

Thoughts and questions about Tolstoy's *War and Peace* in Gaza and the “war on terror”

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Abstract

To mark the world premiere production of the Arabic stage adaptation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace* by Theatre for Everybody, which took place in Gaza in the Occupied Palestinian Territories in November and December of 2017, this piece of writing asks what the relevance of this work might be for the people of Gaza and how Tolstoy's novel may throw light on the character and history of war in the contemporary world.

KEYWORDS

Cold War, collective punishment, Gaza, genocide, military, mimesis, peace, social cohesion, social organisation, Tolstoy, war, “war on terror”

1 | INTRODUCTION

I am the Director of Az Theatre, based in London. We are in partnership with Theatre for Everybody in Gaza and have co-produced their work on Tolstoy's *War and Peace* (1869/1957). The partnership, known as Gaza Drama Long Term, is a ten-year project started in 2009. The two companies have maintained a continuous sharing of creative activities in the form of workshops, productions, and events in Gaza and London (see www.aztheatre.org.uk [Az Theatre, 2017] for further information). This article originally appeared as a blog on Az Theatre's website, and has been revised for publication in this journal.

At an earlier stage in our project, when Theatre for Everybody presented a workshop version of their stage adaptation of Tolstoy's *War and Peace*, it was reviewed in *Al Watan* (Yaseen, 2015). The review opened thus:

Only on the Said Al Meshal stage in Gaza does the will to peace win over the insanity of war and its afflictions. But the reality that Palestine is living, and many of the countries of our Arab nations, is different to this. Completely different! Wars are eradicating people and peoples, and there is not a glimmer of hope of peace. (para. 1)

Tolstoy wrote his novel in the 1860s about the events that climaxed in the invasion of Russia in 1812 by the French army led by Napoleon Bonaparte. The novel finishes with Tolstoy's portrayal of natural family life that he imagines being resumed after the French invaders have been repulsed. What can it possibly mean to demand peace in Gaza today? There are few places on earth at the current time where it is more sorely needed. What might ordinary family life mean in Gaza today? I remember my colleague and friend, Hossam Madhoun, co-director of Theatre for

Everybody, remarking that one war every ten years might be almost acceptable but to have three in that space of time is unbearable. You can't possibly recover from one before the next is upon you.

2 | TWO WARS AND TWO PEACES

In Tolstoy's *War and Peace* there are two wars and two peaces. The first war is the campaign fought by the Napoleonic army against the Austrians and the Russians in Moravia in today's Czech Republic. This climaxed in the Battle of Austerlitz in 1805 and was followed by the Treaty of Pressburg. The French victory was so decisive that the Austrian Empire capitulated and never recovered. This had been the recurrent pattern in European warfare up to that time: there was a military build-up, manoeuvres, skirmishes, a decisive battle, and a peace treaty. This ordering of the business of war and peace in the European territories was linked to the consolidation of nation-states and had prevailed since the Treaty of Westphalia ended the Thirty Years War in 1648.

It is at the Battle of Austerlitz that Tolstoy's fictional character, Andrei Bolkonsky, is almost fatally wounded and for some period of time is missing in action. During his absence his wife dies in childbirth and he becomes a father. His departure for the war, and his aspiration to play a heroic and historic role in it, are described by Tolstoy as being connected with his animosity towards his pregnant wife. There is a drive in him towards war that is depicted as being fuelled by an antipathy towards life. His friend Pierre Bezukhov, after the defeat at Austerlitz, in which he played no part, is driven to drink in his frustration at Russian military officers' celebration of victory—although the Russians lost alongside the Austrians—and finds himself fighting a duel to defend Andrei's honour. Pierre's pro-Revolutionary—and therefore pro-Napoleonic—views are well known. The son of an aristocrat and a peasant, his basic predisposition is towards progress and peace. This friendship of opposites between Andrei and Pierre is the major relationship in the novel, and provides its key underlying dialogue.

The second war depicted in *War and Peace* is of a different sort from the Moravian campaign. It concerns the invasion and occupation of Russia. The intention of the French Army is to inflict a decisive defeat on the Russians and negotiate an advantageous peace settlement. Tolstoy describes this second war as being completely new in nature. The Russians will not make peace while the French are on Russian soil. After the French invasion, there is a dreadful and bloody encounter between the French and Russian armies at Borodino where Andrei is wounded, this time fatally, though he only dies some months after the battle. Meanwhile Pierre becomes a witness to the battle and the war. Napoleon, his erstwhile hero, has now become, for him, a satanic figure. In his determination to encounter his nemesis and assassinate Napoleon, he stays in Moscow after the French occupation, disguises himself as a peasant, promotes and finances armed partisan resistance, is captured by the French, narrowly escapes execution, and is eventually freed by “partisan” forces.

In this war of the second half of *War and Peace*, the Russians refuse peace negotiations and make strategic retreats, leaving an almost deserted and burnt-out Moscow to the occupying French forces. As the Russian winter sets in and the resources of the Russian land are depleted by plunder, Moscow turns from a treasure trove into a trap. The French army, demoralised and softened by its occupation of Moscow, starts its retreat back through Russia towards France without having gained a settlement. It is decimated by the attacks of relatively small groups of “partisan” guerrilla fighters. Tolstoy remarks that it is as if the French were engaging in a duel in accordance with the rules of fencing and their opponent, the Russian people, threw away its sword and snatched up a club. The French are bludgeoned to death.

3 | THE NAPOLEONIC PROJECT AND CLAUSEWITZ

The Napoleonic project exhibited two extraordinary features. Firstly, it was moved by an ideological aspiration to spread the republican values of the French Revolution. Secondly, it created an army from the whole French population. The *levée en masse* of the French people was the closest thing at that time to a conscript army.

The movement of these masses of troops entailed the plundering of all proximate property and land. As the Napoleonic campaign progressed, economic drivers became more dominant than the ideological revolutionary mission. In his invasion of Spain, Napoleon had already met with guerrilla fighters mobilised by civilian resistance to occupation. In the campaign in Prussia his defeat of the Prussian army—whose structures of command reflected the aristocratic values of the *ancien régime* and which was no match for the more democratically organised French—was a major shock. What Europe was confronting was total war, military combat that involved whole populations. This new form of warfare derived from the military methodology of European imperialist expansion and was brought back home in the Napoleonic campaigns of 1792–1815. Carl von Clausewitz, who fought at the Battle of Jena, wrote his classic work, *On War* (1832/1968), as a consequence of his recognition of the changed character of war. This work is the most universally influential theoretical book about war in the modern period, and its most celebrated quotation, “War is a mere continuation of policy by other means” (p. 119) indicates that at the centre of this work is a profound examination and rethinking of the relationship between military and social organisation. There is every reason to believe that Clausewitz advised the Russian commander, Kutuzov, during the Russian campaign. The intensely pragmatic understanding of the interaction between the terrain, the military commander, the government and the people, characteristic of von Clausewitz, was first put into practice in the Russian campaign against the French.

4 | THE PEACE PROCESS AND UNDERSTANDING WAR

Will Theatre for Everybody's adaptation of Tolstoy's work give any renewed sense of what peace in Gaza might involve? Do different kinds of peace relate to different kinds of war? The “peace process” that is constantly brought into play by Israel, the “international community,” and the Palestinian Authority appears to be a waging of war by other means. The theft of land and the humiliation and harassment of the Palestinian population continues. The dreadful privations due to the siege or blockade of Gaza (a prolonged and sustained act of violence that deprives people of the means of life and deteriorates the immediate environment in which they have to live), the displacement, the destruction of natural resources and environmental amenities, the deep ongoing problems arising from the use of armaments such as white phosphorus—Gaza is not just a war zone but an experimental laboratory for the Israeli arms industry—as well as the psychological and spiritual stress, the ongoing destruction of inner capacities produced by continual exposure to fear and terror, all continue during the “peace process.” I know from my friends there that fear eats the soul. The most consuming fear is not of one's own destruction but the dreadful sense of powerlessness to protect those who would, in all circumstances, be most in need of your protection, your children.

At the end of *War and Peace*, Tolstoy accompanies his description of peace after the French occupation with thoughts about the deeply destructive impact of militarism. He makes a general analysis of “the army.” This form of human organisation can have more or less impact and influence on the organisation of a society as a whole. In a war, it comes to dominate; in peace, it is diminished. His description is strongly linked to his view of human beings in general, a view that he elaborates at various points in the book and in other works. He describes the human as divided between individual being and collective being. These modes of being impact variously on human social organisation. The individual is capable of generating movements of self-development and behaviour based on intuitive recognitions of truth, and these movements are subject to human will. As an individual, the human being lives out a sense of self-determination even though the apparent control of his or her circumstances is illusory. In their collective life, human beings are carried along by mimetic interactions where reciprocal expectations of conformity drive them in ways over which they appear to have no control. This is most clearly and fully expressed at the beginning of Book Three of *War and Peace*, at the point where Tolstoy describes the movement between the war of the first half and the war of the second half. He attributes freedom to the individual aspect and destiny and necessity to the other, collective, aspect. He expresses these as different perceptions of time: the personal time of the individual—the series of moments that make up a person's life—and the collective predetermined time, that appears like a landscape and is

associated with complex interactive “swarm” behaviour. The army, for Tolstoy, is an institutionalisation of this contradiction in the human being. He describes the organisational structure of the army as a cone, a hierarchy of command and obedience, where the basis on which someone is able to give orders is the distance that they have from the actual activities over which they give them. This separation of authority from activity—a specific case of the division of mental and manual labour—gives rise to power ascending to the pinnacle of the cone where a man (usually) sits. He, at one point, appears to be a genius though at another—from a different perspective—he appears to be a satanic figure. For Tolstoy, the army is an abnegation of human responsibility. The more prevalent this form of organisation becomes, the less control over their lives and actions—the less freedom—people have.

The people of Gaza live in a permanent state of “unfreedom” because they are subject to intensive militarisation both from the state of Israel and from the organisations of resistance that have been generated in opposition to it. There is a commonplace about Israel that, rather than being a state with an army, it is an army with a state. This fusion of the army and the state, of war and politics, can be seen as the direct outcome of the ideas of Carl von Clausewitz. European nationalism has managed to export itself, in its most extreme form, and inserted itself into the Middle East. In addition, it is not just the physical impact of the violence of war that makes a difference. The conduct of war, especially by aggression and occupation, provokes resistance that replicates its forms of activity and organisation. In other words, war creates violent imitation that makes adversaries more and more alike.

Surely there is no other society on earth that knows as much about war—and knows as little peace—as those who live in the farms, villages, towns, and cities of the Gaza Strip. René Girard, to whose ideas about mimetic violence I have just referred, said in his book about von Clausewitz, “To understand war completely is to no longer be able to be a warrior” (Girard, 2010, p. 148). Does Tolstoy's *War and Peace* or Theatre for Everybody's stage adaptation of it move in the direction of an understanding of war that is helpful to people in Gaza?

War and Peace is a thorough imaginative investigation of war, both in general and in particular. From a psychological or spiritual point of view, this investigation is embodied in the relationship between the two main characters, Andrei and Pierre, and their relationship to Natasha, the fiancée of one and the eventual wife of the other. From a historical point of view, it is articulated in the relationship between the war in the first half of the novel and the “new kind” of war in the second half. What is the logic of this historical progression? Is an ongoing historical direction indicated in the difference that Tolstoy articulates between the two wars in *War and Peace*?

5 | A VIEW FROM BRITAIN

Writing about this in London, I risk having a partial view of these processes. After all, the Napoleonic Wars were, despite appearances to the contrary, fought mainly between the French and British. The British were constantly involved in a process of diplomatic manipulation, setting one side against another but hardly making a military appearance, apart from during the war in Spain, until the very end, at the Battle of Waterloo in 1815, when Napoleon was finally defeated. The strategy of conducting war through alliances or proxies is familiar. It was the ability of the English banking system to extend loans with unusual flexibility, in contrast to the more rigid French system, that was constantly making a difference to the conduct of the various campaigns. The economics of war, mentioned earlier in relationship to the Napoleonic balance sheet of plunder, are also evidenced in the connection between the Israeli state project and its ability to steal Palestinian land and property, theft with which its army is directly concerned. It cannot escape anybody's attention that British wealth, the infrastructurally advantageous position of Britain—which is now almost completely depleted apart from residual financial pre-eminence—is entirely due to military and naval power. The wars that took place in the world between the Battle of Waterloo in 1815 and the start of the First World War in 1914 were predominantly conducted by European powers, plus the United States, against indigenous people whose resistance and endurance have, more or less, been erased from the historical record. These wars had prominent genocidal features. However, the documented history of the development of war is centred in Europe. Since 1945 the Western European powers and the United States have managed to

“export” war whilst remaining the major profiting producers of armaments. This gives the bizarre and false appearance of contemporary Europe being a centre of peace. It is as if the whole of the Western world is mimicking the role played by Britain in the Napoleonic Wars, conducting wars in other countries by proxy and bankrolling them with armaments. Although Britain has profited from war more than any other country in human history—this role is currently being contested by the US—it has never, since 1066, suffered an invasion. I am not counting the arrival of William and Mary with an accompanying army in 1688 nor the Jacobite armed invasion, launched from Scotland and supported by the French, in 1745. Napoleon, for a while in the 1790s, amassed an army on the French side of the Channel and threatened invasion before deciding to turn his attention eastwards. Almost the same pattern occurred with the threat from the German National Socialist regime under the leadership of Adolf Hitler. Hitler's army met a fate similar to that of Napoleon's as a consequence of an attempt to invade and occupy Russia/the Soviet Union in 1941. The pattern of the European wars of the first half of the 20th Century was set in the Napoleonic Wars. In 1945, with the advent of the Cold War, the Western powers went back to conducting colonial wars. However, the Cold War, and the subsequent “war on terror” that in some ways subsumed it, changed the character of war in a way that is similar to that described by Tolstoy in the difference between the Moravian campaign of 1805 and the invasion of Russia of 1812.

The Cold War was a result of the remarkable success of the Soviet Union in the encounter with Germany in 1941–1945 plus the extraordinary advance in the destructive capabilities of human weaponry with the development of nuclear explosives. The “war on terror” is a result of a strategy initiated by Israel by means of its influence over United States policy through the neo-conservative group after the fall of the Soviet Union in 1989. This coincided with the end of the war against the Soviet invaders of Afghanistan and the return to their countries of origin of hundreds of trained fighters who had been exposed to the practice and ideas of military political Islam. In the background was the Iranian revolution of 1979 and the formation of the Islamic Republic and this, in turn, was influenced by the formation of Pakistan as a consequence of the British-led partition of India. It is instructive to see how these nation-state forms repeat and echo each other. It is particularly important in this respect to understand the congruence between the Zionist state project and the Islamic State (ISIS or ISIL) project.

6 | SOLDIERS, CITIZENS, AND IDEOLOGY

A fundamental impact of the Napoleonic *levée en masse*, the redirecting of the revolutionary energies of the French people into nation-building and military adventurism, was a reorganisation of the relationship between soldiers and civilians. War and military organisation have played an integral and essential role in the making of nation-states. War is always projected as having definable strategic aims and often the whole effort appears to be imbued with efficiency and purpose. When we turn our attention to what Tolstoy had to say about the way militarisation (preparing for war) is compatible with already existing inclinations in people to form themselves into purposeful groups and act in unison, we can see that war not only faces out towards the realisable objectives that it avows, whether these are defensive or offensive, but also faces inwards and engages with the need for people to organise themselves collectively. The standard way a ruling group establishes its hegemony over decisive sections of the population is to generate military activity. In the case of Britain (or the nation-state that was to become Britain after the 1707 union with Scotland), the initial action of the new regime formed in 1688 was to create a coalition army with the Dutch to go to war against France. This was a conflict driven by the need to consolidate Protestantism as a key ideological unifier as much as it was an imperial contest. The fact that Britain was, and remains, a kind of theocracy in which religion is used as a test of loyalty and where the monarch was, and is, both the Head of the Church and the military Commander-in-Chief, reminds us of similarities between Britain and Israel. Here it is significant that “chosenism”, the illusion that adherents are God's chosen people, a kind of extremist racist monotheism, is a central element of the religious ideologies that hold, or have held, these state-building projects together. The key institution of the proto-British regime, the Bank of England, was created in 1694 for the purpose of enabling a public debt to be raised to finance the war against the French. In more recent

times Blair's Iraqi war adventure was both a device to advance the transatlantic alliance and a means of gaining the submission of the home population. War-making is the key device in the articulation of "home" policy and "foreign" policy. It is interesting to speculate on the significance of the British governmental reorganisation in the 1790s that established the Home Office and the Foreign Office to replace the Northern Department, responsible for relations with the Protestant states of Northern Europe, and the Southern Department, responsible for relations with Catholic and Muslim states. This articulation of internal policy and external policy continues. For example, immediately after the referendum on membership of the European Union, the UK government led by Theresa May caused there to be a debate in parliament about the renewal of the Trident system of submarine-based nuclear weapons. In the course of this debate on 18 July 2016, May was asked if she would be willing to kill hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children if she was required to do so; she answered yes and was proud of her lack of equivocation. This proclamation had an organisational objective designed to consolidate a consensus and create cohesion within the nation-state, and it was linked to an affirmation of loyalty to the foreign relations partnership with the United States.

7 | WAR AND SOCIAL COHESION

War is a form of social organisation that poses objectives that are functions of the cohesion of a society undergoing the process of militarisation and war-making. By looking at war as a social practice, taking account of all the activities, processes, and material practices that make it actual, and not restricting the view of it to the unleashing of weaponised hostilities, we can see more easily what its purposes and motivations are. This is particularly important in more nuanced examples of warfare like the Cold War and the "war on terror" where there is less focus on directly destructive activity but where violent impacts are held in suspension. Daniel Feierstein's (2014) study of genocide adopts this practice-based approach and in doing so gives proportionate attention to the activity of mass killing by looking at the other practices that make this killing possible. He draws attention to the impacts of these practices on the perpetrating group and makes it clear that the motive of the movement towards genocide is the need for cohesion in this group. He bases his analysis of genocide on Raphael Lemkin's (the inventor of the word's) definition: the imposition of the "national pattern" of one group on another group (Lemkin, 2005, p. 79). This means also that the genocidal process itself defines, clarifies, and structures this "national pattern." Each activity or action in the genocidal process is related directly and instrumentally to the requirement for specific forms of unity within the perpetrating group.

It is as if the war-making and genocide processes are enforced mimesis. The implications of the reciprocal nature of violence are most cogently elaborated in the work of René Girard. In *Violence and the Sacred* (1977), he works out the dynamic connection between organised violence and the sacred. Sacrifice is how the sacred is constructed by violence. In describing the structure of the army, Tolstoy points out that it is never the size or mass of the army that determines its success. It is not the sheer quantitative strength. He says there is a factor x that is decisive. He is constantly asking what force it is that moves large human groups, that drives history. Those internalised ideas that take the form of figures, personages, icons, divinities, beliefs, and values that people are willing to die for are, of course, also what people are willing to kill for.

War cannot happen without violence. But, for example, the Cold War has shown us that this violence can be virtual; it doesn't have to be unleashed to be effective. This is similar to the "war of observation" described by von Clausewitz (1832/1968, p. 246) and the "war of positions" described by Antonio Gramsci (1971, p. 495). I'm not saying there was no violence committed in the conduct of the Cold War but the violence that was threatened was different from the violence that was carried out. This outcome was due to the technology of modern weapons. It also had to do with the prominence of ideology—in other words, the constitution of what is sacred—in contemporary organised violence.

If the mass conscription of the Napoleonic army meant a fundamental change in the relationship between the soldier and the civilian, if what was involved was a militarisation of the whole population, and if the logic of this development reached a new level of intensity in the 1939–1945 World War, then how has this logic been carried through into the Cold War and the "war on terror"?

If the Cold War was conducted in order to affirm the cohesion of the capitalist system and present communism and socialism as an alien “other,” the “war on terror” is being conducted in order to guard “our way of life” against militant Islam. For the West, this “war” has become the most important way in which consent to the power of the ruling elites is gained and affirmed. Our “way of life” is defined and held together by it. It is a major pillar of our modernity. However, it is overlaid and underpinned by the remnants of the Cold War. Although the preparation for its introduction was carried out in the decade following the collapse of the Soviet system, it was launched in the period after 11 September 2001. At this point the leader of the most powerful nation in the world could, with a degree of credibility, assert that “you are either with us or with the terrorists” (Bush, 2001). This was a global call, a call to the world’s population to take sides. From a political point of view this drew a new line in the definition of loyalty, allegiance, and identity. And this line was drawn in the most private spaces of all participating individuals and it had potential impacts on every single living moment and on every action of the populations of the world. The success of this strategy is in no way a foregone conclusion. However, so many events can be spun into the narrative that it describes. The Syrian civil war and the refugee crisis, for example, have been quickly used to re-enforce its basic message.

The most important dynamic in a “war” strategy and the measure of cohesion towards which it is directed is the unity between “home” policy and “foreign” policy. It is clear how well designed the “war on terror” is for this purpose. It consolidates international alliances and enables international “police” actions where technologies and information can be shared. It is also a way of both fuelling and obscuring racism. Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2005) have pointed out that war in our contemporary world takes the form of a global civil war, a war of the rich against the poor. The issues of organised violence, racism, inequality, and injustice are now so clearly linked that the ruling elites’ storytellers must make extra efforts to prove that the issue is one of ideology. It is the implicit obscuring of distinctions between active militant operatives, Muslims, refugees, migrants, suspicious-looking people, and the poor, that is a crucial part of the terror being generated by this “war” strategy. Also significant is the move away from “army” organisation and popular conscription and towards mercenary privatised security organisations. Enlistment in the “war on terror” has consisted of calls to engage in shopping and retail activity in defence of “our way of life.” People are commended for bravery and are honoured for carrying on as normal.

8 | THE “WAR ON TERROR” AND RESISTANCE

What are the problems of resistance in these circumstances? Hardt and Negri advocated “war against war” (2005, p. 67). We know that the radical and personal politics espoused by Tolstoy had a formative impact on Gandhi’s formulation of liberation strategies based on “satyagraha” and civil disobedience. The Palestinian people have themselves come up with innovative resistance movements like the tactics of community resistance and organisation employed in the Intifada of 1987–1993 and also like the mass civil disobedience implicit in the current Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement.

Is what is happening in Gaza an aspect of the “war on terror”? How does this global strategy relate to what is happening there? The armed state that is initiating and perpetrating the organised violence is dependent for its existence on the actions that it carries out in Gaza. They are a part of an array of strategies that isolate and harass separated populations of Palestinians in different ways. As the development of war has progressively obscured the relationship between soldiers and civilians, the strategy of “collective punishment” has become more and more practically influential. As soon as a military entity develops from, and then conceals itself within, a resisting population, this tool becomes relevant and effective. The emergence of partisan guerrilla warfare simultaneously with mass conscription brought this form of combat to prominence. Collective punishment assumed a notoriously crucial role in the German army’s suppression of resistance in the territories it occupied during the Second World War and it was used with devastating effect in gaining the submission of the Jewish communities during this period.

Daniel Feierstein (2002) has published a remarkable analysis of the application of collective punishment by the German occupation forces to the Jewish ghetto in Vilna (Vilnius), Lithuania. It relates to the dilemma faced by Itzik

Wittenberg, the commander of the ghetto's partisan armed group (the Fareynikte Partizaner Organizatsye, FPO), who capitulated to pressure due to the threat of collective punishment and gave himself up to the Gestapo in July 1943. Feierstein's analysis pointed to the problematic isolation of the FPO from the population of the ghetto and the equally problematic collaborationist role of the *Judenrat*, the Jewish Police Force. The events he described preceded the disintegration of the resistance movement and the annihilation of the ghetto's inhabitants. Parallels can be drawn with the Israeli "collective punishment" strategy in the isolation of, and siege carried out on, the population of Gaza. This is especially relevant in the context of the actions taken by the Palestinian Authority (PA) in effectively supporting Israel's blockade. Of course, the difference is that the armed group, Hamas, is also the political governing power in Gaza and the collaborationist PA is operating mainly outside the "ghetto."

Collective punishment is generally pertinent to the "war on terror." The Israelis can create a narrative whereby the whole population of Gaza, in their tacit support of Hamas, are terrorists. Even talking to people who are relatively well informed, it is surprising how this story is internalised as a kind of assumption. The argument would be that the people's support, and therefore their responsibility, is proven by the absence of any popular uprising against Hamas, the "terrorists." This "guilt by association" is a familiar aspect of this strategy and of the "war on terror". For example, when murders are committed by people from the Muslim community and an association between them and a militant Islamist group is established, the whole Muslim community is silently (or not so silently) accused.

The collective punishment of the Gaza population is part of a war with strong genocidal features that Israel, driven by the need to hold the Zionist project together, is waging against the whole Palestinian population. The Israeli "national pattern" is being structured as it is being imposed on the Palestinians simultaneously with the co-ordinate destruction of the Palestinian "national pattern." It is worth asking what the roots of Israel's "national pattern" are and what genocidal processes may be traced in it. Gaza gets the sharp end of the array of strategies applied to different, deliberately isolated, communities. This isolation process has been programmatically agreed to by the PA. The war on Gaza is mainly carried out through blockade. The target of the attack is every aspect of human life in the Strip. The intensity of the attack is disavowed, creating a situation that is then spun as a humanitarian crisis, whereas it is in fact a crisis that has been deliberately created as a prolonged act of war.

What can possibly constitute a strategy for peace or even a "war against war" in these circumstances? Can any human population withstand this level, and duration, of attack? Are not divisions bound to occur in the solidarities that hold social life together in Gaza?

9 | BEGINNING AT HOME

The stage adaptation of *War and Peace* made under the direction of Erwin Piscator and performed at the Schiller Theatre in Berlin in 1955, which has influenced Theatre for Everybody's own adaptation, is very much a work shaped by the Cold War. It is a dramatic call for peace. It finishes with the death of Andrei from the wounds received at the Battle of Borodino and omits Tolstoy's description of the "natural" family life and the "peace" achieved in the marriage of Pierre and Natasha. However, it does suggest that the answer to the difficult questions that it asks, lies in core human activity: "Let us begin at home," it advises.

The ending offered by Tolstoy of a return to natural domestic peace after the French occupation is based on his assertion that war is an unnatural human activity. In the age of the "war on terror," especially in a war zone like Gaza, the war is carried right into the heart of the home. The relationship between warrior and civilian is abolished and this brings the warfare closer to genocidal processes. I know this from my friends there; their descriptions of the impact of war tend to centre on the transformation of family relations. A recurrent theme, as already mentioned, is the feeling of powerlessness to protect their children. This engages with a very deep sense of vulnerability. The feeling that the home, and the powerful place women have there as the foundation of peace, has been destroyed. War has penetrated the most intimate human space.

I have no answers. The perspective opened up by Tolstoy is based on the idealisation of women. Natasha, the third key character, with whom both Andrei and Pierre fall in love, is a figure of beauty, vitality, and peace. This objectification affirms a patriarchal view of humanity. I can see this, but I can find no active way of making this idea helpfully active. She is the prize and the object of the activities of the men, the potential mother, an emblem of love. This accords with how war is structured in Western culture. René Girard (1977) would have us believe that the impulse towards war lies in mimetic rivalry and envy. The issue of gender and sexuality is at the centre of the pursuit of active peace.

The Piscator stage adaptation ends by placing responsibility for human life not on fate or destiny but on human action. Our fate is not given, it is made by us. I recall the great theatre practitioner Augusto Boal sending us a message of support for Az Theatre's War Stories project: "Peace yes, but passivity no!" The human action that is being advocated here is not that which lies solely inside us, but rather between us. Is it possible to create a space where human beings can feel, think, and reflect on their humanity? Our Gaza Drama Long Term project (Az Theatre, 2017) seeks to extend that space to include people in London and Gaza. Our circumstances, here and there, are so different that it is as if we are looking down different ends of the same telescope. I can think of no better place for responsibility and deep living to be sustained but in the shared space that holds together inhabitants of "war-producing" countries and "war-receiving" countries in a common space of creativity and reflection. The activation of this space between us is the life-blood of the real international community, the people of the world.

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