

# Trauma and the Palestinian Nakba

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I certify that all material in this dissertation which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

## Abstract

This dissertation investigates the traumatic consequences of the Palestinian Nakba based upon six interviews conducted with Palestinians living within Israel during the summer of 2015. It is the use of a psychoanalytic theory of transgenerational transmission of trauma which describes the effects of trauma on an individual witness and the percussive effects on their children and their children's children. The focus of this work is studying the path which trauma, from its inception in the events of the Nakba, weaves through the lives of Palestinians and the subsequent effect on their interactions with the external world.

My research on such a phenomenon was motivated by an understanding of the psychological concepts and a deep interest in the persistent crisis facing the Palestinian people. The work is guided by various research questions; what impact has trauma had on the lives of those who experienced the Nakba? Can psychoanalytic concepts enable a deeper understanding of their suffering? Does such a suffering still exert an influence over the lives of contemporary Palestinians and exactly how and to what effect are these influences felt?

The Palestinian Nakba occupies a powerful position in many fields, politics, anthropology, literature, memory work, but is almost totally absent from trauma study. Considering the Nakba's pivotal position within Palestine's relationship with Israel a deeper and broader understanding of its position within a wider context is vital. This work builds upon the work of Vamik Volkan and tasks it with understanding the scenario of the Palestinian Nakba. This dissertation takes the personal stories of the lives of Palestinians and puts them into the wider context of the trauma legacies which still carve their unconscious furrows through the Palestinian society of the present.



## Acknowledgements

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# Chapter 1

## 1.1 Introduction

By the end of 1948, the land of Palestine had been split into three geopolitical units, Israel, the West Bank and the Gaza strip, but to generations of Palestinians it remained the land of Palestine. Preceding this division plans to implant the Zionist visions in Palestine during the British Mandate had been resisted by Palestinians, who suspected British support for the project, precipitating the Palestinian Rebellion after which searing crackdowns on local Palestinian leadership tore into the social fabric of the Palestinians<sup>1</sup>. Following the British Mandate, the proposed UN partition plan, still rejected by the Palestinians, formed the state of Israel which surged beyond its borders into the land of Palestine. It was in this context which the events of 1948 took place; where the balance of power tipped against a weak and leaderless Palestinian population faced with a Europe seeking to compensate the Jewish people for the Holocaust<sup>2</sup>. The events are referred to by Palestinians as the Nakba, or 'catastrophe', but it is a term which stretches from the first forcible expulsion of a Palestinian from their home to the continued colonisation and dispossession of the Palestinian population which persists until today. According to recent historiography, the Nakba was the calculated plan of the Zionist powers, which saw the depopulation of nearly a million Palestinians and more than 418 villages depopulated, many of which were destroyed<sup>3</sup>. It is to this Nakba which I refer to in the title of this dissertation but the events of 1948 are intertwined with its corollaries, the continuing Nakba, in the gradual encroachment into Palestine by the state of Israel. The trauma of the Nakba is both singular and continuous<sup>4</sup> and modifies the way Palestinians react to their environment, how they live day to day and how they behave as a nation. In understanding how this trauma has modified their most fundamental sense of identity it may allow an understanding of how the Palestinians behave in an environment where they face daily the same threat which has so deeply marked their perception.

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<sup>1</sup> R. Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, Zed Books, London, 1979, 43.

<sup>2</sup> I. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2006, 40.

<sup>3</sup> W. Khalidi, *All That Remains*, Washington DC: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992

<sup>4</sup> N. Masalha, *The Palestinian Nakba: Decolonising History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory*, Zed Books, London & New York, 2012, 251.



This dissertation looks to understand the Palestinian Nakba and its effects through the lens of a psychoanalytic model of trauma transmission between successive generations. The research aims to answer the question; “How did the Nakba, when considered as a site of trauma, affect successive generations of Palestinians?” The aims of answering such a question are to investigate the Palestinian Nakba from the perspective of an incident of trauma and to understand the way in which trauma has affected the children, grandchildren and great grandchildren of those who were witness to the events of the Nakba. This work is situated amongst a wide field of study on the Nakba but is unique in the application of this psychoanalytic theory. I look to understand this trauma in an attempt to more completely understand the events, and reactions to events, that have played out in the land of Palestine. Trauma has such powerful and pervasive effects which modify the basic perceptions of both individuals and the collective perceptions of a whole nation and understanding its path through generations of Palestinians allows a far deeper understanding of the reactions of a nation under persistent existential threat.

This research, by virtue of its limitations, only considers the trauma of Palestinians who live in Israel, and not the West Bank, Gaza, or those who are refugees. There are also many corollaries of trauma which to investigate but, due to limitations, cannot be considered, the focus being on transgenerational transmission of trauma. The research is also limited to the scope of six interviews in one area of Israel due to the limited time and budget for fieldwork.

The discussion of the dissertation is structured in three sections, divided into pairs of interviews of parent and child. Each set of interviews is discussed with regard to the psychoanalytic theory, discussed in the following section, evaluating each aspect of the theory alongside elements of each narrative. The entire transcript of interviews is located in the appendix, but narrators are quoted throughout. Deletion of places and names are necessary to preserve the anonymity and confidentiality of participants in the field work. As stated previously, the term Nakba will refer to the events of 1948 and 1949 and not the continuous process of dispossession. Similarly, the various armed elements which later formed the Israeli army are referred to thusly, akin to the term used by the narrators themselves.

## 1.2 Literature Review

### 1.2.1 Volkan and Trauma

Vamik Volkan has provided valuable psychoanalytic study into the effects of trauma both in individuals and large groups, specifically focussing on how trauma operates amongst and between successive generations. His work developed from his studies into many instances of trauma, and provides a comprehensive model for studying trauma and its repercussions. Volkan looks to both the individual experiences of trauma and its transmission and to the societal level, where collective trauma is observed. I will be utilising Volkan's theory to understand the case of the Nakba as an event of trauma and therefore seeking to both confirm the efficacy of the theory and its implications in studying the Nakba.

The category of trauma within psychoanalysis encompasses a wide range of phenomena but at a fundamental level it relates to an event, or a series of events, which results in "an extensive breach being made in the protective shield against stimuli ... by lack of any preparedness for anxiety"<sup>5</sup>. This radical intrusion creates a break in the continuity of the self, and it is this continuity which is coveted by the human mind<sup>6</sup>. The antithesis to continuity is change and, from this perspective, trauma can be understood to be radical change, such that the individual cannot immediately resolve the pre-traumatic and post-traumatic dimensions of identity. Continuity is vital to psychological coherence and the sense of self that is produced from it. Psychological coherence is one of the fundamental goals to which the mind strives to achieve and allows the individual to enjoy a solid sense of identity which is understood to be "a persistent sameness within oneself"<sup>7</sup>. When the individual experiences disruptions to this continuity they become open a variety of detrimental emotions and the instinctive drive to resolve the rupture within their own identity forms a prominent feature of their psychic lives. It is vital to the conception of trauma to understand that "trauma does not reside in a specific event ... but rather in the meanings of that event for the individual involved"<sup>8</sup>, thus the

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<sup>5</sup> S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachley (Ed. and trans.), 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74, xviii, ch. 2, 31.

<sup>6</sup> V. D. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994, 35.

<sup>7</sup> Erikson, E. H., "The problem of ego identity", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 1956, 4: 56-121, 57.

<sup>8</sup> D. Brothers, "Trauma-Centred Psychoanalysis: Transforming Experience of Unbearable Uncertainty", *Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences*, 2009, 1159, pp. 51-62, 51.

categorisation of trauma is intimately tied to the individuals witness to it. I use the term witness to refer to an individual who has experienced a traumatic reaction to an event and has ascribed traumatic association to it, thus referring to a varied range of experiences from observation to direct involvement.

When the individual is a witness to trauma they experience emotions of shame, helplessness and humiliation along with other complex forms of anxiety, and it is for these features which we predominantly seek to identify in the following narratives. The instinctual reaction is to mourn this event in an effort to work through the trauma and return to a level of psychological coherence; this can be described as the 'normal' course of mourning<sup>9</sup>. The mourning therefore is a "slow sandpapering"<sup>10</sup> of the disjuncture between past and present, in order to re-establish continuity. If the trauma is an ongoing event, as in the case of the Palestinian Nakba, then mourning is unable to complete its normal course. The severity of the trauma may also render the disjuncture too large, leaving the individual unable to complete a normal course of mourning and unable reconcile the contradictory elements of their identity. The individual must then externalise this traumatised self-representation, being unable to fully mourn it internally. One of the ways in which this is done is to deposit the traumatised self-representation into the self-representation of a developing child<sup>11</sup>.

The transmission of trauma into a developing child is done via conscious and unconscious means with the intention for the child to resolve this trauma. The unconscious fantasy of the parent is that the child will be able to mourn the trauma successfully, in a way that they were unable to do. This fantasy is achieved by transmitting various tasks which relate to the trauma and the parent's incomplete mourning, such as "Do not trust the 'other'". Tasks can be either vengeful, relating to regaining honour or dignity, or benevolent, such as "Do not treat the 'other' as we have been treated", although benevolent tasks are much rarer<sup>12</sup>. Tasks are far more imprecise than these simple epithets and may overlap and contradict as well as appearing perplexing to a developing child. The feature of the 'other' in these tasks is common, often relating to the perpetrators of the initial trauma, but, as an amorphous entity, creates a vast range of psychological interpretations.

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<sup>9</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 110.

<sup>10</sup> V. D. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994, 35.

<sup>11</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 110.

<sup>12</sup> T. Firestone, "Trauma Legacies in the Middle East", *Tikkun*, Vol. 29, No.3, summer 2014, pp.6-10, 8.

The parent transmits not only the trauma legacy but also ego mechanisms; strategies used to cope with both trauma and the continued interaction with the external world. The adult uses covert and overt mechanisms in order to disapprove and approve of the ego mechanisms the child uses to work through the trauma, for example denial, avoidance or reversal of affects<sup>13</sup>. The persistent traumatic presence of the parent's externalised trauma throughout a child's development may cause the ego mechanisms to become habitual and thus part of the child's identity. If the parent endorses antithetical ego mechanisms in their child, it often causes trauma to be mourned in a very different way, leading to radically oppositional behaviour. To illustrate; a father's humiliation may urge him to promote confrontational ego mechanisms and thus developing aggressive or promiscuous tendencies in his son. Parents may also promote similar ego mechanisms in their child and lead them to mourn trauma in a similar way they mourned.

As stated previously, trauma can be defined as discontinuity with an individual's identity, and such it is this shift in identity which represents a second generation of trauma. The trauma itself cannot be transmitted, only the self-representation, and transgenerational transmission of trauma is therefore a transmission of self-representation<sup>14</sup>. In addition, the child is often unaware of the source, or exact nature of this trauma and experiences additional anxiety through coming to terms with the perplexing presence of their parent's grief.

The traumatic break within the ego of the individual and the process of mourning represents a reformation of the ego. This analogy allows the exposition of the positive aspects of trauma which occur in rare instances; that in restructuring the ego through successful mourning the individual can create a more favourable ego reorganisation<sup>15</sup>. Not only does this allow the individual to lead a happier life but allows them the ability to deal with successive traumas more successfully and emerge more psychologically resilient. This may either be observed in the following study or add to any extrapolation of this study in further work.

Mourning has a whole gamut of mechanisms, of which transgenerational transmission of trauma is merely one. In mourning, individuals may also attempt to "'envelop' the traumatised

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<sup>13</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 110.

<sup>14</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Large-Group Identity and International Pain: Psychoanalytic Observations", Lecture at the International Psychoanalytical Association Congress, 2013, 16.

<sup>15</sup> H.P. Blum, "Psychic Trauma and Traumatic Object Loss", *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, 51:415-431, 2003, 417.

self-representation, then externalize and control it in the 'outside' environment"<sup>16</sup>. This may represent a feature of transgenerational transmission of trauma whereby mourning occurs outside the transgenerational framework, and represents the end of the trauma legacy. Another feature of trauma is the perennial mourner, someone who in Freud term experiences 'melancholia'<sup>17</sup>, who demonstrates an inability to mourn. This inability can come from various circumstances; the traumatic loss may be too great, the emotional effect may cause them to lose grip on reality or the trauma may be ongoing<sup>18</sup>. The ongoing trauma is the most pertinent case in considering Palestine, when viewed from the perspective of the continuous Nakba. The obsession with the traumatic loss leads the individual, or group, to turn away from the present towards their pre-traumatic past and leaving them unable to live a psychologically healthy life<sup>19</sup>. Similarly Freud defines melancholia as cessation of interest in the "outside world, loss of the capacity to love, inhibition of all activity"<sup>20</sup>. This feature is common in trauma and provides a likely phenomenon to identify within the narratives of the Nakba.

Volkan also studies the large group implications of this theory in societies where a collective experience of trauma exists, as in the instance of this study. At the collective level, the trauma becomes a 'chosen trauma', chosen not as self-election but as a collective, unconscious connection between the members of the large group<sup>21</sup>. Within the large group, the trauma sufferers and those who the trauma is transmitted to comprise whole generations, rather than the generational distinctions within one family. The methods of individual transmission are also present within the group but there are additional mechanisms of transmission and wider effects of the existence of trauma. The mechanisms of transmission are detailed below but also include mythologised tales passed down through folkloric tradition which encompass symbolic responses to the trauma. The features of large group trauma are not directly studied in this work but inform the understanding of the group responses to trauma within the narratives studied and also the wider applications of this work.

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<sup>16</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 110.

<sup>17</sup> S. Freud, (1917), "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, 237-258, 237.

<sup>18</sup> V. D. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994, 35.

<sup>19</sup> V. D. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994, 47.

<sup>20</sup> S. Freud, (1917), "Mourning and Melancholia" in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud, Volume XIV (1914-1916): On the History of the Psycho-Analytic Movement, Papers on Metapsychology and Other Works*, 237-258, 243.

<sup>21</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 117.

## 1.22 Four Methods of Transgenerational Transmission of Trauma

Volkan's work is buttressed by that of Kaethe Weingarten who describes the precise mechanisms of unconscious transmission of trauma and its conscious and observable corollaries. She describes four interlacing methods by which transgenerational transmission of trauma can be categorised; biological, psychological, familial and societal. The boundaries between the categories are blurred but provide useful coordinates for understanding Volkan's theory.

The biological element seeks to understand neuro-structural and biological changes in response to trauma<sup>22</sup>. Several traits observed in witnesses of trauma have also been identified in their children, most prominently lower cortisol levels leading to increased vulnerability to post-traumatic stress disorder. However this inquiry is of ethnography and not biology, and therefore a feature to be explored in alternative study.

Psychological transmission of trauma centres on attachment theory and psychological projection<sup>23</sup>. Attachment theory refers to the multiplicity of bonds between mother and child which become a fluent interaction as the child grows older. It functions primarily as a means of signalling contentment and distress and requires both mother and child to engage fully in a system of psychological resonance<sup>24</sup>. The effects of trauma can damage this complex maternal relationship and leaves the traumatised mother unable to present consistent responses or able to respond to stimuli entirely. The child experiences a trauma which corresponds to the mother's inconsistent responses concerning specific emotions, thus building a simulacrum of the trauma within the child.

Projection is the psychological phenomenon whereby emotions felt by the individual are transplanted onto another, predominantly those which are unpleasant, in order to maintain

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<sup>22</sup> K. Weingarten, "Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 49.

<sup>23</sup> K. Weingarten, "Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 50.

<sup>24</sup> J. Bowlby, "The nature of the child's tie to his Mother" *International Journal of Psycho-Analysis*, 1958, 39, pp. 350-375.

psychological cohesiveness<sup>25</sup>. This feature occurs within transgenerational transmission, exhibited in a parental projection onto the child. The parent projects feelings of shame, helplessness and humiliation onto their child, in order to attain a form of “psychic recovery”<sup>26</sup> from their relationship. This becomes apparent in a repeated evocation of the initial traumatic emotions which the parent experienced, enacted by the parent themselves in inflicting the psychological features of the trauma upon their child. When projections are rigidly enforced or unable to be resisted by the person onto which emotions are projected, as in a parent-child projection, then the symptoms become pathological and represent an instance of trauma for the child<sup>27</sup>.

Trauma can be passed through more general familial interactions, operating within the complex web of implicit and unconscious relationships within the family space. Silence is a feature common to both the study of memory and the study of trauma and provides a powerful but often perplexing map of the traumatic past. Silence communicates pain, telling the audience what cannot be discussed, but offers no explanation for the source of the suffering. Silence can also take the form of an enforced non-sequential narrative which further obfuscates a conscious understanding of the trauma, particularly to a child.

Suffers of trauma face an unconscious paradox of harm which can drive the topic of trauma further into unconscious forms of expression<sup>28</sup>. Parents are tasked with protecting their children and, to achieve this, inform them of danger. In instances of trauma, however, the very act of consciously informing is laden with harm and the parent is forced to rely on unconscious methods, methods unconscious both to the child and to the parent. Parents may communicate their personal responses to the trauma in the form of heavily symbolic stories to their children, relaying the tasks that they unconsciously feel the need to complete. The parent may also

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<sup>25</sup> V. D. Volkan, N. Itzkowitz, *Turks and Greeks: Neighbours in Conflict*, The Eothen Press, 1994, 3.

<sup>26</sup> D. Rowland-Klein, R. Dunlop, “The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors”, *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 31: 358-369, 1997, 367.

<sup>27</sup> K. Weingarten, “Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 50.

<sup>28</sup> K. Weingarten, “Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions” *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 51.

respond to specific evocations of the trauma and provide a map of the trauma, which the child is witness to, through their own traumatic recollections<sup>29</sup>.

Silence is also a feature of societal mechanisms of transgenerational transmission and operates on both the group and national levels<sup>30</sup>. The societal elements correspond to the large group applications of Volkan's theory and comprise much of his study into the wider implications of his work. Silence provides the map to the social experience of humiliation and corresponds to what is able to be discussed in folklore, media and social interactions. Humiliation is experienced at the individual level but draws heavily from the structures of social relations, particularly in cases where a whole national group experiences deviations of the same humiliation. As in Volkan's model, humiliation incubates feelings of revanchism and violent revenge at a social level which can be passed through generations as a form of trauma. These features are particularly exacerbated in societies where honour and dignity are prevalent in the social structure, such as those of the Palestinian peasant society<sup>31</sup>.

Volkan discusses a phenomena of "time collapse" whereby emotions associated with the trauma are evoked in relation to a present stimulus<sup>32</sup>. The illusory nature of the associations coupled with the sustained stimulus causes a perpetual association to be made with the trauma, magnifying the traumatic emotions. The situation emerges when circumstances which induce anxiety occur or when the 'chosen trauma' is reactivated. This feature of trauma is especially pertinent to the Palestinian people as the trauma they faced during the Nakba is repeatedly subjected upon them in numerous variants, thus presenting a situation where time collapse is likely to occur.

Children who have become secondary witnesses to this trauma via unconscious transmission often grow up to gain a conscious understanding of the events which provided the initial trauma. The unconscious effects still persist, accompanied by the unconscious obligations deposited within them by their parents<sup>33</sup>, but they exist juxtaposed with the conscious understanding. In many cases there exists a conflict for recipients of trauma whose conscious

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<sup>29</sup> K. Weingarten, "Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 51.

<sup>30</sup> K. Weingarten, "Witnessing the effects of political violence in families: Mechanisms of intergenerational transmission and clinical interventions" *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, Vol 30, No. 1, February 2004, pp. 45-59, 51.

<sup>31</sup> R. Sayigh, *Palestinians: From Peasants to Revolutionaries*, Zed Books, London, 1979, 126.

<sup>32</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity" *Group Identity* 34(1) 2001, pp.79- 97, 89.

<sup>33</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Bosnia-Herzegovina: Ancient Fuel of a Modern Inferno", *Mind and Human Interaction*, 7, 1996, pp. 110-127, 112.



learning of the events contradicts their unconscious drives where this conflict further defines their relationship to the original trauma. This forms another feature of trauma narratives which I will be looking to identify in the case of the Palestinian Nakba.

### 1.23 Other work on the Nakba

This work is situated amongst the broad field of study into the Nakba and its effect on successive generations but remains relatively unique in its application of trauma study and psychoanalysis. I want to provide a brief summary of the current field of research and then look to the reasons why the Nakba has seen little study from the perspective of trauma.

There is a wealth of memory work into the Nakba which deals with conscious and unconscious memory, of which trauma is a part of the latter. Both Palestinian memory and history place as much emphasis on the Nakba as does the study of trauma and the event, whilst a violent disruption, constitutes the founding point of contemporary Palestinian history<sup>34</sup>. The Nakba has been the focus of various memorialising projects which seek to preserve the huge font of Palestinian memory which faces erasure both from the procession of time and the encroaching presence of Israel. The various work on memory strives to develop a continuity which replicates the continuity disrupted by the Nakba and continued Palestinian dispossession. The works of Nur Masalha, Lila Abu-Lughod and Susan Slyomovics have looked at various memorialising projects which integrate the experiences of successive generations in such features as memory maps<sup>35</sup>, film<sup>36</sup> and memorial books. These works seek to understand the events of the Nakba and the relationship of the generations which followed to the events through the lens of memory. Trauma, whilst part of memory, enacts its power through the unconscious whilst the study of memory predominantly focuses on the conscious recollections. The conscious experiences of memory are undoubtedly founded partially on unconscious traumas but the study of the Nakba explicitly through the lens of trauma is only briefly alluded to in many of these works. For example, a single page of Dina Matar's powerful collection of interviews

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<sup>34</sup> A.H. Sa'di, L. Abu-Lughod, "Introduction" in A.H. Sa'di, L. Abu-Lughod (Eds.) *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, 5.

<sup>35</sup> S. Slyomovics, *The Object of Memory: Arab and Jew Narrate the Palestinian Village*, University of Pennsylvania Press, Pennsylvania, 1998, 9.

<sup>36</sup> H. Bresheeth, "The Continuity of Trauma and Struggle" in A.H. Sa'di, L. Abu-Lughod (Eds.) *Nakba: Palestine, 1948 and the Claims of Memory*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2007, 161.

alludes to the existence of “trauma by proxy”<sup>37</sup> but the concept of trauma or its transmission are present nowhere else in her work. The literature investigating the Nakba purely through theories of psychoanalysis are limited and, although trauma is touched upon in various studies, it remains a widely uninvestigated aspect of the Palestinian Nakba.

The reason very little study exists on the trauma of the Nakba is a corollary of its exclusion from the trauma genre as a whole. The trauma genre emerged around the inceptive case of the Holocaust and with it defined the discourse which persists to this day. Being comprised of ethnography, which fails to account for the inherent West and non-West divide<sup>38</sup>, and explicitly excluding “historical memories of suffering”<sup>39</sup> ensured that the trauma genre was defined on extremely narrow terms. The concept of trauma relies on a perpetrator-victim relationship which is not a psychological distinction but a social, political and ethical one<sup>40</sup>, thus placing the classification of trauma as part the trauma genre as a question of politics. In this way the genre excludes the Palestinian Nakba from its study and indeed fails to define it as an event of trauma at all. The limited death toll of the Nakba is another often-cited reason to exclude it from the definition of trauma, which fundamentally misperceives trauma as proportional only to the number who died, and excludes a qualitative understanding of suffering. In the words of Rosemary Sayigh, Palestine is not merely excluded from the trauma genre but also from a more general discourse, and points to the “broader cultural and political myopia where Palestine and Palestinians are concerned”<sup>41</sup>. This study stands separate from the trauma genre, despite being concerned purely with trauma, but is situated with other powerful works on the Palestinian Nakba.

The aims of this research are to investigate the Nakba and its effects by viewing it as an event of psychological trauma. Using the psychoanalytic theories, namely of transgenerational transmission of trauma, I am aiming to understand the generational elements of trauma of which many persist until the present. Elements of the theory will be identified and analysed both confirming the applicability of the trauma theory to the understanding of Nakba trauma. I will then use the theory to provide a new level of understanding to the Nakba by

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<sup>37</sup> D. Matar, *What It Means to be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood*, I.B. Taurus, London – New York, 2011, 132.

<sup>38</sup> R. Sayigh, “On the Exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the “Trauma Genre””, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.43, No. 1, Autumn 2013, pp. 51-60, 53.

<sup>39</sup> A. Kleinman, V. Das, M. Lock (Eds.) *Social Suffering*, Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1997, vi.

<sup>40</sup> D. La Capra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001, 79.

<sup>41</sup> R. Sayigh, “On the Exclusion of the Palestinian Nakba from the “Trauma Genre””, *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol.43, No. 1, Autumn 2013, pp. 51-60, 58.

psychoanalytically interpreting the narratives which I obtained and understanding how each narrative fits into the model of transgenerational transmission of trauma and the wider understanding of Palestinian trauma from the Nakba. This work is situated amongst the field of study into the Palestinian Nakba but also represents a new avenue of research amongst an existing area in my inclusion of the Nakba as part of the trauma genre.

### 1.3 Methodology and fieldwork

This dissertation is formed of an analysis of the testimonies of Nakba witnesses and of the children of Nakba witnesses using a psychoanalytic model. The empirical framework of the study involves using biographical interviews of Nakba witnesses and their children in order to provide details of the events they witnessed, their response to those events and the connections between generations concerning those responses. The validity of the model in understanding trauma will be assessed throughout the analysis and then the responses will be overlaid onto the psychoanalytic model of transgenerational transmission of trauma.

The interviews were conducted in person via a translator in the subject's homes. The conversations were recorded and then typed up, along with notes concerning observations on the narrator's demeanour, deliverance of speech and any non-verbal communications which, especially in a study of psychoanalytic nature, gave a much richer format to the data collected. Interviews were intended to be conducted one-on-one but often the child or parent was present in the interview which allowed them to engage in a dialogue, adding a valuable form of narration which a single individual could not have provided. I conducted semi-structured, qualitative interviews in order to remain open to inquiring about specific features of the narrative and to remain flexible around a sensitive and traumatic subject for the narrators, in order to fulfil the basic ethical criteria of treating people as an end in themselves, not as a means to an end<sup>42</sup>. The loose structure ensured that I got a broad description of events which allowed for a better comparison between narrators and the qualitative basis of the interview allowed me to find data that fitted my central psychoanalytic theory.

Narrators were found by a local contact who knew both the general aims of my research and the nuances of the potential interviewees. This allowed me to confirm the validity of the data that I collected as my local contact knew the various histories which were collected in her village. The sample of interviewees was collected from only one Palestinian village in Israel and therefore is subject to sampling errors however I wanted to select interviewees who had successive generations who could be interviewed and with the limited time and budget available to me, I was only possible to interview via one local contact. The sample size was six,

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<sup>42</sup> V.R. Yow, *Recording Oral History*, AltaMira Press, 2005, 129.

sectioned into three sets of parent-child groups. The subject's ages ranged from mid-40s to mid-80s. The sets were made up of two mother-son groups and one father-son group.

Informed consent was an important factor in the interviewing process and a comprehensive information sheet was provided along with consent forms being received from all participants before the interviewing process began; both sets of documents are enclosed in the appendices. Extensive data protection was also required due to the politically sensitive nature of the information attained. Detailed explanation of the intention of the interview did not affect the data collected in a negative way, in fact allowing them to better understand my motives allowed them to focus on describing emotions rather than a much longer, historical description.

Data processing required a detailed analysis of each interview and analysis conducted between the parent-child interview pairs. Each interview set was analysed in a similar process, accounting for differing regions of discussion. The various traumatic elements of the witness were identified, along with elements associated with the parents of the witness, and these were then analysed along with identifying the psychological effects of the traumatic events on the witness. The psychological effects of the trauma on the child of the witness were acknowledged along with a comparison to the various psychological experiences of their parent. The conscious effects of trauma were then assessed, that is what the witness had been explicitly told or found out about the events of the trauma. If the effect on the grandchildren were discussed, either with the witness or the child of the witness, this was then analysed. I then conducted a comparison between the psychological effects on the parent and the child in order to assess the mechanisms of trauma transmission that were present in each pairing. Finally, I identified any unconscious tasks which were present in the narratives and then concluded with a summary of the narratives, highlighting the key features of the theory which the set of interviews had demonstrated.

## Chapter 2

SS was fifteen at the time of the Nakba and had lost her mother nine months previous to these events. She fled, along with her two younger brothers, to a nearby village whilst her father remained inside their village, attending to his duties as the village priest. Her father, under a white flag, attempted to convince the members of the village to return. Failing in his enterprise, he was informed by the military ruler that they would be removed from their village permanently. After gathering their things they moved to another village where she remained for twelve years. After marrying she moved to the village in which she resided now, where I interviewed her in her home.

### 2.1 Trauma of the witness

SS experienced two intermingled sources of trauma during the events of the Nakba, the loss of her mother and the loss of her home, with many of these elements producing similar emotions within her. SS's father was also a witness to the trauma and his experiences add an extra dimension to her traumatised self-representation. This presents a complex case for studying the transgenerational transmission of trauma and I will analyse all of the traumatic emotions and transmissions and then seek to understand how each element shifts and interplays with the Nakba trauma and the more personal trauma of the loss of her mother.

The events of the Nakba had many elements of fear and anxiety for SS; her maternal role in caring for her brothers, the separation from her father and members of her village and extended family, the heavy bombardment of Israeli artillery and small arms and the dangerous role her father played after the villagers were forced to flee their village. This identifies the events as a definable source of trauma and justifies the use of psychoanalytic theories of trauma analysis.

SS had lost her mother very recently before she was forced out of her home and, with her father remaining in the village, she was forced into a position of maternal responsibility for her two younger brothers. She cooked according to the memories of her mother's cooking, doing the laundry and cleaning up after her younger brothers. During the events she was told by the Arab armies who were helping them to leave the village that they had been "sold out by King Abdullah"<sup>43</sup>, accompanied with conflicting messages from soldiers informing her both to take everything because she wouldn't return and to leave her things because they will be able to come back. These events would typically lead to feelings of helplessness, in being both incomprehensible to her and beyond her individual control.

SS's father, in his role as the village priest, played a very active role in the events of the Nakba. In remaining in the village, he was able to take care of both the Muslim and the Christian elderly people, bringing them food and acting as their spokesperson. In this role he was in direct contact with the military leader and engaged in a process to bring those who had fled back to their village. It was ultimately an unsuccessful undertaking but his role in the events represent a key feature of SS's memory of the events and elicit vastly different emotions with the other aspects of trauma. SS's father also remained in contact with the church, visiting it frequently and leading mass there.

SS's father, in his role of priest, also represents a source of sadness for SS. In losing his wife he could not remarry, in being part of the clergy and therefore spent the remainder of his life alone and, according to SS, frequently unhappy.

## 2.2 Trauma of the witness' parent

SS' father also experienced the same events and will have developed a traumatised self-representation, elements of which may have been passed on to SS through transgenerational transmission of trauma.

Her father undertook a great deal of responsibility during the Nakba, aiding the elderly who remained inside his village and discussing with the military leader. He attempted to bring those who fled back to their village, but ultimately failed and has since maintained a close connection with his church until its demolition. SS's father lost his wife immediately before the events of

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<sup>43</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

the Nakba and the sense of loss from the intertwined events had a powerful on his life, with SS describing him as “sad, sad, sad”<sup>44</sup>. Emotions of helplessness are likely to have arisen from these actions, but without interview, it is hard to predict his ego mechanisms which dealt with this trauma. Undoubtedly these emotions he felt impacted on SS as she grew up and was dealing with her own traumatic self-representation.

### 2.3 Effect of trauma on the witness

The fear and anxiety SS experienced and the wider symbolic implications of the events lead to feelings of shame, helplessness and humiliation associated with the Nakba. These emotions highlight the applicability of the psychoanalytic theory to these narratives, as trauma is further evidenced by the existence of shame, helplessness and humiliation.

The overwhelming dominance of the Israeli army and the complex relationship that the Arab armies played in the events have led to feelings of helplessness. SS was forced to flee her village after the Israeli assault on her village combined with the pervasive sense of fear that was spread across Palestine in 1948<sup>45</sup>. When she returned to the village to gather her possessions, SS was confronted with conflicted messages from the Arab soldiers telling her that she would never return and that she would come back. Accompanying this disarming confusion was the message that “the whole country was sold out by King Abdullah”<sup>46</sup> adding to the helplessness she felt with a feeling of betrayal by their Arab neighbour. The Israeli bombardment had the effect of dividing her from her family, many crossing the border into Lebanon, completely disappearing from her life. Added to these specific aspects of helplessness was the more ubiquitous elements featured in the Nakba of forcible exclusion from her home.

SS lost her mother immediately before the events of the Nakba and this added many painful features to the trauma of the Nakba but also accentuated the impact the Nakba had on her. The loss of her mother was felt keenly as her father, a priest, could not re-marry and thus faced the prospect of a life led alone, something that SS felt up until her father’s death telling me she “felt it and I couldn’t do anything about it”<sup>47</sup>. SS also experienced feelings of transference of the

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<sup>44</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

<sup>45</sup> E. Said, *The Question of Palestine*, Routledge & Kegan Paul, London & Henley, 1980, 101.

<sup>46</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

<sup>47</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix



feelings she had for her mother onto the object representation of the village. She describes many instances of feeling in intimate contact with the land, and towards the end of the interview recounts a poem she wrote which begins “My village is my Mum”<sup>48</sup>. The sense of loss associated with the Nakba is also the loss of that which replaced her mother, further amplifying her sense of helplessness.

The loss of SS’s mother and the events of the Nakba also gave her a double sense of belonging to her former village, both in the conventional sense and the projections of motherhood onto her village, giving a maternal attachment to her home. This powerful tie to her former village emerges in a sense of not belonging which she experiences in her current life. The sense of not belonging is repeatedly emphasised by SS, telling me that even after death she will feel that “the soil is very heavy”<sup>49</sup> and that she will still feel like a stranger even after she is dead. The desire not to belong is repeatedly articulated by SS and may represent an unconscious task for her, one which may have been transmitted to her son, and one which I shall later discuss.

After the loss of SS’s mother, she remained the only woman in her family and took on many of the roles that her mother performed in her life. This had two effects; adding to the anxiety of the events of the Nakba in forcing her to assume responsibility for herself and her two young brothers, but also depriving her of the role her mother would have provided for her as a protector and care giver. During the events of the Nakba, there are constant contrasts between SS as a young girl and her role as the maternal figure, for example, when fleeing the village she took coffee and lebaneh, rather than the substantial food and clothes that were taken by other villagers. Not having a mother to care for her also had a deep impact on SS, telling me “we were deprived of the very basic feelings of warmth, of love, of care”<sup>50</sup>, features vital for a young girl to properly cope with the traumatic events of the Nakba. The recent death of her mother both intermingles with the trauma of the Nakba and accentuates its features, affirming her family and SS’s separation from them as a source of anxiety and sadness. These feelings of loss add to the helpless feelings that SS derives from the events; the loss of her mother and her village represent features out of her control and can thus lead to perceptions of powerlessness.

SS’s memory of the Nakba is not purely traumatic, and memories recalling her father are filled with pride for him and his actions. His role as the leader of the villagers who remained and his continuing connection to the church in the years after the Nakba, represent positive memories

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<sup>48</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

<sup>49</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

<sup>50</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

for SS. His role is complex, however, and his associations with sadness are also present. The death of her mother was for her father the death of his wife, and represents to SS the beginning of his frequent sadness. This sadness presents a powerful sense of trauma for SS, describing that “I’ve never seen my father happy again”<sup>51</sup>. She connects this sadness with the loss of her mother, but also the loss of the village and the church, all happening within the space of a year. Her father’s role within her traumatic self-representation is complex and represents both elements of positivity and elements of sadness and trauma both of which are tied to the events of the Nakba.

## 2.4 Psychological effect on the child

There are many of the emotions that SS feels that are also present, or have been present, in his mother. He informs me that he has “exactly the same feelings of my mother”<sup>52</sup> especially when it comes to the elements which produced the feeling of helplessness in her; the loss of her home and village. SIS feels the urge to participate in demonstrations and protests in his mother’s former village, despite having been born in the village he lives in today. This appears to be a proactive response to the deposited traumatic self-representation of helplessness which was transmitted to him from his mother. He desires the ability to change events, through protest, that his mother was helpless to change during and after the Nakba.

The powerful connection his mother felt to the lands of her village, experienced as a transferred maternal figure, is also experienced by SIS, who describes the pain in being able to “drive past the lands... and I cannot enter”<sup>53</sup>. SIS has inherited this relationship from his mother and, as an aspect of the trauma, it has been passed on to him inducing a powerful feeling of loss, despite never actually living in the village himself. During the interview SIS showed to me a painting of his from some years ago, which depicts a small boy gazing longingly over a barbed wire fence grasped in his hands. He describes the boy’s longing, at once encompassing the desire of the Palestinian nation and his specific desire to return, and sees himself as the small boy, still longing for the home he has never seen. SIS has describes his situation as a “double sense of

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<sup>51</sup> SS, *Interview 1*, Appendix

<sup>52</sup> SIS, *Interview 2*, Appendix

<sup>53</sup> SIS, *Interview 2*, Appendix

belonging”<sup>54</sup> both to the realities of his daily life and the imagined, but nonetheless powerful, connection to the life and home of his parents.

## 2.5 Effect on the grandchildren of the witness

Whilst interviews with the children of SIS were not possible, their relationship to the events of the Nakba was discussed with SIS which, whilst potentially biased, provides a useful insight into the third and fourth generations of trauma.

SIS believes that his children don’t experience the same relationship that he does to the trauma, that they are “so disconnected... it’s not relevant to them”<sup>55</sup>. SIS believes that his children have fulfilled lives and haven’t experienced loss and therefore cannot understand their trauma, which is fundamentally fixated on absence. SIS cites examples of French refugees who have undergone similar disjunctures and tells that he understands, therefore, the reactions of his children. It is an important interpretation of traumatic events, which suggests that the traumatic self-representation can only be fully understood by those who understand or have experienced loss. It may also imply that the experiences of loss in an individual’s life can reactivate trauma that would otherwise have been mourned.

Another interpretation of the disconnection, according to Volkan’s model, is that SIS has been able to fully work through the trauma of his mother and did not deposit his traumatic self-representation in his children. This mourning may have happened prior to the birth of his children or during their formative years, in which case the trauma would not have obfuscated the paternal relationship. Alternatively elements of trauma may have passed to his children, but only to an extent which, due to their fulfilled lives, did not outwardly affect his children and be observable to him as elements of his trauma.

The final interpretation comes from the nature of SIS’s relationship to his children, namely that it is he who has interpreted his children as being disconnected and this may be modified by his own response to the trauma.

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<sup>54</sup> SIS, *Interview 2*, Appendix

<sup>55</sup> SIS, *Interview 2*, Appendix

## 2.6 Mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of trauma

The mechanisms of trauma transmission, as described by Weingarten, comprise of four main categories which can be identified in the various narratives of witnesses of trauma.

The disrupted features of attachment theory can provide a powerful method of transmitting trauma and the strong connection between SS and SIS is indicative of the psychological category of transmission. This may also indicate the existence of projective identification, whereby the parent uses the child as a means of psychic recovery<sup>56</sup>, in the relationship between mother and son. Features which may have existed in the past may now have faded or have been fully mourned giving an incomplete picture of the methods of transmission.

Silence does not appear to be a feature of SS's narrative as she appears to be able to tell a sequential narrative without any omissions. This may be a feature of her successful, or partially successful mourning process, which occurred after SS's formative period when the trauma was transmitted. SIS, in his painting, communicates a persistent but unspoken message of loss relating to his trauma. It provides the coordinates of an unconscious map of his trauma, and may be indicative of the unconscious message that he transmits to his children.

## 2.7 Tasks

Trauma is passed down to successive generations with the unconscious fantasy of successful mourning. This mourning forms the overarching task for the child to complete, but it is subdivided into tasks which relate to specific elements of the trauma and govern how an individual operates day to day.

One of the key messages which SS appears to convey is a strong desire not to belong to her current village, derived from the sense of belonging to her former home combined with her transferred maternal attachment. This powerful sense of belonging interpolates much of her

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<sup>56</sup> D. Rowland-Klein, R. Dunlop, "The transmission of trauma across generations: identification with parental trauma in children of Holocaust survivors", *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry*, 31: 358-369, 1997, 367.

narrative and emerges in her desire to not belong to the village she resides in currently. SIS exhibits this in the pain he experiences when driving past his mother's home, as the unconscious feeling of belonging is tied to his home and not his, and also when he explicitly states his "double sense of belonging"<sup>57</sup>. It's also evident in the painting of SIS which serves as persistent reminder that he belongs elsewhere and is simulated in the constant longing of the depicted child.

## 2.8 Conclusions

The narratives of SS and SIS demonstrate many of the features of the model of transgenerational transmission of trauma and the passage of trauma through the generations fits closely to the theory. SS experienced trauma during the Nakba creating many complex emotions resulting from her traumatised self-representation. These emotions centred on loss, the loss of her mother, her home and of the naivety of childhood, and produced feelings of helplessness and anxiety. The complex role of her father, at once a source of pride but also of sadness and helplessness, occupies a powerful position within her trauma. SIS received a deposited traumatic self-representation from SS via unconscious means, with the fantasy that he would be able to do the work of mourning. Identifying the ego mechanism relationship between SS and SIS is difficult because it appears that SIS has successfully mourned the greater part of that deposited trauma. There are elements which he appears to find painful, such as the presence of his mother's former village, but shows little other signs of trauma. His relationship that his children have to the trauma is testament to the success of his mourning and they appear to show little sign of traumatic self-representation. SIS cites this as something which he understands and points to the fact they live fulfilled lives and for the lack of personal loss, they cannot identify or comprehend the loss that he feels. This may be as a function of the lack of loss in his children's lives and presents an interesting avenue of study into whether loss or trauma within the individual is required to reactivate the trauma of previous generations. This disconnect is then perhaps evidence of a dormant traumatised self-representation, such as Volkan identifies in large groups, only reactivated when stimuli provoke the specific sensitivities that of the original trauma. This feature would require further and more detailed study but would prove valuable in fully tracing the trauma legacies of the Palestinian Nakba.

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<sup>57</sup> SIS, *Interview 2*, Appendix



## Chapter 3

MA was nineteen or twenty years old at the time of the Nakba and has told his story many times before. Living in a small village, MA witnesses the first attacks of the Nakba in August 1948 with a heavy bombardment by the Israeli army. The three fronts surrounding his village began to collapse in October of the same year, after which they raised a white flag atop their village. Soon afterwards the Israeli army came to occupy their village and, by November, had convinced the inhabitants of the village to leave in order for them to perform an operation, the villagers moving to another recently evacuated nearby village. This operation emerged as a cover for their permanent evacuation and they became internally displaced. The paucity of economic prospects forced the villagers to leave in search of work, which is when MA moved to the village he currently resides in, where I interviewed him in his home.

### 3.1 Trauma of the Witness

MA experienced many traumatic experiences during the events of the Nakba, many of which produced anxiety and fear, which led to other emotions including those of shame, helplessness and humiliation. The features of the narrative and the effects they inculcated within MA and his son identify this as a site of trauma and one to which transgenerational transmission of trauma applies.

The atmosphere of fear was cultivated in the village of MA through various means, as it was propagated throughout Palestine during the events of 1948<sup>58</sup>. Bombardment of the village in the months preceding the evacuations, whilst not injuring anyone, was a terrifying experience for an adolescent. Rumours were spread via radio which falsely stated many had been injured during the assault, adding to the daily tension of living in their homes. When the army

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<sup>58</sup> N. Nazzal, *The Palestinian Exodus from Galilee 1948*, The Institute for Palestine Studies, Beirut, 1978, 105.

approached, it did so through a smoke screen, an overtly dramatic gesture towards a village they knew was unarmed. During the occupation, MA was forced to line up facing a wall alongside many other young men of the village, mirroring the procedure immediately before an execution, a tactic designed to terrify the village into submission.

The village's relationship with both the Arab armies and their Jewish neighbours, in the nearby Kibbutz, was fraught with duplicity. The Arab armies, MA states, were full of prisoners from the neighbouring Arab states and, in MA's words, "all the ranks within the Arab armies were traitors"<sup>59</sup>. There are many incidents he cites, suspicious behaviour, covert communication, disappearances and reappearances, which enforce their suspicion of those who purported to be guarding their village. Their Jewish neighbours, whom they were on even terms with, formed part of the group who attacked their village, much to the shock of MA and his village. This betrayal was further enhanced by seeing many of the suspicious individuals who had appeared as members of the approaching ranks. The method by which they were coerced to leave was also fundamentally dishonest, adding to the endemic betrayal of the events. The village was asked to leave in order for the Israeli army to "perform a kind of cleansing"<sup>60</sup> in order to secure the borders of their land and that wished them to leave to ensure the village's safety. The villagers relocated to a nearby village, which had been evacuated by its previous inhabitants, awaiting their imminent return to their homes. They remained in fearful limbo for three years, whilst a Supreme Court appeal was successfully submitted, after which the Israeli army bombarded their position, destroying their homes. It was only at this juncture, MA tells, which they understood that there had never been any intention for them to be able to return and it was then they realised that they had become internally displaced.

After the fronts had begun to collapse, MA and other young men raised a white flag atop the church in an attempt to convey their non-belligerence but nonetheless their desire to remain in the village. Once the Israeli army had occupied their village, the villagers did all they could to assuage their fate and treated the Israeli army with utmost generosity. The army was cooked breakfast, lunch and dinner by the village and was brought water constantly. Both of these acts are gestures of extreme humility yet did nothing to aid the villagers in their ability to remain in their homes.

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<sup>59</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

<sup>60</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix



### 3.2 Effect of trauma on the witness

The anxiety which emerged as a result of the various elements of violence in which MA was involved all were as a result of the Israeli occupation of his village. The lack of control he experienced in these events are likely to have given rise to feelings of helplessness as part of MA's traumatic self-representation. The early attack on the village, where the Israeli tactics of fear begin to appear, MA asserts that "nobody was scared"<sup>61</sup> during the five hour bombardment. This unrealistic statement appears to be an attempt by MA to counter this helplessness by asserting the village's courage in rendering the Israeli acts impotent. Their transfer into the village whose inhabitants had already fled, both at the time and in the years afterwards, give the sense of a greater succession of events which MA and the village were beholden to, yet which were obscured from them. This would likely give rise to a sense of helplessness on a greater scale to the individual powerlessness he experiences at the hand of the Israeli soldiers, a feeling common to the Palestinian nation as a whole.

The elements of betrayal in MA's retelling are numerous and have powerfully traumatic effect. The raising of the white flag, something that MA touched on only briefly in his narrative, clearly has powerful associations with shame indicated by his desire not to discuss it. Not only did the act create a sense of humiliation but its utter inefficacy in averting the village's fate of occupation and depopulation, adds another dimension to the shame. The betrayal by the neighbouring Jews adds a personal dimension to this emotion, MA states "we thought that just as we like to live with them, they like to live with us, but we found out the opposite"<sup>62</sup>. The Arab armies who were tasked to protect them did so duplicitously and also betrayed them despite being hosted by MA and his village.

The feeding of the Israeli army out of fear for their "unknown destiny"<sup>63</sup>, forms another layer to the humiliation. They gave all that they could to the Israeli army, treating them like honoured guests and not the aggressors that they were. MA tells that these actions were conducted in the hope that "they wouldn't harm us"<sup>64</sup> and, in that respect, they succeeded but not in preventing their ultimate expulsion from their homes.

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<sup>61</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

<sup>62</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

<sup>63</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

<sup>64</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

The events had many repercussions later on in MA's life, events which added to the shame and unhappiness already associated with the Nakba. The people of the village prohibited themselves from marriage, because marriage meant celebration and "celebration meant being happy". Even after living this "life of misery"<sup>65</sup> in the nearby village, many families were forced to split because of the economic deprivation of the area. Movement was strictly limited by the region's military ruler and permissions were increasingly divided along family lines, in an apparent bid to fracture their society along family lines. These features also produce symptoms of anxiety for MA around the subject of family.

After the villagers left their homes, an unspoken pact, similar to the one regarding marriage, emerged prohibiting the purchase of houses. Buying meant permanence, and therefore giving up the struggle to return, so renting was the only permitted method of residence. MA's father rented a house but knew the landlord wanted to sell, reawakening the anxiety of losing his home which the events of the Nakba instilled in him, and forced him to purchase the house. This action caused him anguish, especially as a result of the reaction of the village community. This represents a small exposition of the cycle of trauma which can operate within an individual; the trauma of loss gave him anxiety assuaged only by buying the house, this purchase attracted shame from both the community and from within himself, this shame then became a further aspect of the trauma and presented a broader and more easily reactivated trauma.

MA informed me that he had recently returned from a trip to his village, one that he makes frequently according to his son. His routine consists of walking up the steep hill of the village, sleeping in the church, the only remaining structure, waking at dawn and tending to the trees and herbs which still grow there, all despite being in his eighties. He is able to navigate the village purely from the memory of his former life, which is still very powerful. When MA returns he tells me that he is very tired, both physically and mentally, and after he leaves to rest NA tells me that when he is in his former village he feels as if he is "nineteen or twenty again"<sup>66</sup>. This element of MA's life exhibits many features of his trauma. It demonstrates not only the power of the memory and thus the trauma, but the entire landscape of the village which remains inside him as powerful and immediate as the map of his trauma. It also illustrates the radical disjuncture between the two halves of MA's life, ruptured by the presence of the Nakba, which require immense psychological exertion to travel between. Finally, it demonstrates the fantasy of the pre-Nakba life shared by many others, the desire to re-inhabit youth, both in

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<sup>65</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

<sup>66</sup> MA, *Interview 3*, Appendix

terms of his ability to feel young again but also the symbolic youth of the Palestinian life before the Nakba. It is an attempt to turn back time, demonstrating his inability to reconcile his former and current life and thus his inability to mourn.

### 3.3 Psychological effect on the child

NA, the son of MA, exhibits elements of deposited trauma from the events which his father witnessed.

Shame is a key feature of this trauma legacy, as a corollary from the various and sustained aspects of betrayal that were witnessed by his father. When MA is describing how his village fed and gathered water for the Israeli army NA interrupts, clearly uncomfortable about this aspect of the story. Shame appears to be the primary motivation which induces NA to interrupt; his father's supplication to the wishes of the Israeli soldiers is inherently humiliating, accentuated by its futility in averting their eventual fate. Interestingly, MA appears not to find it difficult to talk about perhaps because, unlike his son, he has been able to mourn the events and reconcile them within himself.

When MA briefly touches on the subject of the white flag and surrender, NA, who was present for the interview, interrupts and urges me to inquire about this aspect of the story. In answering MA clarifies that it was due to the collapse of the two fronts surrounding the village. NA's interruption is the reverse of his attempt to silence his father earlier on, indicating different sensitivities to different elements of the trauma. NA clearly feels more comfortable talking about the surrender than the act of hosting your captors, the reverse of MA's approach. This may be indicative of different ego mechanisms which allow different elements of trauma to be mourned successfully, or may relate to different elements of trauma being passed on to the second generation. Alternatively, NA's interjection could be an attempt to use his father to structure a justification for the surrender and thus ameliorate the traumatic effects. This may represent an instance of a child using a parent as a means of traumatic recovery, rather than the reverse, and is an interesting new facet to the theory of transgenerational transmission of trauma which this study has elucidated. NA may have partially worked through the trauma but, when specifically discussed, may desire the support of his father's justification to assuage any anxiety relating to the partially mourned feature of his traumatic self-representation.

Both of these examples, the act of silencing and of un-silencing, represent interjections into MA's story by his son. Situated amongst the other instances of intrusion, it appeared that NA felt the constant need to revise, contribute and interrupt the narrative of his father. It is clear, through this and other features, that one of the transgenerational tasks is to communicate one's story, to narrate the traumas that were witnessed. This is a task common to trauma sufferers but one that is clearly exhibited by NA and the surplus desire to narrate spills over into his father's chronicling of events.

The centrality of family to MA is mirrored in NA, who values family and also the wider pseudo-family of those people in his current village who share his trauma legacy. The label of displaced person, carrying with it the trauma, is not a source of shame for NA, unlike many who carry the same epithet. NA sees it as a positive attribute, he is part of the community of the village he lives in now but transposed onto that, he also has the community of his father's village, which has now become his village. NA appears to have worked through the shame associated with elements of the trauma which now enables him to have a positive relationship with this trauma community, a relationship which he informs me "people envy"<sup>67</sup>, further evidencing the pride which he takes his double community.

NA has also experienced the weight of sadness that his father has borne since the trauma, something which has had a deep emotional impact on him. He speaks of a pervasive sadness that enveloped his childhood, a sadness that was not always spoken but always felt. He makes the distinction between "the sadness" and "how they expressed their sadness"<sup>68</sup> hinting at the various means of trauma transmission which occurred within the family. This sadness was felt most poignantly through his father whom he cannot remember ever being happy, even during such typically joyous events such as his son's birth. This is a feature that is understandably upsetting for NA and this disrupted bond between him and his father is a further indication of the trauma's passage between generations.

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<sup>67</sup> NA, *Interview 4*, Appendix

<sup>68</sup> NA, *Interview 4*, Appendix

### 3.4 Conscious effects of trauma on the child

NA in fact acknowledges that along with the family legacy, his father passed down the legacy of tragedy and as such he carries “a testament”<sup>69</sup> to the trauma that his father suffered. NA consciously acknowledges the unconscious drives within him that cause him to carry his father’s trauma. He identifies this testament with the drive to “continue the struggle”<sup>70</sup> which is likely to be one of the tasks passed on to him by his father. Both MA and NA are involved with the legal struggle to return which has persisted since the Supreme Court judgement over sixty years ago. NA’s conscious awareness of the trauma matches much of his unconscious emotions and he exhibits a relatively coherent self in this respect.

### 3.5 Effect on the grandchildren of the witness

Whilst not being able to speak to the children of NA, I was able to discuss with NA about his perception of his son’s response to the trauma of the Nakba. In the same way NA speaks of the passage of the tragedy from his father to him, he speaks of its passage to his son. Their village plays host to summer camps for the displaced youths who are educated about their village; in its place in Palestinian history and also in a more lived sense, through reconstruction and participation from former residents. This camp represents a collective transmission of trauma from a group of trauma sufferers to a group of their children. It is a less pronounced transmission, due to its periodical rather than incessant presence, but represents another way in which the trauma of NA may be passed on, with the collective fantasy that this trauma may be mourned.

### 3.6 Mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of trauma

The narratives of MA and NA present various aspects of each type of mechanism of transmission and provides an example of the interplay between each.

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<sup>69</sup> NA, *Interview 4*, Appendix

<sup>70</sup> NA, *Interview 4*, Appendix

The psychological process of transmission usually hinges around attachment theory, typically pivoting on the maternal bond, however this theory is just as prescient when analysing the paternal relationship. NA describes the persistent sadness of his father and its impact on the events in his life, mentioning his son's birth and his marriage. Although the events mentioned are relatively recent it can be accurately assumed that the tragedy of the Nakba clouded the much earlier, formative events in NA's life. Disruptions in the proper signalling between father and son can lead to maladaptive relationships being formed. The sadness felt by his father would also have been enhanced when stimuli relating to the trauma were experienced. In this way, the only "emotional communication"<sup>71</sup> NA received would have been limited to a mirror of the trauma his father experienced causing a replication of the same trauma within him.

Familial mechanisms revolve around the paradox of harm and the phenomenon of silencing, both of which appear in the relationship between MA and NA. The paradox of harm, where conscious explanations of danger are too damaging and thus unconscious methods of informing are used, can be seen in many aspects of MA's behaviour. His frequent sojourns in his former village provide a powerful message to his son about the sensitivities he experiences as a result of the trauma. It was not established how long MA had been visiting the village for but if the unconscious message which he was emitting was still this powerful over sixty years after the event, then it is very likely that a process of unconscious warning existed when NA was in his formative years. There were several instances of silencing within MA's narrative, the most evident being his unwillingness to talk in detail about the surrender of the village. This silence communicates MA's sensitivity to the shameful aspect of the trauma and provides an unconscious map of trauma, then mirrored by his child. As time proceeds, mourning occurs and we can assume that the few holes in the trauma today indicate larger and more frequent holes during NA's childhood. NA will have grown up with the narrative of the Nakba but one in which details are both occluded yet emotionally poignant, through which trauma developed within him as a response to his confusing and painful upbringing.

Silence forms elements of societal mechanisms, stretching from the family group all the way to national groups, and is indicative of anxiety and fear. Similarly, instances of humiliation span large groups and often have the effect of incubating desires for revenge. NA discussed his grandfather, MA's father, and his purchase of a house along with the accompanying reactions of the former village community. This societal embodiment of shame was felt by NA's

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<sup>71</sup> T. Benedek, "Toward the biology of the depressive constellation" *Journal of the American Psychoanalytic Association*, June 1956, No. 4, Vol. 3, pp. 389 – 427, 399.

grandfather and forms part of the wider feelings of shame of the village community. The members of the group feel not only their own perception of shame but shame derived from their imagined community, which has undergone humiliation. NA specifically mentions the reactions of the community to the purchase of the house, but in many instances the actual reaction of the community is not necessary for the individual to experience shame. The individual needs only to be part of the large group with a 'chosen trauma', and from this creates a mental perception of the group's reaction<sup>72</sup>. It is then this imagined shame which causes further anxiety and, due to its illusory nature, is a far more pervasive source of anxiety. The mechanism of trauma transmissions which are enacted amongst families is mirrored on a large group level and accumulates on top of the individual experiences of humiliation.

### 3.7 Tasks

Parents pass down, through the trauma mechanisms, various tasks which the child feels the unconscious need to fulfil. In comparing the narratives, it may be possible to observe various tasks that have been passed from MA to NA.

The desire to narrate is common to trauma sufferers and this forms part of a task which has been passed down to NA. This desire exhibited itself in the interruptions into MA's story but also in NA's involvement in the summer camps and his enthusiasm for collecting photographs and maps of the former village, many of which he was eager to show me. There also exists between MA and NA the desire to continue to pursue the Supreme Court edict which permits them to return to their village. This ties together with the will to narrate with both NA and MA desiring to bring this issue to the public consciousness and to members of the Arab political parties. Both of these tasks are subcategories of the fundamental fantasy task of the transgenerational transmission of trauma; to mourn the trauma that MA could not. The various tasks, and the individual response to them, provide the backbone of the day-to-day embodiments of the traumatic self-representation and help to chart the winding narrative that the trauma legacy weaves through the lives of each generation.

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<sup>72</sup> V.D. Volkan, "Transgenerational Transmissions and Chosen Traumas: An Aspect of Large-Group Identity" *Group Identity* 34(1) 2001, pp.79- 97, 84.

### 3.8 Conclusions

MA and NA's narratives demonstrate clear evidence for the transgenerational transmission of trauma spanning three generations, specifically elucidating the differing mechanisms of trauma transmission.

NA experienced a series of traumatic events during the Nakba which revolve around the general theme of betrayal, leading to a sense of helplessness and humiliation in NA. The three forms of trauma transmission are demonstrated by the interplay between the two narratives. Silence plays a role both at the psychological level, where NA and MA silence and unsilenced various aspects of their own and each other's narratives, and at the familial, where MA's journeys to his former village emanate powerful unconscious signals not only to NA but to his grandchildren and extended family. Silence communicates a powerful yet perplexing message of the terrain of the trauma that MA has suffered, and leads to an unconscious sensitivity in the successive generations to the trauma of MA. Disruptions in the paternal attachment between MA and NA are also evident, another feature of psychological transmission. The existence of trauma at a societal level is also present, in the collectively derived shame that an individual feels from the large group's 'chosen trauma', demonstrated by MA's reaction to his father purchasing a house.

These mechanisms induced a similar trauma in NA and led to him experiencing shame, relating to his father's previously un-mourning shame, especially when discussing or hearing his father discuss certain events of the Nakba. The persistent exclusion of his father, and now him, from his former village combined with the futility of the supplicatory gestures, also transmitted feelings of helplessness into NA's self-representation. Similar mechanisms may lead to the transmission of trauma into the children of NA, dependent on the mourning process of NA and the way in which he deals with trauma. The summer camp, hosted in their former village, represents a conscious way in which the legacy of the Nakba is passed on. This may represent a means of externalising and controlling the features of the trauma for NA and may be a function of his mourning process.

The narrative may also demonstrate an instance of reversal in the transgenerational transmission in the child using the parent as a means of trauma recovery. This unusual trait has several implications for the trauma theory; the possibility for a cycle of trauma and recovery to emerge within a single pair of relationships within a family, instances of trauma which traverses



successive generations in both directions and a more general understanding of trauma as far more pervasive amongst familial relationships. It is a feature which requires more detailed and sustained research in other study yet illustrates the pervasive corollaries of the Palestinian Nakba.

## Chapter 4

MS was twelve years old during the events of the Nakba and fled her village along with her mother whilst leaving her father, who refused to leave, in their family home. After a month spent sheltering under the olive trees of a nearby village, the mayor of the village raised a white flag in a gesture of surrender, in order to allow the village's people who had fled to return. She still resides in the same village, giving the interview in the living room of her home.

### 4.1 Trauma of the witness

MS faced many elements of trauma in the events surrounding her expulsion from multiple sources. Her parents were also witness to trauma although in slightly differing circumstances.

MS was at a young age when the events of the Nakba took place and events which would ordinarily have provoked fear will have been amplified by her youth. The events that she witnessed are interpolated with a powerful sense of panic, where fear overruns the ability to function consciously<sup>73</sup> offering only instinctive reactions to stimuli. The tactics of the Israeli army amplified this fear, depopulating nearby villages, allowing insidious rumours to spread while using gunfire to add to the sense of terror. "We were so scared"<sup>74</sup>, she describes, and tells of a woman from the village who instinctively grabbed her new-born baby and ran, beholden to nothing but her terror. The whole village was consumed by this existential fear and a sense of immediacy, taking their "families, our kids, everything"<sup>75</sup>. This sense of fear extended well beyond the initial expulsion; MS tells of her sister whose child died immediately after birth which MS believes was from the "stress of displacement"<sup>76</sup>.

Family, as well as being central to her perception of stress, was also a source of anxiety to MS. Her narrative is suffused with the memories of her family which, during the panic of the Nakba, was divided permanently. She recounts the story of her uncle who packed his four children into the panniers of his donkey and fled across the border into Lebanon. Other members of her family left in similarly rushed scenarios, without goodbyes, some of whom she has never see

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<sup>73</sup> T. Lewis, F. Amini, R. Lannon, *A General Theory of Love*, Vintage, 2002, 48.

<sup>74</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

<sup>75</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

<sup>76</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

since or who have died in exile. When MS left her village she did so only with her mother as her father refused to leave his home. This separation of even a short while will have been stressful to a young girl, added to which her father was living in the village under constant threat of destruction. After leaving the village, the mayor took the collective decision to surrender, believing that it would allow their safety. Surrender being a powerfully humiliating experience and features strongly in psychoanalysis, and forms a strong part of MS's traumatic memory of events.

#### 4.2 Trauma of the witness' parents

Whilst MS was old enough to form coherent memories of the Nakba, her parents were also witness to the same events and the trauma they witnessed may have been passed to her through their interactions with her. When MS fled her village she did so at the behest of her mother, leaving her father behind in the village. This split in behaviour between her mother and her, further exemplified when she recalls her father proclaiming "even if I die I will not leave my house"<sup>77</sup>, indicates a potentially complicated relationship within her family. There appear two differing ego mechanisms for dealing with trauma from her parents; her father with a more active, confrontational approach whilst her mother took a protective role, achieving safety through passivity. It is difficult to gauge traumatic self-representation that was deposited in MS by her parents' experience of trauma as not only does she have her own traumatic self-representation but also the features of the trauma are almost identical to that of her parents. Understanding of the ego mechanisms of her parents does aid in tracing some of the elements of the trauma legacies, in comparing trauma responses through the successive generations.

#### 4.3 Effect of trauma on the witness

Many elements of MS's experiences evoked feelings of anxiety within her. The persistent threat to her and her family occupy much of the narrative and form a fundamental feature of her trauma. The separation from her father for the brief sojourn in the nearby village, the cousin

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<sup>77</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

who they were powerless to stop fleeing into Lebanon, the death of her sisters baby; all revolve around the central concept of family. The anxiety and fear she felt as a result of these events lead to feelings of helplessness. The divisions within her family, the fear felt by her kin and by herself and the separation from her home and father were all imposed upon her and her village by the Israeli army. This is compounded by the sense of panic which clouded events, the overwhelming and debilitating fear left the village in a state of helplessness which persists in MS's traumatic self-representation. MS also states that the Jews "were guaranteed this land"<sup>78</sup>; referencing not only their psychological approach to the land of Palestine but also the overwhelming support from the British Mandate. This references the broader, historical helplessness of the Palestinians and a collective sense of helplessness and humiliation from which personal feelings of powerlessness are consistently derived<sup>79</sup>.

MS acknowledges that her story, in her ability to return to her former village, is unusual and she feels lucky, especially when compared to the fate of other nearby villages and those of her family who were unable to return. Luck is usually accompanied with feelings of guilt or anxiety relating to the fragility of the individual's current situation<sup>80</sup>. This has the effect of creating a complex element in the narrative, associated with both success and the safety of her village but also the shame associated with the collective Palestinian depopulation as part of the Nakba. Trauma can also be defined as the missed encounter with death<sup>81</sup> and thus the scarcely comprehensible ability to return presents a different, but nonetheless powerful, instance of trauma for MS.

MS also experiences elements of shame as part of the trauma especially in reference to the surrender of their village and the raising of the white flag. The shame is a complex emotion for MS both in her part in the surrendering and the resultant return to the village. She indicates her shifting opinion on the subject when she states that "I now believe that it was a good step of the mayor"<sup>82</sup>, by implication informing me that her initial opinion was against the actions of the mayor, indicative of a working through of that particular part of the narrative.

The actual event occurred when MS was only twelve and, though the mayor was her cousin, her part in the action was insignificant. The shame she experience relating to the act of surrender,

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<sup>78</sup> MS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>79</sup> H. Weinberg, "So What is this Social Unconscious Anyway?" *Group Analysis* 40 (3), September 2007, pp. 307-422, 309.

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<sup>81</sup> S. Freud, *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, James Strachley (Ed. and trans.), 24 vols. London: Hogarth Press, 1953-74, xviii, ch. 2, 13.

<sup>82</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

therefore, is most likely derived from the collective consciousness of humiliation experience by the village as a whole, from which she derives her own sense of shame. This derived shame both illustrates the power of the collective consciousness and the complex relationship to the trauma which MS experiences.

#### 4.4 Psychological Effect on the child

The loss that MS feels regarding her family is clearly shared by GS and family features as an important part of his life. Many of his memories feature the same focus upon the members of his family that his mother remembers leaving and visiting the homes that were once theirs. MS lives in the same house as GS, the building divided horizontally, and her proximity is clearly important to him. This can be seen as feature of his shared value of family inherited from his mother's experiences during the Nakba.

GS associates a sense of shame with the members of nearby villages who worked with him on his father's farm to earn money. He tells me "they were forced to do it in order to live"<sup>83</sup> but his mother interjects, telling me that they earned from it, ascribing the emotion of shame where it may not have actually existed. He feels shame when discussing their village's successes when it is so poignantly contrasted with the fate of others. This mirrors MS's complex emotions regarding the fate of their village in comparison to others, but GS feels a far stronger sense of shame unbalanced, unlike his mother, by the positive element of their own village's success. GS states that both his parents were academically bright and learning the Hebrew language was a tough experience for both of them. The insistence they were both academically gifted is a potential means of countering the shame he imagines they felt in learning Hebrew. This ascription of shame to the narrative of the Nakba relates to the conflicting ego mechanisms between GS and MS, which are discussed in more detail later.

The subject which exhibits radical contrast between GS and MS is the element of surrender and the raising of the white flag. MS perceives the raising of the white flag as a positive act to save the village and, even when posed against the loss of dignity which she would suffer from it, asserts "Well we try, at least we try"<sup>84</sup>. GS however has vastly opposing views, seeing surrender as a sign of weakness and indignity. He tells that he would never have left the lands nor fled his

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<sup>83</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>84</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

home and would not have accepted raising the white flag. If, in the imagined scenario of his in which he takes his parents' place, he was offered a deal in which to divide the house between himself and an occupier, the best deal possible for him, he would still reject it. GS prides resistance and dignity over all else, even if it leaves him in a far worse position.

GS, in discussing his parents' actions, describes the actions of the previous generations as based upon fear. He believes that his parents' generation masked this fear by their assertion that they were doing "the right thing to guarantee them safety and their lands"<sup>85</sup>. GS appears to believe that the proper response to this fear is to fight and resist and that in putting the safety of them and their lands in front of their dignity they merely allowed themselves to succumb to that fear. The antithetical responses to the experiences of fear are a powerful indication of differing ego mechanisms to deal with trauma. MS experienced fear and, through the humiliation and helplessness she felt, reacted to it with passivity, accepting the scenario she was in and surrendering, the most pragmatic course of action. MS was not individually responsible for the act of surrender but, in a collective sense, was part of the decision. GS's parents, through the various manipulations of his ego mechanisms, led to a very different reaction, one of proactivity and aggression. This ego coercion was a response to their own unsuccessful attempts at mourning and the unconscious desire for the child to complete the mourning process.

GS experiences a complex relationship to land and property stemming from the dislocating events that his mother witnessed as part of the Nakba. These feelings manifest themselves in a sense disconnect, or in his words "a feeling of alienation"<sup>86</sup>, when GS considers his relationship to his own land and property. This disconnect likely stems from the conscious and unconscious conflict over the concept of land.

As discussed, GS's unconscious reaction to fear is antithetical to that of his mother's. GS therefore associates his parents' generation's actions with a sense of shame, but the result of such actions was the retention of their land and their property, land which he now lives on and property which he now owns. The lands, in his conscious perception, are legally and historically owned by him and the village in a collective sense but this comes into conflict with his unconscious which refutes the right to possess the same lands and property. GS associates the unconscious ownership with fighting and defending the land, not surrender, and therefore experiences a fundamental conflict. This conflict leads to the sense of disconnect, and feelings of anxiety. When referencing his mother's ability to ultimately remain in her home as the

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<sup>85</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>86</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

incomprehensible act of return, the “missed encounter with death”<sup>87</sup>, we can see that trauma is present in attempting to understand GS’s position on his land. His ownership of property may indicate his attempt to physically embody the return in order to fully comprehend and mourn it.

Evidence of this conflict and feelings of anxiety emerge during GS’s narrative. GS exhibits small physical signs of anxiety when discussing the properties which his mother’s family had confiscated, which he psychologically associates with his own relationship to the land. GS’s ownership of many properties in the village may also be feature of the traumatised self-representation deposited in him by his mother. This disconnect has resulted in anxiety for GS and his unconscious response to this has been to acquire more properties in the hope that this disconnect will fade. A common response to a traumatic self-representation is to acquire as much of the features of the trauma, to own them in a psychological sense, and in this way be able to control them. It is an attempt to externalise and control the traumatic self-representation in the external environment, with the aim of fully mourning the trauma. This alternative response to trauma, if successful, elides the progression of transgenerational transmission but nonetheless indicates powerful evidence of trauma transmitted from MS.

Property also emerges as a key feature when discussing the members of other villages who worked on his father’s farm, telling me “they had many, many properties and now they are being paid to gather the crops of others”<sup>88</sup>. The connection between the humiliation which he perceives them to experience and their status as property owners is a troubling one for GS and clearly causes anxiety. The association is disconcerting as it presents a very real example of the situation his parents would have been in if they had undergone the same response to the stimuli that he believes he would have had, of resisting.

#### 4.5 Conscious effects of trauma on the child

The transgenerational aspects of trauma within GS have engendered him towards a great deal of study of the events of the Nakba, combined with the innate interest of a Palestinian to such a crucial moment in their history. GS’s study into the Nakba has raised several conscious aspects

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<sup>87</sup> C. Caruth, “Parting words: Trauma, silence and survival” *Cultural Values* 5:1, 2001, pp. 7-26, 10.

<sup>88</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

which are both sophisticated and provide a contrast to the unconscious features of his traumatic self-representation.

GS's responses to the questions regarding his mother's experiences of the Nakba were immediate and, I regard, motivated by his unconscious emotions surrounding this topic. These answers were soon countered by a more measured and, what I deem to be, conscious response to the events. They can be classed as conscious for two reasons; they were delivered in a much calmer tone to the previous more impassioned responses and they also appear to be spoken from a point of rationality, fully considering the wider implications of his perspective rather than the narrower, short-term considerations of the unconscious.

GS's reading into the events of the Nakba, particularly into his own village's history and that of Tantura, a site of systematic execution during the Nakba<sup>89</sup>, has lead him to different conclusions to that of the trauma legacy of his family. Relating it to a case he read regarding Tantura he retells "the brother who fled survived and the one who remained was wiped out"<sup>90</sup> and then further relating it to the case of his own village; "it would have been suicide from her [MS's] point of view"<sup>91</sup>. GS appears to sway towards the logic of his parents' actions, that in enduring the indignity of surrender they allowed themselves to endure, to continue living in the same village. GS even acknowledges, albeit implicitly, his unconscious drive, his "immediate instinct"<sup>92</sup>, and that his view is metered by hindsight that he is "someone who didn't experience all that horror"<sup>93</sup>.

GS is caught in flux between his unconscious and his conscious; he arrives at the decision that his mother's actions were right but then "still feel[s] like a stranger"<sup>94</sup>, he reaches the decision that one should always resist but then realises the futility of such a response. He tells me "it's about defending stone or human beings"<sup>95</sup> and is a question which he cannot answer. This paradox forms part of the trauma legacy he has inherited, and is perhaps a question which will be passed on to his children for them to struggle with, perhaps successfully.

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<sup>89</sup> I. Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*, Oneworld, Oxford, 2006, 135.

<sup>90</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>91</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>92</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>93</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>94</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>95</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix



## 4.6 Mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of trauma

Of the three mechanisms of trauma transmission that can be measured by this study, psychological, societal and familial, elements of each can be seen in the interplay between the two interviews.

Traumatic damage to the features of maternal attachment, discontinuities in protection and care, were not observed, although this line of inquiry wasn't specifically pursued. MS did not appear to be unable to tell a sequential narrative, a common symptom of silencing. There also remains little evidence of silencing itself and no major features of her narrative needed prompting or were raised purely by her son. MS states "I talk about everything, I unfold all the details"<sup>96</sup> when discussing what she has explicitly relayed to her children and grandchildren. The current mechanisms of transgenerational transmission of trauma do not appear to have psychological features but this may be a result of trauma that, over the decades succeeding that Nakba, MS has been able to fully mourn. It remains unclear exactly what the scenario was during GS's formative years, and how MS approached the topic of the Nakba.

Silence features in familial mechanisms of transmission and the obfuscations of time which occlude the psychological mechanisms again represent a problem. The paradox of harm which shifts the communication of the trauma into unconscious and symbolic avenues features in GS's relationship with his father. He recalls his father telling him that sitting beneath his olive trees is "the best place he can feel relief... He couldn't imagine himself without the trees"<sup>97</sup>, an emotion which conveys a fundamental connection between one's own land and contentment. The features which impressed upon him most from his mother were those surrounding family, conveying an unconscious bias towards family and their importance to individual well-being. These messages, when overlaid onto the story of the Nakba, produce conflicting directives, exemplified in GS's struggle over the question whether to defend "stone or human beings"<sup>98</sup>. This element may also help to explain his struggle between his urge to resist and its wider consequences.

Shame is often experienced at a regional or national level and is another mechanism in which trauma can be transmitted. There are elements of group level humiliation in MS's recounting of the raising of the white flag by the village, which then relates to GS's feelings of shame who refers to the collective use of fear to cover for their actions. The sense of shame was passed on

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<sup>96</sup> MS, *Interview 5*, Appendix

<sup>97</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

<sup>98</sup> GS, *Interview 6*, Appendix

to GS despite his mother only being part of the collective group which surrendered, this highlights the power that the societal level of humiliation can impose on the individual. The feature of humiliation is especially prescient in Palestinian society where honour and dignity are highly valued traits.

#### 4.7 Tasks

Transgenerational transmission of trauma is effected by various tasks which the parent passes on to the child, with the overarching fantasy of the child successfully mourning the trauma.

Family is a central concept to MS's identity, accentuated through the events of the Nakba, and in the reactions of GS, it forms part of the task to care for and value family. The inverted ego mechanisms in GS, which were either encouraged by his parents via differing means or through other factors, have obscured other tasks relating to the more contentious aspects of MS's narrative. MS has undoubtedly deposited a traumatised self-representation in GS but, beyond the already valued task of the family, the task of mourning is given no further nuance. The unconscious fantasy is therefore that the alternative ego mechanisms will be effective in mourning and that the trauma can be worked through.

Other tasks passed down to GS have been obfuscated by the antithetical ego mechanisms engendered in him which have created a conflict between the different approaches to trauma. These tasks have been supplanted by a more general one which enigmatically restates the central tasks of 'mourn our trauma' as 'mourn our trauma – but not as we have done'. It is this perplexing tasks which has resulted in GS's powerful yet complex reaction to the trauma of his parents.

#### 4.8 Conclusions

The narratives of MS and GS exhibit many of the features of the theory of transgenerational transmission of trauma and other features of trauma study.

MS experienced elements of shame, helplessness and humiliation along with anxiety which she relates to specific elements of trauma but which also relate to many stimuli in her daily life since the event. The unconscious responses to the stimuli created an image of the trauma in GS

during his formative years. MS in an unconscious recognition of the inability of her ego mechanisms to work through their trauma effectively, encouraged inverse ego mechanisms in GS having the effect of an inverse response to the trauma by GS to that of MS. The unconscious response of GS to the trauma manifests in several ways, in his desire to resist and to place dignity in front of one's own safety but also in his conflicting approach to property. The property his family owns represents the shame of surrender to GS but it also represents the externalisation of trauma parallel to that of transgenerational transmission. This attempt to externalise and control his traumatic self-representation may prove an effective strategy for mourning the trauma and may also stop the trauma being passed down to the children of GS. This is a clear exposition of the fundamentals of Volkan's theory and asserts the value of assessing the Nakba as a site of trauma using a psychoanalytic model.

GS also exhibits the powerful conflict which can emerge between the conscious and unconscious perceptions of trauma and the anxiety which follows. The unconscious response to trauma is contrasted by GS's conscious understanding of both his parents' experience of trauma and of the Nakba as a whole. The conscious response is a more pragmatic and rational one, acknowledging the consequences of safety which surrender allowed and allying itself with the decisions taken by his parents and that of Palestinians as a whole. This conflict has left GS in a state of indecision but perhaps tempers his unconscious desires to resist, allowing him to lead a more measured life. The conflict between conscious and unconscious is not discussed by Volkan but, as this case proves, provides a powerful dynamic to the understanding of trauma.

## Chapter 5

### 5.1 Conclusion

In investigating the Nakba as a site of trauma, enabled by utilising psychoanalytical theories of transgenerational transmission of trauma, I have explored the pervasive effects of the Nakba on successive generations of Palestinians. Vamik Volkan's theory elaborates on the means by which trauma features in the relationship between parent and child leading to the child's inheritance of the trauma legacy. This iterative relationship continues between generations until the trauma is fully mourned but, with the daily traumas Palestinians face from the continuing Nakba, working through trauma is often impossible leading to lengthy and painful trauma legacies. The transmission of trauma through generations also elicits varied ego mechanisms which deal with trauma, which caused pronounced and often aggressive responses to trauma. The effects of such trauma are endemic, and modify the perceptions of the individual who witnessed the trauma and the generations which the witness is progenitor of. The traumatic effects are not only individual but expand to a collective and even national context weaving trauma into the fabric of Palestinian society.

The investigation not only confirmed the classification of the Palestinian Nakba as an incident of trauma but also facilitated the use of the psychoanalytic theory to elaborate on its traumatic features. The analysis was conducted largely within the framework of the model but several features emerged which challenged or added to the theoretical structure. The use of the parent as a means of psychic recovery, in the narrative of MA and NA, presents the corollaries of trauma as more pervasive and cyclical, rather than a purely linear transmission. The experience of SIS and his children indicates the dormancy of trauma within an individual and the inability to transmit trauma without a shared experience of loss. Finally the conflicting dynamics of conscious and unconscious features of trauma in the narrative of GS highlight the prominent role of the conscious elements of trauma and the value in including them into psychoanalytic models, such as that of Volkan. All of these features require further study to confirm and understand, and also invite further study into the Palestinian experience as trauma. Further

study into the effects of trauma into the various events of violence and unrest as corollaries of the Nakba is another avenue of valuable investigation.

Certain elements of Volkan's model which appear prescient to the study of the Nakba did not appear within the narratives gathered. The phenomenon of 'time collapse', commonly found in situations of continuous trauma, was not apparent and further study is needed to understand its absence. I was also unable to identify the characteristics of a perennial mourner within my work, which would be a commonly associated feature of Volkan's work with the events of the Nakba. It stands to reason that many of the individuals, in passing on their trauma, had at the least begun the mourning process, if not fully completed it.

The study of this nature demands a far greater magnitude of time and research to understand the full scope of Palestinian trauma. My work concerned only a handful of Palestinians living within Israel in a relatively local context. Study into the trauma legacies of Palestinians who live within the West Bank, within Gaza and those who are refugees is vital to gain understanding into the wider impact of trauma. The vastly different social contexts they inhabit and the multiplicity of different narratives will contain huge variants in the trauma suffered and its transmission into successive generations. An expanded temporal element is also necessary to understand trauma legacy. Narratives are constantly situated in the present and the shifting social contexts within which Palestinians live evoke vastly different elements contingent on the external reality and present trauma in entirely new ways. The Nakba is an ongoing process and the trauma which Palestinians face is unrelenting, with each new site of trauma adding to and modifying the experiences of the original site of trauma, the events of 1948. The potential for a wealth of work to be done lies with studying the traumatic effects of the Nakba and its corollaries and this work begins to examine a small section of this field.

The study of the Nakba through the lens of psychoanalysis highlights the deep, unconscious effects that the Nakba has created in the lives of Palestinians today. As opposed to the more wilful act of memory, it is a purely unacknowledged and predominantly undesired legacy which Palestinians carry with them. The fundamental elements of the unconscious which guide daily life remain affected by the Nakba and radically alter the way individuals react to their external environment. In a conflict plagued by violence, the study of trauma allows an understanding of the reactions of Palestinians to the persistent source of trauma, the presence of Israel. The collective effects of trauma also highlight the importance of trauma study. Numerous genocides and vengeful attacks have found their source in incidents of trauma similar to the Nakba, often repressed for many generations they emerge in immense uprisings of anger. It is very possible

that events such as the two Intifadas found their roots in the surreptitious effects of trauma as well as many other conflicts between the Palestine and Israel and many other conflicts to come.

The events of 1948 tore not only into the political, economic, geographical and social fabric of Palestine but also deep into the heart of every Palestinian. The incredibly personal experiences of the Nakba reverberate inside the depths of each Palestinian alive today, emerging only briefly in a silence, a look or a moment of sadness but, when considered collectively, represent a tremendous surge of emotion. It is these emotions which ensure the Nakba will always remain a part of Palestinian history but also as an intimate part of the lives of every Palestinian, as invisible as it is powerful.



## Appendices

### Interview transcripts

#### Interview 1 – SS

N: As much as possible in your own words can you describe the events whereby you were evicted from your home?

SS: I will start talking about the moment we were... we fled our village. My father was the priest of the village and that day we had a church ceremony; a memorial for someone who died from the village. The church was full with people from different villages, -----, ----- . At ten 'o clock we were sat inside the church, we heard noises outside the church, we heard people screaming. Some people came to the village saying that the Jews have started attacking the village and that we have to leave the village

People in the village started fleeing the village, also people who had gathered inside the church also started leaving the church, we went to their houses, we started collecting as many things as we could in order to leave My father told me not to leave to any place but to go to our house bring my two brothers and come back to the church where he was still there. When I went back to our house to bring my two brothers, the youngest one was nine years old and the oldest one was twelve, I found that the nine year old brother was still in the house because he couldn't run with people but the other one who was twelve, apparently went out with the rest of the people of the village to a nearby village called "B". When my youngest brother, the nine year old boy, saw me he started, because I wanted to bring my eldest brother, so I followed people trying to find him and bring him back and what happened was, the nine year old brother started running after me because he was scared and he wanted to follow, to be with me. I went out because I was trying to find my brother, I went out, I ended up in "B" together with the rest of the people but that the people who remained in the village were Christians, old Christian people who remained inside the church and old Muslim people who remained inside the mosque.

We stayed in "B" for three weeks and I learned later that my father took care of all those elderly people who remained in the village and a priest and he used to bring both groups food. Then the military ruler was inside the village, with some Jews, and that's why the people of the village ran away. And my father, as the priest, as the spokesperson of the village, based on his position, he wanted to make his best to bring the people of his village back. So my father went to the military ruler and told him that the people of his village are very poor, we have little kids, we have no weapons, we are not hiding anything and that it's about time we harvest our crops because otherwise we have no food. We had two mukhtars in the village; one that was responsible for Christians and the other one responsible for Muslims and the one responsible



for Christians I.S. [SS's father] and the other one responsible for Muslims, named S.H., and the military ruler asked my father to bring these two mukhtars with him and go to the people of his village in "B", ask them to come back because the military ruler apparently was convinced by my father's talk and to bring the people back from three places, not only "B" but also part of the people in the village ended up in the village of ----- and others ended up in the village of ----- and the rest were in al-Ba'ani. So he was asked to tell them to come back to the village holding up a white flag, entering the village with a white flag. He exited the village, he headed towards ----- and -----, the Israelis were watching him through their binoculars making sure he is going to these two villages and he met them and asked them to have the leading people among them come with him to meet the military ruler. So the leading people among these two villages refused to accompany the priest back to their village because they were scared. After he heard their attitude, the fact that they wouldn't come with him because we were scared, he said I can guarantee your safety, that nothing will happen, that we just have to meet the military ruler, but they were not convinced. The four of them still refused to accompany the priest and they told their families do not believe this priest he's just fooling you, misleading you, he wants to take us back and then to take us to prison. Four because each one of them was responsible for a family. Not all people who heard the four people of the families believed them, some of them wanted to go back with the priest to the village but then the four people said "What if the Jews their kill you?" so in the end they ended up remaining wherever they were in ----- and ----- and the priest ended up going back alone. So when he came back he found the military ruler waiting for him, and the military ruler used to speak Arabic, and he asked the priest "What happened with you?" so the priest explained that people refused to come back, wouldn't come back, because they are scared of you, because they think once they step in you may take them to prison or kill them. The military ruler, once he heard what the priest told him, he said "Ok, just to let you know, we wanted the people of the village to come back for your sake, for the priest's sake, but since they said no, and they refused to come back its good that they said no, not us. Tell them that from this day that they are not going to see their village anymore."

Three weeks after this incident the priest and the elderly people of the village, both Muslims and Christians, remained in the village together with the Jews and the military ruler. Then the army of Jaysh al-Inqadh, the Arab armies that claimed to come and save Palestinians. So three weeks after they appeared. So these groups, Jaysh al-Inqadh, appeared next to ----- and opposite to them, inside the village, were the Jews. At some point they started firing on each other. Jews on these troops of the Arab armies and the Arabs in return, so the Jews went out as the result of exchanging fire, the Jews went out of the village. So the troops of the Arab armies told the people of the village in ----- and ----- that the Jews went out of the village so if you would like to return to your village and take the things that you would want to take with you. So I returned with the people but I found that my father has already left the village to look for me. Back then, I was only fifteen years old. I entered my house, the house, I wanted to grab some things with me to take out with my just like the rest of the people, I was surprised to see one of the officers of the Arab armies saying "Leave everything here because you will come back." I waited there, I stood there after listening to that officer telling me to leave everything, I stood there waiting, hoping my father would appear among people to take me and my two brothers so I was surprised to see another officer or another soldier from these troops saying "Take everything! Take everything!" and I said "...But your colleague has just told me to leave everything?" He said "No, we have just received a message through the wireless, through the walkie-talkie, telling us we have received a message that the whole country was sold out by King Abdullah." He told me that they sold the country for the Jews, they got money in return so

“take your stuff and go out.” After being told to leave, I don’t know whether what he told me was the truth or not but this is what I was told by these two officers.

When this happened, I lost my mother nine months before all these incidents, I was an orphan, I lost my mother that’s why I was the only girl, the only woman in my family. So my grandmothers and my aunties asked me to bring my brothers and bring some food from my house and we started walking with the rest of the people. The rest of the people had some clothes some has some food; I packed some coffee, some Lebneh, and some things because I was worried for my two brothers, my little brothers, to feed them, and that’s it.

People ran away, we didn’t close our houses, nothing, we left the houses with all what they included inside, we left all their properties and I remembers walking and while leaving the village the Jewish artillery started bombarding us, shooting us, with heavy artillery. Bombs started falling next to us, we were so scared and my grandma told everyone to sleep on their bellies on the ground. And one of the bombs fell next to us in one of the water spots and sprayed all of us with mud, that’s what I remember. Because of the heavy shooting on us and the artillery and the mud, we couldn’t see well and people lost each other so we started running to all kinds of directions. Some of us went back to the villages that we came from, for example -----, ----- or “B”, some of the reached “B”, which is higher north, and they continued, some families continued to Lebanon, some families crossed to other Arab countries.

I remember the harvest so it must have been summer, I think its July because of the harvest because harvest time is July so it must have been July. We had some relatives in village called “L”, they had no priest there, we had some relatives there that’s why we ended up in “L” and we were planning to leave “L”. Had the borders remained open we would have continued to Lebanon but for some reason, the borders were closed so we had to remain in “L”.

We remained in “L” for about twelve years and my two brothers continued their studying in the school there and I got married a year after the occupation. My two brothers continued their studies and in order to proceed their studies they moved to ----- with my father and I remained with my husband and they continued their studies there and they stayed there up until now. My eldest brother was 57 when he died from a heart attack; he was a writer. Two of the kids of my eldest son live abroad, one of them in Colorado and three, the other three, live here still, my youngest brother is still alive and he lives in -----.

N: You were very young when it all happened and you said you felt maternally responsible for your brothers. Could you talk a bit more about how that made you feel in terms of the responsibility for your brothers?

SS: I was very sad, my two brothers were still very young, I was the eldest and my father was a priest, he cannot get married again. We used to have a blind woman from the same village who would come to their house to do the laundry for the kids. She used to come when my mother was still alive. After his wife died, the priest gave that woman a sum of money as saying thank you for what you have done so far but you cannot come in here anymore and then when that woman tried to find out why he said “I’m a priest and I lost my wife, if you keep coming in, and there’s no woman in this house, people will start to gossip and I don’t need, it I don’t want that gossip as a priest and as a man.” My father used to give shower to my youngest brother, I used to have my shower alone and I used to help my elder brother, the eldest one. I used to do the laundry for my two brothers, sometimes my father used to cook, sometimes I cooked what I

remember my mother doing and sometimes my grandma, who used to live next to us, guided me how to cook things and how to do things. Most of the food used to be herbs from around the lands of the village, what we planted as people.

As a little girl, I was deprived of the very basic feelings a girl, also of my brother, we were deprived of the very basic feelings of warmth, of love, of care, of having someone to clean things for you, of having someone to cook things for you. I was deprived of all this because I lost my mother and I also felt very sad for my father because I could see he was very sad because he lost his wife at a very young age and he found himself all of a sudden lonely and having to deal with three kids.

The relatives of the family came to the priest and said "Listen, there is a woman named M., in our extended family and she is willing to help you, to come now and then to cook for the family, to clean the clothes for the whole family up until the eldest gets married." This woman, my brothers came to the priest, she was married but had no kids and apparently she lived in the same village with them when they were young and she raised the priest when he was young so she knows him so after she heard the priest lost his wife and he was lonely she talked to my brother and told them to come back, the family, and help them even after we moved out of the village.

N: Concerning feeling deprived of warmth, how did the events of 1948 impact on those feelings?

SS: I remember that people were crying and I was crying for feeling scared and we lost everything. There's a sense of loss, we lost everything, we didn't know what to do, it's not easy for us to go out and leave everything behind, our houses, our clothes, our properties, our crops, our lands. People used to live off their crops, people would barter the crops amongst each other, but we lost everything and we couldn't go back and later on we learned that the Israeli army demolished all of the houses on top of all what we included in the houses and we learned also that the Israeli army took all the crops that we had in the houses, whatever we stored of food and what we planted.

My father, I couldn't see him happy anymore, he was very sad and got sick in the end and died. I remember every Independence Day for this state, he would go back to his village, enter the church where he used to lead the mass, and he would visit the graves, especially his wife's grave. The building of the church started collapsing because Jews and the nearby settlements started bringing their cows into the church. When he saw this scene, the scene, cows inside the church, he couldn't take it anymore, he felt that he couldn't see all of a sudden and he went out of the church and he fell immediately on the ground and I remember that he couldn't see anymore

Twenty-five years after leaving the village I've never seen my father happy again, I was sad, sad, sad, the whole time and I felt it and I couldn't do anything about it

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SS: His son, my brother, told my father "Let me take you to a nearby clinic so you get the right treatment" because it was very hot and he was bleeding a lot and we didn't know what to do with their father but the priest said "No, this clinic is run by Jews and I don't want to be treated by Jews. Take me to ----" there was a doctor, a famous doctor called Dr K., a Palestinian, and because he was losing a lot of blood so the brother did not want to wait and so he took him

eventually to the clinic of the Jews and we spoke in Arabic because we came from Yemen, these Jews.

Five years after this incident, the Jews demolished the church completely, we levelled it. I remember bulldozers coming in and demolishing the church. I remember that the bulldozers also pulled the stones and the bricks of the church aside and exactly where we church was we put a stable for cows and all kinds of sheep because the people of the village continued sneaking to their village every now and then, especially the priest and other bishops, and we held some masses just to, hoping we would come back at some point but eventually the bulldozers demolished the church, we knew that we wouldn't come back.

Six years ago, the Archbishop A.H., he brought a nun and together with the people of the village who are still alive and we went to the site of the church, we put fences around the site of the church, where the church used to be and we had an agreement with the nun and we put a tent for the nun there, to live there the whole time, hoping that we would keep in contact with the land, to keep the site, not to leave the land totally. We wanted this nun to remain there and we would see my every day to bring my food and to bring my anything that I needed, and then the settlers of the adjacent settlements found out about this. They contacted the official institutions and the army came and expelled the nun, of course ruined the tent, took out the fence and there was a cross also there, symbolising the church that used to exist there and they also took this.

I remember, very recently, before we even destroyed or demolished the church we held a mass their and there was an English journalist who came and asked the people questions and he asked them "Would you like to go back to your country, to your village?" and of course all of us said we would like to go back and he asked if anyone had anything to say in front of people and I was the one who wanted to. This is what I said:

"My village is my Mum, I grew up in my lap, and every time I felt hungry I was breastfed by my village, I grew up on the soil of this village, I would never forget every time my feet touched the stones of my village and I wished if I died I would die there. I feel dignity in living on the soil of my village, better than living outside of the village in a better life. I would rather be a prisoner on top of the soil of my village rather than free on the soil of another village. If I die I want to be buried there. I imagine the scene when I am buried, knowing that I will not be buried in my home village, that a passer-by would take a look at my tomb and say "My God, she is a stranger, she does not belong to this place, she should be buried in her original village". When I die I want my relatives to write on my tombstone that I was born in my village in "X" and that everyone who will see the writing on my grave will say "She is a stranger here".

I know that I will die at some point, that this will come at some point, but I know that even when I am buried under the soil of this village I will feel that the soil is very heavy, that it is not the soil of my home village, not the soil of my home land. Even when I am dead I will still feel sad, I will still feel a stranger, I will still feel miserable. Even under the soil I will still feel that pain.

I remember that the journalist started crying, the translator started crying and all the people who were there started crying also.

The day they demolished the church, I used to visit my village every year, every year, up until we destroyed the church. I stopped going, I could not take it.

## Interview 2 – SIS

N: Can you describe what your mother has told you about the events of 1948 in terms of the emotions you felt, rather than what you actually heard?

SS: I heard many things from my mother and father, my grandmother, grandfather. After that day, my mother is still in pain and she considers herself as one of the al-Birwa people, she doesn't belong to (current village). It's very painful for me, I have exactly the same feelings of my mother, it's very painful to drive past the lands of "X" and I cannot enter.

N: Do you feel there are any tasks you need to complete, that your mother could not complete, from the events of the Nakba?

SS: Currently, nothing but before, I had many things on my mind. It's more about feelings, I had feelings for the place; every year I used to visit the place with my parents and the rest of the "X" people. Also if there were any demonstrations to protest what was going on in "X" or what happened I used to participate

N: Do you talk about these events with your own children?

SS: I belong to the third generation and my children belong to the fourth generation. I tried to talk about it but I feel they are so disconnected, it doesn't mean anything to them, it's not relevant to them, it does not talk to them. I am very aware of the fact that fourth generations in any place in the world behave the same and in the case of France, how the refugees who came to France how during the fourth generation there just wasn't any relevance to the place their ancestors came from

N: How do you feel about the chain of remembering and passing on that sadness has been broken? Do you feel that something has been lost or do you understand, as you previously said, that this transmission would naturally fade away?

SS: I understand the disconnection and I am aware of the fact that people cannot keep living in their imaginations or memories, purely what is in their heads. All of my kids are in Universities now, they all study different subjects so they don't have the feeling of loss, the feeling of something missing. Maybe that's why it doesn't mean anything to them. Maybe others feel these feelings from the circumstances that they are living, that something is missing, that their falling behind in terms of economy. My eldest son is a doctor, a week ago he earned a scholarship from the minister of the current government and also last year he was awarded the award for top doctor. He doesn't really feel he is missing something in his career

I was born in this village, so I do have the feeling of belonging to this place but I do have a double sense of belonging; to the village of my parents and to this village because this village received my parents.

## Interview 3 – MA

NA also present

N: Can you give a brief overview of the Nakba, the moment when it happened?

MA: I was nineteen, twenty years old. My village is away from the centre, or any other towns and is five kilometres from the Lebanese border. It was said that the British mandate would end of the 15<sup>th</sup> May 1948, rumours leaked to the village, encouraging the locals to buy weapons because a war is going to break out between Jews and Arabs. We used to hear some of the news, on one single radio that was available in that village. The channel was called Sharq al-Adna, later it was known as London. They started seeing troops, apparently belonging to the Arab Armies and they were obliged also to participate in the act of protecting the village. The first attack that was launched by Jews on the village was in August 1948, it lasted for about five hours; about three and a half hours of firing, and the rest, an hour and a half, was a bombardment by heavy artillery. None of the locals of our village evacuated the village or ran away. We remained there, nobody was scared, and nobody was hurt at all.

There were three fronts, including resistance acts against Israeli troops, three remained until October; the first was A-S, the second, N-T. These two fronts constantly resisted because they were attacked several times but the third front, the village of "I", the village I originally come from, was attacked once, as mentioned before. We noticed on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of October that the fronts were beginning to collapse. The Arab armies, that used to be stationed on the first two fronts, left. At the third front, of "I", we had twenty people, formerly of the Arab armies, and weren't exactly soldiers. They dressed in civilian clothes and were prisoners from Syria, Lebanon and Iraq and some of them even from Palestine.

NA: Some of them were criminals.

MA: I participated in guarding the village and I remember those who guarded the village with me; two Shi'ite people, one from a neighbouring village called -----, today is known as ----- and a settlement, two Yugoslavian Jews. Those who guarded the village were of many different nationalities, under the umbrella title of the Arab Armies. They misled us and made it seem as though they were there to protect us. There was a man, A.M., who during January and February disappeared all of a sudden and then reappeared all of a sudden in July. I knew, just as the rest of us knew, all the ranks within the Arab armies were traitors. We knew because they all disappeared all of a sudden. If they were not traitors, why, just in one night, did they all disappear, without warning us without telling us anything they left us alone. And Abu Marwan brought with him a Yemeni Jew to the village. We had clear orders not to fire back, not to retaliate, even if we were fired on by Jews, we were given clear order not to fire back. I remember the two Yugoslavian Jews very well; once, my sister brought me some food to eat in the shared bunker and I invited these two Yugoslavian guys, and I remember that they, unlike the other members who were in civilian clothes, they were wearing uniforms and were organised into an official army and I invited them to share my meal but they wouldn't reveal or expose their faces. I think because they didn't want me to learn their facial features by heart. And they covered their face when they learnt I spoke and understood English very well. After the two Yugoslavian guys left, they were replaced by a troop from Saudi Arabia, which I could tell from rumours and they were singing a song "Today, Friday for us, tomorrow, Saturday, and Sunday for the Christian" attempting to divide the Jews and the Christians.

NA: The last spot that was occupied by the Arab armies was -----, now -----, and from there they fled the country and were never seen again.

MA: When we recognised that the first two fronts collapsed on the 28<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> of October we went to the top of the church and raised a white flag and the armies started shooting at whoever was on top of the church and the flag. On Saturday, it was the October 30<sup>th</sup> 1948, my

late father toured the bunkers around our village and found only five people, five soldiers who belonged to the Arab armies and none of them recognised the other. So my father collected them and asked them to leave, and my father noticed that on that Saturday it was so quiet, nothing was there. The residents of "I", every Thursday a lot of them used to visit the markets in Lebanon especially ----- market because they lived close to the borders going to Lebanon was a habit, a normal one. So when those five people left, as my father asked them to, on that day 80% the villagers were inside that village and didn't leave and the rest because they were used to going back and forth to the Lebanese markets, some of them were in Lebanon.

NA: Just to mention something important, ask him [my father] why you raised the white flag on top of the church?

MA: Because we heard that the other two fronts, collapsed and weren't fighting some of them had left even. We decided to raise the white flag conveying the message of "We surrender, we don't want to resist, we don't want to fight but we want to stay in our village." The night that we were attacked for the first time, we heard from the radio that the Israeli army attacked the village of "I" and killed about sixty people and we were shocked because no one was killed and we were listening to it inside our village.

On Saturday, I and another four people, young men from the village, decided to leave the village and be positioned on a hill opposite to the hill where the bunkers guarding the village were located. While positioned on the hill opposite to the hill of their village, we could see when the night came because it was dark so they could see the sparkle of lights of the cigarettes and matches of the Israeli army and that was how we knew that the Israeli army was approaching the sites of the bunkers. That group of Israeli soldiers approached the eastern side of the village through a smoke bomb conveying the message that we are approaching you. A group that consists of the priest of the village, the mukhtars and some other dignitaries who went out to talk to this group of the Israeli army.

I remember that part of the Israeli soldiers, there is an adjacent Kibbutz, Kibbutz -----, which already existed, and I was shocked to see that part of my neighbours from Kibbutz ----- were members of that group attacking my village.

We saw the officer that came with this Israeli group and they recognised him that he was the same man who was with A.M. who was with us in July. He was the officer leading this military group coming to occupy their village and the mukhtar and the priest of the village sent four men away mainly to ----- in Lebanon asking them to call those there to return with the nine arms. There were only nine arms within the village, and we had smuggled them away to ----- knowing that if the Israeli army had found these weapons the people holding the weapons would die; so we had to smuggle these weapons to Lebanon.

We were asked to return from the opposite hill, we had 30 arms and we brought these and we were shocked to see the number of Israeli soldiers already in the village. I saw some men that were asked to stand against a wall in the western side of the village and the other guys who were sent out of the village to -----to call the other people to make them come back to the village and these other people brought back these nine arms so that's all the weapons we had.

Once I entered the village, I together with another eleven men were asked to line up against a wall and turn their faces towards the wall and then the priest saw that scene from atop the hill and he went down asking the officer "What are you doing? Are you willing to shoot these men?" That's when we saw the man who used to come with Abu Marwan to our village to be

one of the soldiers and one of the officers to be in the army group that came to occupy our village, the priest of the village, I.K., he told them "Are you willing to do the same as you did in other villages? Making people line up against walls and shooting them?" The answer the priest got was "Father, don't worry, we picked these guys to open the street to make it clear, because we are expecting trucks and tanks to come in" And that is when we saw trucks and tanks coming in from the direction of -----.

The people of the village were worried for their unknown destiny, we had to kind of cook feasts for the army, hoping maybe they wouldn't harm us, they would do anything to us and I remember that they had breakfast and they had lunch and they had dinner in the village with the people of the village. The officer also asked the villagers to take water from their village to the soldiers after the roads were open around the village because the soldiers had no water.

The Israeli army occupied the military camp that was located between "I" and ----- that used to belong to the so called Arab armies and they were located there. On November 4<sup>th</sup> of the same year, the [Israeli] army told the people of "I" that "Don't worry you are our neighbours we are willing to perform a kind of cleansing to the borders." In order to perform this cleansing for the borders, the Israeli army asked all the villagers of "I" to leave their village so their mission can be performed temporarily, claiming it's safer for them because they are worried for their safety. The Israeli army suggested alternative places that we can go to and they mentioned -----, ----- or across the borders. We, as the villagers, refused all these suggestions. As an alternative offer, because we refused the first one, the Israeli army suggested that they take most of the women and children to move to the village of ----- again claiming they are concerned for the safety of the villagers, so that what happened. Only around fifty people remained in the village accompanied by five people.

From the 4<sup>th</sup> of November to the 8<sup>th</sup> we started being convinced that there is something wrong but during that period of time the Israeli army brought its own trucks loaded people on these trucks and transferring them to the village of ----- and that's when about 50 to 60 people were left in the village accompanied by five men from the village who used to work in the camp next to the village with the Jews, serving in the camp.

NA: At that time, because of the military regime in the Galilee, to move from place to place you must have permission from the military ruler. So when they asked for permission two weeks later to move from ----- back to "I" the ruler of -----, which was Y.M., didn't allow the villagers to return back, or give them permission for transportation, that was delayed and delayed for three months.

MA: Three months after the incident I talked about, the group of soldiers that was located in the village was changed by a new group which started asking new questions "what is this village?", "What's happening?", "Why only 50 to 60 people?" so the locals, the 50, 60 people who remained in the village told the story to the new group of soldiers

NA: The new battalion, the commander of the new battalion which came to the village to the area of the village saw 50, 60 people and asked why they were there. So he ordered them to move to ----- as well, and the village remained empty of people but with the food and belongings of people remaining in their houses.

MA: We were loaded onto truck and were annexed to our brothers and sisters in ----- and the village was closed, we took nothing from their houses, we left everything. After the village was completely empty, people from all over the area started sneaking to the village and stealing



everything they could get to and I remember I was sleeping in one of the rooms of my house and two guys entered and wanted to steal tobacco because "I", like many Arab villages, used to plant tobacco, which used to be exported to London. That was the only product which used to generate money for our village.

When we arrived to the village of ----- we found a lot of empty because people have already heard about the chances of war so they left their houses and their countries and fled apparently to Lebanon. So we found empty houses and ended up settling in the empty houses of -----.

While staying in -----, we heard the news about their houses being robbed by different people so we decided one night, 120 men decided to leave the village of ----- and went back to their village spent the night there trying to guard their village and in the morning when the army again saw them they said "Take all the things that you want and leave the village *now* and you're not allowed to come back"

The army helped us all these three times to upload its own trucks and lorries, to load them with their own private things from their houses

Nine months after this incident one of the elderly people of "I", while staying in -----, passed away and some of the men decided to take the body and bury it in the cemetery of our village, "I". While descending the hill, two Israeli military jeeps saw us and starting investigating us trying to find out what we were doing there, so they told the soldiers "We have just buried one of our dead". They asked us to go back to where they buried him, they asked us to take the body out again and to take it out of the village and not to bury it there so they had to go out to the village of ----- and bury the body there. Then, after that incident, six to seven of our houses were demolished by the Israeli army, ones surrounding the cemetery of "I", including the house of the man who had just died.

Six months after this incident, the mukhtar of our village passed away and the people decided again to take a chance this time and take the body up to the village to be buried. We were seen again by the Israeli army but this time the Israeli army did not take the body from them because a man from the Druze village of -----, his name was J.D., was a mediator with the Israeli army and the people of "I" to allow them to bury the body of the old mukhtar in the village and not take the body out. So that was the first body that was buried there and wasn't taken out, but after that another five or six houses were demolished.

Every time one of the people of "I" died in ----- and the people decided to bury the body the Israeli army would demolish another five to six houses.

In April 1949 the people of "I" appointed a lawyer called M.H. to represent them and they went to the supreme court of Justice asking the government to allow the people of "I" to go back to their village. The verdict of the court was to allow the people of "I" to go back, on -----, but the military rule was still there but because of the military rule was still there the military decided to come up with an excuse that our people cannot go back because our village is located next to the borders and we cannot go back. And even as a kind of punishment they were teasing us the whole time, for six to seven months we were not to leave the village of ----- and we were not even given any permissions, even if we asked for them from the military ruler. Only in very few cases, when it comes to dealing with very sick people.

In retaliation for the verdict of the Supreme Court the Israeli army decided to bombard the rest of the village and destroy the houses on -----, bearing in mind that ours was a Christian village. The tanks and artillery were position on the Eastern side of the village and they just bombarded

the whole village. That's when we recognised that the bombardment was a turning point in our history and we recognised that we had become internally displaced, refugees.

In -----, there was no occupations, no work places, nothing really to benefit from so we started receiving aid from UNRWA and the Vatican. This even was banned by the government also who stopped all this aid that we would receive.

The military ruler began to look at the village as individuals or families rather than as a whole village. For example I would apply to get permission from the military ruler to travel to my family in ----- or to bring something from but that family has to apply for permission from the military ruler for him to complete this request.

It was a life of misery, sadness. We were scattered all over the place and we decided not to get married for two years, all of us had the decision not to get married for two years. We were not allowed to go back or even to visit our lands, our houses our village only during Israeli Independence Day were they allowed to visit our village. The first marriage that took place after we were forced to leave was in 1957, so nine years, no celebration, because celebration meant being happy.

Families were torn apart, because in ----- there were not enough occupations so we had to break up as families so one of my brothers went to Haifa, one of my brothers went to -----, one of them staying in ----- and a fourth remained in -----. Families were torn apart, because they were forced to break apart to find work.

NA: In 1969, the Defence Minister of Israel, declared there are no more military zones in Israel and that means we can visit every place and since that time we are visiting frequently "I". At that time, when we heard the declaration the old people of the village, one of these was my grandfather, they left the village to go to "I", they cleaned the church where cattle had been housed and the old men from our village, from our community for six, even seven years. At that time the struggle of the "I" people reached its climax in '72,'73 with the Bishop Y.R.. One of the biggest demonstration was in October 1972 was in Jerusalem was about 5,000 people, demonstrating in Jerusalem, a lot of them Jewish also. Since that time, our struggle started to reach the public agenda in Israel.

MA: Now I want to speak English. During the independence war, which happened before 67 years, we preferred to remain in our village. Our village is the Christian community in the area, we prefer to remain in our village to live with our neighbours, the Jews, to live with the Jews. We think that we fight the fight but at last it appears we don't think about it to live with the Jews. We fight the transfer. The Jews, the nation of the Bible land.

We always had our neighbours and they were Jews and we had no problem with the Jews but in the end after all the facts were revealed, we found out the opposite. We thought that just as we like to live with them they like to live with us, but we found out the opposite that they played a major role in displacing us, in destroying our village, in expelling us out of our village.

I visit my village every week, yesterday I slept there. I take care of the trees that are still there. Every time I come back to (current village) I feel very tired, not only physically but mentally and I will remain in this situation for two to three days. I am 87 years old.

NA: He sleeps inside the church and I ascend that long street in the village by foot, and walks around the whole village just from memory. He sleeps in the church and wakes up at 4am and

begins work. When I ask him where he gets the energy to do all this he says “When I am in “I”, I feel as if it is before Independence and I am 19 or 20 again”.

What he always asks is “Which stage are we in, in our struggle? What are we doing now?” This morning he came to my house in the other side of the village, he asked me what happened with the meeting with the Pope, we met with the pope a year ago when he came, he asked “Is there any news any follow up from his promises?” He asks why we are not making a presentation for a new Arab party. He wants to meet with all the members of the Arab parties, to place the case of “I” on the public agenda.

## Interview 4 – NA

N: How did your father’s experiences, for instance his return to the village, impact on your behaviour? Do you feel the urge to go with him?

NA: In my case I grew up in this story, this tragedy. I heard all the stories from my father and my grandfather when the family gathers for any occasion they talk about memories from “I” the struggle what they are doing. I always heard the sadness and how they expressed their sadness. In this atmosphere we grew up. I don’t remember if I saw my dad happy, even in happy occasions like my son’s birth and my marriage. He passed down the legacy of the family and also the tragedy. I also feel that I carry a testament, a kind of testament. To continue to the struggle, to continue the right to return. What my dad didn’t mention, that the only permission we have to return to “I” is when we die. When somebody from our community dies they give permission to bury the dead in the “I” cemetery. So you can say that the only life place is the cemetery.

N: Your father mentions the splitting up of families being something traumatic to him. Do you think that this has impacted on you relationship with your family?

NA: In our case, in our community case, despite the separation and despite the evacuation and the time of disconnection between families, between brothers even, we still have a, we’re still living as a community. We still meet on every occasion and when somebody dies, everybody comes to the funeral. We have all the community, most of the community, coming to pray in “I” church and we also celebrate our holy days there, the mass of the Christmas in “I”, of Easter and some weddings. We live in kind of social relations, despite the separation, stronger much more than other communities. People envy us, our people. What my father passed down to me, I also passed down to my son.

N: How have these feelings impacted on him, your son?

NA: He, since he was five years old, participated in the summer camp [in “I”]. Mainly we make workshops about the legacy “I”, of the community about the places touring the place. Most of the children of “I” know where their home place, and land and their neighbours were and are. In some workshops, we evoke the memory of the old people, and to tell the young generations about “I” and the history of “I”.

N: Your father mentioned the moment he realised they were an internally displaced person. Do you regard yourself as internally displaced, or is this place home?

NA: I still belong to “I”. Strongly belong.

You know we are living in (current village), this is my village now, but emotionally now, and our relevance, our memories, everything, is related to "I". Also there is no social life here.

HS: Those in (current village) know that these people are from "I" still. They are still as much as a part of the village as anyone else; but they are known still as the people of "I".

NA: Some of the displaced refugees, other villages, when you understand them as people of ----, it is a bad connotation, but in our case it is fine, we feel ok with this character

HS: In other villages the tag of 'internally displaced' provokes negative connotations as if they are excluded. But here they feel proud from where they come from but the title of internally displaced or refugees does not make them feel inferior.

NA: People in our villages did not purchase any houses until 1961. To buy a home, the first one was my grandfather, that means you forget, "I" that you have surrendered to this situation. The purchase of the home was because of other circumstances because the landlord wanted to sell the house and the fear of my grandfather was that the new landlord will ask him to evacuate. Despite that he got a negative response, and all the people said that N., my grandfather, I share his name, had given up the case, the struggle. The interpretation of this act, some people of the community understand but some of them also didn't agree with this.

N: Well, we've covered a lot, so I think that's everything. Thank you.

NA: You're welcome.

## Interview 5 - MS

N: What was your role in the Nakba, as you experienced it?

MS: I was twelve years old when these incidents took place, in 1948. We heard that the nearby villages had been expelled, people were expelled from their villages; ----, ----. We were afraid and we were also told that the Jews were coming to occupy (current village), or to invade (current village) and so a lot of people had to leave their houses and they fled to the adjacent village the Druze village of "Y". And I remember at that time my father was working with wheat, in -----neighbourhood, known for where people gather their crops and work with the wheat crops. So I left together with my mother to "Y". My father refused to leave the house, he told us "Even if I die I will not leave my house, if you want to leave you leave, I don't want to leave" So my mother used to come back every day to cook, to give her husband some food and then take the rest of the food to me.

I remember one of my uncles called S., he had two boys and two girls. He was so scared and worried for the safety of his family, he told the family that he was crossing the border because he cannot take any risks and his kids were very, very young. So on a donkey that he had, with panniers, he put each two kids in each of the pockets and by foot he went all the way from (current village) to ----, another Druze village, and he continued to the mountains heading north, that's how he crossed the borders, first he reached Lebanon and that's how he left to Amman.

I remember leaving the school and immediately going up to "Y". I still remember people flocking in masses going up to "Y" and "D", the two adjacent Druze villages. All the people who left (current village) spent a whole week in the olive lands, under the trees because they had no

place to go and afterwards some people from "Y" or Julis made them rent houses there. I remember that people all talked about the Jews coming to (current village) and doing what they did in other villages because while staying in (current village), the people of (current village) heard the shots that were fired over the two nearby villages ----- and -----and we learned later that the Jews entered these two villages and expelled the people there and killed many others so we were so scared and that's why the moment we heard about the Jews coming we had to take our families, our kids, everything, and just leave the village

My two sisters, were pregnant, my late sister, who died just a month ago, delivered a daughter who died immediately after giving birth because she couldn't take the stress of displacement. My other sister was pregnant as well, who delivered her baby a week after we returned to the village after staying in "Y" for a whole month.

We heard the news that Y., who was the mayor of (current village), had agreed to raise the white flag and he told the rest of the village, if we raise the white flag, maybe we can keep the people of the village safe because now you are displaced. Even after we came back some people did not come back and they remained in Lebanon because they couldn't believe that it was safe. So we came back after we knew about surrendering to the Jews, and we trust our mayor, Y., who said "What would they do to us? At least let's be in our village and not in another place" The mayor was my cousin.

I now believe that it was a good step of the mayor that he surrender otherwise they would have face the same destiny of other villages who refused to surrender and as a result were displaced, or are still displaced.

I remember that all the people that fled from ----- and -----, I remember them coming to (current village)

N: Compared to other villages, does you feel lucky in comparison to other villages, that you were allowed to return?

MS: Of course, they lost everything, their houses, their lands, their families and up until today we still call them refugee. I feel lucky in my house, my lands. For example -----, -----, half of this village is populated by refugees from nearby villages. Had we fled the country or crossed the borders we would have faced the same destiny, just like the refugees who were locked out and were not allowed to return and lost everything.

I remember one of my uncles, before 1948, took his kids on a trip to study at the American University of Beirut because there were no universities here and they did not take anything, thinking they were going on a trip. He never came back, he died a short time afterwards after he heard about what happened to his homeland and the fact that he can never come back to his home and his lands.

N: How do you talk to your children about these events, and how do these events feature in your children's lives?

MS: Up until today, whenever I am asked by my children or grandchildren about what happened, I talk about everything, I unfold all the details, I talk about it. I remember women, who in 1948, I remember a woman she had her first son, he was four days old, people panicked. She just grabbed her new-born baby, she started running up to "D" and "Y" to protect her new-born baby.

I remember massive numbers, my own family, one of my uncles used to have eighteen kids; none of them remained here. During the British Mandate, one of my uncles, his name was N.M., he was the manager of the Office of Archaeology, I never saw him again.

Only two of my cousins came back, thirty years after 1948. One of them after receiving a British passport and one of them after receiving another foreign passport. That's when they were able to enter Israel, with foreign passports, that was the first and the last time they met our families who remained here. They died abroad in Lebanon and no one could attend or reach them abroad.

N: It appears that one of the messages which emerges from the story is that surrendering and peace allowed you to continue living in their village. How do you feel this message has impacted on her life? Are you more accepting of events? How did this affect you raising your children?

MS: No, we did not surrender in the beginning but we fled the village to protect ourselves. If this act guarantees not losing the lands I would do it because what I have in my memory is villages being destroyed completely, massacres being committed, a lot of people being shot, sometime because they tried to resist and also losing their lands and houses and whole villages and whole life and every property they used to own. I see that I did it in this case and it worked.

N: And if it happened again, would you do the same?

MS: No, if this happened again, I wouldn't accept it, I wouldn't allow the occupation, it's not easy to expel people out of their houses, and it's not easy to confiscate your land.

N: And even if raising the white flag means you lose dignity from your life? And if it does not guarantee you retain your home?

MS: Well we try, at least we try.

## Interview 6 – GS

N: How has what happened to your mother affected you emotionally?

GS: I mostly remember her talking about her uncle and cousins, always remembering him coming to the village and visiting the family and when we were. I think my first visit to Akko was with her and telling me that, I don't remember the exact place, but I remember her telling me that this was his house. Now it's settled by others, and I don't think it exists to this day. These are my first memories, and always talking about some properties that the family had confiscated. She told me a lot about school, it was strange for her to accept the Hebrew language, it was so weird for her and her father was not ready for mixed classes. Although she was brilliant at school, as I was told by many of her generation. But 1948, 1949 she was obliged to leave school and this was a very bad memory for her.

The memories, many families came they, I mostly remember these things because in 1981, I think, or 1982 there were some clashes with the neighbouring Druze village of "D", because of a soccer game. I was six or seven by that time, and I remember about thirty people of my family came to our home because we were somehow far from the clashes. And then she was telling me that she remembered about 1948 when they had to leave their home and stayed for about a month. They went to "Y", it's a nearby village.

I also remember that my father didn't accept under any circumstances to learn the Hebrew language although he has a fluent and very rich English, he was with the frontier forces of the British mandate in Jordan and learned Physics and I have lot of his notebooks but when he was forced to learn Hebrew he wasn't ready for that. Until his last day he was writing everything in Arabic, or in English for the quotes for the government offices and stuff like that. He was a farmer so what he was telling me was about the olive trees and what he had planted with his father and that this is the best place he can feel relief and he can understand the sorrow of everyone that was forced to leave their home. He couldn't imagine himself without the trees and living beside the trees so this was a childhood memory from my father. These are most of the things that I remember.

Many things afterwards I read about, a novel about Tantura. I remember in my early years, many of our neighbours here are refugees, they were forced to leave their villages which were very close to our village such as 'Amka and Wikat. As a means of earning money, I still remember the agony of the refugees when they were forced to help me, my father, my family collecting, not helping, they were forced to do it in order to live. In spite of the fact that they had many, many properties and now they are being paid to gather the crops of others while their lands are occupied. He was an old man, he's not alive anymore.

N: Concerning the story of your mother and they raised the white flag which saved them; I wonder if this had affected you, in being more accepting of your fate?

GS: When I grew up and I heard all these stories and I do remember this story about raising the white flag but there is a great conflict between my attitude and my parents' attitude. Had I been born back then I wouldn't have agreed at all to either flee my house, leave my lands or even accept to raise the white flag. Today if someone comes and tells me that they are willing to divide half of my house and that this is the best option for me I would not even think about partitioning the house, giving up even a part of it. I think the feelings they had back then was fear and an excuse to cover for their fear as if they did the right thing to guarantee them safety and their lands.

This point in particular is sophisticated, it's not black and white. Looking back at the events, maybe back then it was the right decision to raise the white flag, and throughout history. I am aware that the IDF and Israeli troops used the techniques of fear to force people from their homes and to claim that they left willingly. But in (current village), it was not used, my mother heard fire in the nearby village to scare them into leaving, but looking back now, maybe I'm someone who didn't experience all that horror, maybe if I lived back then I would have reached the same decision. I can understand both decisions, those who decided to leave and raise the white flag and surrender because I look at it as an insulting attitude to take.

For example in the story based around the massacre in Tantura, there are two brothers because they face this same conflict; to leave or to stay. The brother who decided to leave tried to explain saying we know we've been sold out, there's no such things as the Arab armies if we resist we won't succeed and make it out, we are doomed and he took his family out past the borders and reached the southern part of Lebanon and lives there to this day, having succeeded in protecting his family. While the other brother who decided to stay and remain and struggle he died, along with his wife, his family, his children, were all shot dead in the massacre. Connecting back and forth in memories the things I have heard from my parents and what I am reading, I understood the conflict, I understand the attitude of both people and I understand

the paradox and I agree with both of them. The brother who fled survived and the one who remained was wiped out.

My personal opinion, as a land owner in my land, I do not feel the utmost level of dignity although this is my land and I do own these olive trees and these olive yards but I still have this feeling of alienation in my own land, on top of my soil and on the other hand I try and compare it and contrast it to those who had to leave their countries, their own countries. It's about defending stone or human beings. Those who had to flee their countries and ended up dying strangers on the soil of other lands, deprived of their own rights, their own lands, their own properties, they died with deep magnificent sorrow in their hearts. Now I weigh things; was it better to flee the country and die away from your soil or was it better to stay and surrender and stay on your own soil but still feel like a stranger.

If I want to talk about my immediate instinct, if I ever faced such a case, it's normal, it's natural that the first thing to pop up is resisting. With my instincts and of the events of today, I would prefer to resist, to die while resisting, struggling to maintain and keep my land because that way at least I live in dignity and I die while knowing that I still own my land and that I died defending my own land. The situation now is that we stayed, and we are still here but I don't feel the same dignity. The historical destruction of the Israeli army has destroyed what was here.

The basic feelings of belonging or the components of your own Palestinian identity do not exist anymore, in terms of language, in terms of the sense of belonging.

The problem with our case, all decisions that you reach are correct. In the end, those who decided to leave were right, those who decided to stay were right. In the end those who remained here are a threat to this Israeli state, they are the thorn in the throat of the Israeli system. We would have been demolished if all the people took the decision to struggle but it is not correct to look at it from this time of being because in the end it's the history of my life, what I have read and heard, has made me reach this decision.

I remember the case of Stalingrad, when the Russian army sacrificed 20 million soldiers and the states only stepped in after these deaths, after they were trying to protect the world from the Nazis. I know we're not a great army and we don't have the means of the Russians but we did defend their country and other countries.

MS: We couldn't have done it because things were clear to people here that the British Mandate had already set things for the Jews and sold the country, so even if we resisted they had the weapons. The Jewish troops who came and the first or the second Aliyah came here ready with all the plans in their heads, they were guaranteed this land. Not only psychologically but they were given all the means they needed to establish the Jewish state on the lands of Palestine, especially in terms of weapons. That's what made both side unequal, there's no way we could have resisted even if we had wanted to

GS: It would have been suicide, from her point of view.

MS: I remember the names of my cousins, who had to flee, his sons were very, very young and I remember how they cried a lot when the family split. We could not stop him because he expressed his deep fears and he wasn't ready to lose his kids. There was no way he could give up his decision. I remember seeing him crossing the borders and from there I never saw them again.



GS: I still remember the sentence of my father; people did not imagine that those who fled the country would never come back. Would never be able to come back to their countries, would never be able to see you again. There were no proper goodbyes because they couldn't even imagine that they would never see each other again.

# Consent Form

Research Project: How the conflict between Palestinian and Israeli memory of the Nakba has been affected by the passage of time

## CONSENT FORM

I, the participant, have been fully informed about the aims and purposes of the project.

I understand that:

- there is no compulsion for me to participate in this research project and, if I do choose to participate, I may at any stage withdraw my participation and may also request that my data be destroyed
- I have the right to refuse permission for the publication of any information about me
- any information which I give will be used solely for the purposes of this research project, which may include publications or academic conference or seminar presentations
- if applicable, the information, which I give, may be shared between any of the other researcher(s) participating in this project in an anonymised form
- all information I give will be treated as confidential
- the researcher(s) will make every effort to preserve my anonymity

		/ /
(Printed name of participant)	(Signature of participant)	(Date)

One copy of this form will be kept by the participant; a second copy will be kept by the researcher.

Contact phone number of researcher: Nick Peddle; 07972830198

Contact phone number of dissertation supervisor: Ilan Pappé; 01392 724095

If you have any concerns about the project that you would like to discuss, please contact:

Nick Peddle, Exeter University, np277@exeter.ac.uk

OR

Ilan Pappé, Exeter University, I.Pappe@exeter.ac.uk

Data Protection Act: The University of Exeter is a data collector and is registered with the Office of the Data Protection Commissioner as required to do under the Data Protection Act 1998. The information you provide will be used for research purposes and will be processed in accordance with the University's registration and current data protection legislation. Data will be confidential to the researcher(s) and will not be disclosed to any unauthorised third parties without further agreement by the participant. Reports based on the data will be in anonymised form.

# Information Sheet

## Participant Information Sheet

Title of Research Project: How the conflict between Palestinian and Israeli memory of the Nakba has been affected by the passage of time

I would like to invite you to take part in my research study. Before you decide, I would like you to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. I am happy to go through the information sheet with you and answer any questions you have.

Please inform me if **anything** is unclear.

The research will concern understanding the memories of the Nakba held by both Israelis and Palestinians and how these memories have changed for those who were alive at the time of the Nakba and how these memories have been passed down to their children and their children's children. I am defining the Nakba as the primary expulsions and events in 1948 and 1949 and, though many believe that the events of the Nakba are ongoing, I am looking primarily at these events, if only as a starting point to the memories. My work looks to understand how these two memories differ from each other and the events as they happened. The purpose of such a project is to allow a greater understanding of these events and to also more fully understand the memories of those who witness such a traumatic event. The event is a contentious one in the field of world politics and to revive the past is to revive the importance of the Nakba.

It is entirely up to you to decide to join the study. I will describe the study and go through this information sheet. If you agree to take part, I will then ask you to sign a consent form. You are free to withdraw at **any** time, **without** giving a reason. This would not affect the standard of care you receive.

Your participation in this research will involve a single interview session. You may need to remain in contact with myself if you wish for their interview to be used in other projects which aim to remember the Nakba. The interviews will be recorded by using an audio recorder and written notes, a translator may also be present for purposes of communication. Your participation in this research will be entirely anonymous and confidential. I will follow ethical and legal practices and all information about you will be handled in total confidence.

You will be participating in an interview where we will discuss your role in the events of the Nakba, if you were alive at the time, or those who participated in the Nakba and the effects upon your perception of the Nakba, if you were born after the events of the Nakba. The discussion will be centred around the events of the Nakba but with emphasis placed on the

psychological effects of the events rather than the events themselves. Questions which I may ask will seek to understand the effect of the events on your own psyche, if you witnessed the events, or the psyche of your elders, if they witnessed them. I will also ask about your perception of the memories and the place they hold in your day to day life and the lives of you family.

Any risks to you have been minimised by the design of the research project but there still exists a risk to you in participating. Discussing the Nakba, as a contentious event between Israel and Palestine, is associated with a risk. There is the risk of government reprisal from participating and also potential social stigma associated. Your total anonymity, ensured through various steps, will ensure that the aforementioned risks are minimised if not eliminated entirely. The interviews will also involve discussing memories of the Nakba which may involve painful recollections for you, the participant, as for many the event constitutes an event of psychological trauma, or may involve recalling painful associations of other's place within the events of the Nakba. Therefore there exists a possible risk of psychological harm as part of participating.

I would ask you to consider these avenues of risk **fully**, before agreeing to participate.

There exist benefits which will emerge through participating in this research. The ability to tell your story to a wider audience and the effects that has in allowing the truth of the events to emerge will help to give a wider understanding of the Nakba. There are numerous benefits to allowing a greater focus on the Nakba.

After the research ends, that is after the interview ends, the main part of your participation will be over. I may require further contact with you if you consent to your information being used to contribute to archives of organisations devoted to remembering the Nakba.

If there are any problems or complaints regarding your participation in the study or any further harm that may occur, this will be addressed with the utmost importance. Any complaints can be directed to myself, or to my supervisor, details of which are provided both on the consent form and at the bottom of this information sheet. Furthermore, if complaints are of a more serious or official nature then they can be taken up with the university, details of which will also be provided.

If you decide to terminate your involvement in the study, which can be undertaken at **any time** with **no** justification necessary, then all prior information gathered up to that point can also be destroyed if you so wish.

Data will be collected in the form of an audio file and written notes. The audio file will be encrypted, the notes typed up and encrypted, and the original will then be destroyed. Any names in the tape will be dubbed with a pseudonym or number as will the typed notes. Any overly identifying features of the narrative will be changed, such as place names, family names or certain events. The raw data, the audio and notes, will be stored separately from your personal information as provided in the consent form. The two will be linked via a key

document stored separately from the personal details and the raw data. All of this will be uploaded immediately to secure University U-drive, and the original data destroyed immediately. Only I will have access to this data. The data will be used for the research and may be used in archives such as *Zochrot*, for which further consent will be asked for. The data will remain stored on the secure University drive for a period of five years, after which it will be destroyed.

Your participation in this research will be entirely confidential and you will remain anonymous.

The results of my research will be published in my final MA Dissertation.

Funding is provided by myself and the University and there is no prior agenda or unstated interests present in the research.

The research project has been reviewed by the Graduate School of Education Ethics Committee and my dissertation supervisor.

#### Contact Details

I, the researcher: Nicholas Peddle

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## Ethical Approval

**CERTIFICATE OF ETHICAL APPROVAL**

Academic Unit: Institute of Arabic and Islamic Studies

Title of Project: How the conflict between Palestinian and Israeli memory of the Nakba has been affected by the passage of time

Research Team Member(s): Nicholas Peddle

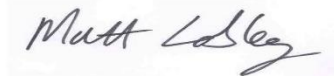
Project Contact Point: np277@exeter.ac.uk

This project has been approved for the period

From: 18<sup>th</sup> June 2015  
To: 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2015

Ethics Committee approval reference: 201415-079

Signature: Date: 11<sup>th</sup> June 2015



(Matt Loble, Chair, SSIS College Ethics Committee)

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