Forensic Ecologies of Occupied Zones and Geographies of Dispossession: Gaza and Occupied East Jerusalem

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In this essay, I work to develop what I term multi-dimensional matrices of suffering that envisage the understanding of suffering beyond the locus of the human subject. In my theorising of multi-dimensional matrices of suffering, I proceed to conceptualise the suffering experienced in occupied zones as both relational and distributed. In the occupied zone, suffering encompasses complex, multi-dimensional vectors that bind humans, animals, animate and non-animate objects and entities, buildings and land. In the context of the regimes of violence that inscribe occupied zones, I situate suffering, and a range of other affects, in ecological configurations that, through a range of forensic indices, evidence the impact of these regimes of violence on the broad spectrum of entities that comprise a particular occupied zone. The conceptualisation of suffering and trauma in occupied zones in terms of its relational multi-dimensionality, its site-specific matrices and relational distribution across ecologies, I conclude, enables an understanding of suffering that moves beyond anthropocentric approaches. I situate my analysis in the context of Israel's drone-enabled regime of unrelenting surveillance, occupation and military control over Gaza and its continuing occupation of East Jerusalem.

Introduction

In his detailed and acute analyses of occupied zones, Franzt Fanon mapped the complex systems of relations that produce, for the colonised, corporeal economies of suffering, trauma, deprivation and death. In this essay, I work to extend Fanon's groundbreaking work by delineating what I will term multi-dimensional matrices of suffering that envisage the understanding of suffering beyond the human subject. In

my theorising of multi-dimensional matrices of suffering, I proceed to conceptualise the suffering experienced in occupied zones as, crucially, both relational and distributed. In the occupied zone, suffering encompasses, I argue, complex, multi-dimensional vectors that bind humans, animals, animate and non-animate objects and entities, buildings and land. In the context of the regimes of violence that inscribe occupied zones, I proceed to situate suffering, and a range of other affects, in ecological configurations that, through a range of forensic indices, evidence the impact of these regimes of violence on the broad spectrum of entities that comprise a particular occupied zone. In other words, in theorising suffering as constituted by multi-dimensional matrices, I want to delineate its spatio-temporal dimensions, differential intensities, site-specific nuclei and its relational distributions across a broad range of entities that encompasses more than the human subject.

I situate my theorisation of the multi-dimensional matrices of suffering in the context of Israel's drone-enabled regime of unrelenting surveillance, occupation and military control over Gaza and its continuing occupation of East Jerusalem. Both these occupied zones, that experience different modalities and intensities of surveillance and military and paramilitary assault by Israeli forces and settlers, constitute what I have elsewhere termed 'geographies of dispossession', that is, geographic spaces marked by the violent practices of enforced displacement and expropriation (Pugliese 2013, p. 587). These geographies of dispossession are, in turn, as I discuss below, transmuted by the Israeli state, through its deployment of military, paramilitary and legal apparatuses, into the violent 'geograph[ies] of the eliminated' (de Certeau 1986, p. 131).

Israel has played a pivotal, if strategically self-effaced, role in the development and deployment of drones for military purposes. In fact, 'Israel was the first country to use drones in combat—during its invasion of Lebanon in 1982. These were later sold in the US which used them in the Gulf War' (Feldman 2014). Israel is the 'world's single largest exporter of drones' (Mohamad 2013). 'A key selling point', writes Ismael Mohamad (2013), a point 'stressed repeatedly by Israeli arms companies and officials—is that Israel's weapons are "field tested" in "real time". This means they are tested on a captive Palestinian population'. In this 'field-testing' schema, Palestinians emerge as mere test targets upon which Israel conducts ongoing experiments of its latest military technologies. Situated at the nexus of Israeli settler-colonial occupation and the military-industrial complex, Gaza emerges as a 'laboratory' where 'Israel tests and refines various techniques of management, continuously experimenting in search of an optimal balance between *maximum control* over the territory and *minimum responsibility* for its non-Jewish population' (Li 2006, pp. 38-39). Avner Benzaken, the head of the Israeli army's technology and logistics division, underscores the significance of Gaza as Israel's weapons testing laboratory: 'If I develop a product and want to test it in the field, I only have to go five or ten kilometres from my base and I can look and see what's happening with equipment … I get feedback,

so it makes the development process faster and much more efficient' (quoted in Khalek 2014). Drew Marks, from ESC BAZ, an Israeli company that manufactures unmanned surveillance systems, boasts that, in their marketing campaigns, they successfully capitalise on the fact that their systems are 'battlefield proven' and that, for him, there is 'a lot of pride in that statement' (quoted in Cohen 2014). In the catastrophic 2014 assault on Gaza unleashed by Operation Protective Edge, Israel 'deployed operationally for the first time' the new Elbit's Hermes 900 drone. As Rania Khalek (2014) remarks:

> After participating in Israel's 51-days of terror on Gaza this summer [2014], the Hermes 900 can join its predecessors in the 'combat-proven' camp, which is sure to boost demand. Also likely to profit from its role in turning Gaza into a graveyard is Elbit's Skylark mini-UAV [unmanned aerial vehicle], a hand-launched surveillance drone. Though it had been used in Gaza in the past, Operation Protective Edge was the first time the Skylark was deployed in large numbers to assist the invading ground forces.

In the course of the militarised assault unleashed on Gaza during Operation Protective Edge, Mary Dobbing, a drone researcher, 'found that 800 drone strikes took place within a fifty-day period' (Electronic Intifada 2014). This latest drone assault on Gaza has reaped significant financial rewards for Elbit: 'In the month of July 2014 alone, during the peak of the assault on the Gaza Strip, Elbit's profits increased by 6.1%' (Who Profits 2014). Drones afford Israel virtually unfettered control of all Gaza's key spatial dimensions: 'We are still living completely under Israeli control', says Hamdi Shaqura, 'they control the borders and the sea and they decide our fates from positions in the sky' (quoted in Cook 2013). The Israeli military is capitalising on its use of Gaza as its own weapons testing laboratory by continuing to develop and test evermore lethal drones, including Suicide Drones—euphemistically termed 'Loitering Munitions': 'They are a hybrid of drone and missile technology that have "autonomous and partially autonomous" elements, and are "launched like a missile, fly like a UAV", and once they identify a target, revert to "attack like a missile"' (Cohen 2014). Lieutenant Colonel Itzhar Jona, head of Israel Aerospace Industries, celebrates the development of the Suicide Drone as a progressive breakthrough because the operator 'doesn't have to bring it home or deal with all sorts of dilemmas' (quoted in Cohen 2014). In other words, the operator does not have to deal with such ethical dilemmas as to whether or not it is legitimate to kill a target. These ethical dilemmas will now be sidestepped precisely because the 'Suicide Drone will quickly find a target using its *internal logic*' (Cohen 2014, emphasis added). This 'internal logic', which evidences the culmination of the militarised instrumentalisation of life, is irrevocably teleological in its autonomously-driven trajectory: 'It carries a warhead', says Lieutenant Jona, 'that eventually needs to explode. There needs to be a target at the end that will want to explode' (Cohen 2014). Operative here is a linguistic sleight of hand that switches the missile for the Palestinian target. In this perverted schema, the Suicide Drone merely delivers the lethal payload, but it is

the human target, resignified as the explosive agent, that must assume responsibility for its own self-inflicted death—'it', the Palestinian target, *wants to explode*, as opposed to the Suicide Drone that has been programmed to explode its human target. In other words, the killing agency of the Suicide Drone is transferred to the Palestinian target that now is recoded as a Suicide (Drone) Bomber. This necropolitical 'internal logic' is entirely in keeping with Israel's doctrine of blaming Palestinians for their own deaths at the hands of Israeli military violence: as defiant and resistant subjects to the process of colonisation and attempted genocidal extinguishment, they are themselves to blame for the violence and death inflicted upon them by the Israeli state.

The Palestinians living and dying under this regime of drone-secured occupation experience suffering as at once generalised, site-specific and harrowingly material. In the face of the daily violence experienced in Gaza's 'laboratory', Palestinians resist and contest their framing by the Israeli state as disposable forms of biological matter that can be experimented on and killed with impunity. Their acts of resistance encompass everything from stone throwing to their giving voice to an 'aesthetic of resistance' (Junka 2006, p. 357) that includes, amongst a range of aesthetic practices, the critical resignification of images of the bombing of Gaza by Palestinian artists who overlay these images of destruction with symbols of defiance and peace (Wyatt 2014) and the turning of shell casings into flower vases (see El-Haddad 2014, p. 123). Through such varied acts of resistance, Palestinians exercise 'forms of Palestinian subjectivity and agency [that] exist beyond the narrow parameters of militancy and victimhood' (Junka 2006, p. 349).

In drawing upon the governing metaphor of suffering as constituted by a multi-dimensional matrix in the context of occupied zones, my concern is to map the manner in which regimes of suffering produce distributed and relational impacts upon the everyday lives of target subjects, their communities and the larger ecologies that sustain their very lives. My focus will be on the manner in which suffering, fear and trauma become collective experiences that radiate out of, and beyond, the site-specific human body. Once envisioned as a multi-dimensional matrix, suffering can be traced in terms of its wave-like motion through communities and across their ecologies: in its wake, suffering leaves disorientation, trauma and a form of living death. The conceptualisation of suffering and trauma in occupied zones in terms of its relational multi-dimensionality, its site-specific matrices and relational distribution across ecologies, I conclude, enables an understanding of suffering that moves beyond liberal-humanist and anthropocentric approaches. In the context of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories, I draw upon the work of Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian in order to map the complex economies of suffering and trauma experienced by Palestinians in the course of their everyday lives. Furthermore, I proceed to map suffering's *communal* dimensions by situating it beyond traditional anthropocentric delimitations and by locating it within broad ecologies of relationality.

Actors in Ecologies

In attempting to theorise a communal and ecological understanding of the experience of suffering that challenges anthropocentric circumscriptions, I want to underscore the critical necessity to articulate a different order of entities that evidences not a binarised subject/object world, but a world of differentially but still mutually constitutive actors. I use 'actor' here in Bruno Latour's (2004, p. 226) extended sense: 'things might authorize, allow, afford, encourage, permit, suggest, influence, block, render possible, forbid and so on, in addition to "determining" and serving as a backdrop to human action'. Complicating and attenuating reductive conceptualisations of cause and effect, Latour (2004, p. 226) advocates agency in non-human objects and things: 'anything that modifies a state of affairs by making a difference is an actor'. Latour here can be seen to be part of that larger theoretical formation that has come to be known as 'thing theory', a theory that, in a nutshell, acknowledges and valorises the agency of non-human entities in the world and argues 'that things too are vital players in the world' (Bennett 2004, p. 349). Even as I affirm the importance of 'thing theory' in marking humans' acknowledgement of the agency of non-human entities in the world, I am troubled by the very title of the theory as, precisely, oriented by the *thing*. The use of the problematic term 'thing' brings into critical focus the hegemonic hold of Euro-anthropocentric language-thought and the manner in which it works insistently to undermine, through its objectifying lexicon, the very possibility of speaking and thinking otherwise about the world. I mark this hegemonic hold precisely because it continues to inscribe my own language-thought even as I attempt to unsettle its grip: as will be seen in what follows, my essay is marked by the very inadequation of my language to an aspired deanthroprocentrising thought. And I qualify this linguistic-conceptual regime of anthropocentrism as Eurocentric precisely because other non-European peoples mobilise different cosmologies that do not reproduce this dichotomous subject/object, human/non-human understanding of the world. Even as she fails to interrogate the problematic term 'thing', that names her reconceptualisation of the relation between different entities, Jane Bennett proceeds to offer an evocative way of thinking through this relation. She writes of the 'autopoetic flow' that enables a 'wide variety of mobile configurations':

> This is not a world, in the first instance, of subjects and objects, but of various materialities constantly engaged in a network of relations. It is a world populated less by individuals than by groupings or compositions that shift over time. (Bennett 2004, p. 354)

In the course of this essay, I attempt to materialise the complex autopoetic flow between various entities in order to bring into focus affective relations that challenge the circumscriptions of anthropocentric thought. I draw on the term 'entity', in contradistinction to 'thing', as, by definition, it works to encompass the plenitude of materialities that exist in the world without reproducing the

subject/object position of the term 'thing'. In the term 'entity', the subject that is being referred to remains indeterminate in its specificity and it cannot be immediately categorised in the hierarchical taxonomies of anthropocentric thought that position human, animal, vegetable, mineral and so on in a categorical descending order. In my conceptualisation of the panoply of nonhuman entities in the world as also, in Latour's sense, actors in the world, I no doubt will be charged with indulging in flagrant acts of anthropomorphism. I am not sure what it means to write outside the inescapable frames of rhetoric and its constitutive repertoire of tropes—metaphor, prosopopoeia or personification and so on—except, of course, by lapsing into catachrestic forms that found their very facticity and literality on the denegated bodies of dead metaphors. Standing at the juncture of tropology and catachresis, I can only avow one thing: that outside the frames of anthropocentric and anthropomorphising language there still reside entities which are not reducible to the same. I do not come to this knowledge through an act of faith. It is what is conveyed to me experientially through my daily engagement with the entities that comprise my world. Even as they are rendered intelligible through my assimilating language, my discursive configurations and repertoire of tropes, they persist in remaining other to my epistemologies and ontologies and, in Levinasian terms, they continue to signify otherwise—even as we stand in relations of proximity.

The ethical reorienting of human-nonhuman relations that Bennett and others call for is not predicated on collapsing the difference between the two. Rather, 'It emphasizes the shared material basis, the kinship, of all things, regardless of their status as human, animal, vegetable, or mineral' (Bennett 2004, p. 359). This is the sort of worldview that, as I mentioned above, has been so clearly articulated by a number of the world's Indigenous cultures, including Aboriginal, Native American and Hawaiian.[i] Critically, Bennett (2004, pp. 359, 354) orients her reconceptualisation of the relation between the different entities in the world by an 'ecological ethos', as she 'advocate[s] the cultivation of an enhanced sense of the extent to which all things are spun together in a dense web', warning of the 'self-destructive character of human actions that are reckless with regard to the other nodes in the web'. In the course of this essay, I work to materialise these other nodes in the web as what also get destroyed in the wake of Israel's militiarised assaults on the Palestinian Territories. And I mobilise the term 'ecology' in order, in Bennett's (2004, p. 365) words, 'to draw attention to its necessary implication in a network of relations' and thus to contribute to an 'ecological ethos'. In other words, I deploy the term 'ecology' in order to gesture to an interlinked and networked assemblage of heterogeneous actors and relations that are mutually constitutive within situated formations. Furthermore, as I discuss below, I condition the concept of 'ecology' with the term 'forensic' as my focus will be on geopolitical sites that have violently experienced both the force and contravention of law and that work to evidence the impact of this violence.

Forensic Ecologies of Slow Violence

In an essay written a number of years ago, '"*Super Visum Corporis*": Visuality, Race, Narrativity and the Body of Forensic Pathology', I examined the intersection of law, visuality and narrativity in the field of forensic pathology. Citing a legally canonical directive to Coroners, that 'a casual glance at the face of the dead body [is] not sufficient [for a postmortem]. The [body] has to be "examined for marks of violence or evidence of the occasion of death"', I worked to delineate the techniques of visuality that bring the dead body into visibility and the series of mediations that make it intelligible in terms of forensic evidence (Pugliese 2002, p. 367). In the face of the dead body, and in the absence of its living voice and testimony, the forensic pathologist is compelled to act as an intermediary between the dead and the living. The forensic pathologist proceeds to mediate between the visual—what is visible—and the linguistic—the telling of the visible— labouring to transmute the 'wordless' corporeal signs of traumata into the evidentiary narrative of the written autopsy report. In this essay, I transpose this analytical model of forensics to sites marked by the operations of Israeli state violence. Yet, let me stress, even as I transpose the model of forensics to the context of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories, I refuse to reproduce the discipline's insistence on deploying a scientistic and objectifying lens in the analysis of its 'objects' of inquiry. Rather, I inscribe my forensic analyses with the very elements and techniques that the discipline outlaws and disavows: the structuring and inescapable influence of embodied affect, tropology and narrativity. My analysis of forensic ecologies can be seen, for example, as enacting the forensic pathologist's equivalent of attempting to constitute a 'chain of custody' precisely by materialising the discipline's disavowed *narratological* assemblage of trace evidence; simultaneously, my forensic analysis also works to bring to the fore the disavowed, because embodied, *affects* that ineluctably 'contaminate' the production of this same trace evidence; these embodied affects, I contend, cannot be wholly eliminated from the operations of any rational or objective analysis. A chain of custody is, then, narratologically constituted by a narrator, spatio-temporal markers, effaced yet constitutive rhetorical elements and the complex interplay between sites, actors and agents that enable an entity (for example, as I discuss below, a deflated child's football, remnant of a drone strike) to become intelligible precisely as a form of forensic evidence (Pugliese 2002, p. 371). The concept of forensic ecologies builds on Eyal Weizman's (2011, p. 10) work on Forensic Architecture. In his theorisation of Forensic Architecture, Weizman brings into focus 'the work of expert witnesses who present structural analysis in a legal context. Their practice combines the principles of property surveying, structural engineering, the physics of blast forces, and the chemistry of composite materials. In that sense, Forensic Architecture is the archaeology of the very recent past, but it must also be a form of assembling the future'. Forensic Architecture is now playing a critical role in uncovering and evidencing the secretive yet devastating role of drone strikes (Garkavenko 2014). I want to expand Weizman's concept beyond architecture, and the attendant

anthropocentrism that continues to inform his analytical model, in order to encompass the larger ecologies within which buildings (or their ruins) are situated, and to move the discussion to the larger assemblage of non-human entities that at any time constitute a particular forensic ecology that has been subjected to the exercise of state violence.

Forensic ecologies are what emerge after the traumatic impact of explosive violence—for example, a drone missile strike in an agricultural field. In the wake of this blast of explosive violence, the field and its larger ecology begin to seep what Rob Nixon (2011, p. 199) terms 'slow violence'. Slow violence, writes Nixon (2011, p. 199), is what inscribes 'ecologies of the Aftermath': it is 'a violence that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility'. It is explosive or fast violence that grabs our attention and that works to signify as violence as such. Nixon (2011, p. 2) calls for a focus on precisely what escapes these doxic understandings of violence: 'We need … to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales'. In what follows, I work to track the unfolding of slow violence as it continues to ramify across the forensic ecologies of Gaza and occupied East Jerusalem.

Israel's Drone-Enabled Occupation of Gaza

Drones are unmanned aerial vehicles equipped with a complex array of surveillance technologies that enable them to surveil their targets from great heights; they can also be armed with missiles. As unmanned aerial vehicles, they are controlled by pilots and screeners (who analyse the video feeds) situated in military bases that can be situated thousands of miles away from the actual location of the drones. In keeping with my desire to begin to articulate the complex matrices that constitute regimes of suffering in occupied zones, I want to proceed to name and view drones as, following Latour, *actors* within these zones of suffering. In attempting to account for the agentic role of technologies, such as drones, in the production of suffering and death in occupied zones, I view drones as the military *prosthetics of occupation*. The figure of prosthesis, I argue, sutures technological ensembles such as drones to their human charges. Critically, the figure of prosthesis also marks the quasi-indivisible join between the one and the other. As objects with a certain degree of autonomy, drones must be seen as both autonomous agents and as also dependent on the ongoing guidance of their human agents. Viewed within the locus of occupied zones—and their entangled ensembles of geopolitical spaces, technologies, human subjects and nonhuman entities—drones emerge not as mere technological effect to human cause but, rather, as *actors* instrumental in the very

processes of shaping and conditioning local and international spatial relations, subjectivities and cultural practices. Taking my cue from Latour, I want to proceed to map the various ways in which drones, in the context of the Israeli-occupied Palestinian Territories, instantiate a series of significant transformations of the lives of the subjects enmeshed within relations of drone-enabled power. Furthermore, my theorisation of drones as *prosthetics* of occupation must be seen as extending beyond the tropological dimensions of prosthesis and into the brutally literal world of material dismemberment and maiming. Jasbir Puar (2015) tracks the biopolitical dimensions of this violence in her conceptualisation of the 'right to maim' as exercised by the Israeli state, and the consequent systemic production of disabled Palestinian subjects: 'Maiming as intentional practice expands biopolitics beyond simply the question of "right of death and power of life"; maiming becomes a primary vector by which biopolitical control is operated in colonized space and hence not easily demarcated "necro" as it is mapped in Mbembe's reworking of biopolitics'.

In my attempt to theorise the complex systems of interdependency between human subjects, non-human entities and geopolitical space, I will draw upon the figure of the matrix. A matrix signifies the conceptual and material infrastructure that constitutes an object's conditions of emergence and possibility. The figure of the matrix effectively encapsulates the network of relations that are generative of the embodied subjectivities, practices and entities that inhabit an occupied zone. In the context of the occupied zones that I discuss below, drones conduct 24/7 regimes of aerial surveillance, together with the unpredictable firing of lethal missile strikes into the surveilled communities. These occupied zones of surveillance and militarised violence constitute matrices of suffering that are multidimensional in terms of their spatio-temporal attributes.

Within the occupied zones of Palestine, what emerge are both spatio-temporal nuclei and peripheral areas of suffering that are all effectively interlinked by the figure of the drone. One source estimates that '65 per cent of Israel's military operations are conducted by drones' (Blair 2014). The scale of Israel's use of drones in its military campaigns in Gaza is made clear in the following escalating statistics of Palestinian drone fatalities:

Year	Total recorded number of people killed by Israeli attacks in Gaza	Number of people killed by Israeli drones in Gaza (% of total)
2009	1058	461 (43.6%)
2011	112	58 (51.8%)
2012	255	201 (78.8%)
2014	2230	840 (37%)

Figure 1: Israel's drone use (Corporate Watch 2015, p. 6)

Writing in the *Washington Post*, Scott Wilson describes how Palestinians are filled with fear and anxiety at the sound of a circling drone. They call them by the Arabic term *'zenana'*, which means 'buzz'. This is the word, writes Wilson (2011), 'that Gazans have given to Israel's drone aircraft, a ubiquitous and frightening feature of daily life in this crowded strip of land … The light-heartened description belies the drones' jarring effect on life in Gaza'. The relentless buzz of drones, Wilson (2011) underscores, is the 'most enduring reminder of Israel's unblinking vigilance and its unfettered power to strike at a moment's notice'. Since 2006, after 'Hamas gunmen captured the Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit just outside Gaza's fortified boundary … Israel has stepped up military operations and surveillance in the strip' (Wilson 2011). Citing the Palestinian Center for Human Rights, Wilson (2011) writes that 'Most of those killed, according to the organization, have been civilians mistakenly targeted or caught in the deadly shrapnel of a drone strike'.[ii] In other words, Israel has repeatedly violated international laws of war with utter impunity. Moreover, replicating the US military's drone-kill criteria, the Israeli drone strikes in Gaza are conducted under the banner of two rubrics: personality and signature strikes. Personality strikes target subjects whose identities are *assumed* to be known by the Israeli military. Signature strikes, in contrast, target both individuals and groups of people whose identities are not known but who are seen to display patterns of behaviour that place them under suspicion. As a result, as I document below, the presence of a group of young Palestinians in the courtyard of a school can easily be read to represent a gathering of 'militants' that warrants a drone strike.

On 27 December 2009, an Israeli drone 'launched a missile at a group of young men and women standing across the street from the UNRWA-sponsored Gaza Technical College in downtown Gaza City killing 12. Nine of the dead were college students, two of them young women; all were waiting for a UN bus to take them to their homes in Rafah and Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza strip' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 11). On 5 January 2009, an Israeli drone fired missiles into UNRWA Asma Elementary School in Gaza City. The school had been opened on the day as a shelter to hundreds of people who had 'fled their homes due to fighting in the area and sought protection' at the school, 'which the UN had opened earlier that day as a shelter' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 21). The report recounts how 'The displaced families stayed in classrooms and used two bathrooms inside the main building. UNRWA officials registered 406 people in the school. According to UNRWA regulations, every individual who entered the school was subject to search, especially for weapons. The school was marked as a UN facility … civilians lining up outside the school and inside the school compound would have been clearly visible by aerial surveillance' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 22). An Israeli drone fired a missile into the school's bathroom facilities in the school's courtyard, killing three young civilians, 19, 23 and 24 years of age. In the recent Protective Edge campaign waged in Gaza, Israeli drones have struck a children's park, Shifa Hospital's external clinics, and dozens of homes killing hundreds of civilians.

The drone killing of civilians in the unambiguous context of a school that was 'well marked as a UN facility' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 21) suggests that the international laws of war can be violated with impunity by the Israeli state and that drone technologies are effectively rendering international law irrelevant. The drone bombing of this school raises a number of questions: How could the much-vaunted visualising technologies of drones—armed with cameras that can accurately see targets from a height of two miles—not detect the comings and goings of children from a school building? What sort of intelligence informed the decision to declare that the school was an appropriate target for a drone strike—precisely when the intelligence appears to have failed to discriminate between combatants and non-combatants/school children? What is unequivocal is that Israel's use of drones not only violates a number of international laws, but that it also renders these laws redundant.[iii] The international law of war principle of proportionality, for example, that prohibits the excessive killing of civilians in order to gain a military advantage, has been made institutionally redundant by the Israeli Defense Force in its bombing campaigns in Gaza. In the words of Major General Gadi Eisenkot, Israel deploys what it terms as the '"Dahiya doctrine" in reference to the leveled Dahiya quarter in Beirut during the Second Lebanon War in 2006' (quoted in WikiLeaks 2008). Eisenkot says that 'Israel will use disproportionate force upon any village that fires upon Israel, "causing great damage and destruction". Eisenkot made very clear: this is not a recommendation, but an already approved plan—from the Israeli perspective, these are "not civilian villages, they are military bases"' (quoted in WikiLeaks 2008). Israel's selective dismissal and rewriting of international law is graphically evidenced by the following words from the former head of the International Law Department of the Israeli army, Colonel Daniel Reisner:

> What we are seeing now is a revision of international law … If you do something for long enough, the world will accept it. The whole of international law is now based on the notion that an act that is forbidden today becomes permissible if executed by enough countries … International law progresses through violations. We invented the targeted assassination thesis and we had to push it. (Quoted in Saif 2014, p. 33)

In other words, in the context of international law and its applicability and validity, might is right as long as the criminal act is reproduced often enough so that it finally assumes a normative status. Colonel Reisner's amoral view of law—international or otherwise—strikes a profoundly Nietzschean note: law is nothing more than a semiotic system that is grounded on its ability to validate its existence through force and violence and on its capacity to transmute its purely semiotic and arbitrarily codified status into normative reality through ongoing repetition—critically undergirded by the threat of force or violence. Law itself, Nietzsche (1969, p. 77) reflects, is only the '*sign* that a will to power has become master of something less powerful and imposed upon it the character of a function', for example, targeted assassination as a legitimate new function of international law as

defined and normatively practised by the Israeli state. A law or 'custom can in this way be a continuous sign-chain of new interpretations and adaptations'. 'The form is fluid', Nietzsche sardonically remarks (1969, pp. 77-78), 'but the "meaning" is even more so'. Thus the practice of targeted assassination, as codified by both the US and Israel under revised forms of international law, 'means' not arbitrary violence that is extrajudicial and that violates due process; rather, it now means a just exercise of violence in the context of a state that can deploy the most expansive notion of 'imminent threat' so that it can encompass civilian targets who, under the rubric of drone signature strikes, display suspicious 'patterns of life' that render them legitimate targets (see Pugliese 2013a, pp. 193-194).

This philosophical meditation on the manner in which arbitrary violence can be duly codified and legitimated through the force of law, so that international law can be seen to 'progress through successive violations', is not a mere abstract rumination. Its flesh and blood dimensions are clearly and brutally staked out in the following words of an Israeli company commander in a security briefing to soldiers during the Operation Cast Lead offensive: 'I want aggressiveness—if there's someone suspicious on the upper floor of a house, we'll shell it. If we have suspicions about a house, we'll take it down … There will be no hesitation … Nobody will deliberate—let the mistakes be over their [Palestinian] lives, not ours' (quoted in Amnesty International 2009, p. 6). As has since transpired, this Israeli commander knew he could voice this declaration of indiscriminate destruction that would necessarily kill Palestinian civilians in the full knowledge that such actions could be conducted with cool impunity in the face of international law and laws of war—all duly resignified by the Israeli state in order to legitimate its arbitrary violence as a form of normative practice. A recent report by the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs Occupied Palestinian Territory (2015, p. 2) underscores what it terms as 'a pervasive crisis of accountability, with no effective remedy for the vast majority of alleged violations of international law, to ensure justice for the [Palestinian] victims and to prevent future violations'. In other words, the state of Israel is fully aware that it can continue to violate and overwrite international law in the context of the Palestinian Territories without having to be concerned about being held to account for these violations.

The report that I have been citing, in its detailed analysis of six Israeli drone attacks in Gaza City, evidences the indiscriminate drone killing of Palestinian civilians by the Israeli military: 'All six of the attacks took place during the day, when civilians were shopping, returning from school, or engaged in other ordinary activities, which they most likely would not have done had Palestinian fighters been in the area at the time, either shooting rockets into Israel or engaging Israeli forces' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 6). Yet another report on Israeli drone strikes documents the drone killing of Palestinian children feeding pigeons on the roof of their house, and three other children gathering sugar cane in a field close to their home (Amnesty International 2009,

p. 16). What are left in the wake of these drone strikes are forensic ecologies of obliteration and suffering: children and pigeons are killed and a field of sugar cane is incinerated. This is the immediate fallout of the exercise of fast state violence. After this fact, Nixon's concept of slow violence proceeds to interpenetrate and radiate out from these ecologies of destruction. What emerges is a ruined and uninhabitable home or a blasted and infertile field with its gaping earth-wound saturated with chemical residues and shrapnel.

In what follows, I want to focus on the devastating effects of these drone strikes and killings as they ramify throughout Palestinian communities in order to flesh out the complex matrices of suffering that are generated by this regime of aerially-enabled surveillance and violence. In the first instance, those in close proximity to the drone strikes who actually survive the missile blast are severely incapacitated in a number of ways—often requiring amputation of limbs and often continuing to live with metal shards that become lodged in their bodies: 'The hundreds of pieces of cubic tungsten fragments in the missile's fragmentation sleeve provide the killing power, literally shredding their targets while puncturing thin metal and cinder block' (Human Rights Watch 2009, p. 10). This drone-enabled shredding of lives operates at both physical and symbolic levels. 'For us, drones mean death', says Hamdi Shaqqura, Deputy Director of the Palestinian Center for Human Rights. 'When you hear drones, you hear death' (quoted in Wilson 2011). The sound and sight of drones, then, establish occupied zones in which Palestinians endure, in Rosemary Sayigh's (2015) words, a 'living death'.

In the context of the testimonies of Palestinians who live under the unrelenting watch of drones, what transpires is a type of shredding of their lives so that everyday civilian activities and practices become either untenable or must be conducted in risk-laden ways. In the disposition matrix of lives lived under the ever-present threat of drones, suffering extends well beyond the initial impact zone of the fatal drone strike. In a quantum wave-like motion, suffering radiates throughout the entirety of the Gaza community shaping and determining the most mundane of everyday civilian practices. 'It's continuous, watching us, especially at night', says Nabil al-Amassi, a Palestinian mechanic who witnessed a fatal Israeli drone strike in his street in which three men were killed, 'including one whose armless torso was carried by screaming survivors from the scene … That was the start of Amassi's close relationship with drones. Nearly every day since then, at least one, and sometimes several, have circled above him' (Wilson 2011). Moshe Ya'alon, Israel's Defense Minister, repeatedly deploys the term 'seared into consciousness' as a way of describing how the ongoing bombardment of Gaza will not only destroy Palestinian bodies, but will also work violently to compel Palestinian minds to accept the position of colonized subjects before the uncompromising military force of the Israeli state (quoted in Leshem 2014). The relentless regime of drone surveillance, and the attendant drone kills, works precisely to reinforce this violent regime of searing into consciousness. Amassi, father of eight children, testifies

to the devastating effects of drones on his family's everyday lives: 'You can't sleep. You can't watch television. It frightens the kids. When they hear it, they say, "It's going to hit us"' (quoted in Wilson 2011). Amassi articulates here the distributed and relational effects of suffering generated by the drone strikes. The site of the actual drone strike must be seen as a spatio-temporal locus of condensation of suffering. From this nucleic site of trauma, suffering proceeds to extend its capillary reach throughout the community, inscribing the lives of subjects caught in the peripheries of the actual missile strike. Suffering traverses the social spaces that encompass drone-surveilled communities, critically redefining, in the process, the lives of those it touches. Furthermore, drones effectively supply yet another dimension to the concrete barriers, walls and fences that encage Palestinians in Gaza and that isolate them from the rest of the world. Atef Abu Saif (2014, p. 40) explains how, 'when there are drones in the sky, the people of Gaza become unable to receive television and radio signals and their telephones and mobile devices become dysfunctional. The result of this situation is that Palestinians in Gaza are disconnected from the outside world … this paralyzes the citizens' ability to know about the overall situation, when it will end, or even how encompassing and destructive it is'.

In the process of this diffusion and inscription of suffering across Palestinian communities, suffering is experienced at different levels of intensity. These differential intensities of suffering encompass the gamut of practices and emotions. A young Palestinian man, Waldi Dawoud, describes how 'when his car breaks down with a drone overhead he leaves it rather than wait for other young men to gather to help. "These drones—they don't always know … At night, if I hear one, I'll cancel my plans to see friends. It's easy—if one is above me, I won't go out"' (quoted in Wilson 2011). The ever-hovering threat of imminent violence is charged with a real potentiality because of the actual and often random lethal strikes against civilians. Because of this drone-enabled potentiality for imminent violence, suffering in Gaza must be seen as at once generalised—the drones are always up there signalling an incessant threat—and site-specific and materially located—whenever they launch their actual missile strikes, the imminent threat is resignified as a violent actuality, and the drone is reinvested as militarised agent of the Israeli state that has the force to continue the occupation and to kill civilians with impunity. Hamdi Shaqqura articulates the significance of the Israeli drones in securing the ongoing occupation of the Gaza: 'This is the first meaning of drones … Israel's military may not be on the ground anymore. But they are in the air—looking, always, at every square inch of Gaza. They don't have to be here in Gaza City to affect every aspect of the lives of Gazans' (quoted in Wilson 2011). As military prosthetics of settler-colonial occupation, drones enable Israel to maintain and reproduce its hold over Palestinian lives and land without placing their own personnel at risk. Israel's Operation Pillar of Defence, a drone-driven military assault launched in November 2012 on Gaza (see Image 1), meant that 'For the first time there were no Israeli "boots on the ground" in Gaza during a major military offensive' (Dobbing and

Cole 2014, p. 5). Atef Abu Saif (2014, p. 21) succinctly sums up what is at stake in this new form of drone-enabled occupation: 'Israel is offering the political dictionary with a new definition of occupation wherein the Occupying Power keeps the occupants hostage to its UAVs screening, control and extrajudicial execution without claiming a presence there'.

Image 1. Geography of obliteration: Destruction in Gaza after Israeli bombardment, part of Operation Pillar of Defence, 22 November 2012. (Image source: Wikimedia Commons)

The array of visualising technologies that constitute drone surveillance, and the fact that drones are deployed in relays in order to keep Gaza under constant surveillance—all bring into sharp focus the configuration of a regime of statist visuality that dreams of leaving no corner of its territory and its extra-territorial spaces unobserved. Lieutenant Colonel R. [full name withheld], who commands the Israeli drone squadron that aerially occupies Gaza, says: 'I can see if your car is hot that you were just driving it, if you are smoking a cigarette' (quoted in Wilson 2011). Ahmed Tawahina, a psychologist with the Gaza Community Mental Health Programme, describes 'the sense of being constantly observed as a "form of psychological torture, which exhausts people's mental and emotional resources"' (quoted in Cook 2013). 'They watch us from their drones and they peer right into our homes', says a Palestinian resident. 'They know what we are doing all the time. They like to hunt people' (quoted in Hamda and Kalman 2012). Israel's drone hunts evidence a regime committed to the military and paramilitary predation of its Palestinian quarry. This regime must be situated within the schema of the biopolitical caesura, the very decisive and often fatal cut that divides the category of the

human from the nonhuman animal; the cut, in other words, that renders those human subjects designated as nonhuman animals as entities that can be killed with impunity (Pugliese 2013a, p. 44-46).

In naming what is operative in Gaza in terms of a multidimensional drone matrix of suffering, I want to underscore the generative dimensions that constitute the concept of a matrix. The drone matrix is generative of subjectivities, practices and the ensemble of activities that constitute everyday life. And I say 'generative' not in a positive sense of enabling a flourishing of lives; on the contrary, the drone matrix of suffering works to erode the foundational practices of everyday civilian life: it produces damaged subjectivities inscribed by fear and trauma and it works to circumscribe or even completely thwart the exercise of once taken-for-granted quotidian practices. Hamza Abu Sultan, a school-boy, explains how the drones affect him: 'We feel tense … We start to think when will it hit. We start to think we are somewhere else—no longer in class' (quoted in Wilson 2011). The drone matrix transforms the space for education—the school classroom—into a militarised zone shadowed by the imminent threat of violence: 'Ismail Ramadan, the school's 40-year old principal, has brought in psychiatrists several times a week to calm the children and explain that the sound of the drones does not mean war is imminent. "They hear the sound and they hold their breath", Ramadan said' (quoted in Wilson 2011). The organisation Defence for Children International 'maintains that during Operation Cast Lead, of the 353 children killed and 860 wounded, 116 of them died from missiles launched by drones' (Dobbing and Cole 2014, p. 15). This evidence makes a mockery of Israel's claim that the drone warfare conducted over Gaza is 'surgical' in its discrimination between military and civilian targets (Dobbing and Cole 2014, p. 5).

Materialising the devastating effects unleashed by the Israeli apparatus of occupation-by-drones offers a graphic picture of a community under a continuous state of aerial siege. There is no quarter that is safe merely because it is a designated civilian site—for example, the UNRWA Asma Elementary School in Gaza City. The drone matrix materially reconstitutes space as it resignifies all designated civilian sites as potential military targets. This material resignification is at once spatio-temporal and psychological in terms of its effects:

> The head of the Gaza Community Mental Health Program, Eyad Sarraj, said the drones' noise is something "you can't escape". Whether intentional or not, Sarraj said their constant presence induces a sense of helplessness among Gaza's residents. "In the back of the minds of everyone here is fear—from the psychiatrist to the student, a sense that something terrible is going to happen", Sarraj said. "The drones are part of that story. They are part of the conditioning—every time we hear them, we go back to those events of violence and death". (Wilson 2011)

The drone matrix emerges here as a crucial element in Israel's militarised apparatus of occupation. It not only brings death and trauma to the Palestinian communities in the form of the explosive materiality of actual missile strikes; critically, the drone matrix works to erode the life-potential of the Palestinian subjects under continued occupation as their lives are shadowed by the spectre of imminent violence and trauma. 'In the colonial world', Fanon (2003, p. 19) writes, 'the colonized's affectivity is kept on edge like a running sore flinching from a caustic agent. And the psyche retracts, is obliterated'. In the drone matrix, the caustic agent of past trauma informs the suffering of the present: as one Palestinian survivor says, 'every time we hear them, we go back to those events of violence and death'. In the drone matrix, the diachrony of the past is synchronised in the present. The violence and death that was witnessed by the survivors assumes the dimensions of the future anterior: in the present, a drone death or mutilation will already have taken place. What is evidenced here is the communal and relational nature of suffering. Suffering here emerges as diffuse, multiple, enchained and differentially experienced along the trauma continuum: those subjects closest to the point of violent impact that manage to survive may be both physically and psychologically damaged and traumatised. Extending out from this originary locus of violence, suffering proceeds, both frontally and transversally, to diffuse itself across the forensic ecologies generated by the drone strikes and their aftermath of slow violence.

Hala's Lemon Tree and the Forensic Ecologies of Occupied East Jerusalem

The significance of conceptualising suffering in terms of a multidimensional matrix constitutive of distributed and differential modalities is that it enables the visibilisation of an array of subjects and entities that are enmeshed within situated, geopolitically-inflected ecologies that would otherwise remain elided. In the matrix of suffering and its situated ecologies, non-human entities play crucial roles as they are entangled in the lives of human subjects. In proceeding to flesh out my proposition, I want to draw upon the expansive body of work that Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2014, 2014a, 2014b, 2012) has produced in documenting the enormity of the devastation wreaked on Palestinian communities by the Israeli occupation. In her work, Shalhoub-Kevorkian has mapped the impact of the occupation across the gamut of Palestinian lives and practices: from the impossibility of burying one's dead in Israeli expropriated Palestinian cemeteries to the traumas Palestinian women have experienced in the process of giving birth due to the apartheid discriminations and restrictions they have to undergo both at border checkpoints and in the hospitals themselves. One story, as told by Shalhoub-Kevorkian, has continued to haunt me. It is the story of a lemon tree and its relation to a Palestinian family. Hala is a five-year-old child who, together with her family, had 'recently been evicted from the Sheikh-Jarrah home they had lived in for fifty-six years to make way for a family of Jewish settlers' (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014, p. 1). The eviction from their home was both violent and traumatic:

'after receiving a final eviction notice, the door of the Al-Ghawi residence was detonated with a small explosive. Police rushed in and a familiar scene commenced. After the family members had been removed their possessions followed, although most belongings were destroyed during the eviction. Violently evicted from their home, they were reduced to literally living in the streets' (Civic Coalition for Defending Palestinians' Rights in Jerusalem 2009 [CCDPRJ], p. 23). Hala's father, Fuad, describes the toll this eviction has exacted on his family: 'The reaction of the children has been terrible. They are afraid and unable to forget that they once lived in that house' (CCDPRJ 2009, p. 23).

In the course of the interview, Hala tells Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2014, p. 15) that one of the things she misses most about her home is the lemon tree in their garden (Image 2):

> Hala talks about the lemon tree, and her love of the fact that the lemon tree is still giving wonderful lemons, as Hala explained: "The lemon tree keeps on giving more and more lemon, to tell me and my mom that she misses us. It gives lemon, while she knows that the settlers won't touch, eat or use its juices. So, it is giving more lemon, to call us to come back. You see, my mom and I visit the lemon tree a lot, and even apologize that we are not close to her, and ask her to take care of our house … we visit and talk to her (the lemon tree) a lot".

Image 2. Geography of dispossession: Hala's lemon tree, occupied East Jerusalem. (Photo by the author)

In the interval between the knowledge of enforced separation through violent dispossession and the emotion of loss that colours this knowledge, something altogether signifies: we have here a mutual recognition between Hala and her lemon tree—one beckons to the other through a series of memory traces. And I want to pre-empt the possible misunderstanding that I am here only speaking metaphorically of memory traces or that I am lapsing into some unreflexive form of anthropomorphism. I situate this relation of memory traces between Hala and the lemon tree within the emergent science of plant neurobiology that posits that plants experience touch, intelligence and memory: 'They communicate with each other with chemicals, whether we want to call this taste, or smell, or pheromones. Plants "know" when they are being touched … [and they] also manage to remember things without the benefit of neurons' (Daniel Chamovitz quoted in Anathaswamy 2014, p. 36). For Hala, these memory traces manifest themselves in the recollection of the tree and its bounty of fruit. In the other direction, the tree itself is shaped by a different series of traces: its very morphology has been shaped by the loving hands of Hala's mother, pruning its arboreal growth and nourishing its roots so that it will continue to flourish. Overlaying these material traces are the ephemeral traces of the child's touch and the tree's intextuation through the child's voice as she incites it to speech: 'it calls us to come back', and the child responds in kind, '[we] apologize that we are not close to her'. These affective, dialogic traces are precisely what cannot be countenanced by the circumscribed and reductive frames of anthropocentrism and the violence of its instrumental reason. They are what challenge its hierarchy of actors, entities and objects. Viewed in this context, Hala's relationship with her lemon tree overturns Martin Heidegger's vision of who exactly is 'poor in the world'. In his anthropocentric theorisation of the seemingly essential differences that separate humans from non-human animals, Heidegger (1995, p. 177) establishes the following hierarchy of entities: '[1] The stone (material objects) is *wordless*; [2] the animal is *poor in the world*; [3] man is *world-forming*'. My invocation of forensic ecologies works to problematise this hierarchy, even as it calls for attentiveness to the otherwise invisibilised and heterogeneous relations of power that inscribe these same ecologies. The stone and other material entities bespeak histories—geological, climatic, historical, political, cultural and social—that are simultaneously autonomous *and* indissociable from the human subjects whose lives they touch and enable. Similarly, animals are only ever poor in the world due to the devastation wreaked upon them by human actors. Their assumed poverty in the world and their purely instinctual captivation is a delusion that can only be sustained by acts of anthropocentric supremacism. It is the complex ensemble of heterogeneous material entities, and their attendant relations, that works to constitute a 'world-forming' ecology for humans. What is articulated for me in the moving testimony of this Palestinian child is that the relationality of suffering effectively binds sentient (human, plants) and non-sentient (rocks, soil, rubble) entities within horizontal networks of affect and attachment. What is at work here cannot be reduced to a mere moment of anthropomorphic projection. Something

larger is at stake. The child's ongoing mourning over the loss of her lemon tree gestures toward the manner in which non-human entities bespeak histories of dispossession, loss and trauma.

***Corpus Delicti*: Concrete Bodies of Evidence and the Narratological Transmission of Crimes Perpetrated by the Israeli State**

For Shalhoub-Kervorkian (2014, p. 15), the Palestinian children's testimonies that she has documented evidence the manner in which 'homes, lemon trees, even home rubble' work to 'speak out against the state's oppression'. As such, their testimonies constitute different modalities of forensic chains of evidence—even as they fail to be legitimated by either the apparatuses of forensic science or of law. Stripped of the very material evidence that would otherwise constitute the *corpus delicti* or body of evidence of their violent dispossession, their forensic modality can only be grounded in memory, materialised in narrative and enunciated in oral testimony. In the absence of her home and her lemon tree, Hala's narrative works to reconstitute the very entities that have been rendered immaterial by enforced dispossession. In narratological terms, Hala's story is constituted by both kernel and satellite events. Kernel events in a narrative function to advance a story as they work to initiate a sequence of events, setting in train a 'sequence of transformations'. Satellite events, on the other hand, function to elaborate and extend kernel events in a story (Cohan and Shires 1988, p. 54). The violent act of dispossession that drives Hala and her mother from their home functions as the kernel event around which everything else in their lives pivots. In the wake of the life-changing transformations that this violent kernel event unleashes, their lemon tree emerges as a satellite event that elaborates and prolongs the originary trauma of dispossession.

Image 3. Geography of the eliminated: corpus delicti of a Palestinian house in occupied East Jerusalem razed by the Israeli state. (Photo by the author)

In forensic terms, the *corpus delicti* that colours the entirety of Hala's life is her house. Citing Mahmoud Darwish's poem 'The House Murdered'—'The house murdered is also a mass murder, even if vacant of its residents. It is a mass grave for the basic elements needed to construct a building for meaning'—Weizman (2011, p. 143) underscores how the destroyed house stands 'as the most potent object-witness of Palestinian history'. The destroyed Palestinian house (Image 3) is the body upon which a violent crime has been perpetrated by the Israeli state: it articulates the concrete evidence of the crime. The magnitude of this crime is evidenced by the fact that 'More than 48,000 homes have been destroyed in the West Bank—including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip since 1967, according to the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions' (Hassan 2014). In the teleological schema of the Jewish settlers' ongoing dispossession of Palestinian land and homes, Palestinians are rendered as mere vanishing points in the picture of the occupation: it is only the land and homes that remain to speak for their previous owners' existence. They bear testimony to the Israeli state's relentless practice of systematic subtraction—of Palestinian land and all that this enables—and the consequent dispossession and loss that this produces. In Hala and her family's case, because of the enforced removal from the locus of their abode, the trauma that ensues the physical act of dispossession can only be evidenced through oral transmission and narratological memorialisation. As such, Hala's narrative would hardly hold in a court of law, where the protocol of the forensic narrative is critically devalued in favour of the numerical form. In the words of one forensic expert, 'The narrative protocol tends to be both personal and subjective, neither of which are desirable features for courtroom purposes' (quoted in Pugliese 2002, p. 384). In contrast, the numerical form is valued because 'It is objective and impersonal, both desirable features in forensic practice' (quoted in Pugliese 2002, p. 384). As I argue elsewhere, the scientist pretensions that valorise the numerical over the narratological cannot, in the actual texts of the discipline of forensics, be sustained, as even the most rudimentary numerical protocol is undergirded by a disavowed narrativity that, structurally, makes it indistinguishable from the so-called narrative protocol (Pugliese 2002, p. 384-387). Situated in this forensic light, one can well understand the drive initiated by the Gaza-based and Hamas-run Ministry of Public Works and Houses to numerically identify and serially catalogue all of the buildings destroyed in the process of the Israeli occupation—even as 'its forensics is … outside the frame of international law' (Weizman 2011, p. 139).

Inscribed within the forensic ecology of occupied East Jerusalem and its multidimensional matrix of suffering, Hala's lemon tree at once haunts and presences forth its own history of expropriation and loss. Hala's story is neither an anthropomorphic fable nor an ethnographic allegory. To reduce her testimony to the status of mere fable or allegory would be tantamount to yet another exercise of epistemic violence. What would be obliterated is the complex entanglement of human and non-human actors that transpires in occupied zones of suffering and their attendant forensic ecologies. Image 4 graphically

evidences the material dimensions of such a forensic ecology: blasted trees and their amputated limbs, broken doors and shattered windows, mangled domestic utensils and disabled satellite dishes, scattered bricks and twisted iron—all are entangled within an ecology that forensically testifies to the moment of catastrophic violence and its harrowing aftermath.

Image 4. Geography of the obliterated: forensic ecology of entanglement in Gaza after Israeli bombardment, part of Operation Pillar of Defense, 22 November 2012. (Image source: Wikimedia Commons)

Anthropocentric accounts of suffering, that only ever focus on the human subject as locus of suffering, fail to materialise the ensemble of actors and entities that in fact constitute the matrix of suffering and its complex ecologies. Houses, lemon trees, even rubble must be seen as agentic actors, as understood in Latour's sense, precisely because they work to impact on and transform a state of affairs—whether it be affective, cognitive or material. Viewed in this light, what emerges is a heterogeneous ecology of suffering that encompasses human, non-human animals, trees, houses, stones and so on. State violence in occupied zones never solely impacts on human subjects. On the contrary, its targets are multiple and distributed. The aim is to destroy the very ecology that sustains life in occupied zones and to render these zones unlivable. In Pakistan, for example, US drone strikes demolish schools, hospitals, communal gatherings, homes and cars—even as they incinerate through their Hellfire missiles humans, cattle, sheep and agricultural fields. Similarly, in Palestine, Israeli state violence destroys homes, schools, olive groves and the very

ecology of place that enables and sustains life. A recent United Nations report documents this type of ecological destruction:

> On the 21 November 2012, precision-guided munitions struck an olive farm east of Khan Younis, southern Gaza Strip, killing two people and injuring a third … Investigations … indicate that all three victims were civilians; that they were working on the farm at the time of the attack; that no warnings were issued to residents prior to the attack; and that no militant activities were being carried out in the location. (Emmerson 2014, p. 19)

In this instance, the drone-driven destruction of an olive farm augments and amplifies Israel's practices of destruction of Palestinian communities and the very life-sustaining quotidian practices tied to the ecology of place. The UN report continues:

> On 19 November 2012, precision-guided munitions reportedly struck an area of farmland adjacent to a house in Ahmad Yassin Street, north of Gaza City, killing three people. Remotely piloted aircraft under the control of Israel are alleged to have been involved in the operation. The deceased were a father, his 12 year old daughter, and his 19 year old son. All three were reportedly picking spearmint at the time of the attack. (Emmerson 2014, p. 18)

How does one render a people destitute within the domain of their own agricultural lands? The state of Israel has the answer. It incinerates both the people and the land that sustains them through drone attacks that fail to differentiate between military and civilian targets. It demolishes homes and destroys fields, olive groves and orchards. In the aftermath of the destruction unleashed by Operation Cast Lead, 'Israel damaged or destroyed "everything in its way", including 280 schools and kindergartens, 1,500 factories and workshops, electrical, water and sewerage installations, 190 greenhouse complexes, 80 per cent of agricultural crops, and nearly one-fifth of cultivated land' (Finklestein 2014, p. 75). The toll inflicted on Gaza in the wake of Israel's 2014 Operation Protective Edge has been even more devastating in terms of the magnitude of the killing of civilians and the destruction of infrastructure (see Finklestein 2014, p. 156). As Shalhoub-Kevorkian personally evidenced for me as we walked the streets and alleys of occupied East Jerusalem, the Israeli state systematically evicts and proceeds to occupy Palestinian homes and quarters in a parasitic capillary-like movement: 'The space within which Palestinians can subsist', writes Rosemary Sayigh (2015), 'is reduced day by day, inch by inch'. Through this relentless process of subtraction, dispossession and occupation, Israel is effectively attempting to produce in Palestine 'a geography of the eliminated' (de Certeau 1986, p. 131).

Yousef Abu 'Ida recounts the devastation visited upon his family, his home and lands in the course of Israel's Operation Cast Lead offensive:

> The following morning [the day after the commencement of the invasion] an army bulldozer uprooted our garden and orchard around the house, where we had tomatoes and citrus fruit trees … I spoke to the soldiers in English, telling them we were a civilian family. At about 10.30am a group of soldiers entered our home, and locked us all in the basement … After two days … the soldiers threw us out of the house … When the ceasefire was declared and we could go back we found a pile of rubble instead of our home … Now we have nothing, we have lost everything and are reduced to picking some of our clothes from the rubble; everything is smashed up; photographs and many irreplaceable things are destroyed. (Quoted in Amnesty International 2009, p. 59).

What is unleashed here is an axiomatic violence that works to destroy the lives, practices, infrastructure and ecologies that serve to enable and sustain existence as such. Spearmint, olive and lemon trees must not be seen, in this context, as mere vegetative life that is insentient, fungible and outside the domain of the ethical and the grievable. This anthropocentric view of life and the earth works to obliterate the complex relations between humans and the ecologies that enable their very existence. Situated in this context, I want to ask the following questions: What would it signify to begin to valorise those aspects of loss that escape a purely anthropocentric model? What would it mean to begin to account for those dimensions of life imbued with the fragrance and sustenance of lemons and spearmint and to begin to name and identify those moments of loss where, for example, a lemon transitions from a life-enhancing fruit to a signifier of dispossession and grief? Hala's lemon tree must be seen as an agentic actor in the lives of her family because it actively shapes and transforms their lives and their experience of suffering. Shalhoub-Kevorkian (2014, p. 3) cites Hala's 'mother's harkening back to the lemon tree: "I wanted to pickle the olives, but couldn't bring myself to do it this year without a lemon from our lemon tree", she tells me with a heavy sigh'. The relations between humans and the ensemble of non-human actors—trees, fruits, fields—must not be seen as imaginary, marginal or rhetorical. On the contrary, they must be seen as embodied, grounded and central: Hala's mother's heavy sigh over the loss of her beloved lemon tree corporeally enunciates as much.

The lemon tree emerges from Hala's testimony as a nucleus of suffering that inflects multiple relations and shapes different temporal dimensions: the past continues to inform and affect both the present and the future. The everyday act of pickling olives instantiates the punctuality of suffering: it arrives with its own unstoppable force driven by the absent presence of the lemon tree and it proceeds to materialise intercalated lives and indissociable relations—the tree folds into Hala's life and marks the loss of her home; it affectively overwhelms her mother with a sense of mourning, precluding the reproduction of quotidian practices: the act of pickling olives. The lemon tree must be seen as a central axis in Hala's lived drama of the dispossession that precipitated such a profound and multivalent sense of loss. As a central axis in her life, it constitutes the ground upon which Hala's memories, desires and emotions intersect, assuming,

even at this tender age, the political articulation of the violence of occupation that she is compelled to endure. The ground that radiates outward from this lemon tree traces the contours of a forensic ecology of displacement and separation—even as it marks the impossibility of affectively cleaving one from the other, the child from her lemon tree. As a key coordinate of violent dispossession and ongoing loss, it persists in orienting the lives of Hala and her family. Inextricably inscribed in their everyday lives, despite its material absence, it emerges as a protagonist that evidences the ongoing corrosive effects of the slow violence of dispossession and displacement.

Hala's lemon tree problematises anthropocentric understandings of power and agency that are strictly conceptualized as vertical and unilinear. The lemon tree radiates horizontal and dialogic relations that encompass an ensemble of heterogeneous subjects and agents—tree, house, garden, lemons, Hala and so on. The lemon tree effectively interpellates key aspects of Hala's (and her mother's) subjectivity, shaping her socio-political understanding of the world. It is at once its own entity and a key player in the drama of Hala's dispossession, materialising what Bennett (2004, p. 349) evocatively terms 'protean flow[s] of matter-energy' between one and the other. These protean flows of matter-energy are what can be complexly conceptualised in the realm of quantum physics or in the imaginative realm of poiesis, but they still effectively remain outside the strictured domains of anthropocentric thought and its instrumentalist logics.

Salcedo's Forensic Ecologies and their Grammar of the Dead

This enlarged, multidimensional vision of suffering—with its entangled, heterogeneous actors and forensic ecologies—is powerfully evidenced for me in the work of the Colombian artist Doris Salcedo. Salcedo is a sculptor who has documented, in the wake of a relentlessly unfolding civil war, the enormity of state and non-state violence that has wracked her country and left over 250,000 dead. Her sculptures emerge as forms of material testimony of the disappeared and tortured. Not, again, in purely allegorical or metaphorical terms, but as material instantiations that bespeak their own testimonies and stories. 'Sculpture', says Salcedo (2008, p. 21), 'is its materiality. I work with materials that are already charged with significance, with a meaning they have acquired in the practice of everyday life … Therefore metaphor is unnecessary … It is an act of everyday life that gives shape to the piece. In some cases it is a hopeless act of mourning'. Salcedo is not sidestepping the constitutive role of metaphor in meaning production; rather, I understand her to be saying that metaphor, and all other discursive or tropic forms, do not solely constitute meaning production in the world. A range of other practices, in the shape of material actors or embodied acts, is also constitutive of meaning production. Salcedo's hopeless acts of mourning are signified through a range of material actors—shoes, wardrobes, beds or chairs—that are often given to her by the families of the tortured, the executed and the disappeared (Image 5).

Image 5. Doris Salcedo (Colombia, b.1958), Untitled, 2007, wood, concrete, metal and fabric, 189 x 233 x 82.5 cm. Art Gallery of New South Wales. Purchased 2007. Photo: AGNSW. © Doris Salcedo. 364.2007

In her sculptures, Salcedo glues shut apertures such as wardrobe doors and drawers that had been handled and touched by the disappeared. She cements together discrete pieces of furniture and fabric that had supported and embraced their human charges and that, through this cementing process, become self-enclosed and preclusionary objects that deny the possibility for either comfort or embrace. Salcedo also encases in wall cavities, that are sealed over with translucent membranes, the random possessions, such as shoes, left behind by the disappeared (Image 6).
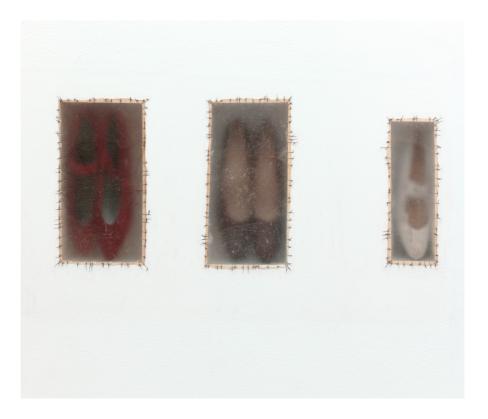
Image 6. Doris Salcedo (Colombia, b.1958), Atrabiliarios, 1992-1997, timber, gyproc, cow bladder, shoes and surgical thread, installation dimensions variable according to wall size. Art Gallery of New South Wales, Mervyn Horton Bequest Fund 1997. Photo: AGNSW. © Doris Salcedo. 372.1997.a-o

Shadowy and barely discernible, these shoes are encrypted behind their walls of flayed flesh. The shoes of the disappeared are imprisoned in their sepulchral vaults by crude sutures that bind the encasing membrane to the wall. These sculptural assemblages bespeak mute testimonies of violence, severed relationships, grieving silences and materially congealed trauma. They at once name and constitute the material evidence of forensic ecologies. These are forensic ecologies that have been shaped by the forces of the unbridled violence scouring war-torn Colombia. If Salcedo's sculptures materialise spatial relations constituted by heterogeneous actors situated within forensic ecologies of suffering and trauma, they also work to manifest, in a radically circumscribed manner, the temporal dimensions of suffering. Her glued and cemented assemblages of furniture, for example, stand as monuments of mourning that evidence the perduration of loss and pain, as precisely that which continues to endure long after the death or disappearance of the subject. Shoes, wardrobes and chairs emerge as different indices of suffering within forensic ecologies of state violence. They evidence suffering's diffusiveness as it proceeds to imbue an array of entities situated within sites of saturated violence.

The figure of the disappeared in Salcedo's work, however, as emblematised by the remaindered shoes of the missing and the dead, cannot be reduced to the singularity of the human subject. Situated within the larger anthropocentric frame that I have attempted to materialise in the course of this essay, there are other nodes within forensic ecologies of violence that are at once invisible and visible, present and absent. *Atrabiliarios*, for example, is haunted by the spectrality of an occulted anthropocentric violence. This anthropocentric violence presences itself in the form of the very leather shoes of the disappeared and in the very membrane of cow bladder that overlays and encrypts the shoes. Encapsulated in this work is a double violence: the slaughter of cattle provides both the hide for the leather shoes and the cow bladder that has been worked into translucent parchment. The (non-human) animal is first disappeared in the slaughterhouse and then rematerialized and reconfigured in otherwise unrecognisable forms: shoes, parchment. The human and animal invoke each other's disappearance and death asymmetrically and in different modalities and relations of necropolitical violence. The dead animal is disappeared in order to materialise the human dead. The shoes in *Atrabiliarios* operate as both metonyms and synecdoches: they are metonyms for the human disappeared and they are synecdoches for the dead cow of which only a partial remnant of the slaughtered whole remains.

Salcedo's work poses and answers the question: What would a grammar of the dead look like if one were to materialise it? It would assume the quasi-inscrutable form of a compressed syntax virtually devoid of *espacing*, of the in-between spaces that are the conditions of possibility for textual signification and, crucially, for the very possibility of meaning. In her work, Salcedo assembles a semantics of shoes, wardrobes, tables or chairs—fusing one to the other: for example, a table upturned and cemented into the side of a wardrobe. Where there was a gap, it has been fused together. Where there was an aperture, it has been sealed over and permanently shut. A wardrobe cavity is filled with concrete and from this sealed mass one can catch the mere glimpse of submerged items of clothing. In the process, and through the liquidation of espacing, the disposition of the form becomes fused into its content, and it is the syntactical arrangement that subsumes the individuating identity of each entity and its semantic resonance. Salcedo thereby produces necrological relations of violent compression: shirtshroudwardrobetable. By eliminating the spacing crucial to the process of articulation, Salcedo constructs the paradox of a syntactic arrangement emptied of virtually all diachronic movement: everything is immobilised in a solidified synchronic moment where diachrony gestures merely as a trace and as something remotely anterior to her tomb-like monuments. In these works, Salcedo produces a sculptural idiom of filled voids and fused joints that offers no possible space for the living to breathe. At the same time, her cenotaphic idiom signals, by proxy, the anguished presence of the absent dead. Little is revealed about the past history of these material remainders. It is precisely what remains

irrecoverable, in much the same way as do the lives of the victims who left behind these material remainders.

As a grammar of the dead virtually devoid of all meaning-making spacing, her assemblages can only speak opaquely—as though viewed through a barely translucent film of skin. Her installations do not freely give up their meaning. They are, in linguistic terms, deictic forms that cannot be apprehended without the provision of additional contextual, temporal and spatial cues. Morphed into sepulchral vaults or columbaria (the *Atrabiliarios*), they are devoid of explanatory epigraphs or other indexical inscriptions that serve to narrate the fate of the dead. As such, they can only be made sense of through the deployment of a type of forensic reconstruction that is animated by the unsettling emotion of being in the solidified presence of 'hopeless acts of mourning'.

In the context of her practice, Salcedo enters the scene after the moment of violence has transpired. She is gifted the remainders of the dead and the disappeared and is invested with the responsibility of their memorialisation. She achieves, however, much more than this. Salcedo collects these shards and arranges them into a grammar of the dead that works to enunciate in an oblique manner the genre of the survivor testimony. Salcedo casts the survivor testimony in an altogether different register: the survivor is not the human subject but the domestic remainders that have witnessed and survived acts of catastrophic violence. Salcedo's works must be seen as evidencing their own forms of forensic ecologies. These are not ecologies that sustain life. On the contrary, they are ecologies of the dead. Her assemblages stand as frozen syntagms caught in the moment after the fatal act of violence has transpired. Post this fatal moment of violence, the living have been disappeared and the domestic shards that remain are, in turn, removed from their quotidian *habitus*: no further dispositions will be assumed; they will no longer be actors in the differential and shifting routines of the everyday. Glued and cemented into immobilised forms, these survivor-entities have been permanently exiled from the flux of life. That is why they embody a grammar of the dead. As such, these material assemblages can only enunciate an unchanging narrative. Fused together and cemented shut, they can no longer be shifted, reconfigured and recontextualised in order to narrate the ever-changing stories of the living. Immobilised into a state of ontological fixity, they are now discontinuous to all states of change: they can only repeat the same story—time and again. As the principal actors of a drama from which all human agents have been violently removed, Salcedo's diverse entities—shoes, wardrobes, tables, chairs—embody the muted realities of the forensic ecologies of the aftermath. These cenotaphic monuments to the disappeared belie the official cenotaphs of state precisely because of their uncompromising reliance on the intimate and the domestic. The only flow of matter-energy escaping from the event horizon of these tomb-like installations is the unsettling murmur of the immured, the disappeared and the dead. These are not assemblages of temporal

unfolding; rather, they are configurations of termination without succession, final witnesses of their owners' end-time.

The Survivor Testimony of a Child's Football: For Mamoun Amna al-Dam

In the context of the drone-enabled Israeli occupation of Gaza, drones transform the civic spaces of civilian life into 'a military camp. The drone transforms Gaza into a field of war' (Gaza resident quoted in Saif 2014, p. 36). In this field of war, the lives of Palestinians—children, women and men—are framed by the Israeli state as largely expendable: in the words of Dov Lior, chairman of the Jewish Rabbinic Council and Chief Rabbi of Hebron and Kiryat Arba, 'a thousand non-Jewish lives are not worth a Jew's fingernail' (quoted in Lendman 2009). Within the forensic ecology of this field of war, in the aftermath of an Israeli drone strike, a child's football becomes irrevocably inscribed by violence and death. Ismael Mohamad (2013) describes how Amna al-Dam keeps 'the deflated red football her 12-year-old son Mamoun was playing with when he was killed by an Israeli drone strike in the occupied Gaza Strip on 20 June 2012'. 'There was dust everywhere', Mamoun's mother says, 'and I could not see anything. When I finally saw Mamoun, he was lying on the ground and there was a lot of blood around him. His legs had been torn off. There was shrapnel all over his body. His clothes were burned and he was almost naked. He was dead' (quoted in Drones Over Gaza 2012). In the locus of this geography of the eliminated, a deflated football becomes a relic and an object of mourning. It is at once a child's toy and the material survivor of an inconceivable moment of violence. Mamoun's football emerges from the hands of his mother as a material object that transcends its quotidian status as a child's toy. It is no longer merely a fungible object in a manufactured series of like objects. It is now shot through with a history of violence and rupture that renders it unique in its ability to emblematise loss and ruin. As such, it becomes a *memento mori* that binds the dead to the living, the past to the present. It is the charged mediator between the dead child Mamoun and his traumatised mother. Maintaining a fragile link between one and the other, it embodies the place of locution from which the dead child continues to signify. In the hands of Mamoun's mother, it serves to hold his absence in abeyance—even if only temporarily, as a metonym bridging the void, marking time suspensively between the reality of inconsolable loss and those transient returns enabled by impassioned acts of conjuration.

Elliptical Blueprints for the Future

In the wake of the geographies of dispossession that this essay has chronicled, I want to end on a note of tenuous hope. The forensic ecologies that I have documented evidence the enormity of the loss that Palestinians have endured in the face of the colonising and expropriative violence of the Israeli state. Yet these ecologies of loss also signify otherwise: their forensic remainders—rubble, a child's

punctured football, a lemon tree—emerge from the context of ruins as elliptical blueprints that memorialise, materially and affectively, what must be restituted and made whole again in the time to come. I qualify these forensic remainders as *elliptical* blueprints for the future because their wholeness has been shattered by the violence of Israeli military, police and settler assault. Their fragile presence is figured by gaps and absence. Their lacunae are what must be filled by the Palestinian survivor's memory. Hala retraces the elisions of her enforced dispossession and displacement through her keening memory and its rootedness in her beloved lemon tree. She reconstructs a history and an inheritance otherwise denied her. Her patrimony takes the shape of a lemon tree laden with an abundance of golden fruit. It beckons from her past and it projects her into a future that is enabled by the very presence of her tree: 'You see', she says, '[we] visit the lemon tree a lot, and even apologize that we are not close to her, and ask her to take care of the house' (quoted in Shalhoub-Kevorkian 2014, p. 15)—*in anticipation of their return*. Even in their fractured and broken state, these forensic remainders enunciate a material refusal to sanction the Israeli state's politics of Palestinian obliteration. The materiality of this refusal articulates a cultural politics of obdurate survivance and immanence-as-resistance: rubble, a child's football or a lemon tree signify perduration that outlives all attempts at eradication. In the face of the Israeli state's violent practices of occupation, erasure and colonial resignification of Palestinian land, homes and places, these forensic remainders stand as disconsolate but enduring mnemonic signs that gesture toward a projected Palestinian future of emancipation and reclamation. Emerging from an archaeology of ruins, they adumbrate what is otherwise negated by the colonising apparatus of the Israeli state: they are evidentiary traces of what has been, what survives and what must be restituted to the Palestinian people.

Image 7. Geography of the occupied: 'Free Palestine' grafitti on the wall of a Palestinian house now partially expropriated by Jewish settlers, occupied East Jerusalem (Photo by the author).

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Notes

[i] See, for example, Watson (2002), Noyes (2003), and Kuletz (1998).

[ii] According to a more recent report, 'data from the Al Mezan Center for Human Rights' suggests that Israeli 'armed drones [have] killed more than 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza between 2000 and 2010' (Electronic Intifada 2014).

[iii] For a trenchant critique of the uses and abuses of both international and humanitarian laws within war-torn contexts, see Perera (2015), 'Accounting for Disposable Lives: Visibility, Suffering and Shame in a Necro-Geopolitical Order.'

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