on either front), civilians are interpreted as 'legitimate' targets (Oren, 2012, p. 132). In their testimonies, soldiers reported a dehumanisation pattern regarding the Palestinian population:

I was in such a situation that corrupted me to a degree which after some time Palestinians didn't really have human face. They were Arabs and as far as I was concerned, they lost all human form. (Lieutenant Artillery Corps 2015; BtS, 2018, p. 18)

All Palestinians are by default the 'enemy', a stereotype created through a lasting social and military construction of threat; ultimately, this is the reward for a problematic society engulfed in a dead-end situation. Wars, says Hillman, need to create an idea of the enemy with 'passions, fear, hate, rage, revenge, to provide extra strength making the combat possible' (Hillman, 2004, p. 24). Losing sight of the human being eases the ethical dilemma involved in the act of killing or abusing force; civilian suffering is normalised or, more cynically, ignored by the war rationale, as this testimony attests:

In short, what shocked me was a talk we had with the commander of ***, he's a colonel, and he gave our whole battalion a talk. The tone of it was really; first of all he started out with something like 'Unfortunately we're a democracy, so we can't demolish Gaza to the extent that we'd really like'. Perhaps he didn't actually say 'unfortunately', but he repeated, twice, 'the fact that we're a democracy works against us, for the army cannot act as aggressively as it would like'. Then he said once again that we're going into this operation aggressively, with- out ... Usually in such talks the army, the commanders mention the lives of civilians and showing consideration to civilians. Here he didn't even mention this. Just the brutality, go in there brutally. (Testimony 24; BtS, 2009, p. 56)

Training is crucial to constructing an enemy identity to guarantee military performance and shaping the fighter identity. Even the semantics of war are relevant. During the training and briefings, military terminology minimises the reality of the sterilisation/neutral- isation of military actions. Razing an entire block is verbalised as 'infrastructure work' or 'clearing', and for systematic destruction, the military adopts idioms like 'purifying' or 'wet entry'. Following this neutralising logic, civilians, who in the Gaza war represented the ROE's most sensitive issue, are regarded as invisible in their suffering, as unavoidable consequences of the combat (Oren, 2012, p. 136). Military training shapes the soldiers' combatant identities, instilling the 'enemy' portrait and the ethos of conflict that identifies the inherent threat represented by each Palestinian, no matter who they are, a child on the way to school or an elderly person coming back from the mosque.

The army training indoctrinates you, at some point in the social limbo, to hate the enemy, to demonize the enemy, and then sends you to rule over it. (First Sergeant Haruv Battalion, 2012; BtS, 2018, p. 4)

Sergeant Haruv's testimony punctuates how preparation for combat is key to under- standing the architecture of violence naturalisation. Attention was called on the responsibility for action and by means to neutralise it by employing statements like 'just doing our job', appealing to the execution of orders, following the chain command. The discourse strategy of military professionalism is employed to disengage soldiers from the tasks that harm the Palestinians (Grassiani, 2013, pos.2501). After training the direct experience of enforcement and control over the Palestinian population puzzles the order of things:

You came here with basic ideas you absorb at school, in your youth movement, in basic training. Ideas of right and wrong. Whom you defend? Whom you fight? Who's the enemy? Who is the Jew? Gradually you realize that this has nothing to do with reality. (Dana educational tour 2016, colloquial record)

This unpredictable state of mind mixes conscious and unconscious levels of personal experience. Soldiers are trained to represent the will of the state of Israel; their duty is to defend state security from the 'Arab enemy' but on the ground, they experience situations like Dana's testimony:

Naturally when you walk around in uniform they look at you, the Jews [the settlers] regard you as the enemy, Palestinians regard you as the enemy and it is horrible. You don't know what are you doing here. (Dana educational tour 2016, colloquial record)

In soldiers' narratives, the recurring motivation to testify comes from the need to restore the dystopian experience of civilian and military life. They wish to disguise the unknown reality of the army behaviour to 'peel off the layers of denial' and reconcile their inner selves. Speaking about their experiences provides a recovery path to reconcile the discrepancy between their two parallel worlds, civilian and military, living side by side but ignoring each other. Dana's accounts bring to light her first dystopian experience when, at the beginning of her military duty, she discovers the incongruity of the reality of the occupation with the social values she learned at school and in the youth political movement. The disruption process activated by the speech act knitted the broken ties of the biographical trajectories animating a conflicted self as epitomised in Zohar Shapira's (Special Forces) testimony:

It was a cathartic process for me, but it was natural that when you have a cognitive block, a kind of sewage lid that you don't want to lift (...) you're different in the Territories and when you come home, you hug your wife or speak to your daughter, or work with children. I'm a teacher. You're a different person and you can't mix the two. You can't be a psychopath and a lover or educator in the same body. (... .) I understood that the little thing that I could do, beyond educating children, is to say that this educator who all the teachers and parents admire, excuse me for bragging, but I really am considered to be special, but this man shot a child. (...) I realised that my words have meaning, and there is not so much meaning to my deeds. Not always the same amount but over time, at last my words have meaning. Since then, I speak.[9] (BtS, 2011, video testimony)

This testimony captures the complexity behind the soldiers' memoirs. These painful bio- graphical trajectories surface in daily educational routines. The performative patterns generate an ontological effect by making this disruption public. Shame and pride surface again as the 'premiere social emotion' that drives the move for change. The shame that Shapira carries for shooting the Palestinian boy might be overcome in the process of modelling a new subjectivity by learning to manage his guilt. This awareness represents the endless dialogical relation between the past and the present that nourishes Shapira's search for biographical continuity. The agency of the speech act is in the pride of carrying the responsibility to speak.

Break the silence is a long process. Ethical dilemmas spring up as post-military duty reflexivity, when the danger—real or imagined—is gone. It might spring up in processing the complexity of the emotions involved, or in response to a sense of civic duty, or a sense of unease (BtS, 2018, p. 3). The pretend normality of civilian life veils the dystopian life sustained by denial as 'the maintenance of social worlds in which an undesirable situation is unrecognised, ignored or normalised' (Cohen, 2001, p. 85).

Something powerful in Israel is making Israeli society do everything possible to stay away. Not to know [... .]. How can you tell your mother to listen? I just don't tell. There's no point, you wouldn't understand. That's the great sin, saying they won't understand. (Dotan Greenwald, served in Hebron for six months, 2003–2004, video testimony 2016)

Dotan's narrative elicits the second dystopian experience, when veterans are back home the tangled emotions and memories are hard to handle. They feel they're living in a hostile environment, and indeed it's emblematic of the use of religious reference to 'sin' to say something is not acceptable for the society. The shifting of the emotional burden from individual to collective action is voiced in terms of political blame to the national responsibility for sending them to do the 'dirty work', giving a fresh version of the key issue

addressed by Hughes in relation to the good people and those in charge of executing the dirty work 'under the circumstances that good people let the others get away with such actions' (Hughes, 1962, p. 4). Here, tangled emotions beyond the barriers of the speech act appear: the imagined praise by family members, or the rejection, the embarrassment, the ostracism, the feelings of inadequacy and from that to denial. It is easier to stay away, not to hear, not to see. Denial is the need to avoid the anxiety and the suffering of starting down a disruptive path. That's why testimonies go through a long process:

It calls on us to carefully peel off, one by one, the thick layers of denial and repression that we draped over ourselves, demanding painful recognition of the sad truth of the occupation and the role we played in its execution (BtS, 2018, p. 4).

BtS's official documents declare that the first and most important step is assuming responsibility, which means advancing down the long path of limbo (Becker, 1997) and entering a liminal stage where the memories of the past behaviour entails rethinking one's identity. That's why, according to BtS, the decision to break the silence is reached several years after army service. This is perhaps the most crucial stage in the process of speaking up, which means making order and finding stability about the memories, coping with the capacity to discuss them openly, accepting the long accountability process by BtS, and facing the high social costs in terms of threats and outrage toward exposing oneself to testify. Veterans' testimonies bear all these complexities to overcome the distress and embarrassment of breaking the denial and the conspiracy of silence (Zerubavel, 2006).

Giving testimony is a remarkable sign of dissension. Veterans' performativity wishes to restore the idealistic army moral code, as, in the words of a Lieutenant of Artillery Corps, 'someone who loves the State and believes in the legitimacy of the army' (BtS, 2018, p. 19). Through their testimonies, the soldiers are violating social norms regarding their loyalty to the nation and to the army hierarchies and chain command. The exposure to sanctions and public outcry inevitably carries the risk of exclusion and rejection from the entire society. Looking at the management of self in public speaking, the matter in question is not one of obedience vs. disobedience but the opportunity to 'give rise to remedial work' (Goffman, 1971, p. 108). From the individual perspective, the remedial work is the initial stage of this long path of disruption, the precondition for a path from political action to testimony. Providing alternative knowledge to mainstream information, the BtS remedial account wishes to activate the rehabilitation of the ideal 'people's army, the impact of culture, ideology and individual memory (Passerini, 1987) are at the core of the inner life. Like the Iraq veterans in the U.S., who speak out against the war, they wish to suggest 'a new definition of patriotism' (Gutman & Lutz, 2010, p. 8). Actually, accounts call for taking full responsibility for the actions taken in the OPT:

> breaking the silence is the readiness to carry the burden of responsibility for what we, as soldiers and commanders, did in the occupied territories [... .] in doing so, we demand that Israeli society take responsibility for what it sends us to do. (BtS, 2018, p. 3)

Goffman's dissection of responsibility helps us to clarify the deep meaning of this action. Carrying a remedial interchange in public relations cast the 'acting knowingly', which means that each testifier is aware of the effects of the speech act and the consequences engendered. The speech act shapes a remedial interchange when the testimony speaks about 'how he acted as he did'. The soldier who decided to explain his conduct reflects on or suggests 'how he could have acted', or 'should have acted', or at least that they are ready to keep carrying the personal burden, as Zohar Shapira testifies. The emotion management deals with the complex balance of shame, guilt and pride. The testimony feels guilt about the action that unveils and activates a burdensome triangulation of shame-guilt-pride. Narrations are pushed by the remorse and shame for their conduct. Self-confidence is restored by the pride in contributing to the army's moral conduct, suggesting 'how in the future he ought to act' (Goffman, 1971, p. 99). This 'guilt-ridden

confessional' of personal experience in a publicly relevant discourse serves a future-riented and change-producing agenda (Katriel & Shavit, 2013, 1).

As a collective action, their aim was to capture the attention of Israeli society and, at the same time, strengthen an inner reconciliatory self from an individual point of view. From the personal to collective perspectives, the idealistic wish reflects their interpretation of the prevailing political left position. Grassiani (2009) and research on radical peace organisations (including BtS) point out how, in the decade after the collapse of peace talks in 2000, some peace groups have been characterised by new radical non-institutionalised activities to promote agendas different from mainstreaming information and challenging societal beliefs (Nasie et al., 2014, p. 315). Regardless of their social marginality, from time to time they draw attention in the press by employing public rebuttals to military officials' reports (Katriel, 2011), replacing the testimonial discourse with an argumentative utterance (Katriel, 2018). The BtS testimonies present a 'performative utterance', which, in Goffman's view, is the most advanced meaning of speaking. The collective agency movement captures the attention of Israeli society and, from the individual point of view, strengthens the inner reconciliatory self. The responsibility of speaking represents the desire to make the reality of occupation visible, however the challenge to the beliefs of the military mindset society may boost the personal risk of public speak- ing. The management of the conflicted self entails such complexities, including the risk to lose face, or not be trusted, or to be regarded as a traitor and a threat to national security. Performativity addresses the core category of security. By breaching the taboo of the national discourse of security, they question society's moral boundaries and the shared values of the social order.

How much further can Israeli society push the limit, they ask, to avoid crossing red lines in the name of security? They deconstruct the meaning of security by distinguishing real security from policies that merely enforce military control. This crucial distinction emphasises how the cycle of violence, activated by occupation rules, has adopted brutality as a deterrent and how collective punishment contributes dramatically to the intractability of the conflict.

Hebron: a theatre of violence naturalisation

The armoured bus of the Egged Company, an Israeli public transport service, connects Jerusalem to Hebron along a 56-mile-long route. It crosses several junctions, revealing a messy landscape of forbidden roads (reserved for settlers), closed roads, roads reserved for Palestinians, abandoned crops and flowering farmland bordering villages. The hill- tops are dotted by settlements as in a medieval European panorama. Following the design of Sharon's plan, they occupy a strategic position. Here and there, forbidden roads and agricultural checkpoints encircle dry and desolate farms. A sharp contrast springs up when the bus stops in the settlements. Everything appears to be aseptic and anonymous like an architectural rendering, new large houses, green gardens and playgrounds in shaded squares ... deserted. A striking sight appears at the Hebron main station, as it is named in the Egged timetable, a simple bus stop in a desolate surrounding. It is immediately obvious why B'Tselem's report on Hebron called it a ghost town. That's what it looks like. Two contrasting worlds: on the one side, an abandoned checkpoint with ruined turnstiles, a rubbish heap, blowing plastic bags and dust. On the other, a simple ornamental garden at the front door of the Machpelah Shrine welcomes visitors to the holy place.

The Hebron main door is the epicentre of the conflicted territory, the ground zero of Israeli apartheid (Burris, 2019). The ancient city was the first place to test the space occupation strategy. Kyriat Arba settlement was created three months after the end of the 1967 war, by transforming a military camp to the first ultra-orthodox settlement neighbouring the Tomb of the Patriarchs. Since then, Hebron has been at the centre of an uncommon urban strategy of violent resettlement. In the aftermath of the 1967 war, when Israel took control of the West Bank, the Jewish Orthodox community undertook a struggle to resettle

Hebron and take control of the suq and Harat al-Masharqa quarters next to the Ibrahimi Mosque and the Cave of Machpelah. The Cave of Machpelah, which is adjacent to the Ibrahimi Mosque, has come to be seen as a sacred symbol for the renewal of Jewish orthodoxy through a combination of Zionism and Judaism. The Kiryat Arba settlement paved the way for future settlements and pioneered the messianic re-territorialisation strategy integrating the exegesis of biblical text and the profane political use of religion. Hebron became the ideal expansionist and nationalistic milieu (Feige, 2001, p. 324), knitting together the threads of past, present and future. The messianic movement of Gush Emunim ('Bloc of the Faithful') found the perfect environment in which to spread its radical biblical interpretations, inspiring the Ibrahimi Mosque mas- sacre perpetrated by Baruch Goldstein during the Purim festival in February 1997.[10]

During the first and second intifadas, aggressions on both sides exacerbated relations between the Palestinian residents and settlers, driving up casualties.[11] Curfews were imposed in the H-2 area and reiterated several times upon various pretexts. Over the three years of intifada, curfew was imposed for a total of 377 days. The duration of home confinement engendered a loss of livelihood and economic impoverishment. More than 2000 shops in Casbah Street and al Shuhada Street closed and never reopened. Sami, a young man born in Shudada Street, owns a shabby little coffee shop close to the few stores. An old city map stuck on the outer wall of the coffee shop captures my attention. It is intriquitely detailed. For weeks I searched unsuccessfully for a map; given that, I relied on Sami's. We struck up a conversation. The Casbah streets were Sami's childhood playground. He knows all the corners by heart. In the survival economy of Hebron, he offers a 'touristic tour' of the old city to the few stray tourists. 'It's my way to be militant, to defend Palestinian land. To tell the story of my place', he confides. He is eager to show me how the old city fell into decadence: the enclosed areas, living spaces transformed into city dumps, beautiful buildings crumbling into ruins, roof decks transformed to military observatories or basketball playgrounds for settlers. We spend hours walking and talking.

The everyday life of the Palestinian residents is intertwined with settler attacks, physical assaults, stone throwing and dumping of all manner of waste material, causing unliveable conditions to force residents to evacuate. Fear, frustration and aggression became the everyday grammar of social relations, a pattern reiterated over and over as Amal[12] explained:

> At the end of June 2012, we left the apartment in the Old City and moved into our current apartment in H-2 area. Our house was close to the entrance to the Avraham Avinu settle- ment. We lived there for twenty-six years. When the Intifada began, the situation deteriorated. The settlers' and soldiers' attacks increased, and the restrictions were more stringent. Every single day, the settlers threw stones at our windows. They destroyed the electricity meters, and the water tanks, they threw garbage and beat our sons. More than once, they tried to break into our place and assault us. They assaulted us almost every day. (Amal, Interview recorded March 2016)

The H2 area is the staging ground of the invisible battlefield, an unconventional, every- day high-intensity war of nerves between Palestinian residents and the settlers. Extreme segregation and expulsion practices have become the city's blueprint, a daily routine set up by the settlers to make everyday life impossible for the residents of Tel Rumeida (Taal-Rumaytha), Beit Hadassah (Dabuya), Beit Romano and Avraham Avinu (Haram al- Ibrahimi),[13] as this BtS testimony asserts:

> The settlement in Hebron is an island in a huge Palestinian city. I mean, you have to use so much force to maintain the order there, that even if you bring 200 Buddhist monks, they would have to use violence to maintain order and prevent riots on a daily basis. (Lieutenant, Nahal 932nd Battalion, BtS, 2018, p. 11)

The soldiers' duty is to oversee a segregated city and control apartheid roads to support the order planned by the orthodox Jews. Over the years, the army has performed the 'dirty work' (Hughes, 1962) to maintain the city's segregation and accept the settlers' requests to close the streets to Palestinian pedestrians and

vehicular traffic (Feuerstein, 2007, p. 25). The IDF approach is reported in the testimony of Sergeant Nahal as:

... hard work, dirty work, all in order to protect you [the interviewer], and there's this enormous crazy apparatus here with many resources just to protect a handful of people, and they do whatever they want. [...] I asked myself if what we're actually doing here is defending civilians, defending the state of Israel. And it didn't feel that way, it simply felt like there are settlers there, and we're defending them, [but] it feels like a completely different entity. They behave differently, they don't feel any belonging to the government and the law, they feel that they belong to this thing called greater Israel and stuff like that. (First Sergeant Nahal, Reconnaissance Unit 2016; BtS, 2018, p. 11)

Supported by civil rights associations, the Palestinian residents filed several petitions with the High Court of Justice, asking for the cancellation of mobility restrictions. However, the Court recognised the prohibition of movements, asserting that the army was acting to separate the Palestinians from the settlers for security reasons. Furthermore, B'Tselem researchers underlined that the settlers' strategy to 'free the Arabs' from the city centre of Hebron was an attempt to Judaise the area based on ethnicity (Feuerstein, 2007, p. 33). By surrendering to the settlers' will, the army paved the way for the naturalisation of violence. The lack of accountability for human rights violations is one of the major drivers of violence neglecting the investigation and compensation for the injuries caused encourages further retaliation.

Most of the roads around Tel Rumedia and Beit Hadassa are closed, even for pedestrians. The educational tour stopped here for the first visit around Hebron. The soldiers' accounts that they decided to share with the Israelis and the foreign participants are performed live at the core of the tour. In the unmediated encounter with the city and the surroundings, the tour guides who serve in the area offer a direct vision of the settlers' enclave in the heart of the old town, and of the role played by the army to protect them. They provided a de-construction of the official representation unveiling the grey areas of the narratives. At the street corner, four soldiers with an armoured jeep observed the group. They were well informed of the crowd's purpose. The non-Israeli participants, more than half the group, look ill-at-ease, unaccustomed as they were with the military machinery. They concentrated on the guide's speech, but still kept an eye out for the soldiers at the corner. A previously unknown world of illegitimate annexation, abuse of power and human rights violations was revealed, while behind the dehumanising practices surfaced an image of the 'enemy': a human being. When the discovery is extended to the social space of the Palestinians, a new, disturbing element, perhaps the most critical, enters into the participants' outlook. Their bewilderment is soon actively transformed in the request for more details about the military operations. The need to know, to understand more about the invisible implications, and this seems to be the most urgent issue of the second part of the day.

At some point, you don't see the people as a human being. An elderly man pleads you, and you do nothing, you don't even listen. Who is he? When they talk to you, you look away, and like a wall, you are impenetrable, you don't hear, you don't care. Old, young ... you pay attention to none of them. (Dana educational tour 2016: colloquial record)

The removal of any human feature for the Palestinians in Dana's utterance crystalises the ontological insecurity (Tawil-Souri, 2019a) of the checkpoints. Being a place of exaggerated corporeality, checkpoints embody practices that connect and collide (Hammami, 2019, p. 87) of an unintelligible humanity, a faceless human being. The tour guides described the army techniques applied in Hebron: the policy separation enforcement, the recurrence of daily surveillance practices, the application of different restriction orders, all leave room for settlers' violence. The general principle applied is to avoid friction between the residents and settlers, but:

It doesn't matter who activated the conflict, Palestinians or settlers, the Palestinians pays always the price. (Shaul, BtS educational tour 2014: colloquial record)

More detailed information is provided regarding management controls at the checkpoints in their application of daily orders. The guide completes the description of deterrence techniques used to justify the entering the houses of Palestinian residents, such as: searching and checking, usually performed at prayer time or during the night, waking everyone and herding them into one room; straw widow, taking over a house, confining its residents to one room and using the house as an army post. These usually take place in strategic locations, such as along prayer routes. The activities at the checkpoints are mainly arrests and detentions. Preventive actions are set up, including deterrent fire and deterrent patrols and tear gas and concussion grenades are usually thrown to make noise:

In the middle of the night we'd throw concussion grenades, boom the street, light bonfires, shoot in the air, bang at the doors, and make noise. (Shaul, BtS educational tour 2014: col- loquial record)

Those outward strategies have dire outcomes for any Palestinian residents attempting to overpower any agency; as Grassiani remarks, the transformation of domestic space in military use leaves the residents totally powerless. Here soldiers lose their awareness of self, showing not only a complete lack of awareness of the environment and the violation of private space, but they imagine this as military space, easing the normalisation of this experience and thus minimising the real meaning (Grassiani, 2009). Attacks to domestic space have wide impact on Palestinian women, in their capability to react, to cope and to function with family members. Shalhoub-Kevorkian reports that IDF strategy to attack the family unit, the sense of privacy and its integrity aims to weaken the stability and social fabric, sending the message that 'there is no safe haven' (2005, p.121). Even the right to mourn (Butler, 2004) is included in this repertoire of suffering, by imposing on the dead bodies forms of dispossession and human denial (Shalhoub-Kevorkian, 2014). Palestinian feminisation and genderisation agency build up a sense of security, elaborating a counter-discourse and counterspace by creating a safer space in unconven- tional ways, like inventing sleeping places for children, salvaging what they can from their home destruction, decorating it with what's left, re-using what was possible (Shal- houb-Kevorkian, 2006, p. 128). Domestic practices as cooking, meetings and self-help are transformed into political resistance of togetherness to recreate the broken societal ties and challenge the doctrine of 'there is no safe haven'.

Settlers are the state actors on the ground, exerting pressure and aggression on the Palestinian residents. The daily goal is to acquire the old city square-by-square, changing the borders, redefining the space and inventing methods for territorial dispossession and new practices of occupation. One such brutal method is illustrated in a testimony given during a BtS tour:

[...] settlers have a method here, which you notice constantly, step by step, house after house. They enter, break in, burn and then take over. They enter in the back door, they covered with greenery, as if no one knows, that it's. The kids enter, destroy what they can, clean it up, and it's Jewish territory. In Hebron it's facts on the ground that count. (Doron BtS testimony, Bts educational Tour, 2016: colloquial record).

BtS agency reaches the memorable narrative in the association of the speech act to the walking practice. The body is an active player in the discovery of a new reality. Participants walk behind the curtains of official narration, they listen to veteran's accounts crossing the othering space of the enemy, encountering the Palestinians in their daily routines. Guided tours bring participants at the core of the intractability to what Lefèbvre (1991) calls the 'absolute space', a place shaped by religious and political concerns. Here the participants' visual perspectives cross the conflicted space of Hebron's old city providing an embodied account of territory (Mason, 2020) and a testimony of embodied practices (Yang, 2019). Guided tours fulfil the speech act and frame the narratives of the physical, everyday routines: immobilities, violations, hollow time. Environment perceptions, sounds, colours and silences add additional memorableness. Walking is a space of enunciation for de Certeau, in the sense that walking in the conflicted territory potentiates the speech act by the act of seeing, performing to 'the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the

statements uttered' (1984, p. 98). Then we can say that the triangulation of the speech act (testimony), the seeing act (guided tours) and walking practice (crossing the conflicted space) increase the power of speech as a 'performative utterance'. The tour allows us to discover the enemy face in the everyday social reality of 'im-mobility', when to reach one's place— work, school, hospital, or farm —depends on the opening of the checkpoints by soldiers' rules, revealing the reality of occupation out of the hegemonic discourse of national security. The audience is not a passive recipient of a faraway experience. Veterans take the tour participants to the place where power is abused. The 'undesirable and unrecognised' come into view, and the participants see the unveiled vulnerability and the resilience of the unhopeful 'enemy' living in a hostile environment. They discover that indifference, such as the 'rejection of common humanity' (Herzfeld, 1992, p. 1) has separated the Israeli and Palestinian social worlds. Guided tours cross the lines, physical and emotional, and create an experience based on a 'contact zone', a place where social space of different cultures meet 'often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations, such as colonialism and slavery' (Pratt, 1991, p. 34). On the strength of the triangulation of speech acts, seeing acts and walking practice, violence naturalisation rises up in a new narrative of experiences, actions, spaces, and actors, deconstructing the static dichotomy of the enemy and arousing a less comforting representation.

The tour actualised how walking is a practice of power and resistance, visualises that the rhetoric of now-there-here (de Certeau) is a matter of human exercise of power that fixes, re-shapes and re-signifies the space and disciplines the bodies, constantly coupling and decoupling the freedom of movement (Kotef & Merav, 2015). Lastly, but not less important we need to emphasise that the aim of veterans' speaking is a collective action to grab the attention of Israeli society to the responsibility in sending them to the OPT and to recover their traumatised inner selves. Palestinians are a silent voice in the general picture (Grassiani, 2009). They appear to be or become faceless, in veterans' narration, as quoted in the excerpt of Lieutenant Artillery Corps (2015, BtS, 2018, p. 18). To be Arab is to possess a recurrent identity feature, mirroring a nationless identity, depicting an unintelligible Palestinian personhood (Hammami, 2016, p. 174). There surfaces contingently a Palestinian precariousness, vulnerability and suffering; even the right to mourning is included in this repertoire of prohibitions, the grievable within its own community, becomes ungrievable across the ontological insecurity.

Conclusion

Soldier testimonies introduce a dissonant voice in the hegemonic discourse of militarism and security. Their accounts provide a source of knowledge that substantiates the asymmetrical power in the daily use of force towards the Palestinian population by revealing how personal experience is linked to the wider context of intractability. BtS accounts show how daily abuses of power and dehumanising actions are, in reality, individual practices performed under a chain of command in response to national strategic goals as the configuration of the asymmetric use of force normalising a state of exception.

The raising of new subjectivity describes how the management of emotions and the agency of performativity are interrelated. BtS personal trajectories are not simply individual paths. The personal choice to break silence is a long process supported by the collective action of the NGO. Narrations go through a phase of limbo (Becker, 1997), a liminality in which pain, shame, fear of outcry and social stigma overlaps with the trajectory. The speech act formalises the disruption: a decision arises to manage conflicting emotions that carry a moral dimension. It is a choice that helps soldiers to recover psy- psychologically from their experiences during military duty, appease the dystopian lives by the ethics of doing in the public sphere and engenders the continuity between the unknown and the known.

Educational tours fulfil the performativity of the speech act and frame narratives in a physical, everyday reality. Walking in conflicted territory potentiates both voicing and the act of seeing, thereby demonstrating

the power of speech as a performative utterance. To be part of a collective action helps the impression management by overcoming a fear of rejection. Troubling accounts, such as Shapira's, epitomise the complexities of the management of embarrassment, rejection, inadequacy, social transgression and guilt. The speech act makes a difference in soldiers' lives, in society and in the history of the ethos of the intractability. In fact, social values and cultural norms such as the reputation of the army and related security issues, are questioned through narratives. Soldiers' social transgressions signal a potential endangering of the national bond. It asserts the need for a restoration of social bonds and therefore the redefinition of pride, shame, honour, loyalty and self-respect, and reaffirms the social dimension of shame.

In conclusion, the performativity of the speech act contributes to the deconstruction of the naturalisation of violence in shading light to the ontological effects generated in Israeli and Palestinian social lives. Soldiers' narratives demonstrate that violence is structural, organised by the ruling military power and justified by the hegemonic public dis- course on security. By unwrapping the undesirable and the unrecognised, performative actions affirm a new subjectivity. The reconciliatory gestures of soldiers' words question the conflict hierarchies; the soldiers reject the imposed identity of the victimiser. They feel that they are also victims of the conflict. Nevertheless, veterans' narrations attest that they are victimisers and that they don't take this responsibility vis-à-vis the victims, the Palestinians. The political statement is entirely addressed to the Israeli society, the responsibility to speak is impairing corroboration of the misbehaviours, a partial political commitment to recognise the victims. In the Israeli political vacuum, BtS commitment fell through the air. At the moment any political ally is able to transform their call to end the occupation in a new political strategy for a resolution and reconciliation with the Palestinians.

Notes

1. Following the ethnographic protocol of qualitative data, the transcribed materials were processed and analysed using a coding process (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2014; Saldana, 2016) with the support of the NVivo software. The coding subjects were related to everyday life, control, mobility regulations, agricultural land access, family separation, settler interactions, soldiers' conflicting selves and force overuse. Due to the limited space of the paper, only a limited portion of this material is quoted in the following pages.
2. From the 1990s, Peace Now has challenged Israeli society by offering tours in the West Bank to unveil the reality of occupation. Different groups have called attention to this practice of framing discursive, visual and embodied experience by highlighting specific topics, such as house demolition (ICHD), checkpoints (Machsom Watch), urban planning barriers and encirclement policies in the city of Jerusalem (Ir-Amim), land rights (Friends of Susya) and more.
3. B'Tselem, Human Watch Report, Unrwa, Adalah, have for the past 50 years collected and cross-checked documentation attesting to human rights violations.
4. https://www.btselem.org/topic/routine_founded_on_violence (last accessed 29 January 2020).
5. The film Smile, and the World Will Smile Back, a documentary by the al-Haddad family of Hebron, made in collaboration with Ehab Tarabieh (volunteer photographer in the B'Tse- lem camera project) and filmmaker Yoav Gross, was screened at the short film competition at the Berlinale International Film Festival in 2014.
6. According to Peace Now Settlement Watch, in the OPT there are 132 settlements and 121 outposts, settlements that were established since the 1990's without government approval and are considered illegal according to Israeli law; they estimate that of the more than 600,000 settlers, more than 200,000 of them are living in Jerusalem. The Central Bureau of Statistics measured the growth rate of settler population as two times higher than the overall population (4.1% versus 2%). Last accessed 29 January 2020, http://peacenow.org. il/en/category/settlements.
7. HebronwasexcludedfromtheOsloAgreement.Aseparate1997InterimAgreementstates that the city is divided into two parts: the H1 area under Palestinian control and the H2 area under Israeli control. Settled in the H2 area are about 800 ultra-Orthodox Jews, 35,000 Palestinians and about 2000 IDF soldiers to protect the settlers and securitise the area through a large surveillance apparatus. Palestinian residents live under the ruling law enfor- cement of the Israeli army and the Palestinian Police Force for civil law. Settlers come under

the law of Israeli Police. This ruling law governance is one of the sources of escalating violence, as minor facts easily evolve into more complex cases.

8. After the 1967 war, a group of veterans recorded their testimonies about their reactions to the Six-Day War, later compiled in a book and documentary film entitled, 'The Seventh Day: Soldiers' Talk About The Six Day War'. They spoke about their regrets and moral misgivings about the war. Negative public opinion arose against the book and the soldiers, portraying soldiers' testimony as a pattern of weak masculinity, soon labelled 'shooting and crying'. The anti-war protest during the first Lebanon War created an environment for a second soldiers' response, this time called 'Soldiers Against Silence'. It cast new criticism of war casualties, paving the way to the '90 to the Four Mothers movement to campaign for the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Lebanon. The essence of those testimonies was politically different from BtS accounts.
9. Zohar Shapira (Special Forces), (BtS,2016, videotestimony, last access July 2017 ,currently unvailable). The murder violated the sacred Islamic area during the Friday prayers, killing 29 Muslim worshippers and wounding another 125.
10. The murder violated the sacred Islamic area during the Friday prayers, killing 29 Muslim worshippers and wounding another 125.
11. Seventeen Israeli Security Forces , five Israeli civilians, and 88 Palestinian civilians, including nine minors, were killed in the second Intifada (Feuerstein, 2007).
12. All testimonies collected in the ethnography are reported, as per qualitative research protocols, with nicknames. The area was progressively depopulated in 1967.
13. The area was progressively depopulated in 1967. The number of Palestinians living there at the time was 7500, which decreased to 6000 in 1970, to 1620 in 1985 and to 1501 in 1990 (B'Tselem, 2016).

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No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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