Narratives of Reputation: Layerings of Social and Spatial Identities

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Places, like people, have reputations, and these reputations are created through relations in narrative—relations among places, the kinds of people who inhabit them, and the kinds of things that are said to occur there. Narratives are oriented not just temporally, but spatiotemporally; many narratives use places strategically, not only as a backdrop for events but also as a means for asserting some connections and negating others. As De Fina (2003) and others have noted, we need to understand orientation as a process ongoing throughout a narrative. And as we argue here, the strategic use of orientation can be crucial for asserting the larger meaning of a story. Places are key to narrative; as Baynham (2003) and Herman (2001) point out, narrative action is constituted in, motivated by, and understood with reference to the particularities of place.

In this chapter we ask what happens when a speaker invokes other, distant, seemingly disconnected places to establish a claim to a more immediate place. What are the structural means for creating the reputations of these places, what is the textual interplay of these place characterizations, and how do place reputations afford certain subject positions for the narrator and others? To answer these questions, we analyze a set of narratives collected as part of a larger project on ethnicity and local identity in the Washington neighborhood of Mount Pleasant. Mount Pleasant is a multiethnic, gentrifying neighborhood with residents who express strong local affiliations. The teller of these narratives is a man in his late forties who we call Boaz, an Israeli immigrant of Iraqi descent; he leads us from a present-day walk through Mount Pleasant, to a bar fight in Germany in 1975, then to Jews facing pogroms in Baghdad in the 1920s, and finally back to a hypothetical confrontation in Mount Pleasant or elsewhere. We trace three narrative features through these accounts—invocation of place, deixis, and negation. An analysis of these features will lead us to some insights about how these narratives of distant times and places—chronotopes, in Bakhtin’s (1981) terms—layer upon each other to ultimately create Mount Pleasant as a certain kind of place, and Boaz as a certain kind of Jew.
Invocations of Place

Research on discourse and place has shown that narrators invoke places in order to do cultural work, from delineating moral or appropriate behavior (cf. Basso 1996; Hill 1995; Modan 2007), to reinforcing community history (Toren 1995) and community identity (Johnstone 1990), to creating cosmopolitan personas (Gaudio 1997).

In narratives, places can be evoked both explicitly, through narrative orientation, and implicitly, through presupposition, allusion, or even silence where one might expect a place to be invoked. We make a distinction here between formal orientation, in the Labovian sense, and more implicit invocations of place; these strategies set up different relations among narrators, listeners, and place knowledge. In the case of implicit invocations, place knowledge is constructed as shared, whereas in orientation, it is constructed as not shared.

De Fina (2003, 372) states that orientations are “occasions for narrators and audience to negotiate and build shared understandings of experiences.” Thus, orientation does more than merely setting the scene; it is an interactional resource. We argue that orientation is not simply about creating shared knowledge, however, and that it is not necessarily related to a narrator’s assumptions about what a listener knows. Rather, the presence, absence, or level of detail of orientation serves as a strategy to include or exclude the listener as an in-group member. The strategic use of orientation can frame knowledge as shared in order to achieve an ideological goal. As we shall see, Boaz provides orientation for places that it is clear the listener knows, and he does not provide orientation at points in which place reference is textually ambiguous and he might assume that the listener does not know. This lack of orientation goes hand in hand with the total lack of reference to one particular place, Israel. The complete lack of reference to Israel constructs this place as maximally shared information that is maximally relevant for the story.

Georgakopoulou (2003) considers time and place as interactional resources, and Boaz’s manipulations of orientation certainly function in that way, because they construct the listener as an in-group or out-group member. But such interactional moves serve the larger goal of establishing his reputation, as well as the reputations of the places he discusses. Through his delineation of place knowledge as shared or unshared, he creates a scale of positionality from the personal to the familial to the ethnic. The subject position that he claims depends on a series of locations in which he demonstrates how events at different points on this scale necessitate his becoming a particular kind of Jew. Indeed, as an ideological move, his narrative choices necessitate the emergence of this kind of Jew in general.

Georgakopoulou (2003)—having been influenced by Ochs and Capps’s (2001) work on affordances—argues that time and place references enable certain storylines and inhibit others; they invoke semiotic meanings, and in so doing create affordances for stories about other places, and linkages between multiple places across storyworlds.

As we will see in Boaz’s stories, the spatial deictic shifts both within and across storyworlds create or disallow certain subject positions for Boaz and the people he talks about. And what happens within each storyworld is as important as what happens across storyworlds: Stories about Germany and Baghdad at key historical mo-
ments serve as orientation to Mount Pleasant in the present. What happens in those stories affords both the subject position and the spatial position that Boaz takes up in the last Mount Pleasant story that concludes the narrative set.

Deictic Centers
Much early narrative work privileged time over place (Labov 1972; Propp 1968; Ricoeur 1984) in understanding narrative structures, but more recently many scholars have shown that the internal organization of a narrative can be accomplished primarily through references to place. Likewise, the relationships among narratives can be structured through the relationships between the social meanings of the places where the narratives are located. As Georgakopoulou (2003, 415) notes, “The relationships between time and place transcend the boundaries of one taleworld and involve the interplay between different narratives.” Such relationships come about through deictic shifts. As Maryns and Blommaert (2001, 75) explain, deictic shifts in narrative “reveal . . . the speaker’s positioning towards . . . events.” More specific to spatial concerns, scholars such as Hill (1995) have shown that speakers use spatial shifts between deictic centers to set up moral geographies in which alignments between people and places set up reputations for both. In our analysis, we look at the shifts in deictic centers from story to story, as well as investigate various characters’ relationships to each story’s deictic center—whether they are in it, how they move around it, and the like.

Negation
Negation is an example of what Greimas (1983) described in terms of a fundamental opposition in narrative, in which making meaning depends on differences, opposites, and contrary positions. As Labov (1972) and others have noted, negation sets up a contrast to expectations. In so doing, negation brings those expectations into the discourse, making them part of the larger story. Labov considers negation to be an evaluative device, for it casts something as narratable because it violates our assumptions of how the world is or should be.

In *Coming Out Jewish*, Stratton (2000, 85) discusses what he calls *ghetto thinking*, “a way of being in the world in which the world is considered to be, in and of itself, dangerous and threatening, and to which, culturally speaking, the only appropriate response is considered to be fear.” He writes that, while such thinking is indicative of the experience of the diaspora Jew, Zionism turns this model on its head; for the Zionist, the proper response to the danger of various places is to show fearlessness and even aggression. Stratton, along with Berkowitz (1993) and Oz (1962), propose that the “new Jew” that Zionism theorizes is not actually something new; instead, it is an inversion—a mirror image—of the anti-Semitic portrait of the weak, submissive diaspora Jew.

In Boaz’s narratives, negation is the linguistic resource by means of which such inversion occurs. Through negation, he sets up a mirror-image storyworld of strong and weak people—specifically, strong and weak Jews. Through negation, his position as a tough urbanite contrasts with a mirror-image pre-Zionist world.
The Data
Boaz’ narratives were told during a sociolinguistic interview conducted by one co-author (Modan, hereafter GM), as a response to her question about how he thinks his ethnicity influences his take on the neighborhood. Boaz was one of a number of Jews participating in this study, but the only Israeli, and his narrative was quite different from those of the American Jews. The narratives that the American Jews told in answer to this question centered on two themes, both having to do with living in an ethnically heterogeneous neighborhood. The first was feeling at home in a mixed community that did not have a majority ethnicity, and the second was civil rights as a Jewish value that made them want to live in a mixed neighborhood.

Boaz’s response creates a very different kind of subject position—a very different kind of Jew. Through his narratives of danger and toughness in the Mount Pleasant neighborhood of Washington, Germany, and Baghdad, he stakes an aggressive claim to the places he discusses, and he creates an orientation of fearlessness as a personal, familial, and ethnic characteristic. Specifically, he creates what we can call a Zionist Jewish subject—a subject that is strong and tough, not vulnerable and afraid.

In addition to the three narrated places, there is a fourth place that plays a role in this story, namely, Israel. As we will see, Israel is only obliquely referenced, but it was also discussed in an earlier section of the larger talk of which this narrative is part. Because the narrator and the listener share a connection to Israel (because GM is part Israeli), and because Israel has already been discussed, Israel and particular symbolic values of it become maximally shared knowledge, such that Israel can serve as the unnamed pivot point around which the other storyworlds revolve. It is exactly through its not being named that its pivot power is created.

Mount Pleasant: Vulnerability and Aggressiveness
The first storyworld in the set of accounts starts with Boaz’s report of how his wife views Mount Pleasant:

GM: So how do you think that your, ethnicity, influences, how you see what goes on, around here. Or how you see what kind of neighborhood this is.
Boaz: U:m, well, to put it like my wife says, you walk around like, you know, like you’re in the middle of uh, attacking a, some guerrilla stronghold somewhere. I have- doesn’t scare me one bit. I mean I walk through the worst, parts here. And uh, maybe because I project, you know the, sort of— you know I’ve learned to to project an image of, don’t mess with me?
GM: mm hmm
Boaz: I don’t know. Cause I’m not very powerful physically. But um, I know how to handle myself. . . . The way what they project towards you if somebody project intimidation, it will be clear within the first 60 seconds that the person to be intimidated here is, you. Not me. Okay because, ^Oh, you can do this and you can do that but you won’t get away with much. Um. Cause it can get pretty scary around here.
GM: Yeah?
Boaz: You know.
GM: Have you had any bad experiences?
Boaz: Well I’ve had some pretty bad experiences of course you know I’ve had, I’ve had- you know. I’ve had people, um, . . . My windows were shattered on the night of the Million Man March. . . . Okay? Um, what do I attribute it to? I don’t know. Nothing was stolen. It was just damage for damage sake. Um, . . . Cause it can get pretty scary around here. Um, I think this neighborhood you you, I don’t care where you’re from, you have to show that- you know where you’re going, and that you’re not- you’re not vulnerable. You know? ’Cause if you show a little bit of vulnerability you’re done. Whether you’re Black White Hispanic. And um, my background is such that this word does not exist. I’m not vulnerable to anything. Yeah, to some– some, vices that I have! But uh, but as far as uh, be– being somebody’s lamb. It’s just not in the lexicon. You know. We draw blood where we come from.

By attributing to his wife the characterization of Mount Pleasant as dangerous, Boaz is able to simultaneously present the idea that some people walk around the area afraid and others, like him, project a “don’t mess with me” image. His embedded account of the Million Man March (a march organized by Louis Farrakhan) alludes to ethnic tensions (specifically, Black-Jewish tensions) and anti-Semitic violence—a theme that is developed in the subsequent discourse—and it sets up a potentially ethnic framework with which to interpret his discourse. However, he negates this ethnic lens with his comments “I don’t care where you’re from” and “Whether you’re Black, White, Hispanic.” Not only is the ethnic lens negated, but following this story, Boaz returns to his earlier topic; thus the Million Man March account remains contained within the Mount Pleasant context. Although it does foreshadow the ethnic valence to come, structurally it does not bleed into the other storyworlds. Therefore, for the purposes of this chapter, we do not discuss it at length.

In the general Mount Pleasant storyworld—the guerilla stronghold—negation sets up Boaz as a fearless person, in contrast to the mirror-image Boaz who exists in a parallel universe in which he might be scared, vulnerable, and intimidated, where people mess with him, and so on. Negation asserts a universe, then, in which his emotions, actions, and the general state of affairs are characterized by invulnerability. Negation sets up the dynamic that continues through the other storyworlds, which are also scary places in which he cannot be messed with.

The utterance “it can get pretty scary around here” and the description of having to show where you are going and that you are not vulnerable, work as place orientation: They characterize the neighborhood and claim a reputation for it. In terms of creating shared knowledge, however, this orientation is not necessary; Boaz knows that GM has lived in the neighborhood for seven years—some of that time just one block away from where the discussion is taking place—so he has reason to assume that she knows what the neighborhood is like. What the orientation does is construct Boaz’s knowledge as insider knowledge, and this helps to shore up his legitimacy as a community member. It also individualizes his perspective as a personal one based on his experience in this particular place.
At the same time, though, Boaz generalizes his experience to that of others in the neighborhood. With the presupposition “I don’t care where you come from,” he casts the neighborhood as being comprised of people who come from other places and who are not anchored in this place—the characters move in and out of this setting. Just as Boaz’s relation to this deictic center is one of “walking through,” the generalized others “come from” somewhere, and they are “going somewhere,” as in the utterance, “You have to show you know where you’re going.” Boaz and these other characters are all on the same footing as outsiders coming in, but what differentiates them is whether they know where they are going or whether they know how to act as if they know where they are going. Boaz differentiates himself from other, potentially scared, people in this setting. His stance negates the association between the place and a character’s vulnerability. Thus, narrative orientations do not merely locate events in places; they can also morally differentiate among different characters in those places, and they set up a range of possible morally imbued alignments among characters and between characters and places.

In narrating his own personal orientation to this place and putting that orientation in conversation with other people of various backgrounds—Black, White, Hispanic—Boaz has not really answered the question about how his take on the place relates to his ethnicity. However, he ends the section with an utterance that opens the potential for his stance to be contextualized as an ethnic stance. The utterance “We draw blood where we come from” simultaneously indexes Israel and constructs it as a place that instills in its people a needed aggressive orientation to the world. It is ambiguous whether the “we” in this utterance is inclusive or exclusive—whether or not it includes GM, an Israeli-American—but in any case, this image and its indexing of Israel begins to show Boaz’s stance as a Jewish stance, and—in linking it with Israel—a Zionist Jewish one.

It is worth pointing out that “We draw blood where we come from” is an alignment with a particular aspect of a Zionist orientation to the world and not an alignment with Israeli government policy or military actions. In the larger speech activity, this set of narratives follows 45 minutes of Boaz’s critique of the Israeli government’s policies and praise of the Oslo accords, and discussion of his own participation in the Peace Now movement. (Also, the data were collected in 1998, before the second intifada.)

The lack of orientation to explain “where we come from” and the vagueness of the utterance overall set up narrative tension. How is this utterance a response to GM’s question about ethnicity? This question starts to be answered with the two following stories that Boaz narrates, one in Germany and one in Baghdad. These two stories serve as retrospective and prospective orientation to the Mount Pleasant scenes between which they are sandwiched. The utterance “We draw blood where we come from” is both the coda of the first Mount Pleasant story and an abstract that enables Boaz to spontaneously launch into the Germany story. “Where we come from” is the transition point between Mount Pleasant and Germany, but “where we come from” is neither of those places. In the Germany story “where we come from” is not technically a part of the orientation to that place, but it is an orientation to the kind of person Boaz claims to be.
Germany: “We’re a New Breed”

After the “we draw blood” utterance, Boaz begins his narrative about a German bar fight in 1975 with an extensive localized orientation that casts the scene as nonshared knowledge:

We draw blood where we come from. I gotta tell you a funny story I was in Germany in 1976. I had a German girlfriend. And I was staying in her apartment. She was a student. And it was her birthday and we went to the cafeteria in the university one night. No, it was a bar—we went to a bar.

The beginning of the narrative has two deictic centers—Anna’s apartment and the bar. In contrast to Mount Pleasant, where Boaz was walking through the space, here he locates himself within these various deictic centers. First, he is staying in the apartment. Then they go to the bar, but when the narrative action happens, Boaz is already in the bar, and it is the antagonist who comes from elsewhere:

In comes this German guy and this big fat guy and he goes, he yells in German, Oh look what Anna got for her birthday, a Jew. This was end of it man this guy got bottles on his head and everything we went outside and, as it was going on i- j- when I, was done with him, I told him, see we’re a different breed. You made a big mistake. We’re not the kind that you put on the table and you start doing experiments and then when you end up you burn them so there’ll be nothing left. You said the wrong thing, that’s why I had to beat you. I got arrested for it, and all that but. Some explaining and all that, got me off of this but. That’s how I am. You know I was brought up to be this way. You know you don’t turn the other cheek.

In this narrative, we follow Boaz as he remembers the particular location of this event in the bar, and he further distinguishes between what takes place inside the bar and what occurs outside. But when we get to the punchline of the story—what Boaz told the German—there is no orientation whatsoever to “the kind you put on the table and you start doing experiments.” This table is not located in the bar but rather in a past that is not occupied by either Boaz or, most likely, the fat German. Because there is no orientation to this table and the events that occurred there, exactly where the table was in time and space and what happened on it is constructed as shared knowledge. What happened was the Holocaust. As was the case with Boaz’s off-record invocation of Israel, the off-record invocation of the Holocaust here casts the importance of the event as shared Jewish knowledge. It is this move that casts Boaz’s stance here as an ethnic stance. The shared ethnic-group nature of Boaz’s stance, as well as the German’s stance, is heightened by the pronoun use in the constructed dialogue: The German becomes a generalized “you” who performs experiments on a generalized “we.” When he then switches back to the specific German guy and Boaz, in “You said the wrong thing and that’s why I had to beat you,” this individual German is the representative of a past group, but Boaz is a representative of a past group that has been reconfigured—“a new breed.”

It is negation in this narrative that sets up the characterization of this new breed, and that reconfigures the agentive relations between Germans and Jews: In the mirror image world that arises through negation, Germans acted upon Jews, and Jews
were not in control of their own movement—Germans put Jews on tables, started doing experiments on them, and burned them, and the only thing that Jews did was “turn the other cheek.” This is in stark contrast to the new storyworld, where Boaz violently acts on the German—although the violence is mitigated through the use of passive voice (this guy got bottles on his head). Another interesting use of the passive voice is the utterance “I got arrested”: The German guy shows agency at the beginning of the story by confronting Boaz, but after Boaz beats him and explains the new order of things, the agency of the police officer is obscured. So Germans are no longer portrayed as acting upon Jews.

Now we begin to have a sense of how the particular present of Mount Pleasant is related to the generalized past of Boaz’s ethnic group. Although the generalized past of the Holocaust is indirectly connected to Boaz as a member of a persecuted group, however, he has no direct connection because his family is from Iraq, not Europe. The coda of the narrative—“That’s how I am. I was brought up to be this way. You know you don’t turn the other cheek”—reinforces the narrative’s start, “We draw blood where we come from,” as an orientation to the kind of person that Boaz is. The coda also gives a hint as to how he came to be that way. With the utterance “I was brought up to be that way,” he affords the telling of a story about his own family. Structurally, “I was brought up to be that way,” he affords the telling of a story about his own family. The coda also gives a hint as to how he came to be that way. With the utterance “I was brought up to be that way,” he affords the telling of a story about his own family. Structurally, “I was brought up to be that way,” he affords the telling of a story about his own family.

Baghdad: The Uniting of Storyworlds
In his story about Baghdad, Boaz describes the city’s pogroms in the 1920s and his father’s refusal to suffer silently, but instead to join the Zionist movement:

That’s how I am. You know I was brought up to be this way. You know you don’t turn the other cheek. And it’s totally against my father’s uh, you know my father lived, all his life until he was like seventeen, in an Arab country. And, they have much dislike to, the Muslim Arabs, because of all the discriminations, and the persecutions, and all that. But much of their life was—my father, being the first one, to join the Zionist movement, was the first one that said well there’s no more second cheek. They can’t come in here and pogrom us. But uh— . . . They just went there and killed them so the thing was okay, don’t upset them too much. Well, you see—this, to me it doesn’t exist.

In the Baghdad section, an ethnic position is accomplished through presupposing descriptions of things that happened in Baghdad as shared knowledge (“all the discriminations, and the persecutions, and all that”). Conversely, Boaz uses orientation clauses to explain his father’s roots in an Arab country (“my father lived . . . in an Arab country”) and to describe the Pogroms and the status of Jews in the city in the 1920s and later. These orientation clauses frame knowledge of Baghdad as particular rather than general, relating specifically to Boaz’s family history. By creating
this as a familial connection and not an ethnic one (not one shared with the listener), Boaz broadens the ideological base that he uses to solidify his stance.

The Baghdad (or Arab country) account becomes, retrospectively, an orientation to the Germany story. It is a prequel that sets up the conditions for Boaz's actions in the Germany story. As we learn, the Germany story is an example of Boaz not turning the other cheek, but it is not the original occasion for this behavior. Germany is a particular instance of a more general stance or alignment, and that stance is occasioned not just by ethnic affiliation but also by family history.

In terms of negation, what distinguishes the Baghdad storyworld from the other storyworlds is that here there is much more explicit contrast between the actually narrated storyworld and its mirror image. In the Baghdad case, the mirror-image storyworld emerges out of the shadow of negation and gets narrated in its own right, merging the two halves of the Baghdad storyworld into one, where the “old breed” vulnerable Jews exist in the same space as the “new breed” tough Jews. In this space, there was a pogrom, the Arab Baghdadis “went there and killed” the Jews, the Jews responded with the attitude, “Don’t upset them too much.” The confrontation of the mirror-image world with its own negation discursively enables the turning point in which a new Jewish subjectivity can be established, and it is here that that subjectivity gets linked with Zionism. Boaz explains that, in the face of the narrated pogrom, “My father, being the first one to join the Zionist movement, was the first one that said well there’s no more second cheek. They can’t come in here and pogrom us.”

Along with this negation comes a placement of Jews in the deictic center—they can’t come in here and pogrom us. This serves to anchor the Jews’ position in that deictic center. Ironically, however, what enabled this steadfast stance was the father’s turn to Zionism and subsequent immigration to Israel. The relationship between Baghdad and the other narrated places is critical for understanding Boaz’s orientation toward staying put; the various places in Boaz’s stories are used themselves as orientations to a particular stance. It is a stance of staying put, but it is not about actually staying put. It is about being able to be in control of your actions and comfortable in various places, deciding to stay or leave on your own terms. This is made clear in Boaz’s discursive return to Mount Pleasant. He narrates the old vulnerable Baghdad position, and then, with the utterance “Well, you see, to me this doesn’t exist,” he abruptly shifts back to Mount Pleasant to contrast the Baghdad pre-Zionist Jews with his own contemporary position in Mount Pleasant. Like “We draw blood where we come from” and “I was brought up to be this way . . . you don’t turn the other cheek,” the utterance “To me this doesn’t exist” serves both as a coda to the Baghdad story and an abstract to the closing Mount Pleasant story.

**Back to Mount Pleasant: An Aggressively Anchored Stance**

Well, you see—this, to me, doesn’t exist. My being here. What I am. Upsets you? You turn around and go. And if you want to make an issue out of it, you’ll have to push me out of the way. And because of this, there is the Israeli Defense Forces, who gave me all the training and instilled in me the confidence that, push and shove, I can push as—well as you can, without any, any any uh,
In this conclusion to the set of narratives, Boaz is not an untethered individual walking through the space of Mount Pleasant. Instead, now with the discursive support of his family and his ethnic group, he is firmly anchored “here.” It is notable that this is the first place reference to use a proform with no prior direct referent. Using the term “here” allows for flexibility; “here” is any place he is, and any place he may be in the future.

The multiple places and times Boaz has taken us through afford a singular, coherent subject position for him as a person who does not turn the other cheek. This position is discursively enabled by the narration of his father’s alignment with Zionism and subsequent move to Israel. And again we see Israel as the unspoken superdeictic center—indexed obliquely by “the Israeli Defense Forces”—that enables him not only to lodge himself in the deictic center of Mount Pleasant but also to resist any attempts to dislodge him. Negation drives home the difference that a Zionist sensibility makes in this regard, in the closing utterances “I can push and shove as well as you can, without any qualms about it. I don’t think my grandfather had that in him. You see? That’s the big difference.”

Throughout his account, Boaz uses negation to establish his alignment as someone who does not turn the other cheek. As in the Mount Pleasant story, the alignment is both personal and part of membership in a larger “we” group. He accomplishes this by establishing coherence in his actions across time and place.

Conclusion
Orientation in Boaz’s account occurs on a continuum of scale, from the localized individual experience to the experience of an ethnic group in several time periods and places to the subject position of the post-Zionist actor who cannot be pushed out of the way. These multiple positions on the continuum accumulate and layer, to strengthen the reputation that Boaz claims. In this continuum, the largest, most overdetermining deictic center, Israel, gets the least invocation. Orientation works at two levels. First, orientation is not placed up front but rather is used strategically, both to shift the deictic center and to provide information more and less precisely and about some things and not others. Orientation is not simply an interactional move to establish shared knowledge. Rather, it is an ideological move that positions the events and the characters at various points along a continuum of historical consequentiality.

Second, each story serves as an orientation for the others. In these narratives, the strategic, embedded use of orientation establishes Boaz as a coherent character, as someone who does not turn the other cheek, across time and place. Coherence contributes to his credibility. It is not the coherence, however, but the negation of an alternative reputation (weak Jews), linked with multiple places, that serves to consolidate his position. He is one kind of person and not another kind, in a dangerous neighborhood in Washington, and this is tied to a larger historical opposition between Jews who turned the other cheek and Jews who did not.
We argue that the juxtaposition of many places, one orienting another, affords the creation of a larger-than-individual overdetermined subject who is who he is because of who he was elsewhere and because of who his father was elsewhere. Boaz is not only a coherent subject who is the same across time and place; he has to be who he is now. Each dangerous place presented choices for action; he conflates these into the same kind of danger and the same kind of choice. Because his father made particular choices (to be a Zionist and to emigrate to Israel), there is no other choice but to be a person who does not turn the other cheek.

Finally, this overdetermined subject position is afforded through orientation, negation, and deixis. The strategic use of orientation determines the choices available for action, one negated and one chosen. What happens in Mount Pleasant is conditioned by what happened in Baghdad, which is made possible through Zionism. The implicit allusion to the decision by Boaz’s father to move from Baghdad to Israel is critical in that it creates an overarching deictic center for the whole set of narratives, and layers one place and time into another. The creation of a super-deictic center is thus reliant upon its off-recordness, silently created through its omission from orientation and consequent invocation as shared knowledge.

The Zionist subject who does not turn the other cheek conditions not only the events in the past, in Germany and in Baghdad, but also, hypothetically, anything that might happen in the future in Mount Pleasant or anywhere else. The Baghdad story resolves the narrative tension set up in the beginning of the whole discourse—how Boaz’s ethnicity is related to his view of Mount Pleasant. The utterance “We draw blood where we come from” only hints at the super-deictic center, and the hinting becomes more pronounced by the mention of Zionism in the Baghdad story. But its power is only revealed in the final segment, with the negation “I don’t think my grandfather had that in him.” Here, Boaz, unlike his grandfather, “can push as well as you can, without any . . . qualms about it.” The choice between pushing and being pushed is, by this point, overdetermined. It is not Boaz, the individual, making this choice but his history and the history of Israel. Anyone in this position would make this choice. By the end, the contradiction—Boaz staying put (in Mount Pleasant) by virtue of having left (Baghdad)—makes perfect sense.

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