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Together in Our Grief, Imagining a Shared Future: rehearsal for a 'Third Narrative' in Israel-Palestine

Insieme nel dolore, immaginando un futuro condiviso: prove di 'Terza Narrazione' in Israele-Palestina

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores a possible third narrative in the Israel-Palestine context, focusing on spatial perspective and temporal axis. Drawing on the Joint Memorial Ceremony organized by Combatants for Peace and the Parents Circle–Families Forum, as well as on the personal journey of Sulaiman Khatib, the paper sees a third narrative as a tension space that goes beyond binary oppositions and reorients memory toward a shared future. Particular attention is given to power asymmetry as an ethical challenge shaping the very possibility of articulating this third narrative. The Ceremony disrupts the victimhood paradigm and the weaponization of memory. The third narrative reveals itself in its unfolding, calling for political imagination and courage.

Keywords: third narrative, power, memory, victimhood, future.

RIASSUNTO

Questo articolo esplora una possibile terza narrazione nel contesto di Israele e Palestina, concentrandosi sulla prospettiva spaziale e sull'asse temporale. Basandosi sulla Cerimonia commemorativa congiunta organizzata da Combatants for Peace e da Parents Circle–Families Forum, nonché sul percorso personale di Sulaiman Khatib, l'articolo considera la terza narrazione come uno spazio di tensione che va oltre le opposizioni binarie e riorienta la memoria verso un futuro condiviso. Particolare attenzione è dedicata all'asimmetria di potere come sfida etica che condiziona la stessa possibilità di articolare questa terza narrazione. La Cerimonia rompe il paradigma della vittimizzazione e la strumentalizzazione della memoria. La terza narrazione si rivela nel suo dispiegarsi, richiamando immaginazione politica e coraggio.

Parole chiave: terza narrazione, potere, memoria, vittimismo, futuro.

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1. INTRODUCTION

> "*How much memory is an act of interpretation, how every telling requires intrusion… developing a story is the act of deciding what to emphasize and what to leave out. And Souli doesn't think this is a bad thing. On a collective level, he struggles both with and against the phenomenon to build a story - a third narrative - that includes Jewish and Palestinian histories, and all the places they overlap. His whole life has led to this reimagining. This, he thinks now, is how the world will get better*" (Eilberg-Shwartz & Khatib, 2021, pag. xviii)

This paper reflects on the possibility of a "third narrative" in Israel–Palestine, considering both the temporal axis and the spatial dimension.

Rather than starting from a fixed definition of a third narrative, I seek to identify some of its qualities and conditions as they emerge through an exploration of the practices and discourses, as well as the struggles and challenges, of those who are rehearsing it.

I refer to a "third narrative" as an emerging, context-specific expression within the field of activism and nonviolence in Israel–Palestine. Although more than one organization in Israel–Palestine works to challenge the dominant narratives, only some explicitly define their work as the creation of a "third narrative"[1].

[1] An explicit use of the expression third narrative is in the independent podcast created and hosted by Palestinian activists Amira Mohammed ('67) and Ibrahim Abu Ahmad ('48): "Unapologetic: The Third Narrative" on Spotify.

This initial attempt to grasp the rehearsal of a third narrative focuses primarily on one grassroots movement in Israel–Palestine: Combatants for Peace. I consider its two ceremonies—the Joint Nakba Remembrance Ceremony and, co-organized with the Parents Circle Families Forum, the Joint Memorial Ceremony—as well as the personal story of one co-founder, Sulaiman Khatib, as told in his book, which "opens a new space, shapes a third narrative, and reveals another world that can exist—though it is often hard to see—within this one"[2].

I see the ceremonies as practices framed within a rehearsal of a third narrative, creating space for the other's narrative and the other's pain, and bridging past, present, and future beyond the cultural and symbolic order of inevitable, perpetual violence. As Combatants for Peace states: "Our ceremonies are intended to carry the audience—Israelis, Palestinians, and internationals—to past traumas and their lingering legacies, then to the present, in order to build a just, peaceful, and equitable future" (Combatants for Peace, n.d.). Both ceremonies offer an opportunity to broaden vision and "model another way forward", challenging the taboo in Israeli society against even mentioning the Nakba and confronting mainstream Israeli narratives of pain, victimhood, and hopelessness that are reinforced during the Yom Hazikaron (Israeli Memorial Day). These ceremonies therefore function not only as commemorative events but as experimental spaces where a third narrative is rehearsed.

The book *In This Place Together* is the personal story of Sulaiman Khatib, a Palestinian activist and co-founder of Combatants for Peace, written in collaboration with the Jewish American author Penina Eilberg-Schwartz. This explicit choice of co-writing offers a powerful analogy for what it means to create a shared space for diverse narratives. "How can these two narratives—Palestinian and Israeli—exist in one homeland? […] What does it really mean to share space?" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. XVII). Eilberg-Schwartz explicitly refers to a "third narrative" as a key concept in Souli's (Sulaiman Khatib's) story: "he struggles both with and against the phenomenon to build a story - a third narrative - that includes Jewish and Palestinian histories, and all the places they overlap" (Eilberg-Shwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. xviii).

Sulaiman Khatib grew up in Hizma, northeast of Jerusalem, in an indigenous family deeply connected to their land for generations. As a child, he herded sheep in the mountains and harvested figs, grapes, and olives with his grandfather. In his early teens, he became involved in political activism and, at fourteen, he and a friend attacked and stabbed two Israeli soldiers in an attempt to steal weapons. The two soldiers were injured and he was sentenced to 15 years in jail. While incarcerated under harsh conditions, he educated himself through reading, study, and hunger strikes. Over time, he transformed his beliefs, embracing nonviolence and recognizing the shared humanity of both Palestinians and Israelis. After his release in 1997, he dedicated his life to peacebuilding and to joint nonviolent efforts for freedom, security, and human rights for all.

These are Khatib's own words describing his transformation, taken from his profile page on the website of American Friends of Combatants for Peace: "I realized I had mistaken the enemy. I had thought it was the Jewish people, but I was wrong. Instead, we have common enemies: hatred, fear, and collective trauma. I knew that if we could somehow unite against these common foes, then together we could end this conflict. Our land does not belong to the Jews or the Palestinians only. We both belong to the land"[3].

Khatib's individual journey thus becomes a lens through which broader questions of narrative, responsibility, and transformation can be examined.

[2] https://www.inthisplacebook.com/
[3] https://www.afcfp.org/sulaiman-khatib

2. METASTORIES AND INTERCONNECTEDNESS

Goldberg and Bashir delineate two metanarratives that host the Palestinian national narrative and the Jewish Zionist narrative: the first is situated within the metanarrative of anticolonialism, and the second is embedded in the Holocaust metanarrative (2023). In their book *Holocaust and Nakba*, Bashir and Goldberg propose a new grammar and syntax of story and memory capable of holding both narratives—honoring their uniqueness and differences while also offering a broader historical and conceptual framework within which they can be seen together (2023). Their perspective, which situates global political violence within the confluence of nation-state ideology, imperialism, Orientalism, and colonialism, allows us to grasp the relationship between the Holocaust and the Nakba (Bashir & Goldberg, 2023).

I identify a possible metanarrative capable of hosting a third narrative in an Indigenous ontology grounded in interconnectedness. A single narrative requires a blindness to interconnectedness in order to sustain itself. Its metastory is one of separation; its strategy is based on a win–lose logic; its tool is competition (even competition over victimhood); its aim is to cancel, blame, or annihilate the other's narrative. By contrast, the third narrative is embedded in a metastory of the interconnectedness of peoples. Its strategy centers on transformation; its tool is togetherness, especially—and even more so—in the shared pain of trauma; its horizon is collective liberation. Moreover, an awareness of our interconnectedness with other species and with the Earth opens fresh perspectives on the role of the Land itself, as I will bring further.

2. POWER AND ETHICAL DILEMMA

> "*This is how to create a single story. Show people as one thing, as only one thing, over and over again and that is what they become. It is impossible to talk about the single story without talking about power. Stories are defined by the principle of 'Nkali (Igbo word meaning "to be greater than another'): how they are told, who tells them, when they are told, how many stories are told, are really dependent on power. Power is not just the ability to tell the story of another person but to make it the definitive story of that person. The Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti writes that if you want to dispossess a people, the simplest thing you can do is to tell their story and to start with 'secondly […] What if we had […] what Chinua Achiebe called 'a balance of stories' […] Stories matter, many stories matter […] stories can break the dignity of a people but stories can also repair that broken dignity*" (Adichie, 2009)

The ethical tension of a third narrative arises precisely from the consideration of power in Israel–Palestine. Edward Said describes a structural asymmetry in which Zionism achieved political realization and international legitimacy within a Western colonial framework, while the Palestinians were denied recognition as a people and rendered politically absent. The conflict thus unfolds between a sovereign, institutionally empowered state and a dispossessed population struggling for acknowledgment of its national existence (Said, 1998).

The asymmetry of power is a controversial issue in joint activism and, consequently, in the rehearsal of a third narrative. Accusations of normalization (in Arabic, *tatbi'a*), and even calls for boycotts whenever Israelis and Palestinians create shared spaces or engage in joint actions, are widespread. This is exemplified by the case of Standing Together, a joint movement of Jewish and Palestinian

citizens of Israel that has grown significantly in recent years. It is a broad, cross-community movement, and it articulates its vision as follows: "We envision a society that serves all of us and treats every person with dignity. A society that chooses peace, justice, and independence for Israelis and Palestinians, Jews and Arabs. A society in which we all enjoy real security, adequate housing, quality education, good healthcare, a liveable climate, a decent salary, and the ability to age with dignity. Such a society is possible – we're already building it" (Standing Together, n.d.). Its activities range from co-leading large street protests and providing humanitarian accompaniment to engaging in disruptive actions in public spaces that strongly criticize the Israeli government, which is considered responsible for genocide in Gaza and ethnic cleansing in the West Bank[4]. Despite all this, Standing Together has been accused of "normalization" by the Palestinian Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel (PACBI), a member of the BDS movement, and is therefore listed among the organizations to be boycotted (PACBI, 2025).

How can a shared space for a third narrative exist when the asymmetry of power is so profound that, from some perspectives, the very act of sharing space is seen as outrageous because it creates an image of coexistence that risks whitewashing injustice?

As I see it, a third narrative is not about decorating co-existence[5] or about bothsiderism. It is more similar to a wider space, where all sides can see each other and be shaken by the other's narratives. It is a space of challenge for each narrative, especially for those that hold more power and privilege. Bashir and Goldberg quote a sentence spoken by a Palestinian character in Elias Khoury's novel *Bab al-Shams*: "I beg you, we must not become a single story". They then write: "We want to say that this request should apply to the Jewish side, which—as we have seen—is the stronger side and the one perpetrating the Nakba […] Khoury's request to the Palestinians should be addressed with even greater urgency to Jewish people" (Bashir & Goldberg, 2023, p. 53).

This emphasis on asymmetry reinforces the idea that a third narrative must engage with power differentials rather than ignore them.

This urgency to challenge the Israeli side more directly is also traceable in the book about Sulaiman Khatib. "He (Sulaiman) didn't want to believe it, didn't want to entertain what he'd heard some people say of him, that through his work with Israelis, he'd given up too much, lost something of himself, become less Palestinian" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 220). Such accusations illustrate how efforts to build shared spaces can be interpreted as betrayal, revealing the social costs of rehearsing a third narrative.

Through the book, one can sense the internal struggle Sulaiman Khatib faced—not only in making space for the Jewish narrative "while knowing Jewish history had been used, was still being used, as a weapon against your people, your family" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021), but also in introducing a third narrative within his own community without feeling like a traitor. This tension shows that the rehearsal of a third narrative operates simultaneously on personal, communal, and political levels. "Now I do not feel belonging to the Palestinian narrative alone. I feel belonging there, and beyond it. So many Palestinians can still relate to me because of certain stages in my life. But

[4] On social media, such as Instagram and Facebook, Standing Together has referred to the situation in Israel and Palestine as genocide and ethnic cleansing.

[5] About the difference between co-existence vs co-resistance, see: "We are not here to decorate co-existence but to co-resist" by two activists of Standing Together; "Co-existence, my ass!" by stand-up comedian Noam Shuster.

sometimes I feel strange talking to fellow Palestinians. I have to think before I speak. […] Sometimes I feel I am too open, more than they can accept" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 219).

This internal struggle is exemplified by a joke from one of Khatib's friends, who says that sometimes he misses "Sulaiman the fellah," who was replaced by "Souli, the Ashkenazi Palestinian" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 219). The humor of the remark underscores how identity transformation can be perceived as loss, even when it is actually an expansion of identity.

Through his story—particularly in his posture and reflections—Khatib can be seen as embodying an archetypal prophetic figure. He speaks from a future horizon, as he says to his co-author: "I am looking from afar" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 220). As Eilberg-Schwartz notes, he is a visionary, and many people recognize this. The prophetic figure is often rejected or even persecuted by his community; he denounces present injustices and calls for collective renewal, embodying both the burden of vision and the loneliness of foresight. This interpretation helps explain why his work evokes both admiration and suspicion.

Because of his position, Khatib—and others like him—are exposed to accusations of normalization from the Left, from Palestinian society, and from international circles. Even some of the Israeli founders of Combatants for Peace left the movement, believing its work came too close to normalizing the occupation. Yonatan, who left Combatants for Peace, stated in an interview: "I realized that the framework was problematic because it's not a conflict between equal parties […] it is a colonial struggle—colonizer and colonized" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 202). This divergence within the movement demonstrates that the third narrative is still a process, contested, negotiated, and continually redefined.

Khatib remains in Combatants for Peace, believing that "this movement was the best place to practice values of equal partnership—even if such a thing could not yet be fully realized" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 203). Continuing to work within the movement does not prevent him from challenging colonial mindsets when some Israelis slip into a "teaching mode," telling Palestinian villagers how to resist: "*Shwayya* with the teaching stuff, Eyal […] your Ashkenazi good intentions are coming out!" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 204). At the same time, while pointing out colonial attitudes among some Israelis, he also acknowledges the "victimhood mindset" among some Palestinians: "Some days he felt occupation had become an excuse for everything" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 204). This dual critique illustrates the third narrative's commitment to self-reflection across all sides.

Reflection on power is closely tied to the victimhood mindset and to the possibility of opening up. Khatib's lived experience reveals the complexity and multilayered nature of power: "Power is very strange. Growing up in Palestine, I believed that the Israelis were evil, that the only way to have a meaningful life with freedom and dignity was through armed struggle. But over the years, I have discovered other, greater forces. The power of love and forgiveness. The power of story and noble silence. The power of humanity, which is bigger and more powerful than any kind of violence. It is the only way for me to live" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. xxi). This statement encapsulates the ethical and philosophical core of the third narrative: transformation rather than binary thinking.

In the final part of the book, Khatib reflects extensively on recognizing the Jewish connection to the land—an acknowledgment that is difficult for many Palestinians, and for himself as well. "He sensed how the Israeli need for recognition marked an opportunity. Because when a person—or a people—needs something from you, it gives you power. Palestinians could choose to extend recognition to

Israelis, or withhold it". This insight reframes power and reframes recognition not as surrender but as agency.

In prison, through hunger strikes, he learned about a different kind of strength: "He saw the walls, the guards, the army outside, and he felt, 'They are the strong ones.' This is why the hunger strikes were so sacred; they had shown him his strength" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 205). The paradox here—strength emerging from vulnerability—parallels the third narrative's emphasis once again on transformation rather than domination.

The book about Khatib's story (*In This Place Together*) was published in 2021; the book by Bashir and Goldberg was published in September 2023, just before October 7, 2023, and the events that followed, that Combatants for Peace name with the contested and polarizing term of 'genocide', just after the report of B'Tselem was published (B'Tselem, 2025)[6]. For Combatants for Peace, the period after October 7 was likely a moment in which the Israeli members were called upon to choose nonviolence and remain steadfast in their shared values amid vulnerability and the reactivation of trauma. Palestinian members were accustomed to participating in joint activities while their communities and families were under threat, humiliated, and expropriated; would the Israeli members be able—as Iris Gur, an Israeli participant, put it in the film - to "resist anger and calls for revenge after the events of October 7, 2023?" (Apkon, 2025). This question highlights the asymmetry of experience that shapes perceptions of joint activism and the third narrative. Avner Wishnitzer (Israeli), quoting Jamil Qassas (Palestinian), says that "it is when it is hard that you need to show your commitment" (Apkon, 2025). This perspective reinforces the idea that the choice of a third narrative, a third space, a third way - "another way", the title of the film and the slogan of Combatants for Peace—does not arise from normalizing the *status quo* but from the lived and painful experience of it, coupled with the determination to change it. Moreover, it is not a one-time choice, but one that must be confirmed moment by moment.

The personal journey of Khatib and of Combatants for Peace raise the following questions: What does it require of Palestinians to enter a third narrative? Are there risks of "giving too much," especially in this historical moment? What does it require of Israelis to "beg not to become a single story," reaching out to those who remain comfortable within narratives that legitimize violence and oppression? In what creative languages can they say, "Take off your uniforms and join us", as Chen Alon (Israeli) asked to the soldiers through a loudspeaker during a creative theater protest at the Tulkarem checkpoint (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 201)? These questions do not provide definitive answers but sustain the inquiry that the third narrative seeks to open.

4. FROM MEMORY AND VICTIMHOOD TO COURAGEOUS IMAGINATION FOR THE FUTURE

"*Our tears are abundant enough, and our hearts are big enough, to grieve for every life taken – every universe destroyed – whether Israeli or Palestinian. It is not either, or. We need one another: Jews cannot be safe if Palestinians are not safe and free.*" - Calling for gatherings under the banner of "Every Life, a Universe" (Klein, 2024)

[6] The approach of B'Tselem merges academic genocide studies with the legal framework of the Genocide Convention, linking coordinated systemic destruction to the intent to destroy a group, also warning about the spillover of genocidal practices into other areas under Israeli control where Palestinians live (B'Tselem, 2025).

The literature on memory has expanded tremendously. The so-called "memory boom" reflects not only increasing scholarly interest in memory as a central theme but also its function as a structuring principle in research (Dei, 2004).

There is more than one thread that connects memory, victimhood, and the possibility of a shared future. For these threads, I consider the Joint Memorial Ceremony and aside the Joint Nakba Remembrance Ceremony.

The Joint Nakba Remembrance Ceremony commemorates the pain and tragedy of the Nakba (Arabic for "catastrophe"), when in 1948 over 700,000 Palestinians were forcibly expelled from their homes and their villages and towns were destroyed (Pappé, 2006). The Nakba is explicitly framed as a continuing present (Bashir & Goldberg, 2023, p. 30), rather than a concluded historical event: colonial practices continue and in recent years have intensified. The Ceremony challenges the Israeli dominant narrative in which the Nakba remains a taboo. For this reason, it can be situated within the lineage of a counternarrative that contests dominant narratives. However, because the Joint Nakba Ceremony involves not only Palestinians commemorating their own catastrophe but also Israelis participating, it introduces a more complex layer of potentialities and challenges—particularly for Israelis confronting questions of accountability and responsibility for the Nakba, with all the strong emotions this may evoke, such as shame and guilt. This complexity situates the Ceremony within the spirit of a third narrative rehearsal. A third narrative "stays with the troubles" (Haraway, 2016), believing in transformation rather than replacement or a win–lose logic.

The Joint Memorial Ceremony is organized by Combatants for Peace and the Parents Circle–Families Forum. It takes place annually on the eve of Yom HaZikaron (Israel's Memorial Day), which honors soldiers and civilians who died "in service to the country" and in acts of terrorism. This commemoration reinforces narratives of pain, victimhood, and despair within a framework of ethnic and performative remembrance (Klein, 2024). The Ceremony transforms this narrative by bringing Palestinians and Israelis together "to grieve and shape another possible path" (Combatants for Peace, n.d.).

There is strong awareness of the temporal dimension of memory and its consequences depending on how it is shaped and by whom. Remembering and grieving together for the traumas of the past and present allows a different future to emerge—one that is already embodied in the participants of the Ceremony. As Khatib writes: "They shared the stage. They spoke of a different, shared future. And maybe, […] looking around, that future was already here in certain ways." He continues: "They stayed in an alternative space, in a third narrative that didn't speak for just one side. A narrative that showed the truth: both peoples were caught in this conflict, and they would have to find a way out together" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 201).

Spatially, the Ceremony creates a space large enough for every story to be heard and for every life lost to be commemorated—a space that embodies the idea of a third narrative. The territory of pain and trauma, often used to reinforce separation and the legitimacy of violence, can instead become a territory of proximity when it opens to the pain and trauma of the other, linking healing with justice. This suggests a possible transposition from the inner territory of memory to the outer territory of the land itself: a shift from a land marked by separation toward one oriented to proximity, healing, and a shared future.

One year after the massacre of October 7, 2023, carried out by Hamas in the kibbutzim of southern Israel, Naomi Klein analyzed how Israel was weaponizing trauma and asked: "what does it mean to perform collective grief when the collective is not universal, but rather tightly bound by ethnicity?"

(Klein, 2024). Her reflection underscores the risks of using memory and victimhood as instruments of political mobilization.

The organizers of the Ceremony in 2025 state: "Instead of allowing grief to be manipulated into hatred, and instead of accepting revenge as justice, we choose a different path". They aim to break the cycle of violence based on the weaponization of trauma and the use of memory to construct identities rooted in victimhood that deny the shadows of perpetration. Traumatic experiences suffered by a group are more readily commemorated and ritualized, while crimes committed by the same group often remain in silence or are subject to denial or reinterpretation (Assman, 2011).

In its non-competitive nature, the Joint Memorial Ceremony can be understood as an instance of "multidirectional memory," a concept developed by Michael Rothberg (Klein, 2024). Still, as Khatib notes: "To hold multiple narratives is not easy. It is not easy to carry contradictions in your soul. It's much easier to see one side of the story, to blame the other, to live in victimhood" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. xxii).

Regarding power, victims often possess significant moral authority, which can be mobilized to garner support. "Taking the side of the victims, in fact, would seem to provide immunity from blame because it 'guarantees innocence beyond any reasonable doubt,' so that 'whoever stands with the victim can never be wrong.' The victim is not to be questioned, is beyond scrutiny, and stands above all criticism" (Mastromarino, 2018, note 64). The subtitle of one of Edward Said's books, "The Tragedy of Being Victims of the Victims" chosen by the publisher Gamberetti (Said, 1995), highlights the centrality of the victimhood paradigm in narratives that support one side or the other. Within a third narrative space, such as the Joint Memorial Ceremony, relinquishing the monopoly of victimhood opens possibilities for accountability and shared responsibility for the future.

In the memorial and narrative arena, initiatives like the Ceremonies assume the responsibility of including diverse and still 'unreconciled memories'—in Rusconi's expression (Mastromarino, 2018, note 15) - and narratives. They may not yet create a single shared memory, but they enable the sharing of memories[7]. For Khatib, the Ceremony has become a significant global event, one of the largest gatherings after the official commemoration. He acknowledges its controversial nature but also describes it as "a sacred event" in which transformation can occur, even within a single hour, a statement he recognizes as weighty in the current historical moment: "We are not in a post-conflict situation; we are still in trauma […] so, much more is needed" (Magazine Zenith, 2025).

The ones who walk the path of a third narrative are those whom Alexander Langer defined as "true 'traitors of ethnic compactness'". Vaccarelli cites Langer in relation to memory and identity in Israel–Palestine: "It will be necessary […] to develop a great capacity to confront and dissolve ethnic conflict. This will require that within each ethnic community we value people and forces capable of self-criticism toward their own community: true 'traitors of ethnic compactness,' who however must never become defectors, if they wish to maintain their roots and remain credible" (Langer, 1994, as cited in Vaccarelli, 2025).

It takes courage to be - or becom - these "traitors of ethnic compactness," on both sides. "When Chen Alon, a former major in the Israeli Defence Force (IDF) and from a strong Zionist and Holocaust survivor family background, decided publicly to work with Palestinian ex-fighters towards a just peace, he was met with this reaction: - A very close friend of my parents said to my father, 'I saw the name of your son in the newspaper, but let's not get into it because you know what I think. I think

[7] This is an expression used by prof. Roberto Cornelli during an online lesson on Restorative and Transitional Justice, on 28th January 2026.

they should put them against the wall and shoot all of them, all these traitors'" (Verwoerd *et al*., 2025, p.1).

In Khatib's story, it is clear that this journey is not only political but also requires a spiritual dimension. It points toward something connected to the future, demanding significant political imagination in order to move beyond binarisms, fixed identities, and the (ab)used memories that sustain them.

It takes imagination to shape a third space. This source for change, often marginalized as a childlike faculty, is essential for both present co-resistance and future possibility. Sulaiman Khatib observes that the Joint Memorial Ceremony remains, in some sense, something unimaginable (Khatib & Alon, 2023). Chen Alon notes that one of the first manifestations of oppression is the inability to imagine alternative realities (Khatib & Alon, 2023). To exit the cycle of violence and the victimhood paradigm may require exiting the symbolic and cultural frameworks that sustain it, frameworks that can shape both perpetrators and victims. It is a widespread phenomenon that victims of violence may appropriate its language and symbolism (Dei, 2004). A third narrative requires the capacity to imagine a third way that steps outside the culturally and symbolically accepted order of violence.

5. THE LAND HERSELF

Considering a metanarrative of interconnectedness, a third narrative can open to an ecological perspective in which the Land itself - or herself, acknowledging the agency of the land - can speak.

I find this insight in Sulaiman Khatib's words: "Maybe it's too spiritual for some people, but I feel the land has its say. I have a firm belief in this. And the way things are - the wall and everything - they will not last. Every stone has a different story, and they existed all together. We can learn from this, from the olive trees and jasmine […] there is a deeper connection" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. XXIII). Throughout the book, the connection with the land repeatedly emerges as a spiritual relationship: Sarah, Sulaiman's mother, touching the leaves of the trees and singing to them—or perhaps with them; Sulaiman's grandfather using the same soft stone as a pillow and teaching Sulaiman that the land did not belong to people at all, but the other way around; and in the acknowledgments, the authors thank "the land itself which is so much smarter than us" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 248).

This paper has not sought to develop the ecological dimension of a third narrative, but only to suggest that such a direction may enrich future reflection on the potentiality of the interconnectedness as a metanarrative.

6. CONCLUSION

Considering Khatib's story and the Ceremonies, the third narrative seems to be a tension-space informed by a future horizon. It is not another narrative within the binary but an undoing of the binary itself - a "third thing". The spatial dimension has accompanied this reflection: making space for the other's narrative, making space for the other's pain, and eventually making space for a third narrative to emerge. Space can be understood in multiple dimensions - mental, emotional, relational, and potentially political. A premise and a consequence of the third narrative is that there is enough space.

As stated in the epilogue of the book that guided this analysis, "if we just think differently, the amount of space widens so drastically that we can't see the edges" and "whatever the nature of the space, whether constricted or expansive, it is always shared. Because we are all here. What matters is the shape of that sharing" (Eilberg-Schwartz & Khatib, 2021, p. 243).

Delving into Sulaiman Khatib's story and the Ceremonies brings to the surface the ethical tension of a third narrative in a context where violence is not only still present (this is not a post-conflict situation) but even increasing. A third narrative needs to recognize the difference between both siderism and the effort to acknowledge the whole; the difference between polarization and truth-telling through the analysis of power asymmetries; the difference between the normalization of the *status quo* with the whitewashing of coexistence, and the challenge of the *status quo* through co-resistance. Given the enormous asymmetry of power, awareness of privileges and responsibilities appears to be a necessary - though for some not sufficient - condition for the creation of a third, shared space.

My attention has been drawn to cracks and challenges. I am particularly interested in the moment - understood as momentum or *kairos* - when the imperative to "be on the right side of history" (which history, and according to which narrative?) gives way to the necessity of staying with the troubles, engaging with complexity, and making kin, recognizing interconnectedness of land, species and communities (Haraway, 2013). The challenge is to remain grounded in justice while listening to multiple voices and allowing the possibility of transformation. It is about creating room for a new story - a third narrative - to emerge: one that is more plural, more porous, more hybrid, and for that very reason, potentially less violent.

What matters, therefore, is not merely opposition within the existing game but the possibility of leaving that game behind and changing the framework itself. A third narrative and co-resistance thus acquire disruptive potential in the literal sense: they disrupt the binary framework of "us versus them". The goal is not to shift positions within the game but to transform the game itself and its lines of division. It is about queering the boundaries of separation, because "If you must divide us, divide us as those who believe in justice, peace and equality, and those who don't - yet" (Abu Sarah & Inon, 2024). And how precious is that "yet"!

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