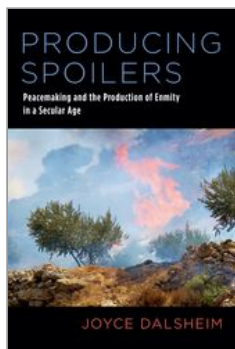


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## Producing Spoilers: Peacemaking and the Production of Enmity in a Secular Age

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## History, Histories, Alternative Histories, Alternatives to History

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### Abstract and Keywords

Chapter Three considers history, alternative histories, and alternatives to history in the process of making peace. Not all versions of the past can be included in peacemaking efforts, either at the diplomatic or at the grassroots level, and narrations always rely on exclusion to achieve a sense of coherence. This chapter considers the stories, especially the religious stories, that are often left out or marginalized in mainstream peacebuilding narratives. It considers why certain versions of the past are difficult to include as part of secular peace processes, and suggests moving beyond the idea of *adding more* stories or providing alternative pasts. Instead, this chapter looks at the idea of alternatives *to* conventional histories in the form of moral tales about the past told by Palestinian and Jewish communities in the contentious city of Hebron, communities usually considered to be the most contentious enemies, but who may be finding ways to move beyond historical narratives that frame them as necessary antagonists.

**Keywords:** History, Historicism, Hebron, Israel, Palestine, secular, peacebuilding, narratives

The historical narrative does not, as narrative, dispel false beliefs about the past . . . [it] figurates the body of events that serves as its primary referent and transforms these events into intimations of patterns of meaning that any literal representation of them as facts could never produce.

—Hayden White (1987:45)

History is a complicated endeavor. It is not simply a matter of discovering and recording events of the past. Historians worry and argue about how to present the past and, of course, the discipline of history with its rules and constraints is only one way of remembering. According to Hayden White, the narrative form of presentation that historians employ to tell the past is problematic because while historians seek objectivity, the narrative is inevitably moralizing. This chapter examines historical narratives, alternative histories, and alternatives to history. As we saw in the previous chapter, peacemakers from top-level diplomats to grassroots-level peace educators and facilitators of dialogue groups are aware of the importance of mutual recognition of the parties to conflict and of the stories they (p.49) tell. However, not all versions of the past can be included, and every narration depends on exclusion to achieve a sense of coherence. This chapter considers stories that are often left out or marginalized in conventional peacebuilding narratives in Israel/Palestine, which tend to remain within the confines of secular nationalism.

The narrative form of historical writing has come to be intuitive and perhaps even inevitable (White 1987:1; 1980:5). Yet this form of representation raises a number of problems for recounting the past. To narrativize is to moralize, to bring coherence, reality, truth, and objectivity to events of the past (White 1980).<sup>1</sup> One way this happens is by bringing together disparate tales and producing unity, as we saw in the cases of Israeli and Palestinian school curricula in the previous chapter. Another way this happens is by making stories appear to tell themselves. Historical narratives such as those in school textbooks can make their stories appear as real, or as the single, objective truth, by removing the subjectivity of an ego from the text (White 1987:3). The events seem to tell themselves *as truth* when the narrator is removed. This is not a problem when the story is presumed to be myth or fiction. Narrative only becomes a problem, according to White, when it is employed to give sequences of real events the form of a story (1987:4).

One way of avoiding such a problem might be to reinsert the voice of the narrator. Another might be to tell more than one version of a particular past, to allow for alternative or even conflicting narratives to

reveal the subjective nature of any telling. This, as we saw in the previous chapter, was Dennis Ross's strategy, telling two different stories of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict to show how the parties of this conflict "see the world the way they do" (Ross 2004:15).

This approach seems fair and impartial, but Ross's telling does something else as well. It says: Look, I know that people have different ways of interpreting events, and I'm not going to fight with them over those interpretations. Instead, I'm simply going to show you that I understand that they have a point of view, and I will recognize their point of view and ask that they recognize each other's point (p.50) of view. This is a polite, relativist move, which in the case of minority histories Dipesh Chakrabarty calls "anthropologizing," because it does not necessarily, and in some cases cannot, tell history from *within* the beliefs of the people who are represented (2000). And Chakrabarty is concerned that such anthropologizing might count as "good" history but will not have the effect of subverting powerful versions of the past and will therefore fall short of the goals of liberation or social justice for the subaltern.

Although some might criticize Ross's strategy for being open to a kind of hopelessly endless relativism,<sup>2</sup> such a telling cannot be criticized for assuming an authoritative voice on the single or true meaning or significance of events.<sup>3</sup> Indeed, it seems more just, more fair, more objective. But what is hiding in this innocence is a kind of repetitive Althusserian interpellation of subjects—in this case, collective subjects. It is a move that reproduces the parties to conflict, once again reinscribing enemies in the process of trying to make peace.

Althusser is known (and his theorizing is often discarded) for his seemingly dated structuralist analysis of repressive and ideological state apparatuses. But in that same long essay (Althusser 1971), he also provides an important and nuanced understanding of how ideology works. If Marxist notions of ideology might be interpreted as removing agency from the subject and *acting on* subjects who have "false consciousness," Althusser demonstrates how the subject is *produced* by, in, or through ideology. Bridging Marx's ideas about ideology and the psychological insights of Freud and Lacan, he explains how ideology gets into our heads, how it powerfully inhabits us, and how ideology can be understood as a structure/system that we inhabit in turn. Ideology, in this sense, is so powerful because it speaks us, names us, but at the same time gives us the illusion that we freely choose to believe what we believe, to be who we are, and to name ourselves. Ideology speaks *to* us as agentive subjects as it also *subjects* us to itself.

Althusser famously illustrated this process by talking about the idea of hailing, or interpellation. He tells a story in which a person is (p.51) walking down the street and a policeman calls out, “Hey, you there!” Even without calling the person by name, the person turns around, responds, recognizes himself as being hailed. And this moment is both one of subjective self-recognition (it is I being called) and the moment in which one is subjected to the state through ideological apparatuses. This example is meant to illustrate the means by which ideology works, but its oversimplification is misleading because, according to Althusser, an individual is always already an ideological subject. Derrida (2008) gives some insight into this double process of naming and answering the call:

one must know . . . that if everything begins for us with the response, if everything begins with “yes” implied in all responses (“yes, I respond,” “yes, here I am,” even if the response is “no”) then any response, even the most modest, the most mundane, of responses, remains an acquiescence given to some self-presentation. Even if during the response, in the determined content of a reply, I were to say “no”; even if I were to declare “no, no, and no. I am not here, I will not come, I am leaving, I withdraw, I desert, I am going to the desert, I am not one of your own nor am I facing you,” or “no, I deny, abjure, refuse, disavow, and so on,” well then this “no” will have said “yes,” “yes, I am here to speak to you, I am addressing you in order to answer ‘no,’ here I am to deny, disavow, or refuse.” (Derrida 2008:313)

Ross is aware of the subjective nature of historical narratives, so instead of speaking in an all-knowing voice he *names* the parties, the ones who interpret the past. And the moment the someone is named—the collective someone in this case—that someone is also constituted as a particular someone, an autonomous and choosing someone, one who interprets the past and is part of the collective defined by that past, and one who might be held responsible for that past, while the educative processes through which that collective someone is produced are disguised, hidden, forgotten. Sometimes, these processes are made clear when a “mistake” is made.

(p.52) The Peacemaker

Once upon a time there was a peacemaker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict—or at least, there was a young woman who wanted to be a peacemaker. Fittingly, perhaps, if we wanted to use the conventions of Arabic folktales, we might begin, There was and there wasn't—*kaan wa makaan*—a peacemaker. This young woman came to Israel in the midst of the first Palestinian uprising (*Intifada*) against Israeli occupation and began working for an NGO bringing together groups of Israelis and Palestinians, young and old, parents and children, teachers and students, to encourage them to meet and talk and get to know each other, and then to discuss issues of conflict. These meetings were generally prefaced with preparation sessions where people spoke about their own collective identities and about their beliefs about the other group. This NGO aimed to create an environment in which these parties to conflict—who under everyday circumstances might be afraid of or hateful toward each other without ever meeting—could hear each other's stories, really listen and understand. And, as a peace worker, the woman herself was subject to a process of working through her own collective identity or identities—that is, to name the groups to which she belonged or with which she identified. Just as a psychoanalyst undergoes analysis, so a peacemaker undergoes the processes she is learning to employ.

On one occasion, the peacemaker was asked to identify herself. Indeed, she was instructed to reveal her sense of collective belonging. To engage in peacemaking, she was told, one must first be aware of one's own positionality in the conflict. When her supervisor asked her to name herself and explain her belonging, she said, quite simply, "I am my mother's daughter." At that point, the supervisor, a social worker and a very patient person by profession, began to lose her patience with the young peacemaker-in-training. That was the wrong answer! Actually, the supervisor said, it might have been acceptable as a beginning, but the peacemaker was stubborn and refused to go beyond her sense of belonging to her immediate family. She refused, the social worker thought, to identify herself as (p.53) Jewish, and as an American. Clearly, she was an American Jew and as such, she really would have to reveal what her relationship as a Jewish American was to Israel. Without this kind of acknowledgment, how could she become aware of her own biases, her subjective position on this conflict?<sup>4</sup> And, to proceed as a peacemaker, such self-knowledge was critical.

But the unfortunate peacemaker had a biography that didn't quite fit the social worker's framework. The peacemaker had had no formal Jewish education, her family never belonged to a synagogue or Jewish community center, nor had she ever learned Hebrew, as so many

American Jews did in preparation for their Bar or Bat Mitzvah. Never having been trained in these ways, the peacemaker did not know she was *supposed* to have had a relationship to Israel, a particular take on the conflict, or a sense of belonging to the place. How on earth could someone be a peacemaker in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict without understanding, accepting, recognizing (answering the call, in Derrida's terms) one's own role in it?

From the point of view of the social worker, most people either do or *should* know "who they are." That is, with respect to particular local narratives, in particular contexts, most people should have been successfully schooled in their collective identities. According to the social worker, their parents, their communities, their churches and schools would have taught them. So that when they are named (interpellated), when their collective name (American, Israeli, Palestinian, Jewish, Arab, Muslim, Christian) is called out, they recognize themselves, admit agentive subjectivity, and recognize as their own the label applied to them.<sup>5</sup>

Yet, even then, there are some who struggle against the powerful meanings attached to their collective name. They express a desire to be recognized as members of a particular collective and at the same time to narrate their own past and thereby their own collective identity differently. And some historians have taken up the project of telling those stories that have been left out or marginalized, as part of a move to democratize history and thereby help to achieve social justice. Such narratives, however, despite all good (p.54) intentions, do not necessarily pave the way toward peaceful resolutions. Sometimes, in fact, they become part of the conflict in the form of competing truth claims, including struggles over who has the right to tell the stories of the collective past.

### Alternative Histories, Subaltern Pasts

Recognizing histories of minority, oppressed, or colonized groups has often taken the form of adding voices and stories to tales of the past within a historicist framework, adding voices that were previously removed, silenced, marginalized, or forgotten.<sup>6</sup> Such additions sometimes present accounts that are at odds with or undermine more powerful narrations. Indeed, they may be recalled precisely in order to privilege a way of telling the past that might serve a different set of interests. Revisionist histories are an important part of recognition not only of peoples but of truth. Quests for truth are also part of who “we” are as post-Enlightenment subjects, concerned with the rational and the role of the rational in achieving a greater common good. We believe that if we can only find out the real and full truth of what transpired in the past, we will surely find salvation or liberation. But when we uncover additional stories about the past, these stories also become part of current struggles. They fuel battles between socially constructed groups, as the past is always revealed through the lens of the present.<sup>7</sup>

### Hebron Stories

We read the past differently, see the present differently, dream about the future differently.—Haim Hanegbi (quoted in Campos 2007)

I could tell you that Hebron is located in the hills of Judea, south of Jerusalem, and that a small group of about 500 religious Jews (p.55) live there because of their commitment to the biblical significance of the city. I could also tell you that Hebron is the largest Palestinian city in the occupied West Bank, with a population of more than 150,000, and that there is a struggle over real estate there between radical Jewish settlers and the city’s Palestinian inhabitants. I could tell you that settlers have been occupying houses and removing Palestinians, and that the Palestinian shops in Shuhada Street have been closed by the Israeli military to protect those aggressive settlers, in a move that amounts to ethnic cleansing. Or, I might say that observant Jews, returning to the city of their ancestors after having been removed following the 1929 massacre, have been protected from current acts of violence and terror by closing those shops and moving the Palestinian market to another place in the city.

I could tell you a number of stories about Hebron, but I could probably not get away with claiming that the settlers in Hebron should be thought of merely as innocent victims, let alone as subaltern themselves. From the perspective of postcolonial scholarship, to apply the term “subaltern” to religiously motivated settlers in Israeli-occupied

Palestine would be considered a misuse of the word. These settlers are part of the colonial invasion and domination of Palestine and party to the ongoing displacement of Palestinians. Indeed, they are at the forefront of expanding Israeli territory by incrementally removing Palestinians from their homes, sometimes through the use of violence and harassment. However, if we can suspend our sense of offense, even for just a moment, there might be something to be learned about theories of representation, the idea of subalterity, and about the case at hand, by imagining these settlers as subaltern themselves.<sup>8</sup>

Each of the following texts aims to set the record straight, and each is speaking to other versions of the past. In some sense, these stories both claim to speak for a subaltern group, to tell the truth from the point of view of those who have been misunderstood, maligned, marginalized, or silenced. And both, unlike Ross's versions, move beyond the confines of the secular nationalism that currently (p.56) provides the framework through which the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is generally understood and which sets the parameters for its resolution. What follow are not Israeli-versus-Palestinian conflicting versions of the past, but different Jewish narratives of the Jewish community in Hebron.

There is a link to Wellesley College historian Jerold Auerbach's (2009) book, *Hebron Jews: Memory and Conflict in the Land of Israel*, on the website of Hebron's Jewish community.<sup>9</sup> Auerbach explains that the history of the Jewish community of Hebron is deeply rooted in the biblical narrative. The community lives in a cluster around the cave of the patriarchs where Abraham and Sarah, Isaac and Rebekah, and Jacob and Leah are entombed. This tomb, Auerbach writes, is the oldest Jewish holy site in the world. The connection to the biblical narrative is clear, as Chapter 1 opens with the voice of God speaking to Abraham: "'Go,' the voice commanded. 'Leave your land, and your father's house, for the land that I will show you.'" This is the beginning of the story of the Jews of Hebron. Auerbach recounts the story of Abraham and his purchase of the site for Sarah's burial. If claiming rights to a place depends on having been there first, then a story like this would surely prove longevity. Or if claiming territory depends on legally acquiring the land in question, then this story proves that too, for Abraham purchased the land where Sarah was to be buried and the transaction is documented in the biblical text. Of course, all this depends on whether or not one accepts the idea that "the Jews," or the specific community of Jews in Hebron today, are the descendants of Abraham and Sarah, and on whether or not one accepts the Bible as historical record. Auerbach is acutely aware of the controversy over Hebron and the anger the current Jewish community there draws. The opening line of



his book is this: “No Jews are as relentlessly reviled as the Jews of Hebron.” If they are so hated, Auerbach suggests, it is because they act on their belief in their right and responsibility to live in this contentious city.

Auerbach’s mission for his text is to “set the record straight,” to explain the Jews of Hebron, to state their case. If narrative has (p.57) the power to persuade, this is clearly his goal. However, there are counter-narratives as well. Michelle Campos, a historian at the University of Florida, writes about Haim Hanegbi (quoted at the beginning of this section) and other descendants of Hebron Jews<sup>10</sup> who claim that the “settlers [currently] living in the heart of Hebron” do not have the right to speak in the name of the “old Jewish community” of the city (the old Yishuv). Hanegbi and other members of The Association of Hebron Descendants claim they are the true descendants of the Old Jewish community of Hebron. “These settlers,” they say, “are alien to the way of life of the [indigenous] Hebron Jews, who created over the years a culture of peace and understanding between peoples and faiths in the city” (quoted in Campos 2007:41). This declaration, Campos tells us, challenges the “widely accepted Zionist metanarrative that saw Hebron as a central symbol of Jewish persecution at the hands of bloodthirsty Arabs. In 1929, sixty-seven Jews were massacred in Hebron,” she writes. They were killed in one of a series of countrywide clashes, “making Hebron a political/national sacred site” (ibid.). In effect the entire Jewish community was destroyed in 1929, because those who were not killed were exiled from the city. Thus, Campos writes, the story of Hebron and the 1929 massacre became another chapter of exile and return, a trope so central to a broader Jewish and Zionist narrative. But Auerbach (2009) claims that most Israeli Jews, and Jews more generally, have forgotten the significance of Hebron:

Jewish history and memory are inextricably entwined, and no community of Jews is more tenaciously committed to the preservation of historical memory than the Jews of Hebron. But their determination to remember in the very place where Jewish memory may be said to have originated, places them at the epicenter of a polarizing conflict within contemporary Israel . . . It involves nothing less than the identity and boundaries of the Jewish state and the definition of legitimacy within it. Hebron Jews are widely condemned by legions of critics for misguided political and religious fanaticism that could propel (p.58) Israel into a disastrous holy war with Arabs or a tragic civil war between

Jews. Yet they remain fiercely determined to remember what most Jews have long since forgotten. (p. 4)

“Remember and do not forget” (Deuteronomy 9:7). Hayden White writes that memory as such is not enough to constitute meaning. “Events,” he says, “must be not only registered within the chronological framework of their original occurrence but narrated as well, that is to say, revealed as possessing a structure, an order of meaning which they do *not* possess as mere sequence” (White 1980:9). The creation of that structure by the narrator and its presentation *as a revelation* of structure to the reader demonstrate that “every historical narrative has as its . . . purpose the desire to moralize the events that it treats” (White 1980:17–18).

The way in which we tell stories of the past matters. White describes the narrative as having a central subject, a well-defined beginning, middle, and end, as well as a turning point in the story that signals its central point or lesson—its moral punch line. The narrator’s choice about where the story begins sets the stage for its moral lesson. Auerbach begins with Abraham and Hebron, which is quite different from beginning with Jewish immigration to Palestine in the late 1800s. If claims are to be made about the right to the land, to live there, to possess the land and have sovereignty over it, and if such rights are understood to be determined by who was there first, then when and where the story begins is enormously important.

Now, justice has taken the form of peace negotiations in Israel/Palestine, and the place (in history, in geography) where memory starts and narratives begin have implications in determining what is “right.” Who has the right to the land? Who was there first? Who can claim legal title? But why are these the bases upon which such decisions are made? For now, I will simply say that in the same way that Durkheim (1997/1933) argued that what counts as crime is determined by what is punished—that is, we cannot determine what crime is through *a priori* assumptions, but only by looking at what (p.59) people actually do—so rights to possession are similarly arbitrary. The arbitrariness of such determinations means that the arguments about having been there first and proving possession go on and on potentially without end. This may be good for the discipline of history, but is this “good” for resolving conflict?

Auerbach tells us that “Jewish memory may be said to have originated” in Hebron, implying that Hebron is the foundation of Jewishness itself (Auerbach 2009:4). This is a story of the very place where Jewish memory originated, or the story of the very first characters in Jewish

collective memory. But if the story of the Jews starts with Abraham, so do many other stories. Abraham is claimed as a spiritual ancestor by Christians and Muslims as well; and in that case, why not start with Adam and Eve? Abraham is the father of Ishmael as well as Isaac, so remembering this patriarch is also significant to the memory of Arabs more generally, whether Muslim or Christian (or, one might add, Jewish).<sup>11</sup>

There are other places in time and different biblical characters that might be considered the beginning of Jewish history and memory. If Abraham is the father of three monotheistic faiths, then specifically Jewish memory might be thought to have started with Moses. And, of course, the memory of Jewish Israelis might be thought to have begun with the first Aliya, when Jews began immigrating/returning to Palestine in the late 1800s. But to begin with the Jewish Aliya in modernity would be to begin where Palestinians often tell this tale, and it would be to deny continuity between today's Jews in Hebron (and the rest of Israel) and the biblical ancestors. Yet the battle, for Auerbach, centers around intra-Jewish politics in modernity. It is about reminding the Jewish community, Jews everywhere, about what they have forgotten, and reminding them about their historical connection to the sacred sites in Hebron, to the tomb of the patriarchs. Indeed, we might conclude, based on this beginning, that the significance of this Hebron story has nothing to do with struggles between Israelis and Palestinians. It is not about contemporary conflicts over real estate there, or justice for Palestinians, or about the potential for a peace agreement. It is (p.60) about reminding Jews of the specifically Jewish significance of this place. And place, as some of the settlers I interviewed made clear, is central to their being.

Indeed place (*makom* in Hebrew) is another word for God (*ha makom*, the place). For the settlers of Hebron, like those in the Gaza settlements of Gush Katif who have since been removed, it is important to understand one's relationship to place because this relationship is integral to who you are, to what it means to be Jewish, and to fulfilling God's commandments by living on the Land He promised to the Jewish people. It is there that they must live and live according to His commandments in order to hasten the coming of the Messiah. On a recent visit to the Jewish community of Hebron, I encountered a woman who told me a story about the importance of living there.

This woman came to Israel with her parents from the United States because of their devotion to the Holy Land. They settled in Hebron, but she moved to another place after marriage. She and her husband were considering moving back to Hebron, but she feared for the safety of her

children and consulted with the wife of a prominent Hebron rabbi, a man considered to be the founder of the contemporary Jewish community there. The *rebbetzin* (title used for a rabbi's wife) convinced her that it was worth the danger to live there because of the importance of living near the biblical ancestors. The *rebbetzin* told her a story about a man who had come to Hebron but decided to leave and go back to the United States. "He got on a plane and flew to New York and no sooner did he get off the plane than some 'Kushi' (black person)<sup>12</sup> robbed him and killed him! That's it. He died! There is danger everywhere you go and in the end it is all in God's hand. Now, when you think about it," she said, "if you have to die, isn't it better to die for the ancestors (*ha-avot*) here in Hebron than to just die for something as meaningless and humiliating as being robbed by some Kushi?"

The same story that Auerbach tells and that underlies the story the *rebbetzin* told this young woman, with its biblical beginnings and its biblical framing of contemporary human groups, also speaks (p.61) to issues of rights and justice in the present and future. If the question of Israel/Palestine is one of possession, dispossession, of place and displacement, then determining possession and placement is crucial. And if the Jews were here for centuries, then the land should be returned to them and Palestinian dispossession either becomes trivial in comparison or is itself a result of an earlier injustice and therefore is not dispossession at all. Auerbach's telling seems to reflect the ways in which the Jews in Hebron today narrate themselves on their website and in their museum (see Feige 2009). Of course, the extent to which this narrative will persuade the reader of the righteousness of the settlers' project in Hebron will depend at least partially on the audience itself.

Michelle Campos writes that such remembering is very partial and selective.<sup>13</sup> She contends that the Zionist appropriation of the story of Hebron remembers the violence of 1929 and that that story is used for ultra-nationalist purposes. However, it should be noted that Auerbach and contemporary Hebron Jews are narrating a religious story about remaining on the Land and living near biblical ancestors. This tale can and does provide content for those arguing for Jewish sovereignty, but living near ancestors on the Holy Land does not necessarily imply *political* sovereignty, as we shall see when we return to the story of the Rabbi that opened this book.

Campos (2007) offers a historical narrative based on one prominent man's memoirs. It tells an alternative story about the relationship between Jews and Arabs prior to the establishment of the state of Israel. The memoirs of Yosef Eliyahu Chelouche, an influential

businessman and prominent figure in the local North African Jewish community, is an account of how the Jews lived together with their neighbors in Palestine prior to the first Aliya, when European Jews began migrating (or returning) to Palestine. The story Campos tells begins with Chelouche's memoirs of life in Jaffa in the late Ottoman period. These memoirs, she writes, "offer us insights into the ways in which indigenous Palestinian Arabs and Jews inhabited a shared landscape." They were written in the hope that they might "awaken those who would deal with the question of relations (p.62) with the neighbors in a different manner and with different maneuvers, in the manner and maneuver of the locals, who have great experience in neighborly relations, to repair to the extent possible that which is distorted" (Chelouche, quoted in Campos 2007:42). This account is careful to distinguish between indigenous Jews—those who lived in Palestine before the first Aliya—and those of European descent who came later. It sets up a story in which native Jews lived in relative harmony with their Arab neighbors because they shared a set of cultural norms and knew how to live together. It was only when the Ashkenazi Jews began to arrive—foreigners who came from Europe to the Middle East, to a culture very different from their own—that trouble began between Jews and Arabs. The Ashkenazi Jews did not know how to interact with their neighbors. They behaved in ways that might be insulting, and they looked down upon the local Arabs and wanted to change them and make them more like Europeans.

While a small number of Ashkenazi Jews were longtime residents of the town, many of the victims of the 1929 massacre came from abroad, Campos writes. They were "neither native to the place nor known to the local residents" (p. 55). Many, according to Campos, were there as students in the yeshiva and they "commonly had misunderstandings with the locals and engaged in violations of the local cultural code" (ibid.). These Ashkenazi Jews were part of the Zionist movement to establish a sovereign Jewish state in Palestine. This, according to Campos, is why the violence broke out, and this is the reason for the 1929 massacre of Jews in Hebron. It was, she explains, misrepresented as neighbors killing neighbors (p. 57). Instead it was a case of locals killing outsiders, and was aimed against the Zionist movement.

The story of Chelouche is filled with ambiguity. He worked for the Zionist movement to convince local Jews to join, and he tried to persuade his Arab neighbors that the movement would be good for everyone and that they had nothing to fear from it. However, Campos

explains, Chelouche was also critical of some of the Zionist movement's racist beliefs and practices.

(p.63) If Auerbach's narrative aimed to remind all Jews of their biblical past, especially to remind secular Zionists<sup>14</sup> of their ancient connection to the Holy Land, and presumably to unite them, the story Campos tells makes clear distinctions between Jews of different backgrounds. It calls into question the continuity between the current Jewish community in Hebron and earlier ones. In this sense it also reveals the constructedness of the national collective. It makes these distinctions in order to claim the authority on which to speak about the past, to focus on a very different interpretation of events, one that does not frame Palestinian Arabs as murderers of Jews, but rather places the blame on Zionist settlement and on Ashkenazi Jews. This interpretation provides a framework in which Jews and Arabs once lived harmoniously and therefore could presumably live together peacefully again. "[M]ost of Hebron's Jews," Campos emphasizes, "were in fact saved and spared by their neighbors" (p. 57).

This story is also about rights, but not necessarily about the right to possess land. Focusing on a different time period and providing a different interpretation of events, this story is about the *right to tell* the past. Emphasizing a period of stability and good neighborly relations, this narrative frames the events of 1929 as an understandable anomaly, a reaction to Zionism and the attempt to gain political sovereignty. The massacre in Hebron should not be read as indicative of the eternal character of Palestinian Arabs. That violent outburst was an aberration, a temporary interruption of stability and good neighborly relations.

### Who Can Be Subaltern?

To be subaltern means to lack or be denied access to power. More specifically in the case of postcolonial scholarship and cultural studies, it has come to mean the inability to speak in a hegemonic discourse, and therefore to be excluded from self-representations connoting agency. Subaltern studies seeks a solution to the (p.64) problem of colonial domination that is exercised through forms of knowledge and cultural practices, through forms of representation and telling history. If colonization and political domination more generally are accomplished through more than direct physical force, then decolonization means more than winning wars of independence or the removal of foreign troops. It can include trying to undo the ways in which the powerful have written history and generated knowledge about the people and places they have colonized (Fanon 1967; Said 1978). Decolonizing includes a range of processes like regaining control of history textbooks in which local or subaltern representations of the past are included in order to recognize “a people” making claims for political independence and sovereignty, or to seek retribution for past injustices, or more generally to gain the independence to define one’s self (Spivak 1988).

If being subaltern means exclusion from dominant discourse, then surely this definition applies to the members of the contemporary Jewish community in Hebron. It is not that they cannot speak *in* a dominant discourse, but that the dominant discourse is not their own. They can perhaps adapt to it or translate themselves into it, but the secular nationalism that is the ground of contemporary peacemaking is not their voice, not their worldview. So, to what extent is the term “subaltern” useful in such a case when considering stories about the past?

On the one hand, these settlers cannot express themselves to the hegemonic secular<sup>15</sup> in their own voice, and they therefore fit one definition of subalterity. Making themselves intelligible requires translating themselves into the terms of more powerful others; when settlers speak to outsiders they often represent their concerns in terms of issues of security, national or communal heritage, or national continuity between earlier and later Jews in Palestine in ways that coincide with a broader secular nationalist imaginary.<sup>16</sup> On the other hand, they are part of the colonial project in Palestine. Indeed, they are currently either blamed or credited for driving the conflict by being “spoilers” of peace—and therefore subaltern in yet (p.65) a different way in their exclusion from secular political processes seeking peace through territorial exchange. If they have close ties to highly positioned political power and are driving the conflict and state decisions, then

perhaps they are part of the hegemony. But if they are constantly throwing sticks into the spokes of state-sponsored peace negotiations, pushing things off track and causing endless problems, then they are the subaltern who desire a different sort of hegemony (in the Gramscian sense). If their ways of being and believing, their sense of the importance of living with biblical ancestors, cannot speak persuasively on the secular international political stage, then in terms of postcolonial and subaltern studies, they are clearly subaltern. They claim they have been misunderstood, their voice(s) marginalized, maligned, demonized, or even silenced.

But if these settlers, these persistent, effective, and sometimes violent colonizers and expropriators of territory, can therefore be categorized as subaltern, what does subaltern mean? What does naming a particular group of people “subaltern” do? And under what circumstances should we enter into an endeavor to restore the voice or agency of such subaltern peoples? If subalterity means having been denied the right to speak for one’s self, to define one’s self, then justice requires restoring that right, as we saw in the case of the Palestinians in Bekerman’s study who are (represented as) not yet ready to deconstruct their national identity because they are still in the process of building it. If this right is to be respected, if restoring justice means that subaltern Palestinians should *not* have to deconstruct themselves, then does this also mean that religiously motivated settlers should also be granted this right? If the lack of access to hegemonic discourse is the defining factor of subalterity, and if both groups of Hebron Jews represented in this chapter claim that their perspectives, interpretations, and understandings of the past have not been recognized, does it not follow, from the point of view of subaltern studies and its quest for social justice, that both of these narratives should be recognized?



(p.66) They Are Not Temple Breakers!

Campos's telling of the past is very much like a story told by Ashis Nandy about another conflict situation in which people who are sometimes considered eternal enemies instead regard each other as morally upstanding, and as people to live with rather than fight against or to separate from. Nandy (1995) has written extensively against the limits and dangers of secular nationalism. He argues against the limits and potential danger of historicism as well, offering ways of looking at the past that do not necessarily participate in the interpretations of cause and precedence that fuel nationalist struggles. Nandy suggests that traditional or religious communities can emphasize the moral constitution of themselves and those who are construed as their enemies through non-historicist interpretations of the past (Nandy 1995). His argument moves beyond the idea of *adding* voices or stories to the historical mode of constructing the past and instead points to the importance of alternatives *to* history.

One case he discusses involves the dispute over the destruction of the Ayodhya temple and the Babri mosque in northeast India. The dispute has to do with what happened at the place where violence triggered by the Ramjanmabhumi movement in India reached its climax on December 6, 1992. On that day a controversial mosque at the sacred city of Ayodhya, which many claimed was built by destroying a Hindu temple that stood at the birthplace of Lord Rama, was demolished to avenge a historical wrong. The controversy surrounds questions of whether or not there was a temple that was destroyed by the builders of the Babri mosque, and whether or not this Ayodhya is really the Ayodhya of Rama. Nandy explains that these questions are important for secularized Indians but not for the devout millions who have made pilgrimages to this sacred city for centuries.

In this case, rather than arguing endlessly over what actually happened, whether there is proof of the temple's existence, or whether some people are "true" Hindus or true Muslims, he shows (p.67) how the *puranic* textual genre of the Hindu tradition (a traditional form of telling the past) is not concerned with the objective historical truth of the past, but is a narrative of morality.

Contemporary Indian Muslims, for example, deny that they are temple breakers ("It was not us!"). They have not claimed, as they conceivably might, that their forbears destroyed Hindu temples *and* that they are proud of that past as a measure of their piety. Nor have Muslims affirmed their *right* to break temples, or even to retain mosques built on demolished temples. They have not sought protection for the Babri mosque without insisting that the mosque had *not* been built on a razed

temple, or without insisting that what Muslim marauders did in India is what marauders always do and such vandalism had nothing to do with Islam (Nandy 1995:63).

Nandy tells us that most of the Hindu residents of Ayodhya have customarily considered these kinds of denial by Muslims about anti-Hindu violence in the past to be an important moral statement. To these Hindus, such denial is a reaffirmation of a specific kind of moral universe by Muslims, which may be more acceptable than the interpretations offered by Hindu nationalists. In this mode of storytelling, the past is truly the past, and present social relations must be based on construals of shared morality, rather than of history.

One might argue that this is what Campos's telling of Chelouche's story does. It is about Jews who don't think the 1929 massacre in Hebron is indicative of Palestinian (or Arab or Muslim) morality—or their "essential nature"—more generally. That violent event is read as an exception, an aberration due to specific circumstances, and should not be used to justify separation or removal of Palestinians. But if Chelouche tells a tale of morality quite similar to the one Nandy tells of Hindus and Muslims in India, his story, like Auerbach's, also does something else: it moves outside the parameters of secular, territorial nationalism. Auerbach, in the name of contemporary Hebron Jews, recalls the ancient past and explains why it is so important for Jews to live near the biblical ancestors. We could say that Hebron Jews' self-conceptualization as (p.68) descendants of Abraham continuing God's commandments to the patriarch is very like Ranajit Guha's (1994/1983) peasants who speak of supernatural agency in their lives. As with the Indian peasants, this motivation has to be translated into secular nationalist talk in order to be heard at all, but it also works against them. This might be the "authentic" voice of the settlers that would speak if the subaltern voice could be heard, and this is part of the reason why they cannot say some of the things that the "crazy" Rabbi does, if they want to be influential in secular politics. Although Auerbach expresses concern that giving up sovereignty of this territory could prevent Jews from praying at their holy sites, his story of Hebron Jews is not primarily about national sovereignty. Indeed, it is critical of secular Zionism for forgetting the importance of the Holy Land to the Jewish people. The so-called crazy Rabbi who was introduced at the opening of this book also emphasizes the Jewish connection to the Holy Land in a way that moves beyond the limited parameters of territorial nationalism.

### Passion for the Land

The “crazy” Rabbi’s passion for the Land and the Lord places his ideas beyond the current social and political order, and beyond well-known categories of conflict in Israel/Palestine, making his actions and words fall within the category of the crazy. Among different sorts of Israeli nationalists/Zionists, the Rabbi is marginalized in different ways. Those on the left wing of politics, who are often secular or antireligious, find him eccentric—sometimes amusing, but often annoying. While they might applaud his ideas about living with Palestinians, they find his actions contradictory because he feels so strongly about Jewish presence in all of the biblical Land of Israel. Some of that Land, they say, must be relinquished to the Palestinians for their state. Thus, non-Zionist and anti-Zionist members of the left wing of Israeli politics also find this rabbi and his ideas problematic, because from their perspective he cannot claim (p.69) to support Palestinians and at the same time support Jewish settlement in post-1967 territories. Those on the right wing of politics, who are often supportive of territorial expansion, and therefore of the settlements in post-1967 occupied territories, see this rabbi as a traitor. The right wing usually includes religiously motivated settlers such as the Rabbi himself. However, many religious settlers are adamant about Israeli sovereignty, and many see Palestinians as dangerous enemies.

“Zionism must undergo a process of feminization,” the Rabbi sometimes said. “The land is feminine and sovereignty is masculine. We must become closer to the land and let go of our tight grip on the reigns of sovereignty. We must not be afraid to let go.” He often spoke about his many meetings over the years with those in the Palestinian community who were considered Muslim extremists. “They are not like you and me,” he said. “Do not misunderstand. I do believe we must talk to them, but I do not think they are angels . . . They practice violence and brutality and do not sanctify human life as we do.” Nevertheless, the Muslim clerics with whom he had met shared his deep belief in God as the only true Sovereign. And this, he said, can be the basis for living together in the Holy Land, albeit each according to his own practices. He hoped that Jewish settlers could take the role of what he called an “outstretched hand” toward the Palestinians by bringing Jewish and Palestinian communities physically closer to one another, like interlacing fingers. This may seem like a very strange idea, since we so often hear of violent behavior reported between settlers and Palestinians. Still, the Rabbi maintained his determination and is convinced that this is the right and righteous path.

It is interesting to note that at least some of the Jews in Hebron today—including recent settlers of American and European descent who, according to the people Campos describes, have no right to speak about the Jewish past in Hebron—also speak about good neighborly relations. On a recent visit to Hebron I was introduced to a man who lives in a dilapidated trailer in one of the tiny Jewish neighborhoods in Hebron. He is a political activist and known to be an agitator. (p.70) He sometimes organizes antagonistic marches and demonstrations through Palestinian neighborhoods and towns in Israel that result in injury and destruction. But when I asked him about some of the recent reports of violence in Hebron, he told me this was most definitely *not* carried out by the local Jewish community. The Jews of Hebron are not violent, he said, and if tires were burned in a struggle to hold on to a particular building that Jews had moved into, those fires were set by people who came from outside the city.<sup>17</sup> In addition to this depiction of the current moral character of the Jews of Hebron as desiring good neighborly relations, other stories appeared in the Israeli press. Hebron Jews were quoted speaking about good relations with their Palestinian neighbors, about going to Palestinian dentists, for example, or shopping together in the same supermarket.<sup>18</sup>

Palestinians in Hebron have also reportedly denied being violent toward their Jewish neighbors.<sup>19</sup> When asked about the 1929 massacre, Hebron Palestinians said that violence was carried out by people from outside the city. Both Palestinians and Jews in Hebron make these claims about their own moral constitutions, denying participation in violence against each other. It was not us, they say.

### Alternative Futures?

Should particular pasts, marginalized or not, blot each other out? When you see the Jewish community in Hebron today, you may want to tell them they are drawing on the *wrong* past, because that past has them imprisoned, literally, inside walls and guarded by soldiers, surrounded by emptied dwellings where their Palestinian neighbors once lived. For some of them, their present might encourage them to move beyond nationalism/anti-nationalism because of the sacredness of the place and the importance of being there. Should diplomats like Dennis Ross, or grassroots activists recognize only particular pasts or privilege previously marginalized tales? Or, might there be room for all the multiple ways in which people (p.71) understand their pasts to be recognized in the present and taken into account for processes of making peace?

Being attentive to minority or subaltern pasts poses a challenge to maintaining the heterogeneity of many pasts without reducing them to any overarching principle that speaks for an already given whole (Chakrabarty 2000:107), an already given whole like “the nation”: the Palestinians, the Israelis, or the Arabs and the Jews.

Nandy recommends moving beyond historicism and suggests focusing on moral discourses that move beyond secular nationalism. But Chakrabarty insists we should make room for *all* the various ways of telling the past, even though historians do not have a form that can accomplish such inclusiveness. Nor do we have a social order that proceeds from such inclusive heterogeneity.

All three narratives recounted above—the “crazy” Rabbi’s embrace of territory at the expense of sovereignty; the Old Yishuv story of neighborly relations between Hebron’s Jews and Arabs; and Auerbach’s story of the centrality of the tombs of the patriarchs to Jewish experience and even the survival of the Jewish state—interfere with hegemonic social and moral orders of nations and states, the rights of peoples to sovereignty in their own territory. They interfere with the premises of the two-state solution in different ways, spoiling the ability of the people currently in power to get what they want without trouble. Each tale points to a different specific solution: remaining on the Land without political control; a one-state solution for all residents; or permanent Israeli sovereignty over the West Bank, and then some.

Notes:

(1) . White distinguishes between narrating and narrativizing. According to White, historians can narrate an account of the past without imposing upon it the form of a story (White 1980:6).

(2) . This has also been a critique leveled against postmodernism in the field of history precisely because of the problem of adjudicating competing claims. See Eric Hobsbawm’s essay “Identity History Is Not Enough” (1997:266–277).

(3) . Ross explains that there is little chance of mediating a conflict without showing “each side” that “a third party understands why it feels as it does” (2004:15). This is a form of recognition that is central to liberal secularism. This recognition of people’s feelings is comparable to a liberal recognition of people’s beliefs, which only means the fact that they have such beliefs and feelings is recognized, not the truth of those beliefs or feelings.

(4) . Subjective here in the sense of having a particular take on things because of one's background and experiences. This is quite ironic, of course, since the peacemaker can express her position, but only if she does so according to a set of preconceived, and very powerful, categories.

(5) . Althusser recognized that hailing does not always work, although he contended that it did in the overwhelming majority of cases, as in the case of the Palestinians in Bekerman's example who resisted the deconstruction of their national identity.

(6) . This work, of course, includes the groundbreaking scholarship of the Subaltern Studies Group, like that of Ranajit Guha, Amitav Ghosh, Veena Das, Partha Chatterjee, Dipesh Chakrabarty, and Gayatri Spivak, among many others. However, recognizing subaltern pasts is not limited to this work; Edward Said's *Orientalism* is seminal to such work on the Middle East and to postcolonial studies more generally. Although there is some controversy over how the term "subaltern" should be used, it sometimes refers to any oppressed or marginalized group and sometimes is used more narrowly to indicate those who have no access to hegemonic forms of cultural expression and who cannot tell their own story in their own voice. This is what Dipesh Chakrabarty discussed even in the work of some scholars in the Subaltern Studies Group whose goal it is to represent subaltern pasts. In some sense, the entire *Journal of Palestine Studies* (or *History and Memory* or *Radical History Review*) might be called such a voice. And histories "from below" of marginalized, oppressed, or colonized peoples continue to be written about Native Americans, Latin Americans, African Americans, the African Diaspora, Aboriginal Australians, women, the working class, and so on. See, for example, the work of bell hooks and Gloria Anzaldúa on women, gender, sexuality, race, and ethnicity. See Stuart Hall and Paul Gilroy on race and racism and the African diaspora and the writings of Ella Shohat, Yehuda Shenhav, Amnon Raz-Kratkotzkin, and Smadar Lavie on Jews of the Middle East and North Africa.

(7) . See Brow (1990) and Brow and Swedenburg (1990) for useful discussions on hegemony and using the past in the production of collective identity.

(8) . As Saba Mahmood (2005:39) wrote, I ask that "we - my readers and myself - embark upon an inquiry in which we do not assume that the political positions we uphold will necessarily be vindicated . . . but instead hold open the possibility that we may come to ask . . . a whole

series of questions that seemed settled when we first embarked upon the inquiry.”

(9) . The website of the Jewish community in Hebron includes links to a number of books and articles about the place, its history and to current events there. This is the link to Auerbach’s book: <http://www.hebron.com/english/article.php?id=580>. The website of the Palestinian city of Hebron also displays articles and current events related to the city and has links to information for residents. It also contains sections explaining the agreements reached to redeploy Israeli troops in Hebron and provides maps: <http://www.hebron-city.ps/>.

(10) . “Hebron is the city of his grandfathers,” she writes, “as well as a place holy to both Muslims and Jews” (Campos 2007:41). Haim Hanegbi grew up in Jerusalem and is a peace activist who recently left the Gush Shalom movement, which calls for a two-state solution, to work toward the establishment of one democratic state for all citizens. See his article explaining his political position based on his memory of good neighborly relations with Palestinian Arabs in his childhood on the website for One Democratic State in Israel/Palestine: <http://odspi.org/articles/shavit-hanegbi-benvenisti.html>.

(11) . Indeed, in an article by Auerbach on the Hebron website, he explains that not only is the tomb of the matriarchs and patriarchs (the *Machpelah*) significant for people of other faiths, but that “over the centuries, Christians and Muslims attempted to make Hebron exclusively theirs. Beginning in the mid-thirteenth century, Muslim rulers prohibited Jews (and other ‘infidels’) from entering the Machpelah to pray at the tombs, permitting them to ascend no higher than the seventh step outside the enclosure” (<http://www.hebron.com/english/article.php?id=580>). Thus, remaining in Hebron is critical to ensure that Jews will have access to their holy sites.

(12) . The slang term “Kushi” is derived from Kush, which refers to the son of Ham and brother of Canaan (Genesis 10:6) and the country of the supposed descendants of Cush (ancient Ethiopia), comprising approximately Nubia and the modern Sudan, and the territory of southern (or Upper) Egypt.

(13) . There are also other narratives of Jews of Middle Eastern and North African descent that do not represent such a harmonious past between Jews and Arabs in the region. Campos’s representation of the past resonates with those found in the writings of Yehuda Shenhav and Ella Shohat, and are found in the film *Forget Baghdad*. But there is also

a film produced by the David Project called *Forgotten Refugees* that laments the way Jews were treated in Arab countries prior to the establishment of the state of Israel.

(14) . Many secular Zionists (the majority of Israeli Jews are more secular or traditional than orthodox in their religious practices) do not necessarily feel a particular connection to Hebron or to Jerusalem because of the sacred quality of these places. These Israelis express their emotional connection to the places where they grew up, or where their friends and family live. This is a much newer, more personal, and also specifically secular memory.

(15) . This doesn't mean, for example, that secular Israelis have more political power in the Knesset; it means that "the secular," as Talal Asad (2003) uses the term, comprises a hegemonic cultural milieu, disciplining the public sphere in Israel/Palestine, and in particular around the campfire of conventional or liberal peacemaking.

(16) . See Charles Taylor's (2002) description of modern "social imaginaries."

(17) . Clearly there are multiple ways of understanding this claim. One is to take it literally, as an assertion that there were specific other individuals or groups who perpetrated the violence. The other is as a guilty Freudian expulsion of violent impulses from the self onto others who become one's demonic alter ego, and who can bear the blame for actions that are socially disapproved.

(18) . Assaf Harel (personal communication).

(19) . Hillel Cohen (personal communication).



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