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FORUM

Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, eds., *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*

Disturbing Histories and Unsettling Historians: *The Holocaust and the Nakba*

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Bashir Bashir, Amos Goldberg, and seventeen contributors have produced a powerful and incisive book that deserves the attention of everyone interested in central European history.* Bashir and Goldberg's volume engages readers methodologically as well as intellectually, politically, ethically, and personally. It challenges us to think, write, and do things differently, to take risks, and to welcome the invigorating and disruptive presence of people in every aspect of our work.

In a remarkable foreword, Elias Khoury sums up the complex entanglements of the Holocaust and the Nakba in two words, one Hebrew, the other German: *Sabonim* and *Muselmänner*—bars of soap and Muslims. With these terms Khoury sets the stage for the chapters that follow, each attentive to "the complicated and multilayered intersections" of the Holocaust and the Nakba,[1] yet alert to specificities, too. Central to the book is a distinction Khoury articulates, which (simplistically summarized by me) is the difference between past and present. The Holocaust, he points out, "has become a collective human memory that must be preserved." The Nakba, in contrast, "is a continuing story." In other words: "The everyday reality of life in Palestine clearly indicates that the 1948 war was merely the beginning of the catastrophic event."[2]

The foreword sets the tone for the book. Like Khoury, Bashir and Goldberg in the introduction, and all the authors in their chapters, are forthright and unsentimental. Jacqueline Rose's afterword, for instance, is as eloquent as it is clear: "Israel's claim on a monopoly of suffering is the transcript for its continuing oppression of the Palestinian people … This must be stated—loudly, as it is here—over and over again."[3] I may be naive, but to my

I am grateful to Melanie Newton, Mita Choudhury, Catherine Schlegel, Anna Shternshis, and Jessica Bush for helpful conversations. Thanks also to students in my undergraduate seminar, "Religion and Violence," and in my graduate seminar, "History and Historiography of the Holocaust," in 2019 and especially the 2020 group: Victoria Abel, Lief Dubin, David Farrell, Lauren Fedewa, Maria Hartyunyan, Frederik Hayward, Eli Jany, Catherine Lukits, Richard Musson, Anne Sophie Narod, Erin Rose, Jessica Simpson, Sara-Jane Vigneault, Tianna Voort, and Somaia Youssef.

[1]Elias Khoury, "Foreword," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), ix.

[2]Khoury, "Foreword," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, xiii–xiv.

[3]Jacqueline Rose, "Afterword: The Holocaust and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 360.

reading the chapters did not seem loud but respectful and restrained. Rose identifies "the hardest challenge to issue from this book" to be about connecting: "to find a way of communicating across the space and time of silence."[4] For Khoury, the book's "central challenge" is the recovery of hope, to "find our way back to the optimism of the human will amid the pessimism of the intellect."[5] Bashir and Goldberg themselves try to open a door for change. It is their hope that "this volume might make a decent contribution to … identifying different discursive venues for putting an end to the oppression and colonization of Palestine and the Palestinians and advancing decolonization and historical reconciliation among and between the two peoples."[6]

The Holocaust and the Nakba is an extraordinary book, and it invites and even demands a response more personal than the usual academic-style review. The subject feels urgent, and writing this article in the current moment heightened my awareness of the porous boundaries between scholarship and the wider world. Here is a selection of headlines, most from the *Toronto Star*, that point toward the refracting layers of the context now: From June 5, 2020: "'Get your knee off our necks!' Civil rights leader gives fiery eulogy as [George] Floyd is mourned in Minneapolis." On June 6: "Coronavirus Depletes the Keepers of Europe's Memory," and in *U.S. News and World Report*: "Israelis Protest Netanyahu's Annexation Plan." Two days later: "Twin crises spur calls to treat racism as public health crisis." June 11 brought this headline from the *New York Times*: "Eva Konrad Hawkins, Marine Scientist Who Fled Hungary, Dies at 90. She lived through the Holocaust, Communism and the Hungarian Revolution of 1956. She died of Covid-19." Then, on June 14: "Global protests surge over racism" and "RCMP shoot, kill Indigenous man in New Brunswick."[7]

The Privilege of Staying Out of It

Ever since I taught my first course on the Holocaust, in 1991 at the University of Vermont, I have tried to avoid discussing Israel, Palestine, and Israel/Palestine in my classes and public presentations. Sometimes it has been easy to do so; at other times it has been more difficult. The list of topics to steer clear of is long—the Nakba, intifadas, Zionism, war in Gaza, Benjamin Netanyahu, the BDS movement, and more—and it has seemed like I would only bring trouble by weighing in.

There were more overt pressures, too, sometimes from students and colleagues but more often from audience members at public events. Messages arrived online, some anonymous, others bearing names of people I know, reacting to occasions when I expressed views about current affairs. Speaking at a roundtable on "Antisemitism and the U.S. Elections," organized by the Anne Tanenbaum Centre for Jewish Studies at the University of Toronto in January 2017, brought me a scolding from a community member and a few unpleasant emails.

[4]Rose, "Afterword," 360.

[5]Khoury, "Foreword," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, xvi.

[6]Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Introduction: The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Syntax of History, Memory, and Political Thought," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 32.

[7]Additional headlines I had to include: from a *Toronto Star* feature on June 10: "'Most people don't have any clue about the damage being inflicted, where it began and where it ends.' Two young men share the subtle and not-so-subtle ways they've been targeted because of the colour of their skin while growing up in Canada." June 11, CNN: "Biden 'absolutely convinced' military would escort Trump from White House if he loses and refuses to leave." A day later in the *Star*: "Jefferson Davis statue toppled in Virginia" and "U.S. threatens sanctions on war crimes investigators." On June 13: "The protests feel different this time" and "Pakistani truck artist paints Floyd mural on his home."

Signing the open letter about US Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's use of the term *concentration camps* to describe detention centers at the US-Mexico border elicited some nasty insults ("you are disgusting") and threats to inform the administration of my university of what a "shameful" scholar of the Holocaust I was.[8] These incidents are nothing compared to the dangers people all over the world face every day, and I am not writing this to suggest I have it hard, only to point out that, when I think about it, I realize even these minor irritations added to my reluctance to initiate or join a conversation about the Holocaust and the Nakba.

And yet it seemed important to engage with this volume edited by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg and face the challenges it poses to Holocaust studies and to me as a practitioner in the field. The list of topics to avoid was growing too fast, and people and events kept adding to it. Netanyahu's blatantly false and provoking claim in 2015 that Hitler got the idea of annihilating Jews from the mufti of Jerusalem, Haj Amin al-Husayni, was a pivotal moment for me.[9] Another turning point was the show of force of an anti-Black, xenophobic, antisemitic, Islamophobic confederacy at Charlottesville, Virginia, in August 2017. The Holocaust was not going to stay in a closed box labeled "1933 to 1945" or "1933 to 1948," even though I organize my research and teaching that way. Or at least, it was taking more and more intellectual and emotional energy, and felt increasingly dishonest, for me to sit on that box or inside it, holding the lid down over my own head.

Students in my first-year seminar "Religion and Violence" helped me move toward rethinking the Holocaust and the Nakba through a broader discussion of Israel/Palestine. For their term project, students choose a topic to research and a format in which to present it. Over the years, I have had students create graphic novels about genocide in Guatemala, write plays about sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, make scrapbooks about the assault on Indigenous children and families through residential schools in Canada, and more. The key thing is that their work should open up questions rather than claim to resolve them.

Several years ago, a student developed a project on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, which he titled "Both Sides of the Wall: A Comparison between Palestinian and Israeli Viewpoints." He interviewed two middle-aged academics, both men who had lived in Israel for about thirty years and now reside in Canada. One was Palestinian, the other Jewish. He asked them the same questions, showed them the same set of photographs, and juxtaposed their responses without attempting to analyze or judge them.

For me, two of those juxtapositions jumped off the page. The first involved this question: "Can you describe an event that comes to mind that highlights your interactions with the other side?" The Palestinian respondent told the following: "One day, I was studying for my oral driving test with my friend. So the soldiers took us and they brought us to a three foot wall and asked us to jump up and down the wall for maybe half an hour and they

[8]For more on this issue, see "An Open Letter to the Director of the US Holocaust Memorial Museum," *New York Review of Books*, July 1, 2019 (https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2019/07/01/an-open-letter-to-the-director-of-the-holocaust-memorial-museum/).

[9]Netanyahu's fabrication also opens a wonderful chapter in the book. See Mustafa Kabha, "A Bold Voice Raised Above the Raging Waves: Palestinian Intellectual Najati Sidqi and His Battle with Nazi Doctrine at the Time of World War II," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 154–72. For discussion, see Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (New York: Metropolitan, 2009).

kept us there for maybe two or three hours, just for fun." He went on to recount other humiliations until the interviewer had to ask him to move to the next question. The Jewish respondent answered the same prompt this way: "I don't think so. I don't have memories of very dramatic transformative events that would define the whole experience."

The next question and pair of responses deepened the contrast. The student asked, "Did you have any interactions from people on the other side?" The Palestinian man answered, "Yes, we had to go and get permits from them. They would kick us at the checkpoints; they would beat me. That's it." His Jewish Israeli counterpart responded very differently: "Living in Israel, you are almost never exposed to Palestinians. If you are not in the army, if you do not live as a settler in territories, then you almost have no opportunities to encounter Palestinians living in those places. So there is a clear separation. They go to work in Israel, but if you don't go to places where they work, then you don't really get to interact with them." Reading and reflecting on that student's project was eye-opening for me because it highlighted an aspect of privilege I had not fully recognized before. Being privileged means you do not have to look, you do not have to see, and entire systems exist to protect you from doing so. By not looking and not seeing, you perpetuate a certain narrative without even thinking about it.

I grew up in Alberta as a white, settler European-Canadian. My family lived on a farm about twenty miles away from the community of Maskwacis, then officially called Hobbema, a territory home to the Maskwacis Cree, collectively, and individually known as Samson Cree Nation, Ermineskin Cree Nation, Louis Bull Tribe, and Montana First Nation. The Ermineskin residential school, one of the largest such schools in Canada, was located there. Until the mid-1970s, while I was attending school in a town nearby, Indigenous children my age who had been taken away from their homes were confined there, deprived of decent food, beaten for speaking Cree, and subjected to every form of abuse.[10] Privilege allowed me never to think about that residential school or even know it existed. Growing up, I did not give much thought to the situation of Indigenous people in general, including children my age who had been apprehended from their birth families in the so-called Sixties Scoop.[11] Yet some of those children lived in foster homes in my neighborhood and rode on the school bus with me; some of them were my cousins.

Asymmetry

A word that comes up a lot in Bashir and Goldberg's book is *asymmetry*, and the privilege I am talking about is related to that phenomenon. Hearing my student's presentation and thinking about where I grew up made me realize that to be able to tell a personal story and have it be heard, as I am doing here, is another form of privilege. The most personal chapters in *The*

[10]"In Hobbema, Residential-School Survivors Share Their Stories with Commission," *The Globe and Mail*, July 24, 2013 (https://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/national/in-hobbema-residential-school-survivors-share-their-stories-with-commission/article13403496/). See also *Canada's Residential Schools: Missing Children and Unmarked Burials: The Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada*, vol. 4 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2015) and Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, "Redress for Linguicide: Residentials Schools and Assimilation in Canada," *British Journal of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 183–204.

[11]See Raven Sinclair, "Identity Lost and Found: Lessons from the Sixties Scoop," *First Peoples Child & Family Review* 3, no. 1 (2007): 65–82.

Holocaust and the Nakba are by Yochi Fischer[12] and Omer Bartov.[13] These are beautiful essays, stirring and honest. Fischer recounts how her father, a Holocaust survivor and refugee, boasted about helping "grab" an apartment in a "big Arab house" near the sea for his mother. Bartov describes his project to write a "personal political history" of the first generation of Israeli citizens. In the process, he tells some remarkable stories—for instance, about he and his classmates shouting out to Golda Meir when she visited their high school, "What about the Palestinian people?" He recalls her response: "There is no Palestinian people. I am a Palestinian; I lived in Mandatory Palestine and have the ID to prove it."[14]

The word *asymmetry* features in both Fischer's and Bartov's chapters. There is a major asymmetry, Fischer writes, "in the responsibility of the Jews for the Nakba and the absence of responsibility of the Palestinians for the Shoah."[15] A profound asymmetry exists, Bartov concurs, in the "tale" he hopes to tell: "This is the obvious asymmetry in the conditions of Jews and Palestinians."[16] In a chapter titled "Counterpublic of Memory," Nadim Khoury spells out the "highly asymmetrical conditions" of the "public sphere" encouraged by the Oslo Accords, "where Israelis and Palestinians could deliberate on their collective memory." In fact, he points out, "there is no equality between Israelis and Palestinians," and the public sphere was mostly created from the outside, "a byproduct of the dialogue industry."[17]

Bashir and Goldberg's volume does not include any chapters by Palestinian scholars that are as personal as those by Fischer and Bartov. Instead, for the Nakba, the voice of experience enters through literature. Three wonderful chapters at the end of the book, by Refqa Abu-Remaileh, Raef Zreik, and Yehouda Shenhav, analyze Elias Khoury's 2016 novel, *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*. Through the character of Adam Danoun, a Palestinian man who sets out to write a novel then changes to a memoir, readers of this volume catch glimpses of the Lydda massacre and perceive the ongoing silences around 1948. As expressed by Adam's interlocutor Murad, a victim and witness: "We were denied tears, denied crying, and when you are not able to cry in fear of death, words lose their meaning."[18] Words are a kind of promise, so when there is no future, communication has no value.

In spring 2020, I assigned the Bashir/Goldberg volume in my graduate seminar, "The Holocaust: History and Historiography." Before the term ended, COVID-19 struck and the university shut down, so we discussed Bashir/Goldberg online, through written posts. Our class was a sophisticated group of fifteen people, with varying levels of familiarity with the subject matter, ranging from students fluent in Arabic to others who encountered the word *Nakba* for the first time. All of them loved the book and especially appreciated its nuanced approach to comparison and its thoughtful use of literature. Like me, they found especially compelling Honaida Ghanim's chapter, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa:

[12]Yochi Fischer, "What Does Exile Look Like? Transformations in the Linkage Between the Shoah and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 173–86.

[13]Omer Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood: Methods and Ethics of Telling the Past as Personal Political History," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 187–205.

[14]Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," 201.

[15]Fischer, "What Does Exile Look Like?", 173.

[16]Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," 197.

[17]Nadim Khoury, "Holocaust/Nakba and the Counterpublic of Memory," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 118.

[18]Quoted in Raef Zreik, "Writing Silence: Reading Khoury's Novel *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 309.

Intersections Between the Holocaust and the Nakba in the Shadow of Zionism."[19] Another case where "people" enter the narrative through literature, Ghanim's analysis of Rashid Hussein's poem "Love and the Ghetto" portrays the encounter between Jaffa—the city, Yaffa—a young woman and Holocaust survivor, and the young man who loves them both, as a joining of two destructions. Survivor and victim share the same desire, to live on, but their realities are opposed and their affections doomed. What started as a love affair dead-ends in a tomb and a cross.[20]

Amnon Raz-Kravkotzkin's carefully formulated conclusion to a chapter on Walter Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Palestine also resonated with students.[21] "The inevitable recognition of the right of the people of the land to return to it will indeed undermine and require the reconstitution of Jewish existence," Raz- Kravkotzkin writes. "It is undoubtedly a source of anxiety," he concedes, but worse is the anxiety "provoked by denial" because it can "only end in destruction." Yet in all this, he continues, "we must also ask how the Jewish collective existence may be ensured and recognized. Attending to denied memory demands recognition of the Jewish-Israeli collective as well."[22] Holding these conflicting positions together led to some creative expression. "I do not want to go too much into it," one student posted, "but I feel the need to introduce Palestinian rap music as a way to counter the dominant narrative." Another obliged by providing a link to the group DAM, singing "Mama I fell in love with a Jew."[23] The performance, they noted, "tries to use humor and sarcasm to confront the notion that Arabs and Jews should just learn to live together in peace. It highlights the impossibility of these relationships built on a colonial and therefore inherently unequal power structure."

European History, Western Civilization

But what do these conflicts have to do with Europe? The answer is, of course, everything. In Bashir and Goldberg's words, "It is not aberration that Europe must fear, but the devil at the very core of modern, liberal, democratic, western civilization."[24] The Holocaust originated in Europe, and colonialism is a European product. Removing Europe from the Holocaust and the Nakba is tantamount to permitting those who started it in the first place to walk away, shaking their heads as if to say, "What is wrong with those people. Why can't they get along?"

[19]Honaida Ghanim, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa: Intersections Between the Holocaust and the Nakba in the Shadow of Zionism," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 92–113.

[20]The emblematic Holocaust survivor as the young woman washed ashore reminded me of Yitzhak Sadeh's poem and the trenchant analysis by Miryam Sivan: "I … do not think it coincidental that the image of a Jewish woman forced into sexual slavery in Palmach founder Yitzhak Sadeh's poem 'My Sister on the Beach' became the symbol of Jewish ravishment in Europe, and a rallying cry in the nascent Israeli state's fight for independence." See Miryam Sivan, "'Stoning the Messenger': Yehiel Dinur's *House of Dolls* and *Piepel*," in *Sexual Violence against Jewish Women during the Holocaust*, ed. Sonja M. Hedgepeth and Rochelle G. Saidel (Lebanon, NH: University Press of New England, 2010), 201.

[21]Amnon Raz-Kravkotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and the Question of Palestine," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 79–91.

[22]Raz-Kravkotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and the Question of Palestine," 90.

[23]"Mama I Fell in Love with a Jew," written and performed by Tamer Nafar, Suhell Nafar, and Mahmood Jrery.

[24]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 4.

Gil Anidjar's profound chapter starts from the concentration-camp jargon *Muselmänner*—Muslims—to reveal the Christian West's interconnected, often interchangeable views of Jews and Muslims.[25] Anidjar repeats the phrase "Muslims in Auschwitz," expounds on its implications, and reveals it to be part of a pattern:

> One among numerous iterations in which the Christian West has encountered, confronted, feared, denied, and combatted *at once* the Jew and the Muslim, where it contended with, displaced onto, and finally *solved* its interminable questions. It was always an asymmetric dispute, steeped in divisions and in denials (turning one from the other, using the other against the one), not least because the very proximity of Jew and Muslim long occasioned great anxiety on the part of Christians.[26]

Anidjar's point about "the Jew" and "the Muslim"—"the Semites"—as the Christian West's twin foils has enormous analytical and historical significance. At a practical level, it made me revisit my ongoing efforts to replace the hyphenated spelling of "anti-Semitism" with the more focused "antisemitism," with its clear anti-Jewish dimension, or at least to contemplate what is lost with excision of that hyphen.[27]

European history—and by extension, Holocaust studies—has the luxury of separating itself from the rest of the world. As an expert on the Holocaust, I can choose not to think about the Nakba, but a counterpart who focused on that case of extreme violence could absolutely not do the same with regard to the Holocaust. What is more, I can invoke a noble-sounding excuse for doing so—equally part of a privileged narrative of ignorance—which is that I do not know the languages or have the training to say anything informed. And anyway, at my large university, I have colleagues who specialize in the Middle East, and I can easily refer students and others to them. But these very explanations reveal the disproportionate resources at my disposal and highlight the privilege of not being forced to be informed.

Isolating the Holocaust erases a lot of people, ideas, and possibilities. Mustafa Kabha's chapter on Najati Sidqi demonstrates this fact and reveals the stakes. Sidqi, an influential Palestinian intellectual of the interwar period, early and consistently identified Nazism as "a complete contradiction of his values as a communist, Arab, and Muslim."[28] Through his involvement in the Spanish Civil War, his work in the Communist Party (until he was expelled for opposing the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact), and countless publications, from popular books to newspapers, he stressed the terrible danger of "destructive Nazi doctrine and its barbaric regimes."[29]

Erasure of Sidqi and likeminded intellectuals from the history and memory of Palestine and Israel illustrates how the present can taint interpretations of the past. Netanyahu's charge that Mufti Haj Amin al-Husayni had a "major role in developing the 'Final Solution'" may have shocked Holocaust scholars in 2015,[30] but as Kabha points out, it was by no means the first time current hostilities had fueled and been fed by allegations that Palestinians supported Nazi Germany's murder of Jews. Also disregarded in a narrative

[25] Gil Anidjar, "Muslims (*Shoah, Nakba*)," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 66–78.
[26] Anidjar, "Muslims (*Shoah, Nakba*)," 71.
[27] See also Gil Anidjar, *Semites: Race, Religion, Literature* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2008).
[28] Kabha, "A Bold Voice Raised Above the Raging Waves," 159.
[29] Kabha, "A Bold Voice Raised Above the Raging Waves," 166.
[30] See Christopher R. Browning, "A Lesson for Netanyahu from a Real Holocaust Historian," *Foreign Policy* (October 22, 2015).

of unchanging enmity between Palestinians and Jews, Kabha observes, are the nine thousand Palestinians who fought for the Allies, and the British authorities' maltreatment of Palestinian civilians in the wake of the revolt of 1936–1939. Sixty years later, Kabha reported, when he interviewed some Palestinians who lived during that time, "they angrily displayed scars or deformities inflicted upon them at detention centers during the revolt."[31]

Sealing the Holocaust in a closed system of "western civilization" also obliterates possibilities that existed or might have existed for alternate trajectories and histories.[32] In his chapter, Alon Confino tells the story of a Polish Jewish woman, Genya Kowalski, and her husband, Henryk Kowalski, survivors of the Holocaust, who arrived in Israel in 1949.[33] The Jewish Agency assigned them "a house of Arabs who left," but when they realized those people had in fact been thrown out, they refused to move in. "It reminded me how we were made to leave," Mrs. Kowalski told Confino; "The plates on the table. It was scary."[34] To Confino, the Kowalskis' act declares "by whispering not by shouting, the moral obligation of the victim toward other victims, particularly toward the victims created by one's own actions."[35] This quiet act of solidarity might also help us imagine the countless other such actions, large and small, that were precluded altogether by Jewish military force. Perhaps some Palestinians would have tried to help Jewish refugees, would have said to survivors of the Holocaust, "Come in," as happened even in the deadliest zones of genocide, but expulsion meant there was no opportunity to tell that story or indeed for it even to happen.

Moving, Changing

With its theme of "empathic unsettlement" and its emphasis on the Nakba as an "explicitly continuing present," Bashir and Goldberg's book is a call to think and also to act.[36] Students in my graduate seminar took up the challenge. "I wonder," one asked: "as people who study the Holocaust, what is our obligation? By studying genocide while simultaneously staying silent about the ways that the State of Israel has made political use of the history of the Holocaust, does our research make us complicit in the subjugation of Palestinians?" Another underscored Elias Khoury's distinction between past and present. "With the Holocaust," the student wrote, "we have no capacity to change the events of the past. With respect to the Nakba there is an urgent obligation to address an ongoing injustice." A third responded to the melding of history and power: "For the present understanding of the Holocaust to justify Israeli policy, the uniqueness of the Holocaust becomes essential, as a kind of necessary evil to create the conditions for the Jews so that this may never happen again. The shifting of Holocaust responsibility is terrifying!"

[31] Kabha, "A Bold Voice Raised Above the Raging Waves," 156.

[32] By using lowercase for "western civilization," I am following Bashir and Goldberg and trying to signal a move away from a position that assumes European, North American, and white superiority.

[33] Alon Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History—Jaffa, 1949: Between the Holocaust and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 135–53.

[34] Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History—Jaffa, 1949," 148.

[35] Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History—Jaffa, 1949," 145.

[36] As Bashir and Goldberg explain, "empathic unsettlement," a phrase coined by Dominic LaCapra, transforms "'otherness' from a problem to be disposed of into a moral and emotional challenge." Central to the book is the understanding that "the Nakba is an explicitly continuing present." Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 25 and 7.

When I assigned *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, I shared with students my reluctance to address this issue. But I told them I considered it my responsibility to help people who may teach about the Holocaust—including them!—reflect on where they stood and how they wanted to position themselves. "If we can't find a safe space in a graduate seminar on the Holocaust to listen and speak openly," I asked them, "where could we ever hope to do so?" Their willingness to jump in, disagree, ask questions, adjust and revise their own posts, and above all to listen and think together said a lot about them as scholars and people. It was also a magnificent tribute to a book that invites intellectual creativity and offers anyone who cares to join the discussion "a new syntax and grammar of history and memory."[37]

Reading *The Holocaust and the Nakba* raised a question for me about the discipline of history. Are historians too fixated on answers, arguments, conclusions, and closure? A student in last year's seminar reminded me of an exchange about Indigenous people's claims to restitution in Canada. "When will it end?" a student had wanted to know. Why do we expect solutions, I asked in turn? Maybe studying the Holocaust serves as a warning about describing people—women, Jews, Black people, Indigenous people, Muslims—as questions to be resolved and problems ripe for "final solutions." One student quoted Hannah Arendt's 1945 criticism of the "valiant attempts of contemporary historians to lend events a certain grandeur."[38] Others noted the racist framework of that same article, with Arendt's references to the "Dark Continent" and "savage tribes."[39] I thought of the danger of "big ideas," so powerfully articulated by Nell Painter with her penetrating observation that "a notion of freedom lies at the core of the American idea of whiteness."[40]

One lesson from Bashir and Goldberg's book is that history, if it is going to be anything other than a means of domination, needs people. Like Genya and Henryk Kowalski, whose names Confino's title uses to contrast the Hegelian pomposity of History—"When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History"—people and their complex, unpredictable lives (even if they are fictional lives) are the greatest disruptors and "contaminators" of all.[41] This book does not contain many jokes, although Yehouda Shenhav quotes one from the poet Mahmoud Darwish, in an exchange with a Jewish Israeli: "Do you know why we Palestinians are famous? It's because you are our enemy."[42] Shenhav uses that quip to highlight a serious point: "The Palestinians needed to become the Jews of the Jews in order to be seen."[43]

[37] Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.

[38] Hannah Arendt, "Imperialism: Road to Suicide–the Political Origins and Use of Racism," *Commentary* 1 (December 1, 1945): 27.

[39] Arendt, "Imperialism," 28–29.

[40] Nell Irvin Painter, *The History of White People* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2010), 34.

[41] On contamination, see Omri Ben-Yehuda, "Ma'abara: Mizrahim Between Shoah and Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 249–74; especially the discussion of "Identity as a Contaminated Role": "Comparison makes agency because in representation, be it by words, colors, or any referential medium, everyone must take part in the process of contaminating and blending, even if by avoiding or separating" (259).

[42] Yehouda Shenhav, "Silence on a Sizzling Tin Roof: A Translator's Point of View on *Children of the Ghetto*," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 344.

[43] Shenhav, "Silence on a Sizzling Tin Roof," 349. For discussion, see Tarek El-Ariss, "Teaching Humor in Arabic Literature and Film," in *Arabic Literature for the Classroom: Teaching Methods, Theories, Themes and Texts*, ed. Muhsin al-Musawa (New York: Routledge, 2017), 130–44.

When Bashir and Goldberg's volume first came out in Hebrew in 2015, I knew I wanted to assign it in my seminar, but I had to wait for the English edition. It was not ready for 2019, so we read Bashir and Goldberg's 2014 coauthored article, "Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: Disruptive Empathy and Binationalism in Israel/Palestine."[44] It is an excellent piece, and many of the main ideas appear in some form in *The Holocaust and the Nakba*. Missing, however, is my favorite part, about the Holocaust exhibition of 2009 in the village of Naalin. The exhibition was the idea of Khaled Kasab Mahameed, a lawyer from Nazareth, who believed Palestinians should educate themselves about the Holocaust in order to understand Israeli Jewish society. Bashir and Goldberg characterize the project as "unsettling" in its willingness to confront the enemy's catastrophic history. But it also signaled to Israeli Jews, in the authors' words, "Yes, we are willing, however hard and challenging it may be for us, to engage with your history but we do not abide by your narrative."[45]

The Naalin exhibition project models what I try to encourage in my history classes: engagement, understanding, presenting, discussing, switching the frames, interrupting the gaze, and turning the tables. In short, I want to open up multiple possibilities. Refqa Abu-Remaileh offers another model. She cites the poet Darwish on "the little-acknowledged pleasure of the Palestinian story." Their story has an "open frame that provokes, dislocates, decenters, and creates 'new kinds of thinking.'" Abu-Remaileh observes: "It has immense potential for the radical, ethical, and transformative, and even for the disharmonious, unresolved, and unreconciled, which can culminate in a great capacity for aesthetic and political freedom. In short, it is a story that can contain itself and its opposite and, in this sense, can contain both the Nakba and Holocaust."[46]

A student in my graduate seminar suggested an additional model for inviting "new kinds of thinking." They were involved in a project in Germany where newly arrived refugees served as educators at Holocaust memorial sites. The goal was for these people "to reinvigorate the German narrative of this past with their own experiences." It was incredible, the student said. Using vocabulary from Bashir and Goldberg, they described the project as "a kind of empathic partnership, one that leads neither to appropriation nor to submission." And without a doubt, "it does create a type of disruption." Like Najati Sidqi, Genya and Henryk Kowalski, and Khaled Kasab Mahameed, the refugee Holocaust educators complicate and interrupt master narratives of the past and attest to the relevance of Bashir and Goldberg's book. Its editors and contributors may not be able to fulfill the promise in the subtitle ("A New Grammar of Trauma and History"), but by opening windows onto lives and perspectives rarely brought together, they definitely make the hoped for "decent contribution."

[44]Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: Disruptive Empathy and Binationalism in Israel/Palestine," *Journal of Genocide Research* 16, no. 1 (2014): 77–99.

[45]Bashir and Goldberg, "Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba," 88.

[46]Refqa Abu-Remaileh, "Novel as Contrapuntal Rerading: Elias Khoury's *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam,*" in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 304.

The Personal Is Historical: On Not Finding a Place to Stand

Geoff Eley

For several years I've been teaching a big lecture course on the history of terrorism, whose definitional first half ranges back and forth inside the "long present" since the 1960s, before turning after the midterm break to a more straightforwardly chronological approach, from the 1850s down to the present. In the first half, I pause for an in-depth look at two emblematic cases, going back to the early-twentieth and late-nineteenth centuries: one of these deals with Irish Republicanism and Northern Ireland; the other with Palestine-Israel.

I begin my Palestine-Israel lecture with China Miéville's sixth novel, *The City & the City*, published in 2009.[1] Miéville imagines the twin cities of Beszel and Ul Qoma, located seemingly in the Black Sea region of southeastern Europe or the eastern Mediterranean, somewhere between Istanbul and Cairo. Each city occupies the same physical and geographical space, but, as the result of a long cultural and systemically policed separation, they are *perceived* by their inhabitants as two different places. Those living in one are required to "unsee" those living in the other, along with all of the buildings, economic life, social circumstances, and general happenings that characterize it, even if only an inch away. The apartness is marked by differences of dress, stylistics, architecture, and habitus—the cultural modalities and registers through which each population lives its everyday transactions. Residents of the two cities learn from childhood how to distance and erase their knowledge of the presence of the other. They internalize the protocols. They live by an epistemology of absence. They recognize the world of the other without actually *seeing* it.

Life in the twin cities observes three types of space—"total" areas located entirely inside the city where the person resides; "alter" areas equally completely inside the other city that have to be avoided and ignored; and "crosshatch" areas, where each city's residents exist directly alongside one another even while "unseen." Intricately strict rules govern those rare circumstances permitting passage from one city to the other. All of the resulting boundaries are policed by a superior authority called Breach. Anyone ignoring the cross-city barrier—criminal "breaching"—will be seized and then disappears. Tourists and young children are treated leniently. But tourists who breach are deported under permanent exclusion from either part of this bi-city world.

The actual plot of *The City & the City* is a murder mystery, so the novel is shaped as a police procedural. Two other features of its invented world stand out. One is communication: the cities speak different languages based on distinct alphabets, but which share a

[1] China Miéville is a British fantasy/science fiction writer who describes himself as writing "weird fiction." His breakout novels were a trilogy set in the invented world of Bas-Lag and the city-state of New Crobuzon, which is a cross between Dickensian London and contemporary Cairo. See his titles *Perdido Street Station* (London: Macmillan, 2000), *The Scar* (London: Macmillan, 2002), and *Iron Council* (London: Macmillan, 2004).

common root and are close enough to be mutually understood. Second, the cities have radically contrasting sociologies: Beszel is at the cutting edge of modernization, with big concentrations of wealth and high average incomes, innovative high-tech industry, sleek urban planning, conspicuous consumption, administrative efficiency, and a clean, well-designed environment; Ul Qoma is a mess—dirty and disordered, teeming with people who can barely make a living, everything muddled together, corruptly and inefficiently administered, with an economy resting on small-scale craft and sweatshop production, the black market, smuggling, and the inventiveness of informal economies.

When I first read *The City & the City*, I thought of San Diego and Tijuana, or Ciudad Juárez and El Paso. But by the intensities of space-time compression, including all of the jumbled immediacies of the two societies' physical, demographic, geopolitical, and historical imbrication, Israel-Palestine seems all the more painfully apposite. The allegory works most directly, probably, in the period between the Six-Day War of 1967, when Israel occupied Gaza, the West Bank, and East Jerusalem, and the start of the Second Intifada in September 2000. But with the collapse of the 1993 Oslo Accords and the Gaza-Jerichow Agreement, and the effects of the Second Intifada, including the sharper and more brutally policed segregation of Palestinian populations represented by the blockading of Gaza, the tightening confinement of East Jerusalem, and the building of the West Bank Separation Wall from 2002, the aptness remains none the less compelling, if perhaps more inexact.[2]

Between the eastern Mediterranean shoreline and the River Jordan, two adversarial, distinct histories, cultures, and political formations concurrently subsist on a single geographical ground. Braced by rival narratives of violence, expulsion, redemption, and loss, collective identity for Jews and Palestinians has solidified over time into antithetical, mutually exclusive understandings of how that territory should be regarded—an embattled but unassailable sovereignty in the one case, sealed via militarized state formation and crushing international legitimacy and material support; the permanence of dispossession in the other case, hopelessly vulnerable, yet hardwired into memorial capacities of remarkable resilience and regenerative reach. Each of the resulting nationhoods is entirely a twentieth-century construction. Earlier genealogies have certainly been sought and found. But the possibilities for becoming Israeli or Palestinian, for constructing that architecture of belonging—its cultural and political imaginary in the Benedict Anderson, Cornelius Castoriadis, and Charles Taylor sense—were able to coalesce only via the world-historical conjuncture of war, revolution, and imperial realignment during 1912–1923. It was from *this* inception that the familiar Jewish-Palestinian contradictions properly descend.

[2]See these statements from *The Holocaust and the Nakba*: "Laws of physics posit that two solid objects cannot occupy the same space at the same time. But memories are different. They can and do exist, always, for every society has multiple memories of different pasts. The Holocaust and Nakba reside now side by side in Israeli Jewish society, but Jews use the memory of the former to erase the memory of the latter, as the Holocaust is largely employed to deny or belittle the Nakba and Jewish responsibility for it. Is it at all possible to maintain a complementary balancing act of memory between the two events?" from Omer Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood: Methods and Ethics of Telling the Past as Personal Political History," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 201; and "How is one to write this story of a generation, of Jews and Arabs living side by side, as it were, on separate planets?" from Alon Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Changed History—Jaffa, 1949: Between the Holocaust and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 145.

Adjudicating and reconciling those rival claims, or navigating between them toward a place of meaningful coexistence, requires some knowledge of their history. It presumes the historian's creed of contextualizing—not as some court of final appeal, where one side can be arraigned and the other awarded compensation, but as an essential ground of empathy and clarification, where the claims of each might be mutually engaged. Here, some readiness for strategic forgetting—for setting aside the nationalist's sacralizing impulse, that vital authorizing legitimacy conferred by declaring ownership of the deepest possible past—has become an essential step. We need *some* history, in other words—by means of the careful and critical good-faith unscrambling of earlier-twentieth-century complexities—but not too much. On the one hand, the geopolitical fallout from the two postwar settlements, in 1917–1923 and 1943–1948, describes the indispensable starting point. But then to invoke two thousand years of a preceding past, or even the nineteenth century, serves no secular or constructive end. For while each side's partisans continue building emotionally compelling and highly elaborate nationalist justifications from those far deeper histories, neither "Israel" nor "Palestine" attained any political or territorial actuality until the twentieth century. In the still stricter sense, it was only at the century's midpoint, in the cauldron of 1948, that each of their histories—whether as material presence or a fully realized ecology of belonging—really begins. Not only did partition seed the institutional thickets of sovereignty and state building, but it was now that the enactments of a binding, everyday solidarity could also acquire lasting continuities of form.

This new anthology of reflections assembled by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (presaged by an earlier volume in Israel a few years before) offers a courageously conceived framework for approaching the continuing debacle of Palestinian futures, casting the Shoah and the Nakba as mutually constitutive founding traumas, whose meanings then resonated so painfully through Israeli and Palestinian collective memories, back and forth down the years. Eloquent, probing, informative, darkly elegiac, mainly mournful, occasionally auspicious—the book's tones appropriately realize its subtitle's promised poetics. Rather than the silences and suppressions commonly attending the traffic between these two violent pasts—imposed by a dichotomously adversarial separation that remains both "historically flawed and ethically and politically damaging"—it brings those pasts together in a common realm of interconnectedness and complex equivalence.[3]

Under the sign of Dominic LaCapra's "empathic unsettlement," its editors want to overcome the "fetishized, exclusionary, deadly, and closed" narratives of trauma so foundational for each national camp by inviting a common exercise in mindfully pursued reciprocal understanding.[4] They hope thereby to "defetishize" and interrupt the opposing narratives of unique suffering and redemptive nationalist return. Yet at the same time, whether by history or contemporaneity, Jewish-Palestinian differences will have to remain in some vital respects irreducible. They are not to be effaced in a fantasy of "harmonious closure."[5]

[3]Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Introduction," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 6.

[4]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 22. See especially Dominick LaCapra, "Trauma Studies: Its Critics and Vicissitudes," in Dominick LaCapra, *History in Transit: Experience, Identity, Critical Theory* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2004), 133–36, and "Interview for Yad Vashem (June 9, 1998)," in Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, 2nd ed. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014), 141–80. Also Hannan Hever, "The Post-Zionist Condition," *Critical Inquiry* 38, no. 3 (2014): 630–48.

[5]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 24.

Nor will they disappear in the misplaced voluntarism of total identification. Indeed, rather than collapsing distinctions, Bashir and Goldberg argue, empathic unsettlement permits them to be *seen*. It "transforms 'otherness' from a problem to be disposed of into a moral and emotional challenge." In being seen, the Other now has the chance really to coexist. "Preordained narratives" become less threatening, more legible, more negotiable. Empathy should stay unfinished, admitting not just the readily assimilable, but also the toughest and most discomforting, engaging "precisely with that alienating, traumatic, and hard-to-digest element of radical otherness."[6]

How, then, should the Nakba and the Holocaust be related together? Grounding their argument in a conjunctural reading of World War II and the 1940s, Bashir and Goldberg find the common beginnings in the large-scale political violence and "toxic legacies of European nation-state building" in the earlier twentieth century.[7] Both Nazi expansionism in eastern Europe and Zionist state-making in Palestine drew their respective meanings in large part from that superordinate narrative—one of geopolitical rivalries, state-building nationalisms, and coercively driven ethno-religious and ethno-linguistic *Kulturkämpfe* (struggles for cultural uniformity). Citing Karl Korsch, Aimé Césaire, and especially Hannah Arendt, Bashir and Goldberg carefully but forthrightly compare the racialized dynamics of Nazi empire-making in eastern Europe with colonial depredations overseas. The "novelty" of Nazism, Korsch argued in 1942, was "simply (to) have extended to 'civilized' European peoples the methods hitherto reserved for the 'natives' or 'savages' living outside so-called civilization."[8]

Insisting on these two complex chains of equivalence—European New Order/state-making in Palestine, empire in eastern Europe/colonialism overseas—forms this volume's unsettling edge. "As radically as they may differ," its editors argue, the Nakba and the Holocaust "belong(s) to the same modern and global history of genocide and ethnic cleansing."[9] Each was an episode in the hurricane of epically conceived demographic engineering, grand-scale ethnic cleansing, and genocidal population politics that crashed across east-central Europe, Eurasia, and the Middle East between 1937–1938 and 1948.[10] However complex

[6]Bashir and Goldberg "Introduction," 25.

[7]I take this phrase from Mark Levene's opening essay for *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters: European Nation-State Building and Its Toxic Legacies," 45–65, itself distilled from his remarkable magnum opus, *The Crisis of Genocide, vol. I, Devastation: The European Rimlands 1912–1938*, and *The Crisis of Genocide, vol. II, Annihilation: The European Rimlands 1939–1953* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), along with its two-volume prequel, *Genocide in the Age of the Nation-State, vol. I, The Meaning of Genocide*, and *The Rise of the West and the Coming of Genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005).

[8]See Enzo Traverso, *The Origins of the Final Solution* (New York: New Press, 2003), 50. Césaire's similar argument is far better known: What made Hitler different was that "he applied to Europe colonialist procedures which until then had been reserved for the Arabs of Algeria, the 'coolies' of India, and the 'niggers' of Africa." See Aimé Césaire, *Discourse on Colonialism* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2000), 30. More generally, see A. Dirk Moses, "The Holocaust and Colonialism," in *The Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K Roth (Oxford: Oxford University, 2010), 68–80.

[9]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.

[10]For the shocking extent of this ethno-political violence, see Levene's detailed inventory of "Major Incidents of Genocide and Sub-Genocidal Violence: Rimlands and Near-Regions, 1912–53," in *Annihilation*, 417–19. For the wider global context, see *Around 1948: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Global Transformation*, ed. Leela Gandhi and Deborah L. Nelson, a theme issue of *Critical Inquiry* 40, no. 4 (2014), especially Mark Mazower, "The End of Eurocentrism," 298–313; also Mark Mazower, *No*

and elaborate the respective analyses will need to be, "it is hard to understand such events … without the broader contextual framework that connects them." This is "the very heart of the new historical grammar" Bashir and Goldberg want to propose.[11]

The primary sensibility of the resulting anthology is literary. Its main subject matters are poetry, fiction, art, ethical philosophy, and aesthetics. Of the book's fifteen essays, only the first, Mark Levene's distillation of his own larger work, provides structural underpinnings or concrete chapter-and-verse pursual of the editors' urgently presented case. The two strongest historical essays that follow, by Alon Confino and Omer Bartov, deliberately eschew either the editors' conjunctural perspective or Levene's macro-historical approach, opting instead for highly personal micro-focal reflections—Confino by dissecting a bitingly poignant incident from the aftermath of the 1948 war (a Holocaust survivor couple's refusal to accept ownership of an expropriated Arab house in Jaffa), Bartov by retracing his own journey (personal, scholarly, political, filial) from Israel/Palestine through (West) Germany to Ukraine, and back.[12]

Otherwise, a mixed team of literary scholars, intellectual historians, sociologists, scholars of religion, political theorists, and an art historian riff variously on multiple complexities of the Palestinian-Jewish encounter; on the shifting boundaries of nationally authorized silence and speech; on the aporias and possible synergies in the processing of rivalrous traumatic memories; and on the fissures marking the insides of the respective discussions. For me the most successful chapters included Hannan Hever's reading of Abba Kovner's tortuous poetics of Palestinian removal during the 1948 war; Tal Ben-Zvi's vignette of Abed Abdi's mentoring by Lea Grundig in the doubled diaspora of 1960s Dresden; and Honaida Ghanim's reading of Rashid Hussein's 1963 poem "Love and the Ghetto." The anthology closes with three reflections on Elias Khoury's 2016 novel, *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam* under the rubric "Narrating the Nakba with the Holocaust."

In their general purpose, very movingly, Bashir and Goldberg succeed: to find a different "register of history and memory—one that honors the uniqueness of each event, its circumstances and consequences, as well as their differences, but also offers a common historical and conceptual framework within which both narratives can be addressed."[13] Within the existing grammar of understanding, in contrast, meaning the "discursive constructs" (words, terms, concepts) that "shape and determine the horizons of meaning and imagination," the Nakba and Holocaust can only remain "incommensurable traumas and memories."[14] The nationalism that organizes collective belonging on each side rests on passionately held stories about national justice and injustice. These stories are each about expulsion, exile, and return: return to home, return to the land, return to history. But the stories are reversed. At their core are two unbearable records of trauma. When put side by side, they produce asymmetry or mismatch:

Enchanted Palace: The End of Empire and the Ideological Origins of the United Nations (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009).

[11]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.

[12]See also Alon Confino, "The Warm Sand of the Coast of Tantura: History and Memory in Israel after 1948," *History and Memory* 27, no. 1 (2015): 43–82.

[13]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 5.

[14]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 5.

Shoah >><< Nakba
recovering a homeland >><< losing a homeland
settling >><< moving
return >><< exile
centering >><< dispersal
occupation >><< dispossession

If the Israeli story is one of triumphal, heroic resolution, then the Palestinian story is one of victimhood and defeat—a martyrdom without any remotely assured or even faintly foreseeable resolution, a journey without destination.

Insisting that the Shoah and the Nakba exercise comparable influence or do equivalent political and cultural work does not make them the same: exile and dispossession of seven hundred thousand cannot equate to the genocide of 6 million. But nor is it necessary to belittle or deny the Nakba, as the Knesset did in March 2011, by potentially debarring public funding from any entity commemorating the Palestinian tragedy. In response to this binarizing reflex, which delegitimizes public discussion and impedes cross-national conversation, Bashir and Goldberg offer "a way to deliberate and think jointly on the two traumatic memories" by rendering them "historically, politically, and ethically instructive and productive."[15] That can happen "without conflating the two events but also without completely separating them as if they had nothing to do with one another."[16] Arguably, this makes them "non-commensurate but equivalent," rather than "commensurable" as Bashir and Goldberg suggest. For the glaring asymmetries will surely have to remain. If not replicating each other directly or exactly, the memorial machineries grind in comparable ways, translating remembered experience into normative patterns, instituted practices, and obdurately defended agency that continue to feed from the foundational injustices involved. By the later twentieth century, this had produced the endlessly continuing impasse of our violently entrenched present: an unbudgeable structuring complex of finely imbricated ideas and affiliations that unavoidably shape and constrain how the land's futures can ever be thought.

What does this mean for politics? Bashir and Goldberg are on one level entirely clear: binationalism. They rightly criticize the more liberal constitutionalist or multiculturalist versions, with their formalist reliance on rights-based systems of law, an imagined civil society, and doggedly cultivated blindness to difference. In moving away from a two-state model, they observe, one-state proponents can too easily renounce nationalism per se, thereby misgauging the passionately ingrained stubbornness of "Jewish Israeli and Palestinian national identities and their respective collective rights."[17] Instead, Bashir and Goldberg describe a wider variety of institutional arrangements:

> Specifically, various forms of governing polities, such as a federation, a confederation, a parallel state structure, a condominium, a binational state, and/or an expansively cooperative, overlapping, and interlinked two-state structure, can realize and respect the egalitarian, individual, and collective national rights of Arabs and Jews in Palestine/Israel.[18]

This seems both principled and pragmatic, if understandably abstract. Yet if narratives of national injustice are to receive full credence, how can reparation be escaped? That means,

[15]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 28, 5.
[16]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 28.
[17]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 27.
[18]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 27.

in the broadest sense, a good-faith public conversation about restorative justice, which was precisely the point of departure for Bashir and Goldberg. But for genuine *political* exchange and concrete reparative action, the requirements must surely go further. Plausible and resonant proposals presuppose courageously pursued historical work. Buried pasts will be excavated. Fresh genealogies will be assembled. Then 1948 will rejoin the agenda.

Here, the absence from *The Holocaust and the Nakba* of the so-called New Historians, whether directly as contributors or as a far stronger critical presence, really matters. Since the 1990s, both the breadth and the influence of that revisionist historiography have severely suffered, including the readiness even to see the 1948 atrocities and expulsions as a problem in the first place, as opposed to the regrettable but unavoidable debris from collateral damage. But in light of Mark Levene's compelling contextual case—in particular, the normative recourse to population transfer during the generalized nation-state building conjuncture of 1937–1948 ("the most secure means of solving the dangerous and painful problem of national minorities," in David Ben-Gurion's formulation)—Zionism falls unambiguously inside its frame.[19] Whether as racialized exclusionary nationalism or settler colonialism, it drove for an ethnically homogeneous state that would ultimately dispense with its Arabs: "Our movement is maximalist. Even all of Palestine is not our final goal."[20] As a ruthlessly focused state-making project, Ben-Gurion's Zionism embraced all of the entailments, from mass expulsions and ethnic cleansing to the aggressive claiming of cultural superiority: "We came here as Europeans. Our roots are in the east and we are returning to the east, but we bear European culture with us." "We, the Jews," Ze'ev Jabotinsky had said, "have nothing in common with 'the east,' thank God."[21]

A stronger empirical-analytical engagement with 1948–1949 is an unfortunate omission from this anthology. As the threads linking critical revisionism to Israeli public discourse continue to fray, such reminders grow more vital by the year. The rightward radicalization of Israeli politics, the Trump administration's ditching of the Palestinians, and the largely successful sidelining from public debate of any historical accounting—to say nothing of the assault against acknowledging the Nakba per se—all militate against any emergent conversation.[22] Indeed, the incapacitating recognition of political isolation is surely what animates the subjectivism running through the discussions in *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, with their

[19]Ben-Gurion's assessment was made in October 1941: "In the present war the idea of transferring a population is gaining more sympathy as a practical and the most secure means of solving the dangerous and painful problem of national minorities. The war has already brought the settlement of many peoples in Eastern and Southern Europe, and in the plans for postwar settlements the idea of a large-scale population transfer in Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe increasingly occupies a respectable place." See Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought, 1882–1948* (Washington, DC: Institute for Palestinian Studies, 1992), 128. Levene describes Josef Weitz, director of the Jewish National Fund's Land Department and key to the 1948–1949 expulsions, as "a rather typical example of a rimlands technocrat driven by uncompromising ethnonationalist convictions." He takes Edvard Beneš and the post-1945 compulsory transfer of Germans from Czechoslovakia as the closest model for Ben-Gurion's thinking at the time. See Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 58–59.

[20]Ben-Gurion to the Zionist Executive, March 10, 1938, in Tom Segev, *A State at Any Cost: The Life of David Ben-Gurion* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2019), 267–68.

[21]Segev, *A State at Any Cost*, 463.

[22]See Ofer Ashkenazi, "Hidden in Plain Sight: The Nakba and the Legacy of the Israeli Historians' Debate," *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History* 16, no. 3 (2019): 549–63. On the thirtieth anniversary of the New Historians' major publications, that journal's editors had invited Ashkenazi to

enunciating, declarative, confessional tones. In times of dismay, the reach shrinks. With no political exit, an ethics of personal standpoint becomes one truthful recourse.

For Alon Confino, the Kowalskis' story "made a crack in history's course of events and called into question that which was and is considered normal and normative."[23] For Omer Bartov, studying Israel's founding generation becomes a personal mission of understanding, an existential travelogue. He wants "to hear the voices of this generation while they can still be heard. For ultimately I believe that if we listen to each other, we may actually learn something about ourselves. And that may be the first step toward a new politics."[24] This impulse is laden with the diminished possibilities of our profoundly dispiriting and disabling contemporary moment. "The crucible of history and memory," Confino reflects, contains the possibility "of liberating ourselves from the constraints imposed … by national identity—from the collective pressure of reading history in a particularistic, nationalistic way." It gives us "the benefits of thinking about our past above, beyond, underneath, and against the restraints of our group identity."[25] Those are admirable words from two fine historians seeking to affirm the integrity of history, scholarship, and an actively ethical self. But with the exhaustion of negotiable possibilities, in the absence of what used to be called, wishfully, the peace process, politics has now contracted around the bearing of witness. The ground for any larger political conversation across organized or representative bodies of Palestinian and Israeli opinion seems to have gone. In that sense, actually, there is no place to stand.

organize a forum around their significance, but none of the prospective contributors he tried to recruit (Israel-based historians from a diversity of backgrounds and perspectives) proved willing to join.

[23]Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Changed History—Jaffa, 1949," 137.

[24]Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," 203.

[25]Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Changed History—Jaffa, 1949," 149.

Victims of Colonialism and Ethno-Nationalism? The Holocaust, the Nakba, and the Quest for Meaningful Historical Comparisons

Laura Jockusch

The volume *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* is a bold endeavor by two Israeli editors, one of Palestinian and one of Jewish descent. By conjoining the words *Holocaust* and *Nakba* in one book title, two words that represent the most traumatic events that Jews and Palestinians in Israel perceive as exclusivist "foundational catastrophes,"[1] Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg broke a taboo.

These historical events were asymmetric in character, scope, intent, and magnitude. On the one hand, the Holocaust, a transnational genocide perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its collaborators during World War II, was geared toward total annihilation; it affected Jews in twenty countries and murdered 5.8 million Jews, or two-thirds of the European Jewish population and one-third of the Jewish population in the world. On the other hand, the Nakba was the displacement of approximately 750,000 Palestinians in the context of the 1948 Arab-Israeli War, during which some Palestinians fled the warzone and some were expelled by Jewish combat forces in what some scholars call an ethnic cleansing. Thus, two-thirds of the Palestinian population of British Mandatory Palestine and roughly 80 to 85 percent of the Palestinians who lived inside the borders of what would become Israel became stateless refugees and were barred from returning to their homes. Some 160,000 Palestinians became citizens of Israel. Both the Holocaust and the Nakba continue to affect the present through the intergenerational transmission of pain, loss, and trauma. For the Palestinians, the Nakba is not only a historical event but an ongoing crisis.

According to Bashir and Goldberg, Jews and Palestinians are so focused on their own suffering and status as victims that both are unable to acknowledge—let alone empathize with—the suffering of the other group.[2] With their collection of essays, Bashir and Goldberg aim to challenge the dichotomy between the conflicting historical memories and narratives of Jews and Arabs. They seek to "transcend the binary, dichotomous confines that these national narratives impose on history, memory and identity" and propose a different "register" that "honors the uniqueness of each event … but also offers a common historical and conceptual framework within which both narratives may be addressed."[3] They hope to start a scholarly and broader public discourse about the conflicting historical memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba, raise awareness of these events' points of convergence, and create empathy for the

I wish to thank Lutz Fiedler, Alexander Kaye, Avi Patt, Ariel Silverman, and Kim Wünschmann for their insightful comments on my struggle with this book.

[1]Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Introduction: The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Syntax of History, Memory, and Political Thought," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 2.

[2]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 2–3.

[3]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 5.

victimhood of the "Other" without blurring the boundaries or imposing identification. Bashir and Goldberg aim to lay "the groundwork for a language of historical reconciliation between the two peoples." They ask no less than that this language become "an ethical and egalitarian binational language that carries the potential for decolonization through transforming and dismantling the existing Jewish colonial privileges, domination, and hegemony."[4] According to Bashir and Goldberg, this comes with the "asymmetry"[5] that the Israeli side must take historical responsibility and acknowledge the wrongs it perpetrated against the Palestinians to allow for peaceful coexistence in the future.

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From my perspective as a historian of European Jews, Nazi Germany, and the Holocaust, the volume's strengths lie in its discussion of the post-1948 years. Most of the eighteen chapters approach the Holocaust and the Nakba through the lens of language and narration, some through the literature and poetry in Arabic and Hebrew, others through art. They show an enthralling and little-known wealth of unexpected entanglements between the victims of the Holocaust in the aftermath of World War II and the victims of the Nakba since 1948.

For example, Hannan Hever's chapter shows that Holocaust survivors comprised between one-third and one-half of the Jewish combatants in the 1948 war, and some became perpetrators of the Nakba. Focusing on the poet and partisan Abba Kovner, Hever demonstrates that survivors experienced a post-traumatic transference and thought that they were fighting powerful Nazis when they were fighting powerless Palestinian villagers. Only after the war did Kovner become aware of the reality of the power relations and develop empathy toward Palestinians. Or, as Alon Confino's chapter shows, while Holocaust survivors arriving in the first years of statehood were regularly accommodated in "abandoned" Palestinian houses, some of these new arrivals refused to live in former Palestinian homes. It was their own experience of loss, displacement, deprivation, and political violence in Nazi-occupied Poland that made Genia and Henryk Kowalski particularly sensitive to the circumstance that, as recent immigrants to Israel who were provided with an apartment, they became beneficiaries of the plight of others. The Kowalskis' refusal to live in an "abandoned" house, in Confino's view, rejects the "zero-sum game of identities and … acknowledges that the world is not divided neatly between victims and perpetrators" while their defiance also rejects "claims made in the name of the Holocaust about the singularity of Jewish suffering, the eternity of Jewish victimhood, and the pristine, immaculate birth of the State of Israel." This refusal illuminated "the moral obligation of the victim toward other victims, particularly toward the victims created by one's own actions, an obligation that the State of Israel has denied with respect to the Palestinians since 1948. Affirmation of such an obligation is deemed in Israeli society as treasonous, if not as Holocaust denial. But acknowledging that Jewish victims of the Holocaust could be perpetrators in 1948 does not diminish the Holocaust, just as Jewish victimhood during the Holocaust does not justify the Nakba. Rather, it makes us more and not less human: fallible and vulnerable, as we all are."[6]

[4]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 8.
[5]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 25.
[6]Alon Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History—Jaffa, 1949," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 145.

Yet another powerful example of the entanglement between the memory of the Holocaust and the Nakba is the geopolitical location of Yad Vashem, Israel's national Holocaust memorial and the adjacent cemetery for Israel's war dead on Herzl Mount in the western outskirts of Jerusalem. Honaida Ghanim shows that Yad Vashem, which opened in 1954, was built on the lands of Khirbet al-Hamama that belonged to the Arab village of Ayn Karim (today Ein Karem), whose more than 3,100 Muslim and Christian residents were expelled in July 1948.[7] It was also located in the vicinity of the Arab village of Deir Yassin, where members of the right-wing combat forces Irgun and Lehi had massacred more than one hundred Palestinian men, women, and children in April 1948. Deir Yassin was demolished, and the Jewish village Kfar Shaul was founded on its ruins. Thus, while the state fostered the commemoration of the victims of the Holocaust, it also rendered the victims of the Nakba silent and invisible. According to Ghanim, "The Nakba had to shut up to enable the Holocaust to speak in colonized Palestine."[8] Yad Vashem was "built on villages that were destroyed and whose people were prevented from returning, with Jewish immigrants settled in their stead. For the Palestinians of the place who were forbidden from exercising their right to live in their own homeland, this means in practice that the Holocaust was settled colonially and that the compound, as a representation of Holocaust memorialization, is a political structure intertwined with the fundamental obliteration of the Palestinians."[9]

However, Yochi Fischer argues that in the early days of the State of Israel, the Jewish public was acutely aware of the injustice of the Nakba, and contemporaries on both sides experienced an "affinity" between the two events early on. Repression, denial, and oblivion came in later decades, for fear that both were ethically, emotionally, and politically too close, leading to a competition between the narratives of victimhood. Similarly, Nadim Khoury focuses on more recent attempts at Jewish-Arab dialogue. He finds that although the Oslo peace process encouraged that dialogue, it hindered discussions that challenged the dominant Israeli narrative or allowed Jews and Arabs to talk about the Holocaust and the Nakba beyond "two mutually exclusive stories."[10]

Seeking to move away from the "competing political narratives," Omer Bartov approaches the entanglement between Jews and Arabs through analyzing how they "understood, articulated, and felt their link to their homeland."[11] In an effort to write a "personal political history" of the first generation to be born "into the state," he focuses on first-person narratives of Jews and Arabs born between the late 1940s and the 1960s. For the parents of these "natives," the State of Israel was either an "answer" to the obliteration of their families, communities, and homes in Europe during the Holocaust, or it meant the "negation of their existence as a people, a mass expulsion, and an ongoing repression and existence as stateless people."[12] Asking

[7]Honaida Ghanim, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa: Intersections Between the Holocaust and the Nakba in the Shadow of Zionism," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 104.

[8]Ghanim, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa," 109.

[9]Ghanim, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa," 111.

[10]Nadim Khoury, "Holocaust/Nakba and the Counterpublic of Memory," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 116.

[11]Omer Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood: Methods and Ethics of Telling the Past as Personal Political History," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 187.

[12]Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," 197.

how we can conceive of "two opposing powerful links to the same land,"[13] Bartov sees answers in listening to, accepting, and empathizing with the different voices and narratives.

These stories of how the complex interconnections between the memories of Holocaust and Nakba have developed within the space that Jews and Palestinians have shared since 1948 are moving, compelling, and thought-provoking. They show that throughout Israel's existence, public and private memory of both events were at the same time separate and intertwined, negated and acknowledged, invisible and conspicuous.

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The volume's attempt to link the history of the Holocaust and the Nakba by establishing a conceptual genealogy of common historical roots and joint ideological origins is, however, far less convincing. In fact, it is very problematic. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg suggest that what binds the asymmetric historical events of the Holocaust and the Nakba together on a conceptual level and "provide[s] the most appropriate and unavoidable framework"[14] are two European evils (they call them "European metanarratives"):[15] on the one hand, colonialism, especially settler-colonialism, in which the colonizers eventually replace the colonized, and on the other hand, nationalism, especially ethno-nationalism, which seeks ethnic homogeneity and also includes antisemitic views of Jews as religious, ethnic, or racial aliens. According to Bashir and Goldberg, the "wider conceptualization of modern political violence created by the convergence of nationalism, imperialism, orientalism, and colonialism provides useful historical terrain for understanding the complex relationship between the Holocaust and Nakba."[16]

Moreover, Bashir and Goldberg make clear that in their view, "the Nakba, although a unique event in its own right, belongs to the same modern and global history of genocide and ethnic cleansing of which the Holocaust (also a unique event) is part—perhaps the most extreme and cruelest part."[17] Moreover, Bashir and Goldberg believe that "in historical terms," the Holocaust and the Nakba, despite their differences "could be viewed at least partially within a common global framework of violence created by strong nationalism combined with imperial and colonial ideology and policies."[18] Bashir and Goldberg see the Nakba as the "almost unavoidable consequence of the convergence of two fundamental components of Zionism, namely chauvinistic ethnonationalism and settler colonialism. Promoting an exclusivist ethnonationalism and achieving Jewish majority and hegemony, main strands of Zionism, and later the State of Israel, have used colonial eliminatory policies and practices that actively sought to de-Arabize and ethnic-cleanse Palestine, which was predominantly Arab in character for hundreds of years."[19] Although they caution that "this contextual framework cannot … explain" the Holocaust and the Nakba "any more than it can explain the many other instances of full or partial ethnic cleansing or genocide," they nevertheless believe that "it is hard to understand such events—including the Holocaust and the

[13]Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," 201.
[14]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 14.
[15]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 14.
[16]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 14.
[17]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.
[18]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.
[19]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.

Nakba—without the broader contextual framework that connects them. This is perhaps the very heart of the new historical grammar we are proposing in this book."[20]

What Bashir and Goldberg are actually suggesting is that, stripped of their respective historical contexts, both Nazi Germany's mass murder of European Jews and Zionism's quest for national sovereignty for Jews in Palestine were "colonial projects" infused with an ethno-nationalist drive for ethnic homogeneity. Both projects—leaving aside their difference in magnitude, scope, and outcomes—resulted from the same root, namely European colonialism and ethno-nationalism, which are both based on European racism. The emphasis on this conceptual nexus between the Holocaust and the Nakba is problematic in many respects, not least because it is an oversimplification. It also seems disingenuous in that it reduces the historical complexity and magnitude of the Holocaust and makes a simplistic and mistaken equation between the Nazi regime and the Zionist movement. Furthermore, the fact that Bashir and Goldberg fail to problematize the application of the European concepts of colonialism and ethno-nationalism to the Middle East looks at that region through a European lens. For one thing, colonialism was intrinsically linked to the rise of empires and Western-style nation-states—it is therefore debatable whether the Jewish immigrants who arrived in Palestine from the 1880s to escape Europe's antisemitic violence were necessarily agents of settler colonialism, even if they were "white" Europeans. Rather, it could also be contended that Jews were among Europe's domestically colonized minorities and Zionism functioned as an anti-colonialist liberation movement, while Israel only turned to colonialist policies in the territory it occupied as a result of the 1967 war.[21]

Explaining the Nazi genocide of European Jews with the concept of colonialism is even more contentious. Strong elements of colonialism as an ideology, system, and practice existed in Nazi Germany's aggressive expansion, subjugation, and exploitation of the territories it conquered, especially in eastern Europe. Likewise, the eliminationist warfare in conscious violation of the laws and customs of war followed the logic of colonial warfare in which all means are justified because war is deemed a necessary means to fight "savages" and break their resistance against those who "rightfully" colonize their land.

By contrast, as an event that spanned the European continent, the Holocaust was more than just a colonial project, and the explanatory value of colonialism seems limited and is therefore debatable. Explanatory models focusing on colonialism ultimately cannot explain why, of all the indigenous peoples victimized by the Nazi "colonizers," the Jews were the first priority when it came to extermination and that the Jews ultimately remained the only ones systematically murdered on a total and global scale. Colonial models also absolve local non-German perpetrators because these models can neither explain the collaboration of locals with the Nazis, nor account for the role of antisemitism that was deeply engrained in the cultures of non-German societies. Moreover, colonial models also have their limits when it comes to explaining the Holocaust *beyond* eastern Europe, in Germany proper, and in Europe as a whole. This might perhaps make sense, if we accept the idea that Nazi paranoia and propaganda saw Germans as "indigenous" people who were "colonized" by Jews and other racial and political enemies deemed inferior and

[20]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 20.

[21]For an analysis of the complex interplay of colonialist, anti-colonialist, and imperialist elements in Zionism before 1948 and how they developed over time, see Derek J. Penslar, "Is Zionism a Colonial Movement?" *Colonialism and the Jews*, ed. Ethan Katz, Lisa Moses Leff, and Maud Mandel (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2017), 275–300.

corrupting Germany and the Germans from within, so that fighting the Jews was seen as a form of "self-defense," an act of liberating Germany from its "colonizers." Yet, to explain a continent-wide genocide solely on this premise seems forced, and it is far-fetched to explain the regime's obsession with eliminating the Jews as a collective in these terms.[22]

Hence, the editors' emphasis of colonialism as a common root of the Holocaust and the Nakba (which is reiterated by other authors in this collection) ultimately does not make a cogent case for the comparison of the two events. Nor does conceptualizing them as two examples of nation-state violence against minorities that resulted from ethno-nationalism, as Mark Levene argues in his chapter.

While Levene disagrees with Bashir and Goldberg's emphasis on colonialism as the common denominator between the Holocaust and the Nakba, he sees ethno-nationalism as the binding force.[23] He suggests to "reposition the debate through a tighter focus on the nationalist urges which … might provide not only an underlying framework and context for the relationship between these two events but equally might make them more understandable within a wider process of historical development heralding the genocidal birth pangs of the contemporary international nation-state system."[24] Levene looks at the historically multiethnic borderlands between the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, German, and Ottoman Empires, which "became not just in the course of Hitler's conquests but in a period spanning 1912 to 1948 the primary locus of a repeated sequence of genocides or genocidal ethnic cleansings."[25] With the emergence of nation-states came the "state-authorized expurgation of ethnoreligious difference," which "fated not only Jews but many other internally complex and heterogeneous communities to compulsory deportation and/or overt elimination across a geographical range spanning the lands between Danzig to Trieste in the west and the Caucasus to Mosul in the east and southeast. In 1948, as an extension of this sequence, these ethnic cleansings would also embrace Palestine."[26]

For Levene, ethno-nationalism—being the "mindset of this brave new world" that followed the breakdown of multiethnic empires and the rise of nation-states—links "Jewish annihilation to Palestinian destruction."[27] But, even if ethno-nationalism was the driving force in the two catastrophes, how do we account for the significant differences in the levels of destruction, namely that one was an ethnic cleansing and the other a genocide? Why are "Others" displaced in one and annihilated in the other? Why was one the result of interethnic violence in the context of an ongoing ethno-religious conflict over a piece of land that had turned into a war and the other an ideologically motivated murder campaign

[22]For the debate about the usefulness of colonialism in explaining Nazi violence, see Robert Gerwarth and Stephan Malinowski, "Hannah Arendt's Ghosts: Reflections on the Disputable Path from Windhoek to Auschwitz," *Central European History* 42, no. 2 (2009): 279–300; Thomas Kühne, "Colonialism and the Holocaust: Continuities, Causations, and Complexities," *Journal of Genocide Research* 15, no. 3 (2013): 339–62; Birthe Kundrus, "How Imperial was the Third Reich?", in *German Colonialism in a Global Age*, ed. Bardley Naranch and Geoff Eley (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 330–47; and Dirk Moses, "Colonialism," in *Oxford Handbook of Holocaust Studies*, ed. Peter Hayes and John K. Roth (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 68–80.

[23]Mark Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters: European Nation-State Building and Its Toxic Legacies, 1912–1948," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 47.

[24]Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 47.

[25]Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 46.

[26]Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 46.

[27]Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 57.

of a state against a distinct group of human beings who were not at war with that state and were targeted both within and beyond its own territory?

Like colonialism, ethno-nationalism is such a broad paradigm that it does little to conceptually underscore the *distinct* nexus between the *specific* catastrophes of the Holocaust and the Nakba. Many other historical examples of nation-state violence against populations dehumanized as an undeserving and threatening "Other" come to mind, which also share the elements of colonialism and ethno-nationalism. Some would be more obvious comparisons to the Nakba because they are closer in scope, process, timing, and geography than the Holocaust. These include population transfers, interethnic violence, and ethnic cleansing perpetrated in pursuit of ethnic homogeneity after 1945, some in the process of decolonization, some after the breakdown of multiethnic coexistence, be it the expulsion of ethnic Germans from eastern Europe, the westward expansion of the Soviet Union, or the divisions of India-Pakistan and East and West Bengal, the partition of French Indochina, the French-Algerian War, or ethnic cleansing in the former Yugoslavia, among many others. Other historical examples that share the elements of colonialism and ethno-nationalism would be more obvious comparisons to the Holocaust than the Nakba because they involved genocidal violence and the attempt to destroy an ethnic, religious, or national group by the systematic murder of its members solely for their belonging to that group, be it the cases of Armenia, Cambodia, or Rwanda.

Ultimately, it is not clear what we gain if we argue for a conceptual nexus between the Holocaust and the Nakba. Both events in their own right certainly were painful, cataclysmic, and traumatic for the victims and their families—this is not about weighing their pain against each other or ranking the events. I do not contend that comparing the two is illegitimate. Rather, I contend that looking at both events in comparative perspective must be as much about understanding their shared characteristics as it is about understanding the differences between them. Only this allows us to make sense of their historical complexity. The emphasis on the common roots and conceptual similarities of the two profoundly different historical events, however, ignores their significant dissimilarities and thus obscures and reduces their historical complexity.[28] The claim of a conceptual nexus does not even seem *necessary* for the validity of this book's noble goal: to create empathy and dialogue between Palestinians and Jews (and those who sympathize with them). On the contrary, it is likely to undermine that goal, for it alienates and potentially loses a significant audience who find that the search for similarity does away with historical complexity and nuance. Had Bashir, Goldberg, and Levene done more to acknowledge the conceptual *differences* between the two cataclysmic events, there would still have been an abundance of overlaps between the traumas and memories of Jews and Palestinians *since* 1948, within the shared geographic space of Israel/Palestine that warrant, even demand, historical analysis and scholarly discourse.

In addition, the book features a number of misrepresentations, imbalances, and absences. The title, *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, suggests that this is a book about the *history* of the Holocaust and the Nakba. But in fact, it is about the *memory* of the two catastrophes and how that memory is represented in literature, art, politics, and public discourse from 1948 until today. Historical questions, historical inquiry, and

[28]I couldn't agree more with Samuel Moyn's recent piece, "The Trouble with Comparisons," *The New York Review of Books,* May 19, 2020 (https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2020/05/19/the-trouble-with-comparisons/).

historiography play only a marginal role in this book. This comes to the fore, for example, in that the work of the "new historians"—the Israeli scholars who introduced self-critical inquiry into the history of the State of Israel into Israeli historiography and academy—remains virtually unacknowledged although their work caused a paradigm shift that prepared the ground for the dialogue that this volume aims to develop.[29]

Not only does the volume garble the distinction between history and memory, but it also misrepresents the *agency* of the historical actors. While it tends to shed light on the agency of various Jewish actors, Palestinians come across as agency-less, passive victims of Israeli aggression since 1948; their displacement and suffering are often addressed in the passive voice; and the actions of Palestinian protagonists, be they members of leadership elites or "ordinary" people, remain at best reactive. While Jews appear as historical actors and subjects of history—and are held accountable and criticized for how they have handled the power they gained through sovereignty—Palestinians appear more as objects of history.[30] This striking imbalance is perhaps an unconscious and unintentional representation of the ongoing asymmetry of power between Jews and Palestinians in Israel today.[31] It does a disservice to Palestinian choices, activism, and struggle for change and also their role in the conflict. For example, the resort to political violence among some Palestinian groups—be it in 1948 or more recently—is a nonissue, although it would have been an instructive test-case for the issues that lie at the heart of the book. After all, Israeli Jewish memory tends to assimilate the victims of terrorism to the victims of the Holocaust and integrates them into one narrative of continuous Jewish victimhood—Jewish suffering at the hand of an eternal Amalek. For this perception of historical continuity, it does not matter that power relations have fundamentally changed between the 1930–1940s and the 1990–2000s. On the contrary, this narrative serves as a justification for military strength and military intervention. Also, violence from Palestinian terrorist groups seems to be a central factor in the unwillingness and inability of Jewish Israelis to acknowledge Palestinians as victims and show empathy for the suffering of Palestinian civilians. Although the book explores the theme of traumatized victims who become perpetrators of violence for the Jewish side—with regard to Jewish aggression against Palestinians in the 1948 war—it does not elaborate the topic for the Palestinian side.

Moreover, the representation of agency shows a gender imbalance. Because male authors dominate the volume (fourteen out of nineteen contributors are men), male perspectives on male historical agents prevail. Although a few Jewish women stand out (for example, the artist Lea Grundig in Tal Ben-Zvi's chapter and Genya Kowalski in Alon Confino's), Palestinian women are largely absent. Most authors who address the suffering of

[29] I second the critique of Jacqueline Rose in her sensitive afterword to this volume, see Jacqueline Rose, "Afterword: The Holocaust and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 356.

[30] For example, Honaida Ghanim states: "The Palestinians are made to pay the price of a heinous crime that was committed in a faraway land, without having anything to do with it. Palestine tragically turns into a sacrifice offered to redeem the victim, in a deadly and bloody relationship that renders the Palestinian a victim of the victim who had become a partner in crime" (Ghanim, "When Yaffa Met (J)Yaffa," 111).

[31] It might also be related to the fact that contributors of Palestinian background are a minority (six out of nineteen), which in turn might reflect the unwillingness of Palestinian scholars to take part in such a collaborative volume. Palestinian academics might face professional retaliation or worse if advocating for a greater awareness of and empathy for the Holocaust among Palestinians, as the example of Mohammed S. Dajani shows. He lost his academic position at Al-Quds University, and his car was torched after he took a group of Palestinian students to Auschwitz in 2014.

Palestinians essentially talk about Palestinian men, perhaps unconsciously replicating the patriarchal power structure of Palestinian (and Israeli) society.

Closely related to the problem of agency is the problem of historical *contingency*. Many of the chapters display a teleological reading of history—seeing the history of Zionism as a whole, and particularly events since 1948, in a negative light because of the current state of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and especially because of Israel's occupation of the West Bank. Some of the authors seem so driven by the quest to criticize the ongoing injustices and human rights violations of the occupation that they read history backward and do not allow for historical contingency— the possibility that Jewish immigration in the 1880s and even the 1930s and 1940s did not inevitably lead to the current state of affairs, but that there were many other options along the way, many roads not taken.

Here the use of the concept of "settler colonialism"—which most authors do not question or unpack—as both the origin and explanation of current problems, obscures rather than illuminates the complexity of historical events and processes. Settler colonialism is a teleological concept which describes a process that inevitably culminates in rendering invisible and replacing the colonized.[32] It also presupposes a timeless continuity of roles, from the emergence of Zionism to current Israeli politics, in which Jews as a collective are active and powerful aggressors whereas Palestinians as a collective are passive and powerless victims. Not only does this ignore the fact that power relations were by no means predetermined and that they fundamentally changed over time (quite dramatically so in the years 1945–1949), but it also presents the Palestinian side as having no role in shaping the historical process nor responsibility for its outcome. It also treats Jews and Palestinians as if they were the only actors in the region. The British play no significant role in this book (they are marginally addressed in Mustafa Kabha's chapter on Palestinian intellectuals' responses to Nazism and fascism), even though they were a player in the conflict leading to the 1948 war. Likewise, the neighboring Arab states are absent, although their policies toward both Israel and the Palestinians played a fundamental role in the power relations between Israelis and Palestinians and the mutual lack of empathy. This lack of contingency along with the imbalance between the different historical actors is unsatisfying because it is not only incomplete but also ahistorical.

Ultimately, a fundamental tension exists between the book's scholarly format and its political activism—Bashir and Goldberg promote their distinct vision of "binationalism"—and quest for change.[33] The inaccessible and lofty language of some of the chapters—drawing largely from the jargon of the field of comparative literature—stands in the way of reaching a broader audience. In addition, chapters are uneven in quality; many are evidence-based inquiries, but some make sweeping generalizations that are not backed up by evidence and drift into the realm of the polemic. This is the problem with Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin's chapter. Raz-Krakotzkin makes an effort to destroy the misconception in Israel and "the West" that Nazism was a relic of "dark times," an antithesis of Western liberalism and progress and that the Holocaust was an event of "ahistorical proportion defying reconstruction"[34]—as if scholars of Nazism, the Holocaust, and genocide had not already

[32]See, for example, Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

[33]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 25–28.

[34]Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Question of Palestine," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 83.

understood this long ago. He scolds Israel and Germany alike for professing "Holocaust exceptionalism" and making it "the constitutive foundation of a new Western memory"[35] and "the only stain on the historical record of the West,"[36] while failing to understand that this record was "rife with slavery, genocide, dispossession, and destruction. It is not that the Holocaust is not unique, but its detachment from history leads to the negation of its own memory as it affirms the memory of the victors—to the point that the Holocaust, in all its facets and in its status as a venerated event, becomes a part of the narrative of progress."[37] Ultimately, then, for Raz-Krakotzkin, those who "distinguish between the Holocaust and the history of the West" only do so "in order to preserve the Western self-image."[38] He accuses "the Jews," "the Germans," and "the West" of Islamophobia and of shifting the responsibility for the Holocaust to Muslims, in particular the Palestinians. This is as ahistorical as it is tendentious because it has no serious empirical basis and only aims at political provocation.

Raz-Krakotzkin's argument echoes that of Gil Anidjar in this collection. Anidjar's chapter reflects on the term *Muselmann*, an old-fashioned German term for Muslim used in Nazi concentration camps by victims and perpetrators alike to denote emaciated prisoners who were about to die from starvation, exhaustion, and disease and had reached a state of mind in which they gave up their will to live as a result of their prolonged incarceration and abuse. Although the origin of the term is unclear, for Anidjar it means that in the face of European racism the fate of Jews and Muslims is inseparable. Anidjar's work is enthusiastically endorsed by Raz-Krakotzkin, who sees it as proof that "at the moment of annihilation, the Jew unites with the Muslim to become as one. Therein lies the uniqueness of the Holocaust. The Jew is annihilated as a Muslim and immediately takes the side of Christianity against Islam. In an immense act of negation and denial, the Jew eliminates and stands against the Muslim and against himself. Responsibility for the Holocaust is generally shifted to Islam and to the Palestinian in particular."[39]

This argument, as well as Anidjar's chapter, was beyond the pale for me. To say the least, this argument is incompatible with any historical facts. The term *Muselmann*—or *Muselfrau*—was not limited to Jewish prisoners in the German concentration camps (even if prominent Jewish survivors wrote about it after the war); there was nothing distinctly "Jewish" about prisoners who reached that state. The term was predominantly used at Auschwitz, while other camps had other terms. Most Jews murdered in the Holocaust did not die as *Muselmänner*/*Muselfrauen* in concentration camps; rather, they died in ghettos and mass shootings in killing fields, or they were brought to extermination camps where they never reached the state of the *Muselmann*/*Muselfrau* because they were murdered immediately upon arrival. Not only is Anidjar's and Raz-Krakotzkin's argument far from the historical reality—it would be ridiculous if the subject matter was not so gruesome—it also exemplifies the problem of what happens when the history of the Holocaust is harvested for "symbols"

[35]Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Question of Palestine," 84.
[36]Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Question of Palestine," 84.
[37]Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Question of Palestine," 84.
[38]Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin, the Holocaust, and Question of Palestine," 84.
[39]Raz-Krakotzkin, "Benjamin," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 87. It should be noted that Raz-Krakotzkin uses the singular male form with a definite article when referring to Jews, Muslims, or Palestinians as collectivities here; this is how Nazi propaganda commonly related to collectivities it defamed, demonized, and dehumanized. This reminiscence is distasteful.

and "signifiers" to serve as "evidence" for politically motivated arguments. Here, some humility toward the subject matter and some serious and nuanced historical grounding would have been apt and befitting an academic publication.[40]

Similarly, I was troubled by Elias Khoury's implication in his foreword that Jews had an advantage over Palestinians because the Holocaust belonged to the past whereas the Nakba was still ongoing. This strikes me as insensitive, even cynical, given the fact that the Holocaust is irreversible because it permanently extinguished millions of Jewish lives and destroyed their former lifeworlds.

Overall, the meaning of the notion "new grammar," which appears in the title of the book and is used in the introduction with mantra-like redundancy, sometimes synonymously with "syntax," remains elusive. Bashir and Goldberg explain that by "syntax" and "grammar," they mean "to allude to the order, arrangement, and deployment of words, terms, and concepts—discursive constructs—that shape and determine the horizons of meaning and imagination and their symbolic and material representations and manifestations. In the dominant discourse and its syntax and grammar, the Holocaust and Nakba are viewed as incommensurable traumas and memories. In the new grammar that we propose, they are considered as commensurable, and their connection proves historically, politically, and ethically instructive and productive."[41] Although I do appreciate the mission to change the tone of the dominant narratives and begin a conversation, the terms *grammar* and *syntax* strike me as fashionable phraseology. Instead of focusing on the "rules" and "structure" of that dialogue, it might have been more productive to think about who is talking, who is listening, in what location and setting, and in what languages.

Despite my many criticisms of this book, I dearly hope that it will result in the "empathetic unsettlement" and "disruption"[42] that the editors have in mind and will make a contribution to a productive and healing process of reconciliation between Jews and Arabs in Israel. As with all processes of transitional justice and reconciliation, it is a long route, especially considering this conflict is not yet over. May this volume and the debate it sparks be an important first step.

[40]See, for example, Nikolas Wachsmann, *KL: A History of the Nazi Concentration Camps* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2015), 209–10, 685n117.

[41]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 5.

[42]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 22–24.

Different Traumas: Ethnic Cleansing and Genocide in Comparison

Philipp Ther

The scope and ambition of this edited collection is expressed in the subtitle (*A New Grammar of Trauma and History*) as much as in the provocative title. A grammar sets the rules on how to use a language, what is right and what is wrong, and it provides the very basic structure of any text. The editors propose to interpret the term *grammar* more comprehensively, inspired by Walter Benjamin's semiotics. But then we should distinguish a plot and narrative structures that create a system of meaning. Moreover, we need to consider that 6 million potential narrators perished in Nazi concentration camps and mass shootings, and could not narrate their terrible experience to future generations and the wider public.

I do not intend to develop such strong dialectics between right and wrong, or between death and narration. Instead, I will consider the potential advantages and drawbacks of bringing together the Holocaust and the Nakba. Rather than choose a postmodern focus on constructions of history and collective memories, let us take a step back and restrict the focus to historical events, processes, and some hard facts. I would also like to make clear that I am writing these reflections as a historian with a predilection for comparative and other relational approaches. Although comparisons build upon the abstract juxtaposition and examination of two or more objects of study, they bring those together by applying the same set of research questions. Moreover, comparisons often lead to detection of connections between the objects of study, even if these are not already known, and therefore belong to a larger family of relational approaches.[1]

On these grounds, the volume clearly has its merits: it presents the voices of great international, Israeli, Palestinian, and other Arab intellectuals and historians, whom the editors have brought together in one cohesive volume. It is fruitful and important to place the seemingly never-ending Israeli-Palestinian conflict into the larger context of European history, and in particular European nation building, which was pursued mostly by violent means, in particular by ethnic cleansing.[2] However, did the Holocaust and therefore a specific genocide set the stage for state formation in the British Mandate for Palestine? Or are other contexts as important when we discuss the Nakba?

Some Methodological Remarks

In the field of genocide studies, there have been long debates about the terms *Holocaust* and *Shoah*. The Holocaust has become a metaphor for the uniqueness of Jewish suffering and trauma, whereas *genocide* has been used as a more general term in international law, politics,

[1]Philipp Ther, "Comparisons, Cultural Transfers and the Study of Networks: Towards a Transnational History of Europe," in *Comparative and Transnational History: Central European Approaches and New Perspectives*, ed. Heinz-Gerhard Haupt and Jürgen Kocka (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 204–25.

[2]See for the concept of an enlarged European history, Philipp Ther, *The Outsiders: Refugees in European History since 1492* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019), 16–17.

and history. Of course, the exceptional and exclusive usage of the word *Holocaust* can be and has been disputed. Nevertheless, the attempted complete destruction of European Jewry stands out in modern history due to the sheer numbers of victims, its spatial range (which might have included Palestine had World War II taken a different course), and mode of organization. Although this might appear contradictory, one may conclude that precisely because the Holocaust is unique in many regards, it has served as a vantage point for studying and assessing other genocides. Thus, over time it became relativized, sometimes for overtly political reasons (e.g., when Germans who had been removed from eastern Europe after 1945 claimed equal victim status with Jews), and sometimes in service to academic agendas. One of the lasting merits of genocide studies is that it has made a comparative agenda explicit and opened up debates on how genocides could be compared.

The very act of bringing two or more objects of study together is controversial in and of itself. Many debates about historical comparisons have evolved around variations of "apples and oranges," and how two objects of study might not be comparable.[3] However, comparison and other relational approaches such as the study of cultural transfers (which was pivotal for nation building in the Middle East) and *histoire croisée* bring two or more objects of study together and put them on the same analytical level. This can also be done through the conjunction "and," which is used in the title of the book (*The Holocaust* and *the Nakba*) and indicates an implicit comparison, while it explicitly argues that there was a strong correlation. Hence the question why the Nakba is placed in the same context as the Holocaust merits discussion. Is that reference point and object of comparison indeed the obvious one? Or might it be more fruitful to debate the Nakba in other comparative and relational directions?

Mentioning and correlating the Holocaust and the Nakba in one short sequence of words sends a clear signal: it indicates that the Nakba was traumatic too. This is hard to dispute, but if two genocides are compared and correlated via the deliberate construction of comparisons, the goal is not to falsify one case as not being genocidal. There is an underlying assumption of similarity that justifies the common study in one terminological framework. Although the term *Holocaust* still conveys uniqueness, as demonstrated by the fact that it is rarely used in the plural, it is commonplace to speak about genocides and to assume that the worst of all crimes against humanity have occurred multiple times in various places and periods.

Genocide versus Ethnic Cleansing

The universalization of the Holocaust through the term *genocide* was built upon a very broad legal definition. According to the 1948 United Nations Convention on Genocide, the destruction of a group is defined in much broader terms than physical killing. The removal of a group from a given territory and even a suppressive assimilation policy destroying its culture could be considered genocide. It remains doubtful whether Rafał (later Raphael) Lemkin had this in mind when he invented the term, first in Polish (ludobójstwo) and then in English. We do know, however, that Lemkin, who was well informed about the multiple crimes committed against Poles, was not only Jewish, but also a citizen of the Polish Republic. He did not seek to create a term reserved for one ethnic or national group, but a more universal term, and he succeeded. The very fact that

[3]One of the best texts on that problem is still Nancy L. Green, "Le Melting-Pot: Made in America, Produced in France," *Journal of American History* 86, no. 3 (1999): 1188–1208.

genocide became so broadly defined by the United Nations might be considered a pyrrhic victory. The wide scope of the term as it was codified in 1948 was one of the reasons it was hardly ever used in international politics during the Cold War. There were too many conflicts and wars for which this term could have been applied, hence it was hardly ever invoked.

The cases of the Christian Poles and Polish Jews (many of whom, including until his emigration Lemkin, might be labeled Jewish Poles) during World War II are not only key to understanding the evolution of the term *genocide*, but also show how comparison of the two cases can help to demonstrate the difference between genocide and ethnic cleansing. A very brief working definition of the latter term is the systematically organized, enforced removal, by violent means, and usually permanently, of a group stigmatized due to its ethnicity or nationality.[4] The Nazis certainly attempted to decapitate and enslave the Polish nation. This is why they shot tens of thousands of intellectuals, priests, and public servants, and incarcerated even more in concentration camps. One could argue that in the Polish case a genocide was in the making, though it could not be carried out due to the priority of the war and of murdering the European Jews.

Nevertheless, three key differences existed in the treatment of Christian Poles and Polish Jews, which helps us distinguish between genocide and ethnic cleansing. The first one was territorial. The Nazis planned to remove up to 10 million Poles from the annexed territories in their megalomaniac attempt to expand the German Lebensraum. Because of the priorities of the war against the Soviet Union, the Nazis expelled and resettled just under three hundred thousand Poles to the occupied General Government. Certainly, after the presumed victory, that part of Poland was supposed to be ruled and settled by Germans as well. Nevertheless, the primary goal was territorial expansion, to exploit and chase out Poles, not to kill as many of them as possible. A strong territorial imagination was evident in all cases of ethnic cleansing, covering borders and lands where unwanted minorities could be brought. In the case of a genocide, there is either no concept of an external homeland or transporting a group thereto is deemed out of the question. This is symbolized by the infamous end of the railway tracks in Auschwitz-Birkenau: they did not lead to a territory for the Jews, but to a void, a space of pure nihilism and death.

A second key difference was whether members of the persecuted group were regarded as suitable for assimilation. The Nazis did not want to dilute and spoil their imagined German nation by racial mixing. However, assimilation of specific groups of Poles was considered possible and was actively encouraged in some regions. Hence the racist ideology, and its implementation differed vastly from the annihilation of the Jews. Although Christian Poles suffered tremendously from German crimes against humanity, approximately 90 percent of this group survived the German occupation. Among Polish Jews, the victim to survivor ratio was the exact opposite, only about 10 percent survived the Holocaust, affecting the narration of the traumatic experience. In retrospect, we may consider the Holocaust a trauma, but we must consider that for many more Jews it was a traumatic *and* a lethal experience. That means that the vast majority of possible narrators—I prefer to analyze their activities as an individual, creative, and transgenerational process (which many of the articles in the Bashir/Goldberg volume show), not as a seemingly objectivized narrative—were simply

[4]On the use of this term by the United Nations and the International Court of Justice, see Cathie Carmichael, *Ethnic Cleansing in the Balkans: Nationalism and the Destruction of Tradition* (London: Routledge, 2002), 2.

dead. Moreover, a substantial minority of the surviving Polish Jews were survivors of a different trauma; they had been deported by Soviet security forces to the East, and thus had survived by chance.

Although the chances of survival in Kazakhstan or Siberia were much higher than in areas occupied the by Germans, some aspects of the Soviet deportations in 1940–1941 and in 1944 bring them close to a genocide. The mortality rate among the deportees was much higher than in ethnic cleansing; it reached almost 25 percent in cases such as that of the Chechens.[5] Also absent was a clear territorial vision. Most deportees were brought to a no man's land, not to an imagined external homeland or nation state. However, the suffering and the lethality of Soviet deportations of Jews still fades in comparison to that of the Holocaust. Even in the worst phases of Stalinist antisemitism, the Soviet Union never had the primary intent of the mass killing of its Jewish nationality. If we consider these differences—the primary intent, the underlying ideology and its implementation, and the mortality versus survival rates—we can recognize a big difference between ethnic cleansing and genocide.[6] This distinction has also been recognized in international law, which distinguishes between various crimes against humanity and the ultimate crime, genocide. The distinction has been further developed by the International Court on the Former Yugoslavia (ICTY) in The Hague. The court did try many Bosnian Serb perpetrators of acts of genocide. But eventually, after a number of revisions, the ICTY decided to try for genocide only Bosnian Serb functionaries who were directly involved in the intentional mass murder of some eight thousand Muslim men and teenagers in Srebrenica. It stressed the principle of *dolus specialis*, which in most legal systems serves to distinguish between murder and manslaughter. This distinction makes sense, as does the focus on actual killing, and not on the "wanton destruction" of material objects, though that has often preceded mass killing.

An important debate emerged at the turn of the twenty-first century concerning whether and how an agenda of ethnic cleansing can escalate and result in a genocide. Norman Naimark has argued that the Nazis first wanted to remove the Jews from Germany, and only went on to kill them en masse after the invasion of the Soviet Union.[7] A fine point, though we should not underestimate the violent and lethal racism of the National Socialists. Nevertheless, other European cases, such as the Romanian policy toward the Bessarabian Jews, or the persecution of Jews and Serbs by the Croatian Ustaše, demonstrate how ethnic cleansing can mutate into genocide.[8]

The line separating ethnic cleansing from genocide was blurred in the "white" settler colonies as well. The westward deportation of the indigenous peoples of America in the nineteenth century (deportation being characterized by the fact that it did not occur across international boundaries, but within a single state) built upon greed and racialized contempt.

[5]A full 23.7 percent of the deported Chechens died. See J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR 1937–1949* (Westport: Greenwood Press, 1999), 49; Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2001), 125.

[6]This is stated very clearly in Alon Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History–Jaffa, 1949: Between the Holocaust and the Nakba," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 138.

[7]Naimark, *Fires of Hatred*, 57–72.

[8]Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe* (New York: Berghahn Press, 2014), 95–111, 119–134.

Native American suffering and the mortality rate were extremely high due to neglect, maltreatment, and diseases. There was also a lack of a territorial vision, except to concentrate various indigenous peoples in so-called reservations, which could be changed and dissolved any time if overriding material interests like the extraction of mineral resources presented themselves. The deportations in the Americas were certainly more lethal than the Nakba.

Can the Nakba "largely be explained in the context of European settler colonialism," as the editors claim in their introduction to the book? (See page 15.) Was Palestine, if we zoom in again on Europe and the Mediterranean, another Algeria? It seems doubtful, not only because of the ancient roots and history of Jews in the region, their presence in the Ottoman Empire, in particular the Vilayet of Beirut or the Sandzhak of Jerusalem, or later as a substructure of the British colonial empire. Neither the eastern European nations ruled by the Habsburg and the Russian empires nor the Ottoman Jews were members of colonizing nations like the French, English, Dutch, or Belgians, and Germans. The history of these western countries served as the point of departure to develop "postcolonial studies." Hence, postcolonialism is an occidentalist term, that can be applied to the Jewish-Palestinian conundrum only with great caution. Some Middle Eastern and Sephardic Jews took on the role of middlemen under British colonial rule, yet they were not members of a colonial or actively colonizing nation. We should be cautious about making judgements about the "absolute wrong of settler-colonialism" (citing Edward Said on page 14) because this term has been invoked too many times in European history to claim land and power and to chase out national minorities. The Bohemian and Silesian Germans and the Galician Poles were attacked and eventually ethnically cleansed in 1944–1948 based on the claim that they had come late to where they lived as illegitimate colonizers.

If we consider all these comparable (not be equated with similar) cases, we can clearly recognize that the mass expulsion of the Palestinians constitutes a case of ethnic cleansing. However, in some regards it was a unique case. Firstly, because of the location; the model of European nation building with its component of violent homogenization was mostly implemented in Europe and in the transatlantic settler colonies. The central and eastern European founders of Israel obviously transferred radical concepts and practices of nation building from their regions of origin to Palestine, as Mark Levene states in his contribution.[9] However, was this transfer deeply connected with the Holocaust? A large majority of the Jewish inhabitants of Palestine had immigrated prior to World War II, and the same is true for the soldiers who served in the underground forces before 1948 and then the Israeli army. Of course, the Holocaust and the dire situation of Jewish DPs in postwar Europe additionally served to legitimize the foundation of an independent Jewish nation-state. However, if we focus on an immediate causal connection between the course of the first Israeli-Arab war and how Jewish forces gained the upper hand and then ethnically cleansed Palestinians, the delivery of modern Czechoslovak weapons in 1948 (one of those non-colonizing European nation-states that do not fit neatly into the paradigm of postcolonial studies) might be considered as crucial as the transfer of the idea of a radically homogenized nation-state.[10]

[9]Mark Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters: European Nation-State Building and Its Toxic Legacies, 1912–1948," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 45–65.

[10]For another interesting link between Czechoslovakia and Israel, and the perception of a Palestinian minority as a threat like the Sudeten Germans, see the contribution by Yochi Fischer, "What Does Exile

Ethnic Cleansings Compared

Compared to postwar Czechoslovakia, the homogenization of Palestine in 1948–1949 was incomplete. Czechoslovakia removed almost all Germans, and would have liked to remove all Hungarians from southern Slovakia (it succeeded in doing so in the future capital of Bratislava) and thus became a nation-state in which approximately 95 percent of the population belonged to the titular nation(s). The campaign against the Hungarian minority was only stopped due to Allied and in particular Soviet intervention. Poland was even more radical than Czechoslovakia. Besides the Germans, it expelled or deported the entire Ukrainian minority in the Southeast.

By contrast, Israel tolerated a sizable Arab minority, especially in Galilee, a number of loyal clans, and Bedouins in the desert. This comparative assessment might look like an unbearable relativization of the Nakba. Nevertheless, it sheds a different light on Israeli policy, which might have aimed more at imperial domination than the total homogenization of an imagined national territory. I prefer the term *imperial* over *colonial* because there was no systemic racist distinction between colonizers and the colonized like there was in the European overseas empires. That does not mean that there was no racism in Israel, as some of the Mizrahim and in particular the Ethiopian Jews came to experience, and of course Israeli Jewish nationalism at best accepted Arabs as a subservient class. In spite of open discrimination, Israeli Arabs could advance to become high-ranking judges, members of parliament, and scientists. That kind of mingling and social advancement, though it was rare, would have been impossible in European colonies in Africa or Asia.

How is it that Czechoslovakia, the most liberal nation-state in interwar Europe, and the most accommodating toward its national minorities, became so repressive, intolerant and, in spring of 1945, sometimes murderous? The reason was revenge for the German aggression and occupation. Moreover, the postwar context was a unique opportunity to "solve" the German question once and for all. Certainly, this was not a "final solution" like the Nazi government had foreseen for the Jews. At most 1 percent of the Czech Germans died as a result of individual violent acts and pogroms in the spring of 1945. After the summer of 1945 and partially due to Allied interventions, the state regained its monopoly on power and organized the transfer of the Germans more or less as stipulated in the Potsdam Agreement. The high level of technical and logistical organization in the removal of the Germans helped to save lives, yet is reminiscent of some of the dark sides of European modernity upon which Zygmunt Bauman reflected in his book on the Holocaust.[11]

I have referred here to Czechoslovakia because, with respect to some other details, it is the most similar to the case of Palestine and Israel. The German minority constituted almost one-quarter of the population of Czechoslovakia—it was even more numerous than the second titular nation, the Slovaks—while Czechs amounted to roughly half the population. This means that the ratio of the nation that cleansed its territory and the affected minority was approximately 2 to 1. The removal of 3 million people was only possible through the total defeat of Germany, which made impossible any civic or armed resistance. Rounding up and transferring a large and in some areas predominant national minority was logistically

Look Like? Transformations in the Linkage Between the Shoah and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 182.

[11] Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

very challenging. The case of Palestine was the only one in the history of ethnic cleansing in which a slightly smaller population expelled a larger one. While the role of the British and the other Allies in first permitting and then actively supporting the "orderly transfer of the German populations" from Czechoslovakia is well researched,[12] much less is known about their role in co-organizing the transport of the Palestinian Arabs to neighboring countries, especially to Jordan. On paper, the role of the British was limited because there was no equivalent of the Potsdam Agreement, yet on the ground the British army did help to organize the removal of Arabs to the West Bank and over the Jordan River.[13]

In both cases, the removal of such large populations could only take place in the context of a major war. Perhaps the editors of *The Holocaust and the Nakba* came to the conclusion that enough has been written about the war over Palestine and Israeli independence. Indeed, in some sources, such as Benny Morris's later works, military action almost seems to serve as an ex post facto excuse for violent ethnic cleansing.[14] Massive ethnic cleansing occurred as well in areas that were not primary theaters of war.[15] Yet the larger context needs to be taken into account again. The misguided intervention of the Egyptian, Syrian, Iraqi, and Lebanese armies led to an escalation of military action and subsequently of ethnic cleansing in 1948.

Every single war in the twentieth century resulting from territorial conflicts in the framework of partition plans has resulted in massive ethnic cleansing. Examples include multiple cases in southeastern Europe, Asia Minor, the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands, Transylvania, partitioned India, Palestine, and, later, Cyprus. When partition plans were implemented, one of the main areas of conflict and military action was always the location of the new borders. Often, earlier lines of partition were moved in favor of the winners of the war and to the detriment of its losers. This happened in the Greco-Turkish war in 1919–1922, when the Greek army first pushed the borderline of a future partition (which was laid out in principle in the Treaty of Sèvres) far to the east, until the Turkish army pushed back the Greeks and reestablished the border in the Aegean Sea. A similar process took place in Palestine. After the failure of the Arab international intervention, the Jewish victors could dictate the lines of territorial and ethnic partition. The Israeli government did not have a completely free hand because it depended on the consent of the great powers. Nevertheless, it moved the borders far east and north in favor of the newly independent country. The asymmetry of power, the course of the war, and its escalation sealed the fate of 750,000 Palestinian refugees.

Causes of the Palestinian Trauma

What created the traumatization of subsequent generations of Palestinians? Was it only the Nakba, which is so central to Palestinian collective memory, or also subsequent events and processes, such as the terrible living conditions in refugee camps, the next Arab defeat and subsequent mass flight in 1967, or the long-term denial of integration in most countries

[12]Matthew Frank, *Expelling the Germans: British Opinion and Post-1945 Population Transfer in Context* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

[13]Mustafa Abbasi, "The War on the Mixed Cities: The Deportation of Arab Tiberias and the Destruction of Its Old, 'Sacred' City (1948–49)," *Holy Land Studies: A Multidisciplinary Journal* 7, no. 1 (May 2008): 45–80.

[14]Benny Morris, *1948: A History of the First Arab-Israeli War* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2008), 139.

[15]See Ilan Pappé, *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (London: Oneworld, 2006).

of arrival? Is it one trauma or multiple traumatization, created by being deprived of the most basic human rights, and poverty in the receiving regions and countries? The term *trauma* has the drawback that it turns traumatized individuals into passive objects of history. However, the Palestinian refugees were more than that; later on, the PLO and other Palestinian organizations were also subjects of history. This is even truer of the Arab states of arrival which for a variety of reasons hesitated or denied the incoming refugees citizenship in both a narrow and a broader sense. Jordan was a positive exception in many ways—also because the number of refugees was so overwhelming, it had not much choice but to develop a more constructive policy toward its Palestinian population.

I mention the neighboring states not in order to reduce the responsibility of the nascent Israel for the Nakba, but to stress that the afterlives of refugees can be as important as the original event that caused them to flee. In most places of violent population removal, notably in post-partition India and Pakistan, there has been a strong effort to mitigate the suffering of refugees and to overcome the trauma of mass flight. Historians should look upon the integration record of each of these countries with some skepticism. The touted successes of integration were never as great as announced, and the first generation often remained traumatized and had great trouble finding new jobs, homes, and everything else that is needed to start a new life. The integration was one-sided, refugees had to adapt to their new environment, and their identities were often suppressed, as initially King Abdallah suppressed a Palestinian identity in Jordan. Nevertheless, today no German question exists in Poland and the Czech Republic, and no Polish question in Ukraine or Lithuania.

Although Pakistan and India have fought several wars, these have not been fought over the "right of return" or any other major refugee issue. This is because all of these countries have accepted that the presence of the postwar and post-partition refugees is permanent. A key component of integration was granting citizenship, based on the assumption that the refugees were part of the same national or ethnic community as the residents of the country of arrival. This was not the case with the Palestinians, with the exception of Jordan and some thirty thousand Christian Palestinians in Lebanon, who did receive Lebanese citizenship. Even Pan-Arabism did not help as a bridge for integration. This refusal to take responsibility on the part of Israel's Arab neighbors, including for their own military interventions, was not a single traumatic event like the Nakba, but it intensified and prolonged its traumatizing impact.

The larger Middle Eastern context is also required to bring the Mizrahim into the picture. In terms of numbers, their expulsion and emigration from the Arab world into Israel is comparable to the Nakba. Of course, while the Nakba occurred in a relatively short period of time and in the context of war, the exodus of the Mizrahim took more than two decades. This facilitated their arrival and integration in Israel, probably even more so than the official ideology of Zionism, which was not invented by or specifically for the Middle Eastern Jews.

In spite of these differences between the Nakba and the exodus from the Arab world, the commonalities in individual experience created mutual understanding and compassion, as Omri Ben-Yehuda and Alon Confino show in their contributions to the Bashir/Goldberg volume.[16] That linkage might be more productive for a Palestinian-Israeli rapprochement than the binationalism proposed by the editors. If we take the term *binational*

[16]Omri Ben-Yehuda, "Ma'abara: Mizraḥim Between Shoah and Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 249–74; Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History–Jaffa, 1949," 135–53.

literally (the book has a tendency to interpret terms beyond their original meaning), there is a risk that it might confirm or even strengthen the dialectical setup and confrontation between Israelis and Palestinians. Instead of (re)constructing a binary constellation, which the British established in a classical "divide and rule" policy, and which might have been useful for a two-state solution after the Oslo Accords, the plurality among the Jewish population of Israel might serve as a better point of departure, as some chapters in the volume suggest.[17] The same is true for the Palestinians and the Israeli Arabs, who differ a lot depending on their country of residence, religious belief or nonreligious convictions, class status (which is barely discussed in the volume), and generation.

Multinationalism in a self-declared nation-state might seem like an oxymoron, yet the possible annexation of large parts of the West Bank would turn Israel into an even more multinational state than it is today. Multinationalism was one of the characteristic features of the continental empires that existed in Europe prior to 1918 and of the Soviet Union. Obviously, Israel is too small to be labeled an empire, but it could perhaps learn from empires how to coopt minorities (although one needs to acknowledge that individual Israeli Arab Palestinians rose to prominent government and judicial positions), to create power-sharing arrangements, and to reduce violence.

Can democratization or other forms of civic inclusion and participation be achieved by looking into a past that is so full of suffering, discrimination, disenfranchisement, and ethnic cleansing? Democracies were mostly established step by step and by looking into a better future. How would that future look in an enlarged Israel whose government actively rejects a two-state solution?

Perhaps such a debate would prove more fruitful than a focus on "healing" and undoing past injustices. Overcoming trauma can only be an individual process. If it is elevated to a political level and applied to entire nations, it can probably work only if there is some symmetry of power. In postwar Europe, the overarching political structure and project of the European Community and then the European Union were pivotal for overcoming past conflicts. This is the framework in which France, Germany, Poland, and Ukraine (although the latter is not an EU member) slowly overcame the legacy of two world wars. This was also possible because the time and cause of the trauma and its main perpetrators could be clearly identified. This would be more difficult to achieve for the Palestinians, who were traumatized in multiple ways and by different historical actors during *and after* the original catastrophe of the Nakba. Moreover, who would be the present-day actors of such a reconciliation process if there is no national government or other generally acknowledged institutions that can act on a par with Israel?

The goodwill of the intellectuals who contributed to this volume to launch a dialogue and rapprochement over history between Israelis and Palestinians is to be commended. Alon Confino once rightly stated that the task of the historical discipline is "not only of reminding us what to remember, but also of liberating us from the tyranny of the past."[18] Daily life in poverty for the vast majority of the Palestinians is a tyranny of the present, which historians can acknowledge, but unfortunately have very limited means to remedy.

[17] See again the contributions by Ben-Yehuda, Confino, and earlier publications, for example, Yfaat Weiss, *A Confiscated Memory: Wadi Salib and Haifa's Lost Heritage*, trans. Avner Greenberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011).

[18] Alon Confino, "On the Virtue and Tyranny of the Past," in *Deutsche Zeiten. Geschichte und Lebenswelt. Festschrift zur Emeritierung von Moshe Zimmermann,* ed. Dan Diner et al. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2012), 323.

How to Write the History of Trauma

Michelle Tusan

HISTORIES of mass violence against targeted populations rely on an important narrative tension. Scholars recognize genocidal acts as part of a larger history of humankind's inhumanity while acknowledging the specificity of historical events and their classification as "genocide," "ethnic cleansing," or even "mass murder." *The Holocaust and the Nakba* engages this attempt to connect universal lessons with particular experiences of mass violence. Drawing on interdisciplinary methods and theory from the social sciences and humanities, it raises new questions about the how and why of comparing the history of genocidal events. This article explores three historical issues that stem from examining the Holocaust and the Nakba together. First, considering these two events side by side requires a rewriting of the history of mass violence against subject populations in the context of the rise and fall of empires in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Second, it orients the field of inquiry away from the question of what qualifies, what does not, and who is to blame for committing the act or failing to prosecute it to considering the event as an ongoing process and lived experience. Finally, it raises new questions about the relationship between fiction and the archives.

It is important to make clear what this collection of articles is not. *The Holocaust and the Nakba* is not a study of the anatomy of genocide that seeks to explain root causes or offer broad or exclusive definitions in order to posit these events as relative moral or political acts that easily can be compared to one another. Rather, it understands these events as connected because they came out of a specific and shared historical experience. Readers will not find clear-cut arguments intended to categorize what happened in either event in terms of legal, economic, and political frameworks. They also will not find side-by-side comparisons of the facts and what happened. In its most modest iteration, the collection simply opens a space to discuss these events on the same page. At its most ambitious, it attempts to use new tools and apply methods that map genocide and mass atrocity across time and space. Shifting the focus away from origin stories to context-rich studies of events and experiences opens the possibility to bridge distinct histories of genocide, atrocity, and human suffering.

Writing Violence into the History of Empire and Nation

To talk about the Holocaust and the Nakba together requires rethinking empire in its broadest historical framework. The present volume focuses on "the violent stream" of events in the twentieth century wrought by imperialism and its consequences for the Middle East.[1] But the genesis of massacre as a problem in its modern form dates to the nineteenth century as a manifestation of European imperial politics at home and abroad. The great European land-based empires—the Russian, Austro-Hungarian, and Ottoman—had never successfully

[1]Mark Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2017), 45.

reconciled the status of minorities within their borders. Living side by side in multi-ethnic, multi-linguistic, and multi-confessional states, minorities often fared well in peacetime but enjoyed few protections when tensions rose as a result of internal and external pressures that provided the root cause of pogroms and massacres.

At the same time, an outward-looking European foreign policy, led by Britain, began during the mid-nineteenth century to engage in the politics of what Carole Fink has called "defending the rights of others."[2] The well-known story of European intervention after the Crimean War in the internal affairs of the Ottoman Empire to stop massacres against Christian minorities had its counterpoint in Europe's own culpability for crimes committed in the name of imperial expansion in its overseas empires in Asia and Africa.

Just as the Nakba and the Holocaust, according to the editors, belong "to the same modern and global history of genocide and ethnic cleansing," they also belong to the *longue durée* of imperial expansion and European nation building in the context of the treatment of subject populations.[3] Mark Levene, in an article that opens the collection, frames the problem as one of ethno-nationalism in order to explain how deportation came to be used as a tool of nationalists. Reading the Treaty of Lausanne, which ended the war between the Allies and the Ottoman Empire in 1923 as the birth of the national solution as rooted in international law and practice, he shows how the idea of the minority was managed and shaped by nationalism. This brand of nation making—removing those who do not easily conform to the imagined community of the emergent nation—did not originate in the Middle East but in Europe. Ethno-nationalism, with its roots in nineteenth-century European imaginings of the nation-state, helped shape the colonial relationship between minorities in the Middle East, first with British and French imperial policy, and later with Israel's treatment of the Palestinians in 1948.

The replacing of empire with nation thus had dramatic consequences for minority populations in both Europe and the Middle East who, after World War I, faced a reconstructed imperial order. The colonial experience in this sense was not one of slaves and masters but of the complete removal of subject populations who did not conform to the boundaries of the new nation-state. This ethno-nationalist embrace of deportation had its earliest dramatic consequences and solicited widespread condemnation in the international community in the case of Ottoman Armenians, Greeks, and Assyrians during the Armenian genocide of 1915. The story of removal and deportation in the service of nationalist agendas, however, predated this event. The massacre of Bulgarians during the 1878 Russo-Turkish War, pogroms against the Jews in Russia during the late nineteenth century, and the removal of Muslim borderland populations during the Balkan Wars that preceded World War I were all part of a nationalist agenda that held sway in multi-ethnic, multi-religious, and multi-confessional empires.

The use of violence against minorities as a tool of foreign policy thus emerged within and across imperial and national borders well before the twentieth century and contributed to the weakening and subsequent destruction of the European land-based empires after World War I. The continued growth of Britain and France's imperial holdings in Africa, Asia, and especially the Middle East exacerbated the problem. This new imperial reality—a world made up of fading but still powerful land-based empires and expanding overseas empires—posed

[2]Carole Fink, *Defending the Rights of Others* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).
[3]Levene, "Harbingers of Jewish and Palestinian Disasters," 20.

challenges to nineteenth-century liberal ideals that unsuccessfully sought to reconcile the status of minorities in the nation-state in both Europe and the Middle East. Tensions culminated in the context of two destructive world wars, ongoing famine and civil war in the Russian borderlands, and the aftermath of genocide in the lands of the former Ottoman Empire, where the imperial and national project collided.

The postcolonial frame embraced by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg in the introduction to explain events of the twentieth century in the Middle East thus needs further refinement. Both pre-national and colonial relationships remained a powerful determinant of what happed in the mid-twentieth century. Imperialism as perpetrated by the British and the French had a role to play in atrocities against the Palestinians as Europeans practiced a policy of divide and rule to prevent nationalism from challenging their imperial claims. But so, too, did an older framework of statecraft that divided the world into contiguous empires that challenged one another and kept pressure on minorities to maintain global power and prevent domestic unrest. These geopolitical realities that came from domestic and overseas imperial engagements had their own role to play in explaining the rise of racist ethno-nationalism against minority populations in Europe and the Middle East in the twentieth century.

The story of the rise and fall of empires further complicates the narrative of nation building and rebuilding in the context of decolonization after World War II. The end of the large overseas empires led by the British and the French meant that empire as a form of state formation had little purchase during the second half of the twentieth century. But decolonization created new obligations and historical burdens that tied former colonies to imperial masters and, even more problematically, provided a blueprint for the treatment of minority populations in new nation-states. Israel, born in the aftermath of these events, shares the traumas and complexities of a nation forged in the aftermath of genocide and the end of empire. The Palestinian story is equally complex and made even more so by the fact of the Palestinians' reality as an occupied people who still do not have equal citizenship or a nation-state. This has prevented them from fully narrating a story of nation from a neocolonial perspective and has made literature and storytelling the one form that allows for a true understanding of identity and actionable politics.

Geopolitical explanations, however, provide only one way to understand the roots of these traumas. Nations forged in the aftermath of genocide and ethnic cleansing create from these experiences "foundational pasts," in Alon Confino's formulation, and have the difficult task of narrating a usable history and imagining a present that fulfills expectations of a more peaceful and just future.[4] Violence, an extreme but seemingly fundamental tool of nation making, remains a powerful constitutive and psychological force that can hold the nation as imagined by its citizenry together. Placing the Nakba and the Holocaust on the same linguistic and historical plane challenges us to narrate these stories as mutually constructed and equally relevant. While the question of defining perpetrators and victims remains important in this context, there is a greater urgency to understand genocide and ethnic cleansing less categorically and more in terms of how these events represent the experience of a people connected by a not-uncommon history.

[4]Alon Confino quoted in "Introduction," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 2.

Experience(s) of a People

Trauma is an inevitable result of systematic violence against a people. That experience often has been overshadowed in scholarship by definitional battles over what counts or does not count as genocide. As Clemantine Wamariya, a survivor of the Rwandan genocide, put it: "The word [genocide] is tidy and efficient. It holds no true emotion. It is impersonal when it needs to be intimate." The word *genocide* in this context risks becoming a "cool and sterile" descriptive legal category, which Wamariya, rejects as "the worst kind of lie."[5] Although naming an event remains an important and necessary first step in giving it a history, too close a focus on definition and meaning has led scholars to neglect the study of mass violence as the experience of a people.

Raphael Lemkin gave us our current working definition of *genocide*, which as those engaged in this work have shown, remains problematic.[6] Today, scholars continue to reconcile themselves to Lemkin's concept, whether to reject or accept his formulation.[7] Thus, all events that fail to meet the criteria for genocide seem somehow less significant, which explains, in part, why the word has taken on such power. It is important to recall that Lemkin's own definition came out of a specific historical context—attempts to understand what happened to the Armenians during World War I and the lead up to World War II—and had its own politics.[8] Its potential to explain how humans experience mass violence relies on understanding the many contexts in which genocidal events occur. The experiences of World War I and World War II led to the axiom that genocide occurred under the cover of war. That both world wars witnessed genocide has offered a way of seeing the act in its modern form. But the study of mass violence has moved beyond these confines to include crimes committed by the state in peacetime and times of civil unrest. This shift remains important for understanding massacre, the concept of crimes against humanity, ethnic cleansing, and genocide as operating on an equal plane that occupies an important space alongside the legalistic definition of the act, which historically has focused on identifying and prosecuting perpetrators.

Acknowledging acts of mass violence, regardless of categorization, needs to be followed by a reconciliation of the event and its definition as the experience of a people. The study of genocidal acts, then, becomes the study of the materiality, ideas, and events that move beyond the act itself. In practical terms, it means reading the archives differently. Material artifacts—what people left behind, what they took with them, where objects ended up—are read against official orders to remove subject populations. Popular media accounts are analyzed alongside autobiography and even, controversially, fictional accounts of survivors and their children attempting to reconcile the event in the collective memory.[9] This methodology,

[5]Clemantine Wamariya and Elizabeth Weil, *The Girl Who Smiled Beads* (New York: Broadway Books, 2019), 93.

[6]Raphael Lemkin, *Axis Rule in Occupied Europe* (Washington, DC: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1944).

[7]Douglas Irvin-Erickson, *Raphael Lemkin and the Concept of Genocide* (Philadelphia: Pennsylvania University Press, 2016); A. Dirk Moses, *The Problems of Genocide* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, forthcoming).

[8]Michelle Tusan, "James Bryce's Blue Book as Evidence," *Journal of Levantine Studies* 5, no. 2 (Winter 2015): 9–24.

[9]Michelle Tusan, "Genocide, Famine and Refugees on Film," *Past and Present* 237, no. 1 (November 2017): 197–235.

which reads culturally generated texts against the grain and in intimate connection with one another has the potential to make the response to genocidal acts both more particular in its very materiality and universal in its humanity.

Alon Confino's reading of one couple's refusal to occupy a Palestinian home in the aftermath of the Holocaust reveals the stakes in this approach. The experience of Genya and Henryk Kowalski as Holocaust survivors who saw in their situation as refugees in Israel a parallel with what they left behind in Germany when they were expelled to the ghetto by the Nazis offers a way of seeing expulsion as a human problem. One experience cannot offer empirical evidence of the actions and attitudes that characterized life for refugees in this moment. One experience also is not indicative of a pattern, a tool used by cultural historians to understand change over time. Rather, as Confino argues, such stories make "a crack in history's course of events."[10] The tie between the Holocaust and the Nakba, then, is predicated on a human experience of exile that relies on narrative connections between events and feelings of loss. But how did Palestinians forced into exile understand their experience in this context? The place where these narratives—Jewish and Palestinian—meet, has the potential to provide an explanatory framework and show how human suffering and loss are constitutive of historical change and not simply its byproduct.

Tal Ben-Zvi takes a different approach to understanding genocide as experience by delving into the culture of memory in the representation of refugees in Jewish and Palestinian art. She makes the two sides talk to each other through artists' renderings of distinct experiences of exile. The life and friendship of Holocaust survivor Lea Grundig and Nakba victim Abed Abdi is read through their artistic and political commitments which reflect their individual experiences. Refusing to de-historicize the experience through unsustainable comparative claims, the story of these individuals and their art finds common ground in their representation of human suffering. Looking for commonality in both individuals' quest for social justice through art, however, largely sidesteps the politics of the Arab-Israeli conflict by focusing on the plight of the refugee. What is the nature of empathy born out of these experiences that bridges experiences of human suffering and loss?

In his "personal political history" of the Israeli experience, Omer Bartov raises the question of how to narrate suffering and victimhood from two counternarratives about homelands.[11] While acknowledging the possibility of dialogue he also recognizes the violence inherent in any discussion of claims to occupy a space and call it an ancestral home. Competitive claims over who belongs lead to different readings of the events of 1948 as either war of independence or moment of expulsion. After these distinct foundational events, accommodation and compromise between various state and nonstate actors seemed impossible and provided only limited forms of understanding the experiences of the Other. Yet these events shared, somewhat remarkably, a similar view of what was owed to each side: the right of refugees to "go home."

Home in these articles reveals itself as a powerful, motivating idea that has long animated human movement and experience. But the idea of home can blind historical agents and actors to the possibilities of engagement and accommodation that make room for the

[10] Alon Confino, "When Genya and Henryk Kowalski Challenged History," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 136.

[11] Omer Bartov, "National Narratives of Suffering and Victimhood," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 187.

displaced in unlikely places that do not necessarily conform to the boundaries of empire or the nation-state. The idea of going home remains part of a utopian strand of liberalism that imagines the possibility of the free movement of peoples who ultimately embrace the romantic idea that they belong to a national homeland that always has existed. In this way, the history of massacre and genocide and subsequent displacement has the power to fundamentally define the experience of a people. Refugees in the Middle East, who became refugees because of the horrors of the Holocaust and the Nakba, could not pick up the pieces and live quietly among their neighbors again, as had happened after some previous massacres and wars. Nationalism and the legacy of empire in the Middle East made it difficult if not impossible to imagine a functioning multi-ethnic and multi-confessional state.

Despite these difficulties, the Holocaust and the Nakba when viewed side by side offer scholars an opportunity to use new tools and apply methods that map the experience of violence and its consequences for survivors across time and place. People experience mass atrocity as perpetrators, victims, or observers. Understanding the myriad actors, actions, and ideas that constitute these events as lasting and translatable means moving beyond writing and reconciling individual histories in order to see the story of loss as a defining modern human experience.

Fiction and Truth Telling

Reading genocide and mass atrocity as a collective experience means studying their representation in a variety of literatures. This raises the question of how to read texts that do not easily conform to conventional forms of truth telling. Social scientists rely on archives, statistics, and material evidence to unlock objective truths. The choice to include an entire section on the reading of Elias Khoury's novel, *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*, challenges scholars to expand the archive of knowledge surrounding the Holocaust and the Nakba. A master storyteller who writes from a deeply engaged and highly personal understanding of both events, Khoury reveals the trauma of the experience of loss and memory that ultimately transcends the event itself.

Children of the Ghetto speaks to the dilemma of how to read and narrate trauma. It sits between genres in many ways, and contributors to this volume read it as a combination of testimony and literature. The experiences of the Holocaust and the Nakba are intertwined in Khoury's story of Adam Danoun, a Palestinian Israeli living in New York City. Adam lives between worlds and serves as a mediating voice through which to understand trauma. Fully belonging to neither world, his character offers a window onto both sides of an experience and resists easy categorization as victim. The always negotiated state of his identity creates the potential for Adam's political and emotional transcendence. But the trauma of occupation ultimately weighs too heavily on him rendering any reconciliation of the events of the past impossible. Refqa Abu-Remaileh offers a Saidian "contrapuntal" reading of the novel, which shows the intimate connections between the Palestinian and Jewish stories.[12] Raef Zreik goes further, claiming that the novel allows the "subaltern to speak" through its silence, making possible the impossibility of Gayatri Spivak's original formulation.[13]

[12]Refqa Abu-Remaileh, "Novel as Contrapuntal Reading," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 295.

[13]Gayatri Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988), 271–313.

Here literature, rather than history, allows for storytelling in its most honest form because literature makes it possible to imagine a space for agency. This is a theme that Khoury repeats again and again in the novel, denying the possibility of history and historical method to accurately tell this story from any point of view.

Silence, according to Khoury's Hebrew translator Yehouda Shenhav, functions as a "root metaphor" in the novel.[14] Indeed, there is a focus on silence in each of the articles in this section that speaks to the difficulty of narrating the events of the Nakba and the Holocaust together. But Khoury also seems to be after something else in these silences. The urgency of this refusal to speak and to narrate events is driven by both the desire to forget and the fear of forgetting. Forgetfulness, one of the few powers of the powerless, can become a tool of survival. Adam's suicide appears to be the only way out for him. But Khoury's insistence on telling a story that does not want to be told shows the impossibility of forgetting and thus insists on the imperative of telling more stories while also rewriting the ones we cannot be made to understand.

Truth telling through fiction offers possibilities for thinking about events beyond the Holocaust and the Nakba. Representations of atrocity in popular culture, literature, and media, and most especially the iterations of survivors themselves, whether in autobiography, poetry, song, or oral testimony, can offer a fuller picture of displacement and survival. Reading Franz Werfel's *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* and the Hollywood film *Ravished Armenia* about the Armenian genocide, for example, reveal the high stakes in using this approach to study the history of trauma.[15] Are these texts best read as testimony? Literature? Fiction? Entertainment? Pornography? It depends on the question we ask of the text in relationship to and in conversation with other texts. *Forty Days of Musa Dagh* reveals certain truths about the experience of the Armenian genocide despite its status as a fictional account of real events. *Ravished Armenia*, the Hollywood film based on the true-life story of Aurora Mardiganian who escaped the Ottoman Empire as a teenager, offers more complicated truths and shows some of the limits of such an approach. A new version of the film has subtitles and a dramatic classical soundtrack, neither of which conforms to the original. The film is intended to offer evidence of genocide through dramatic storytelling. But this reading of the film also can unnecessarily blur the line between fact and fiction.[16] In the process, Mardiganian's story gets lost. Interviews with her in her later years revealed how what happened to her was representative of an experience of sexual violence that many women like she must have shared.[17] Writers thus face a moral imperative to get it right when fictionalizing true life atrocity events. This burden falls heaviest when making the past speak through the imagined retelling of the traumatic experience of one individual meant to represent the tragedy of an entire people. To access this experience as

[14]Yehouda Shenhav, "Silence on a Sizzling Tin Roof," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 340.

[15]Andrekos Varnava and Trevor Harris, "'It Is Quite Impossible to Receive Them': Saving the Musa Dagh Refugees and the Imperialism of European Humanitarianism," *Journal of Modern History* 90, no. 4 (December 2018): 834–62; Michelle Tusan, *The British Empire and the Armenian Genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2017), 220–21.

[16]Michelle Tusan, "Promises, Promises: The Strange History of Film and the Armenian Genocide," *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 25, 2017.

[17]A. F. Timm discusses the erasure of narratives of sexual violence in the reading of Holocaust victim testimony in "Testimony in Holocaust Historiography" in *Holocaust History and the Readings of Ka-Tzetnik*, ed. A. F. Timm (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 37–66.

a form of historical truth, stories like Adam's and Aurora's must be read and reread against and alongside other representations that reflect and even challenge their individual narratives.

Where does this method of reading and interpretation leave the archive? The recovery of truths from fiction relies on the existence of documented experience accessible only through storytelling. These stories need letters and memoirs from those who experienced the trauma of displacement as much as they need official reports and statistics chronicling how and why an event happened. Similarly, the archive needs storytellers who create new ways of knowing human experience. This is particularly important for events not part of the dominant historical narrative because it offers a unique space to understand trauma as history. The layering of individual stories, real and fictional, shows the complex dynamic of mass violence and the mark it leaves behind on the social and political landscape. It asks us not to take sides and places perpetrators, victims, and observers in a unified and extended historical frame. This methodology also refuses to look for precursors in earlier events in order to show the inevitability of genocide or attempts to read genocide backward, which risks an ahistorical treatment of events.[18] Reading experiences of displacement, belonging, and human suffering beyond the moment of atrocity situates genocide as a process. It also starts to address the vexing question of how to compare these events without losing their historical specificity.[19]

To study genocide as experience means engaging the debate over legal definitions—who is a victim and who is not—as a political claim on moral conscience in order to understand genocide as a modern human problem. In other words, it is not something that happens to me but to us. Understanding genocide and ethnic cleansing as existing in both a historical and a relational context makes it harder to accept the inhumanity of humankind as a series of unfortunate but inevitable events. Most importantly, it means taking mass violence seriously as an agent of history that has played an important role in forging our recent global past.

[18]Ronald Suny, "The Hamidian Massacres, 1894–1897: Disinterring a Buried History," *Études arméniennes contemporaines* 11 (2018): 125–34.

[19]Considering genocides in relation to one another has raised the stakes in terms of how we categorize and understand genocide itself as event and process. Eric Weitz, *A Century of Genocide* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2003).

Roaring Silence

Teresa Koloma Beck

THE *Holocaust and the Nakba*, edited by Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, is an audacious book. In fifteen chapters it revisits two interrelated moments in history, which to this day resonate in conflicts all over the globe. It examines the historical embeddedness of these "foundational catastrophes"[1] and explores how they have shaped political realities, biographies, and family histories in Europe, the Middle East, and beyond. Instead of aiming for a normative high ground, the contributions walk the reader through a thicket of historical situations, illuminating how different and even antithetical processes might be connected through similarities in experience and memory.[2] The book challenges and engages because it articulates resonances and connections between seemingly incommensurable and irreconcilable events. The aim, however, is not to compare or contrast, but to elaborate more generalized insights about specific constellations of conflict, their historical embeddedness, and their articulation in experience and memory. By exploring contradictory and irreconcilable particulars, the book, hence, allows the reader to catch glimpses of the universal.

How does this volume speak to academic discourses in Germany, especially in social science research relating to questions of violence and armed conflict? This is the question I have been invited to discuss in the following pages.

When I received this invitation, I hesitated. *How*, I asked myself, *could a sociologist from Germany legitimately add her voice to a most delicate debate about contentious and painful realities, in whose production German governments and German people had played a decisive and most violent role*? By that time, I already knew the book and had read it with much enthusiasm. Having researched everyday life in war and violent political conflicts for more than a decade, and having lived in (post-)war societies for the purpose of ethnographic research, the volume spoke strongly to methodological, theoretical, and ethical problems I had encountered in my own work. Keenly aware of the role of German governments and German people in the events in question, however, I had read the book as a curious but humble listener. How was I to become part of the conversation?

My doubts were mirrored and reinforced by the reactions of colleagues with whom I tried to share my enthusiasm for the volume. They ranged from surprise to profound irritation—frequently already the title was deemed a challenge or provocation. The responses converged in the assessment that the topic was delicate and better left alone.[3] To this day, there have

[1]Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, "Introduction: The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Syntax of History, Memory, and Political Thought," in *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History*, ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2019), 2.

[2]Yochi Fischer, "What Does Exile Look Like? Transformations in the Linkage Between the Shoa and the Nakba," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 173.

[3]Other titles that place the Holocaust in a comparative horizon elicit similar reaction, for example, Kitty Millet, *The Victims of Slavery, Colonization, and the Holocaust: A Comparative History of Persecution* (London: Bloomsbury, 2017).

been no broader debates about the volume, and—to the best of my knowledge—not even a book review in a major German-language publication.[4] Outside of historical research on memory politics and the Holocaust, few people in Germany seem to be aware of the book's existence. My own doubts aside, the question I was invited to consider thus seems to have a short and straightforward answer: How does *The Holocaust and the Nakba* resonate in Germany?—It doesn't.

The reception of scholarly books depends, of course, on many contingencies. In this case, however, I would argue that the absence of reviews and debate is a silence of the telling kind. Instead of relating how the volume connects to scholarly debates in Germany, I will, therefore, attempt to understand muteness and disconnections in what follows.

Reconfiguring Narratives and the Framework of Debate

Broadly speaking, the project undertaken in *The Holocaust and the Nakba* is one of narrative reconfiguration. The volume aims to reframe the debate on both events so as to mitigate the need for the denial of the Other's suffering, to create a "syntax and grammar of history and memory in which the combination 'Holocaust and Nakba' or 'Nakba and Holocaust' makes historical, cultural and political sense."[5] The editors are well aware that "making sense" does not mean creating harmony or immediate mutual understanding. The conversation they stimulate is fraught with moments of disruption and pain. Yet this is the only viable route toward developing a shared "language of historical reconciliation between the two peoples."[6] Although chiefly set in a framework of historical analysis, the volume is an intervention into an urgent present.

With their focus on narrative patterns and discursive frameworks, the editors and contributors shift emphasis from the quest for historical "truth" to problems of intersubjectivity and communicability. This perspective resonates with approaches in conflict and violence research after the linguistic and narrative turns, which emphasize that the stories we tell about conflicts are part of the dynamics of conflicts themselves, and therefore highly relevant.[7] It also connects to debates in sociological science and technology studies (STS) about the ontological or "worldmaking" effects of research.[8] Scientific inquiry, the argument goes, participates in those communicative processes that configure imaginaries and establish

[4]The only somewhat relevant reference I could find was an English review on *H-Soz-Kult*, the major platform for historical research in Germany, of an earlier collection of working papers published in Hebrew under the same title: Alon Confino, "Rezension zu: The Holocaust and the Nakba: Memory, National Identity and Jewish-Arab Partnership," ed. Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, Jerusalem 2015, in *H-Soz-Kult*, April 22, 2016 (https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-24083).

[5]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 5.

[6]Bashir and Goldberg, "Introduction," 8.

[7]See, for example, Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap H. de Wilde, *Security: A New Framework for Analysis* (Boulder, CO: Rienner, 1998).

[8]For a concise elaboration of the general argument, see John Law and John Urry, "Enacting the Social," *Economy and Society* 33, no. 3 (2004): 390–410. For an application to violent conflicts in world society, see Craig Calhoun, "A World of Emergencies: Fear, Intervention, and the Limits of Cosmopolitan Order," *Canadian Review of Sociology/Revue canadienne de sociologie* 41, no. 4 (2004): 373–95; Teresa Koloma Beck, "Welterzeugung. Gewaltsoziologie als kritische Gesellschaftstheorie," *Zeitschrift für Theoretische Soziologie* 8, no. 1 (2019): 12–23. A major philosophical reference for these debates is Nelson Goodman, *Ways of Worldmaking* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1978).

the spaces of what is thinkable and debatable in any given society, and in doing so enacts specific realities.

The collective expedition into this contentious terrain is undertaken not in closed formation but in individual and at times very personal quests. The book deliberately seeks to open up a variety of angles and connections through which to explore "Holocaust and Nakba" or "Nakba and Holocaust." The contributions share the understanding that these two historical moments are connected by more than causal sequence. They are considered to be the product of long-term developments in European history: the rise of (ethno-)nationalism on the one hand and colonial expansion on the other. Underlying these developments were narratives of Modernity and progress, in whose name violent policies were justified. These macro-historical dynamics and overarching discursive structures are the focus of part 1 of the book. Another strong line of analysis refers to the entanglements of the Holocaust and the Nakba in biographies and family histories. Such juxtapositions of the personal and the political, the historical and the biographical, are mainly explored in parts 2 and 3. These contributions trace how historical moments come to be connected in the experience and memory of historical subjects, as they are forced to integrate politically irreconcilable events into their life histories. In some chapters, the authors make their personal entanglement with their research topics transparent and explore how their own life histories and experiences can be made productive in processes of research and analysis. Part 4, finally, discusses questions of language and translation in multilingual contentious political spaces.

Unsurprisingly, this polyphonic and decentered inquiry does not result in some *new* narrative on "the Holocaust and the Nakba" or "the Nakba and the Holocaust." And such a thing never was intended. The book's main contribution is not to be found on the level of content, but on the level of method and process. The volume unsettles and reconfigures narratives and imaginaries by recontextualizing stories and events. The chapters provide new frameworks or lenses through which we can "read" anew all-too-familiar processes and problems. But they do not converge toward a unified perspective. Although the texts clearly speak *to* each other as topics reoccur,[9] dissonances and incongruities between them remain. The book thus appears like an exercise in what Donna Haraway calls "mobile positioning,"[10] a methodological strategy for analyzing contentious realities in a globalized world. Because the contributions are not just additive or complementary, but can also be read against one another, they also demonstrate on a formal level the importance of *construction* at work in any research (or narration).

Although its title might suggest comparison between two historical events, the book is in fact an exemplar of *Histoire croisée*[11] and multi-sited/-situated research.[12] The methodological and theoretical problems discussed as well as the insights gained transcend the specific

[9]Recurring topics of the book are, for example, the problem of memory in divided societies; the importance of literature and art as sites in which to articulate and confront incommensurable memories of identical events; inter- and trans-generational dynamics and conflicts; and the integrating effects of joint participation in broader struggles as, for example, in socialist or communist movements.

[10]Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective," *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (1988): 585.

[11]Michael Werner and Bénédicte Zimmermann, "Beyond Comparison: *Histoire Croisée* and the Challenge of Reflexivity," *History and Theory* 45, no. 1 (2006): 30–50.

[12]George E. Marcus, "Ethnography in/of the World System: The Emergence of Multi-Sited Ethnography," *Annual Review of Anthropology* 24 (1995): 95–117; Haraway, "Situated Knowledges."

historical objects of analysis. The volume, thus, shows how questions of universality can be pursued by analytically connecting dissimilar particularities.

Explaining Silence

How is it that this book, which clearly speaks to current theoretical and methodological debates in various disciplines, which has been published by a major university press, and which treats empirical topics to which German audiences have been hardly indifferent, receives so little attention in Germany?

Despite the many contingencies at work in the reception of academic publications, I would argue that, in this case, the silence surrounding the book is neither chance nor hazard. It is produced by social and political processes, which are themselves a topic of the volume. Discussing Elias Khoury's novel *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*, Raef Zreik argues that in this novel the author had found a form to articulate an incommunicable perspective and that, in this sense, the book's central achievement was to productively engage with silence. Zreik observes: "Muteness results from the impossibility of airing a version of events within the dominant discourse. This discourse sets the limits of what can and cannot be said. It does not forbid, prohibit, or suppress an expression outright, rather it fails to recognize the semiotic move, and thus the act of silencing is itself made silent and invisible."[13] This kind of silence is produced by collective imaginaries, which set boundaries to what can be meaningfully communicated and understood. In the collective imaginaries that condition dominant public discourses in Germany, there is no place for a subject like "the Holocaust and the Nakba." To account for this situation, entanglements between research and politics are as important to understand as are properly scholarly problems relating to structural aspects of Holocaust research in Germany.

Entanglements of Research and Memory Politics

Although the history of the Holocaust, the history of Israel, and current affairs in Israel-Palestine are contentious subjects in many parts of the world, they are particularly delicate in the German context. The reason is simple. The Holocaust is the foundational catastrophe not only in Israeli but also in postwar German history. Confrontation with the legacy of National Socialist extermination policies conditions the development of all German postwar states. After the disregard and denial of the immediate postwar period, acknowledging the gravity and the singularity of the Holocaust became the cornerstone of Germany's political stance. Definitively, the consensus was established in the so-called *Historikerstreit* (historians' controversy) in the late 1980s, in which a younger generation of liberal historians successfully countered increasingly vocal nationalistic discourses in their own discipline as well as the general public. The objective was to assert, contrary to revisionist tendencies, the irrevocable centrality of the Holocaust to the German national narrative.

Since then, academic debates have moved on. Stimulated, for example, by the growing importance of global and connected history, the focus on national concerns broadened.[14] These advances in research, however, were hardly mirrored in public discourse. There,

[13]Raef Zreik, "Writing Silence: Reading Khoury's Novel *Children of the Ghetto: My Name is Adam*," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba,* 310–11.

[14]Aleida Assmann, *Das neue Unbehagen an der Erinnerungskultur. Eine Intervention* (Munich: Beck, 2013).

the Holocaust remained relevant primarily as the cornerstone of a national narrative in a nation of perpetrators.

Against this background, neither the Holocaust nor the history of the State of Israel or the Nakba are "ordinary" research subjects. Discussing them means entering the contentious terrain of memory politics and memory culture, where scholarly analysis risks entanglement and collision with political public discourse. Doron Rabinovici and Natan Sznaider have pointed out that "antisemitism and the memory of the Holocaust have melted into one system of thinking and acting"[15] and that under such circumstances research and debate not only on the Holocaust itself, but also on related topics such as Zionism, the history of the State of Israel, or the Nakba become difficult. Analysis risks being suffocated as it is constantly challenged in a "rhetoric of suspicion."[16]

The silence surrounding Bashir and Goldberg's book is due in good part to the discouraging effects of these factors on research. The book is at odds with the core principle of memory politics in Germany. As it situates the Holocaust in the context of broader historical developments, connecting it with the experiences of people in other places during different times—most notably, but not exclusively the Nakba—it proposes a seemingly impossible, unthinkable subject.

These conditions in which the political environment of research takes place are crucial. Yet, to explain the silence surrounding *The Holocaust and the Nakba* in Germany, properly scientific factors play a role, too. Of particular importance is a disciplinary division of labor, according to which research on the Holocaust is the domain of history, while the social sciences—as they deal with society in its present state—can neglect this "historical" subject. The persistence of this understanding is all the more surprising given, since the late 1990s, social science research on political and mass violence in Germany has developed into a vibrant and innovative field.

The Strange Presence of the Holocaust in War and Violence Research

Already in the late 1980s, the sociologist Zygmunt Bauman pointed out that the preeminence of history in Holocaust research is problematic. In his book *The Holocaust and Modernity*, he elaborated that this disciplinary division of labor risks neglecting or even downplaying the relevance of Nazi mass violence for the present. Delegating the Holocaust to the discipline that by definition deals with things past supports narratives according to which the Holocaust was an aberration of Modernity, an accident in the history of progress, a temporary anomaly. Countering this narrative, Bauman elaborated how Modernity itself had made the Holocaust possible and concluded that the disciplines that had made modern society their primary concern, that is, the social sciences, should study it. Their blindness to the subject, he argued, resulted from their own entanglement in the history of Modernity. Having incorporated modern society's self-description as being genuinely more peaceful than others, they did not recognize the Holocaust as a research subject of systematic relevance.[17]

[15]Doron Rabinovici and Natan Sznaider, "Neuer Antisemitismus. Die Verschärfung einer Debatte," in *Neuer Antisemitismus? Fortsetzung einer globalen Debatte*, ed. Christian Heilbronn, Doron Rabinovici, and Natan Sznaider (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019), 12; my translation.

[16]Rabinovici and Sznaider, "Neuer Antisemitismus," 11; my translation.

[17]Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge and Malden: Polity Press, 1989).

In a more general epistemological perspective, Bauman's work demonstrates how the disciplinary context affects the *meaning* of subjects of research. He elaborates how disciplinary epistemologies situate topics in distinct frameworks of temporality, and in doing so configure their relation to contemporary realities. Although history enacts the Holocaust as a subject of memory politics and memory culture, social science perspectives are needed to elaborate its relevance as a present concern. According to Bauman, the most important task was to account for the inherent possibility of mass violence in theories of society because the latter shape sociological imaginaries. In this sense, his study can be read as an attempt to work against the muteness of his own discipline, as an effort to reconfigure what is sociologically thinkable.

Within the social sciences in Germany, the impact of Bauman's work was significant. It provided the basis for the formation of a new field of research dedicated to the study of violence as part of the past and present of Modernity.[18] This new sociology of violence (*Neuere Gewaltsoziologie*) stimulated challenging theoretical debates and connected analyses of violence to theories of social order and everyday life, to sociologies of organization and state formation, to the sociology of space and the sociology of the body. It also produced a wealth of empirical studies. On a conceptual level, this was exactly what Bauman had called for.

Due to various contingencies, however, Nazi violence and the Holocaust silently disappeared from this new research agenda. Scholars in the field took Bauman's struggle against the violence-blindness of social sciences to a new site: the internationalized conflicts in the postcolonial Global South. While Bauman had challenged the narrative of the Holocaust as an accident in the history of Modernity, other scholars called into question narratives about "new wars" and the barbarization of conflicts in Africa and Asia.[19] While Bauman had argued against the narrative encapsulation of mass violence in anomalous times, new violence sociology argued against narratives that ascribed mass violence to certain anomalous places.[20] In this process, Nazi violence and the Holocaust, which earlier had played an important role,[21] moved toward the margins of the field's empirical focus.[22]

The success of Bauman's book was, thus, ambivalent. His work stimulated the transformation of social science research on war and violence in Germany; it encouraged methodological perspectives that connected the analysis of present realities to historical processes. Paradoxically, however, the study of the Holocaust did not profit significantly from these

[18] Among the seminal works are Trutz von Trotha, "Zur Soziologie der Gewalt," in *Soziologie der Gewalt*, ed. Trutz von Trotha (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1997), 9–56; Jan Philipp Reemtsma, *Vertrauen und Gewalt. Versuch über eine besondere Konstellation der Moderne* (Hamburg: Hamburger Edition, 2008).

[19] Mary Kaldor, *New and Old Wars: Organized Violence in a Global Era* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999).

[20] For a detailed discussion of this shift, see Koloma Beck, "Welterzeugung."

[21] Wolfgang Sofsky, *Die Ordnung des Terrors. Das Konzentrationslager* (Frankfurt/Main: Fischer, 1993).

[22] The few studies relating to National Socialist violence were insightful, but did not receive the same attention as other works in the field: Michaela Christ and Maja Suderland, eds., *Soziologie und Nationalsozialismus. Positionen, Debatten, Perspektiven* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014); Maja Suderland, *Ein Extremfall des Sozialen. Die Häftlingsgesellschaft in den nationalsozialistischen Konzentrationslagern* (Frankfurt/Main: Campus, 2009); Sonja Schnitzler, *Soziologie im Nationalsozialismus zwischen Wissenschaft und Politik. Elisabeth Pfeil und das "Archiv für Bevölkerungswissenschaft und Bevölkerungspolitik"* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2012). Only a study from organization sociology stimulated broader debates: Stefan Kühl, *Ganz normale Organisationen. Zur Soziologie des Holocaust* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2014).

achievements. As a consequence, the Holocaust itself as well as related issues such as antisemitism or Zionism or the Nakba have remained niche topics and never reached the mainstream of social science disciplines. In the major relevant journals in the German language, these topics are virtually non-existent.[23] The research undertaken in Germany is published in English rather than in German—not only to reach larger audiences but also to avoid the political minefield described previously.

Although war and violence research learned to insightfully connect the analysis of contemporary armed conflicts with the historical sociology of colonialism and Empire, the contact zones between research on the Holocaust and the study of contemporary antisemitism or current affairs in the Middle East are limited. Research is organized by what Nadim Khoury in his contribution to the Bashir/Goldberg book calls "narrative partition."[24] Topics are treated in isolation from one another in different fields and disciplines, by different people and in different perspectives. Narrative partition discursively conceals relations and connections and therefore makes it difficult to articulate experiences and memories in which such links are central. It contributes to silence by making it "impossible to develop a version of events due to the grammar dominating the field … the field itself suppresses by not permitting the account to emerge from within in the first place."[25]

Social science theories and methods could enact the Holocaust as embedded in the social realities of global Modernity and connected to stories and histories in other places at other times, for example to the Nakba. Such intellectual engagement could help to overcome the inertness of public debates, which are stuck in the state of research of the late 1980s. In its absence, however, the Holocaust remains first and foremost a subject of memory politics and memory culture, that is, a past event, which is important and needs to be remembered, but which is, most importantly, over.

(Dis-)Connections

Bringing more of the complexities present in historical research on the Holocaust to public debates in Germany seems important not only from a scholarly point of view. In the past sixty years, not least due to several waves of immigration from southern Europe, the Middle East, Asia, and Africa, Germany has become an increasingly diverse society[26] and home to people whose life or family histories have been marked by different, but no less painful, foundational catastrophes. Some might argue that these demographic changes threaten or undermine the centrality of the Holocaust in the

[23] I searched the abstracts and titles of original articles in the major relevant social science journals in the German language since 1997. See *Politische Vierteljahresschrift* and *Zeitschrift für Internationale Beziehungen* (political sciences), *Zeitschrift für Soziologie*, *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie* and *Soziale Welt* (sociology), *Zeitschrift für Ethnologie* (social and cultural anthropology), *Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung* (interdisciplinary peace and conflict studies), and *Leviathan* (interdisciplinary social sciences). Mentions of the Holocaust, Israel, Palestine, or antisemitism varied between six (*Politische Vierteljahresschrift*) and zero (*Zeitschrift für Friedens- und Konfliktforschung*). As in German social sciences, books continue to be an important format of publication, this overview is, however, but a rough indication of major trends.

[24] Nadim Khoury, "Holocaust/Nakba and the Counterpublic of Memory," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, 115.

[25] Zreik, "Writing Silence," 311.

[26] In 2018, one in four people living in Germany were migrants, children, or grandchildren of migrants; numbers rise for younger generations, up to 38 percent for children younger than five. The political scientist Naika Foroutan has coined the term *postmigratory society* to refer to this condition. See Naika Foroutan, *Die postmigrantische Gesellschaft. Ein Versprechen der pluralen Demokratie* (Bielefeld: transcript, 2019).

national narrative. Yet this is shortsighted. The growing diversity of German society lends new and present relevance to remembering and intellectually engaging with the legacy of a period of German history in which the eradication of diversity became a cornerstone of state politics.

As new voices appear, however, the conversation will not stay the same. To the new participants in this national debate, the Holocaust is relevant not because it is the history of their forefathers and foremothers, but as a crucial moment in global history that affects perceptions and experiences of other events. Within scholarly research, this relevance of the Holocaust in the memory of global Modernity is widely acknowledged.[27] Yet, as already pointed out, the imaginary of public discourses has not expanded in the same way. In Germany, Holocaust remembrance continues to be a soliloquy among the descendants of perpetrators. Germans with different family histories appear in these rituals and discourses only insofar as they serve them these established narratives—for example, in the role of the Jewish victim or the Muslim antisemite—but not as actors in their own right with distinct perspectives and concerns.[28] And similar to how Yochi Fischer describes Nakba remembrance in Israel, these self-referential tendencies have grown stronger as historical distance from the events has increased.[29]

A public scandal unfolding while I was working on this article acutely illustrates the disconnect between Germany's increasing transnational embeddedness and its memory culture. At the center of the affair was the historian and philosopher Achille Mbembe, one of the few internationally well-known scholars from Africa. He had visited Germany frequently, hosted by academic and cultural institutions. In 2020, he had been invited to deliver the opening speech of the *Ruhrtriennale*, the largest art festival in the federal state of North Rhine-Westphalia. Then suddenly, he was publicly denounced as an antisemite hostile to Israel.

The accusations were first brought forward by a delegate in the North Rhine-Westphalian state parliament, for whom critique of the African scholar was chiefly a means to resume an older dispute with the head of the art festival. But the accusations quickly gained national momentum as they were taken up by the Federal Government Commissioner for Jewish Life in Germany and the Fight Against Antisemitism, who publicly demanded that the invitation be revoked. The critics mainly referred to two of Mbembe's oeuvres: first, his book *Necropolitics*,[30] in which the author explores different forms of violent rule in recent history and in doing so discusses the Holocaust in the same analytical categories as the South African apartheid state; and second, a foreword, written in the form of a travelogue, to the volume *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy*.[31] Their readings of these texts were apparently selective, and harsh accusations were derived from the interpretation of isolated sentences.

Within a month, this dispute grew into a political and intellectual controversy of transnational scale. National newspapers and radio stations stimulated the debate. Two open letters were published in direct support of Mbembe, signed by almost one hundred scholars from different countries, including some of the contributors to the volume edited by Bashir and

[27] Most importantly, see Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

[28] For an ardent essayistic critique of this practice, see Max Czollek, *Desintegriert Euch* (Munich: Carl Hanser Verlag, 2018).

[29] Fischer, "What Does Exile Look Like?", 173–86.

[30] Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

[31] Sean Jacobs and Jon Soske, *Apartheid Israel: The Politics of an Analogy* (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2015).

Goldberg.[32] A third open letter published in the wake of these events and signed by more than four hundred international scholars and artists criticized the shrinking spaces for advocacy for Palestinian rights in Germany more generally.[33] Going into the details and the evolution of this controversy would be interesting but is beyond the scope of this article. The very constellation of events, however, illustrates how far Holocaust remembrance in Germany *is* already globalized, even though this is not acknowledged in dominant public discourse.

Critics of Mbembe tended to stage this debate as a confrontation of or competition between the memory of the Holocaust and the memory of colonialism, which politically poses an "old" Germany against a "new" one. This polarization can flourish in a discursive environment that represents the Holocaust and colonialism as two isolated subjects and ignores the extent to which they are connected in the history of global Modernity as well as in the flow of biographies and family histories—a topic that is central to the Bashir/Goldberg book.

In his first detailed response to the allegations against him, Achille Mbembe also stressed this point. Under the heading "Living in the Myths of Others: A Letter to the Germans,"[34] he emphasized the insecurity and riskiness involved in exploring the global entanglements of collective experiences of suffering. Such inquiries are like a journey that "forces us to leave the comfort zone of the familiar and to consciously expose ourselves to the danger of upsetting our certainties."[35] Perceptively, he added that the urge to throw oneself into such intellectual endeavors might be "a peculiarity of those who were born somewhere, left early, and never came back."[36] Mbembe explained that the current polarization was the opposite of what he had tried to achieve. To him, the intellectual engagement with a variety of distinct, yet structurally similar moments in history is a way to envision a truly shared world. "Today, we all need to ask ourselves whether the suffering of a people is owned by this people alone and only that people can relate to it. Is it possible to share the communality of the memory of the world, and under which conditions?"[37] These words by the African intellectual echo Elias Khoury's foreword to the Bashir/Goldberg volume. There, the novelist argues that exploring the Holocaust and the Nakba together is important to establish the relevance of both events in the collective memory of humankind.[38]

[32]The first letter, *Aufruf Felix Klein als Beauftragten der Bundesregierung für den Kampf gegen Antisemitismus zu ersetzen*, was published on April 30, 2020, and signed by thirty-seven Jewish scholars and artists from Israel and other countries. It was addressed to the German Minister of the Interior and demanded Felix Klein's removal from office as a federal government commissioner for Jewish Life (https://www.dropbox.com/s/grroe59qdd92q2s/Aufruf%20an%20Bundesminister%20Seehofer.pdf?dl=0). The second letter, *Aufruf: Solidarität mit Achille Mbembe*, from May 1, 2020, declared solidarity with Mbembe; it was signed by fifty-nine international scholars specializing in the history of racism, antisemitism, National Socialism, and colonialism, many of them working in Germany (https://www.dropbox.com/s/idp56qbs3wh4k05/Aufruf%20-%20Solidarität%20mit%20Achille%20Mbembe.pdf?dl=0&fbclid=IwAR2n2F_SkTE--cKjDQqs08x6d2Zl2UyLj5YSZ2Rh6Ppz7WjSCE10TRFF06E).

[33]Published on May 11, 2020, under the heading *Opposing Political Litmus Test: Scholars and Cultural Figures Stand Against Silencing of Advocates for Palestinian Rights in Germany*, the signatories warn against the politicization of juries, prize committees, or academic hiring boards (https://nopoliticallitmustests.wordpress.com).

[34]Achille Mbembe, "Leben in den Mythen anderer. Brief an die Deutschen," *taz.de*, 2020 (https://taz.de/Leben-in-den-Mythen-anderer/!5681758/).

[35]Mbembe, "Leben in den Mythen anderer"; my translation.

[36]Mbembe, "Leben in den Mythen anderer."

[37]Mbembe, "Leben in den Mythen anderer."

[38]Elias Khoury, "Foreword," in Bashir and Goldberg, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, xv.

Research and Courage

In a book-length interview about his life and his work published in 1990, the sociologist Norbert Elias argued that social science research should fearlessly face realities. Recounting how, in the early 1930s, he had attended a Hitler rally in Frankfurt out of an urgent intellectual interest, he concludes: "There should be more people like me, who are not afraid of what they might discover."[39] A Holocaust survivor and émigré who had dedicated his major works to the historical sociology of the modern condition, Elias knew something about intellectual ventures that produce unnerving new questions and exposed old wounds.

The Holocaust and the Nakba is a book that is daring in Elias's sense. Its aim is not closure. It tries to irritate and shake established imaginaries and frameworks so as to stimulate conversations and from them develop new perspectives. This is what makes the book highly relevant to current debates in Germany. The perspectives unfolding throughout its pages transcend the perpetrator-centered frameworks that still dominate German public discourses. Moreover, the book demonstrates how researchers' biographical entanglements with the historical events in question can be made productive in methodologies of self-reflexion and dialogue. The volume leaves no doubt that this is an unnerving and potentially painful exercise that poses challenges beyond the intellectual sphere. But without leaving the parochial comfort zones of unchallenged perspectives, a shared world cannot be achieved.

[39]Norbert Elias, *Über Sich Selbst* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1990), 63; my translation.

Multidirectional Memories and Entangled Histories

Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg

Our book, *The Holocaust and the Nakba*, and this forum touch on particularly sensitive issues— academic, political, ethical, emotional, and existential. We are thus grateful to the six respondents for having accepted the challenge of critically engaging with this book. We would especially like to thank the journal *Central European History* and its editor, Monica Black, for the courage and intellectual integrity entailed in initiating and hosting this forum.

The respondents have given us a great deal to think about and have raised many points worthy of reply and discussion. Naturally, we are unable to respond to all in this brief response, or to respond on behalf of the other authors who contributed to our book. We hope that these authors will find other opportunities and venues to continue this discussion.

In general, all of the respondents seem to have tended to see the book as a contribution to the discussion of memory, but were more doubtful—some more than others—regarding its contribution to understanding the history of the two events themselves. Indeed, the issue of memory is crucial to our project. For many Palestinians and Israelis, from the 1940s onward, the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba intertwine, both directly and indirectly. Consciously and unconsciously, these memories influence one another and shape perceptions of the Arab-Israeli conflict. It is these multidirectional memories that we and many of the book's authors have started to expose.[1] We also believe that this kind of multidirectional memory, the importance of which was evident to all of the respondents, has the potential to lead to greater understanding between Israelis and Palestinians. We suggest the concept of "empathic unsettlement," on which we elaborated in the book's introduction, as a key to such understanding.

These memories always act within a system of power relations, one that is blatantly asymmetrical. As Doris Bergen stresses in her contribution to this forum, many people are prepared to accept such asymmetry in power relations in virtually every other situation of mass violence. Many recognize the power relations involved in knowledge and memory in the cases of whites and Blacks, North Americans of European and those of indigenous descent, and so forth. In the context of Israel/Palestine, nevertheless, many tend to refuse to acknowledge the asymmetry and its inevitable epistemological ramification—supposedly, because things are more "complicated" in this case. Bergen's enlightening article is an exercise in applying the same ethical and epistemological frameworks many of us use in other discussions of asymmetrical power relations in history and memory to the context of Israel/Palestine—especially in the pedagogical setting of higher education. Bergen raises a question that reverberates throughout the entire volume: How do we write a common history of events and memory while recognizing the lack of symmetry between the

We wish to thank Alon Confino, Lena Salaymeh, A. Dirk Moses, Raz Segal, and Nadim Khoury for their valuable comments on this article.

[1]Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009).

groups involved and the ethical dilemmas that this asymmetry presents? The dilemma is real, but we acknowledge that there is no one answer to it.

We are of the opinion, however, that the connection between the Holocaust and the Nakba is not only a matter of memory, but also of history. In fact, we reject the dichotomous distinction between history and memory. We would therefore like to begin from the clear and unequivocal point of departure we created many years ago, when we started working together. Despite the significant differences between the two events—a point we stress repeatedly in the book's introduction and in all of our writings on the subject—the historical connection between the Holocaust and the Nakba is inescapable. It is not a radical choice motivated by "political activism," as Laura Jockusch intimates. The proximity of the events, the historical continuity between them, and the fact that Jews were central historical subjects in both (albeit in very different positions) make it impossible to separate them. We are convinced that any attempt to claim that there is no historical connection between the two events, or to see such a connection as little more than political whim—worthy of admiration or denunciation (depending on the reader's political orientation)—misses the crux of our argument, and fails to address, for seemingly extraneous reasons, the manner in which the history of the 1930s and 1940s unfolded.

Historical Connections

The Holocaust ended in 1945. The Nakba occurred in 1948. From the perspective of Jewish history, they exist along a single continuum. Because the development of Zionism and the establishment of the State of Israel cannot be understood in isolation from the events in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s, and because the Nakba is a central and indivisible, albeit unpleasant, part of modern Jewish history and the history of Zionism and the State of Israel, the events are inexorably bound to each other. This should be common sense—just as, for example, the history of Poland during World War II cannot be separated from postwar Polish history.

As some of the book's contributing authors and some of the participants in this forum have noted, between one-third and one-half of the Jewish Yishuv/Israel fighting force in 1948 comprised Holocaust survivors (broadly defined). If the story of the survivors is the last chapter of the story of the Holocaust—as assumed by much of mainstream Holocaust historiography—then the Nakba, which was perpetrated by some of these survivors and by the state that absorbed them, is integral to that story. The Nakba is, therefore, part of post-Holocaust Jewish history and part of the last chapter of the history of some Holocaust survivors.[2]

The connection between the events, however, appears to run much deeper. There is no doubt that World War II and the Holocaust exerted a decisive influence on postwar leaders—on the Jewish side, on the Arab side, and around the world. Dimitry Shumsky, for example, has recently shown how various forms of binationalism and autonomism enjoyed considerable support until the mid-1930s, even among prominent mainstream Zionist leaders, such as Ze'ev Jabotinsky, David Ben-Gurion, and Berl Katznelson.[3] Over the course of the 1930s and 1940s, with the rise of the Nazis to power in Germany, the consolidation of antisemitic

[2]We thank Debórah Dwork for the sharp articulation of this notion.

[3]Dimitry Shumsky, *Beyond the Nation-State: The Zionist Political Imagination from Pinsker to Ben-Gurion* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018).

regimes in Europe, the Arab Revolt, and the Holocaust, the view that only an exclusive Jewish nation-state would satisfy the political aspirations of the Zionist movement and meet the real needs of Jews came to dominate the Zionist mainstream. It was at the Biltmore Conference of 1942, held in the shadow of grave reports from Europe (although the extent of the catastrophe was not yet clear), that Ben-Gurion first declared that the goal of the Zionist movement was to establish an exclusive Jewish commonwealth in Palestine. The proliferation of such an idea was greatly reinforced after the Holocaust. Many Holocaust survivors and the Zionist movement that helped them settle in Palestine imagined the new land as one in which Jews would finally live only among themselves and enjoy exclusive sovereignty. These positions did not lead deterministically to the Nakba, but were certainly among the factors that enabled it, because a country in which 45 percent of the inhabitants are Palestinian Arabs—as the State of Israel would have been according to the UN Partition Plan of 1947—was incompatible with these needs and aspirations.

Moreover, the Arab Revolt itself (1936–1939), which had a considerable impact on the development of the Arab-Israeli conflict, was largely the result of large-scale Jewish immigration to Palestine, particularly from Nazi Germany and nationalist Poland in the 1930s. The Peel Commission of 1937 (headed by Lord Robert Peel), appointed in the midst of these events, stemmed from the legacy of the Lausanne Conference (1922–1923), at which the British foreign secretary, Lord Curzon, raised the idea of compulsory "population exchange" as a method of conflict resolution. Indeed, the Peel Commission was the first to formally propose separation and population transfer as solutions to the worsening conflict between Zionists and Palestinians. Consequently, as Nimrod Lin has recently shown, politico-demographic discourse gained traction among leaders of the prestate Zionist settlement (Jewish Yishuv), largely rendering the idea of "transfer"—or what we today would call "ethnic cleansing"—legitimate and realistic. The connection between the events in Europe in the 1930s and 1940s and the importation of ideas of population transfer is thus patently clear.[4]

We could cite many more causal and contextual links, like those we briefly alluded to in the introduction to *The Holocaust and the Nakba* (also addressed, for example, by Geoff Eley in his article in this forum), regarding the problem of refugees after the war. The concept of repatriation, which dominated European reconstruction efforts (alongside expulsions and massive population shifts, particularly in central and eastern Europe), was ill-suited to resolving the problem of Jewish refugees, who experienced virulent antisemitism after the Holocaust, especially in eastern Europe. The UN Partition resolution of November 1947—viewed by the Arabs as a criminal expression of Western colonialism, granting (with the complete support of the Soviet Union and its satellites) land that was not its own to recently arrived settlers—was largely a response to the Jewish refugee problem in Europe. This resolution was also the trigger for the violence, in the context of which the Nakba occurred.

How, then, can we separate such proximate and dramatic events in Jewish and Arab history? Although the Holocaust and its broader context are not the only or the most important factor in understanding the Nakba, they are central and significant factors that cannot be

[4]Nimrod Lin, "The Arithmetic of Rights: Zionist Intellectuals Imagining the Arab Minority May–July 1938," *Middle Eastern Studies* 54, no. 6 (2018): 948–64. See also Gil Rubin, "Vladimir Jabotinsky and Population Transfers between Eastern Europe and Palestine," *Historical Journal* 62, no. 2 (2019): 495–517.

ignored. Had the events of the 1930s and 1940s not occurred, the Nakba may not have occurred either. *So even if one rejects the specific connections that we have sought to establish between the two events, there is no escaping their linkage; it thus behooves critics to put forward their own proposals about the relationship.* Given the preponderance of the empirical relationship, any attempt to eschew this inevitable connection represents an attempt to marginalize the Nakba as a historical event of ethnic cleansing worthy of study in its own right. Such attempts reflect the problematic view that the Nakba is nothing more than collateral damage, regrettable perhaps, but secondary to the truly important historical event—the establishment of the State of Israel—and, in any event, the result of Arab and especially Palestinian rejection of the Partition Plan.

The Nakba, as an ongoing national catastrophe, did not only bring fundamental change to the Palestinian people, Jewish history, and the Middle East. Arguably, the long-standing conflict in the Middle East, which is largely a result of the Nakba (although it began much earlier) also had a real effect on world history. We therefore argue that the Nakba is a significant event in Arab, Palestinian, Jewish, Zionist, and world history, and is connected, in one way or another, to the Holocaust that occurred only a few years earlier. In our opinion, questioning these two observations signifies taking an ideological position, in the sense that it rejects widely accepted methods in defining and understanding historical events and processes and the connections among them.

Unfortunately, the close connections between these two events have barely been studied. Yair Auron's *The Holocaust, Rebirth, and the Nakba* (2017) is an exception in the field of history, and Elias Khoury's books (from *Gate of the Sun* to the *Children of the Ghetto* trilogy—*My Name is Adam*, *Star of the Sea*, and the final volume, which has not yet been published) are exceptions in the field of literature. There are also some works in the field of memory studies. In our book, we sought to offer a number of conceptual frameworks within which this joint discussion might take place.

We are conscious of the criticism expressed by Geoff Eley in this forum, also intimated by Philipp Ther and Michelle Tusan, that the book offers little in the way of empirical historical research, with most of its chapters focusing on issues pertaining to literature, art, and cultural and intellectual history. We would like to stress two fundamental points here. First, Arabs and Jews writing a book together on equal footing is practically a chimera in the present reality. The number of authors willing to take the risk and face the challenge of grappling with the connection between the Holocaust and the Nakba naturally limited the selection of themes. In this sense, editing the book as a collective project was no simple task (as Geoff Eley acknowledges). What is more, and this is a far more significant point, the book is an invitation to initiate a discussion of the inescapable connections between the Holocaust and the Nakba in a variety of disciplines and from a wide range of perspectives. It seeks to open a number of different channels of discussion of what Ethan Katz (and many others) have termed, albeit in a slightly different but certainly relevant context, "entangled histories."[5] It is our hope that, in the wake of this book and other writings, research on this subject will also progress along more empirical historical lines. Such studies might focus not only on the historical connections in the Jewish and colonial context, but in the Palestinian context as well.

[5]Ethan Katz, "An Imperial Entanglement: Anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and Colonialism," *American Historical Review* 123, no. 4 (October 2018): 1190–209.

The shared history we identify in our book is not only political and military. As Michelle Tusan notes in this forum, the history of experience and mentalities is no less important. This unravels the dichotomy between history and memory proposed by Jockusch becuase the way in which historical agents experience and understand the reality in which they live, the imagery and symbols they draw upon, their aspirations, moral decisions, fears, and the memories they use, are all a part of history, but also significantly affect its course. Jockusch herself is well aware of this, as she has shown in her brilliant study of the first testimonies of survivors after the Holocaust (*Collect and Record! Jewish Holocaust Documentation in Early Postwar Europe* [2012]). The stories of Genya and Henryk Kowalski (of Alon Confino's chapter in our book) are as much a part of post-Holocaust Jewish history as the historical committees that collected the testimonies of Jews after the war. The world of the historical actors in 1948 was imbued with the Holocaust as a close and formative historical and personal experience that also influenced the course of events.

Let us briefly mention an issue we did not address in our introduction to the book, but which arises from Hannan Hever's chapter on Abba Kovner: revenge. Benny Morris often writes that the motivation of the Zionist fighters in 1948 stemmed, inter alia, from the Holocaust.[6] Elsewhere, he explains: "Without doubt the Holocaust played a part [in consolidating Zionist thinking on transfer]." It proved that "massive murderous intentions [against Jews]" could materialize.[7] This connection contributes to our understanding of the Jewish fighters' mental and cultural world, which was one of the factors that made the war so brutal, and enabled or led to violence against the noncombatant Palestinian population and to the Nakba.

The idea of revenge against the Germans was central to the consciousness of Holocaust survivors and of that generation of Jews in general. Actual acts of revenge against the Germans, however, were very few. Some of that energy appears to have been transposed to the struggle in Palestine. In 1953, the poet Haim Gouri, the epitome of the generation of Zionists who fought in 1948, wrote the famous poem "From that Fire," which would become a central and permanent fixture at Holocaust memorial ceremonies for many years. The poem includes the lines: "From that fire, which burnt your tortured and charred body, we carried a flaming torch for our souls.... Your humiliation we made into guns.... We avenged your bitter and lonely death with our fist, which is heavy and hot."[8] In this poem, the terrible helplessness of the Holocaust is transformed into violence and revenge—not in Europe but in Palestine, and not against the Germans but against the Arabs.[9] This is in line with the findings of political psychologists and political scientists such as Vamik Volkan, Dan Bar-On, and Mahmood Mamdani; they have shown that major political traumas tend to replicate themselves against, and to transpose themselves

[6]Benny Morris, *Tikun Ta'ut* (Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2000), 36.

[7]Benny Morris, "Explaining Transfer," in *Removing Peoples: Forced Removal in the Modern World*, ed. Richard Bessel et al. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 356.

[8]Translated by Shmuel Sermoneta-Gertel.

[9]That transformation occurred in the memories of a Holocaust survivor who fought in the Palmach and who transposed his desire for revenge that he could not exact on the Germans to the Arabs, while unconsciously but very clearly identifying with his tormentors and the murderers of his family. Amos Goldberg, "Three Forms of Post-Genocidal Violence in Beni Wircberg's Memoir," in *Talking about Evil*, ed. Rina Lazar (New York: Routledge 2017), 50–67.

on, other enemies. This is yet another aspect of the connections between the Holocaust and the Nakba that awaits historical study.

This book, as a collective project undertaken by a group of Arabs (mostly Palestinians) and Jews (mostly Israelis), is only a beginning. It is an invitation to scholars to examine for themselves the range of historical and cultural connections between the two events.

Analogical History

It seems that most of the criticism and even indignation expressed by some of the participants in this forum was elicited by the analogical frameworks we proposed. We argued that two central conceptual frameworks for the understanding of modernity—nationalism and the modern nation-state on the one hand, and colonial violence (especially that of settler colonialism) on the other—are common to both events despite their great differences. These frameworks were partly developed by Mark Levene in his chapter in our book and, to a lesser extent, by Omer Bartov in his chapter. This argument is also a basic principle in both postcolonial and decolonial thought. Our suggestion of conceptual continuity is not meant to be as exhaustive as some respondents seemed to think we suggested.

A vast body of literature exists on the Nakba, and entire libraries on the Holocaust. The idea that the few pages in which we attempt to provide conceptual frameworks for a joint discussion of such different historical events seeks to offer a complete explanation of one or both of these events is unwarranted. We certainly accept the basic argument advanced by Donald Bloxham, on which we drew, *inter alia*, in delineating this analogical framework: "If the basic matter of power politics over the *longue durée* should not be ignored, the different rationales employed in this period for lifting up populations … are not simply matters of intellectual nuances."[10] They determine the specific components of every concrete event. A full and accurate understanding of a given event, including the Holocaust and the Nakba, depends on the broad, general context, as well as the concrete details that determine the nature and specific components of every event—including which instances of violence become ethnic cleansings and which become genocides. There is also considerable value in common conceptual frameworks.

The important articles by Geoff Eley, Philipp Ther, and Michelle Tusan are excellent points of departure for a broad discussion of the validity of our analogical framework. Each in its own way, these contributions begin to explore the senses in which these historical analogies are valid and those in which they are not, revealing clear differences of opinion. We believe that these are merely the first steps that should be taken further. We ourselves, as noted, have suggested a framework for such a discussion, largely following in the important intellectual tradition of which Mark Levene is a leading exponent, although by no means the only one. Donald Bloxham identifies the time frame 1875–1949 (but effectively until the end of the wars in former Yugoslavia in 1999) as the "unweaving of Europe": a more or less coherent period for the understanding of "population removal, at least in two of its major guises, genocide and ethnic cleansing"[11] caused by the disintegration of empires, the establishment of nation-states, and the immense violence that unfolded during the

[10]Donald Bloxham, "The Great Unweaving," in Bessel, *Removing People,* 173.
[11]Bloxham, "The Great Unweaving," 167.

course of these processes, often in borderlands.[12] The period begins with the Eastern Crisis of 1875–1879, the Balkan Wars of 1912–1913, the Armenian genocide, followed by Stalin's population transfers and starvation project, Nazi violence (including the Holocaust), and numerous other events, all the way to the great postwar ethnic cleansings. The Nakba, although not explicitly mentioned by Bloxham, easily falls within the schema he describes. Indeed, a recently published anthology on partitions demonstrates how these global processes of "unweaving" reached also the British Empire and resulted in territorial partitions, often accompanied by ethnic cleansing and mass violence—as in the case of Palestine/Israel.[13]

It seems to us that Doris Bergen's article sheds light on some of the ramifications and promising directions for further study that arise once the option of entangled/comparative histories is taken seriously in the Israeli-Palestinian context, and even expands them to a discussion of American and Canadian reality—particularly with regard to the connection between political privilege and the right to tell a story and to be heard.

Zygmunt Bauman, to whom Philipp Ther and Teresa Koloma Beck also refer, and who postulated the existence of an intimate link between the Holocaust and modernity, is undoubtedly central to the analogical framework we have sought to delineate.[14] In this we are, of course, exposing ourselves to the criticism leveled at Bauman himself and many others, that such broad concepts offer little in the way of historical explanation. We are of the opinion that analogical and conceptual thinking is essential because it opens up a broad range of contexts in which historical events should be understood, and it enables comparative/entangled research. For example, Mark Levene, in the final part of his chapter (which none of the critics address), points out that this analogy applies not only to the Holocaust and the Nakba (as well as many other events), but also to the expulsion and emigration of Mizrahi Jews with the rise of radical nationalism in Arab countries.

Ultimately, this comes down to a fundamental question: Is the comparative/integrative study of events in a genocide, and the Holocaust in particular, as well as events in ethnic cleansing justified and instructive, or not? If the answer is that such research is valuable, this would apply to the Holocaust and the Nakba as well. In his authoritative book on the subject of ethnic cleansing, Philipp Ther asserts that there is an essential difference between ethnic cleansing and the Holocaust, which is why his book does not deal with the latter.[15] Many have criticized this position, to the point of calling Ther's distinction artificial, arguing that it makes it harder to understand historical processes and seeks merely to preserve hierarchies of suffering and catastrophic events. Some have even suggested that it is for this very reason that the powers that won World War II, and other conflicts, sought to exclude mass expulsions from the UN Genocide Convention (contrary to Raphael

[12]Donald Bloxham, *Genocide, the World Wars and the Unweaving of Europe* (London and Portland, OR: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008). See also Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz, eds., *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2013).

[13]Arie Dubnov and Laura Robson, eds., *Partitions: A Transnational History of Twentieth-Century Territorial Separatism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2019). See also A. Dirk Moses "Cutting Out the Ulcer and Washing Away the Incubus of the Past: Genocide Prevention through Population Transfer," in *Decolonization, Self-Determination, and the Rise of Global Human Rights Politics*, ed. A. Dirk Moses et al. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020), 153–76.

[14]Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).

[15]Philipp Ther, *The Dark Side of Nation-States: Ethnic Cleansing in Modern Europe* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2014), 3 and 243–45.

Lemkin's view that such phenomena exist on a continuum). Ther's critical article in this forum is in keeping with his fundamental position.

Even so, we find it hard to agree with Ther's claim that postwar Czechoslovakia, which expelled the Germans from the Sudetenland, is the relevant analogy for the situation in Israel/Palestine in 1948. Although a significant ethnic German population had lived in Bohemia and Moravia since the Middle Ages, Jews were only 10 per cent of the population of Palestine in 1917, when the British colonial empire promised them, in the Balfour Declaration, exclusive national rights in the country. The Palestinians were the long-standing indigenous population (despite having absorbed waves of regional immigration over the course of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries). Most of the Jews who lived in Palestine in 1948, however, were European immigrants. These immigrants for their most part had clear opinions about the "Orient"—that is, the indigenous Palestinian population—and had come to Palestine to realize a colonial national project that strove not to integrate into the existing political structure in the region but to replace it. In other words, Ther ignores the fact that the Palestinians were an indigenous population, while the Zionist Jews were a population of settler immigrants. We do not think one can ignore this dimension of events—in which we find striking and bold elements of settler colonialism. What is more, the expelled Sudeten Germans were absorbed by West Germany and shared in the economic miracle of the late 1940s and 1950s. By contrast, at the end of the war of 1948, no Palestinian state was established to absorb the Palestinian refugees, most of whom were scattered throughout the Arab world, where they encountered weak economies and were often treated as unwanted burdens.

The truth is that it is almost impossible to grasp and appreciate the rise of Palestinian nationalism after the Nakba without understanding the centrality of the refugees, the refugee camps, and refugeehood. The significance of these foundational experiences was resettlement in places that were, in many cases, hostile to the refugees. The pressures of denial, negation, and misrecognition brought to bear on Palestinian nationalism after 1948—not only by Israel, but by Arab regimes as well, including those that took in refugees—were enormous. Contrary to the process of absorbing the Sudetenland expellees in Germany, the Arab host countries could not, in any way, be considered the homeland of the Palestinians, and some of the Arab regimes even fought against Palestinian nationalism while, at the same time, presuming to represent the Palestinians

The tension between improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees and the Palestinian national struggle and right of return has been and continues to be of considerable interest to scholars—primarily Palestinian scholars. But Ther not only advocates improving the living conditions of Palestinian refugees, but recommends their naturalization in the host countries, which would then become their permanent homelands. We assume that Ther was not referring to the Orientalist-colonial view of the entire Arab world as a monolith, without national distinctions or particular affinities to concrete regions, so we are at a loss to understand what he meant.

To return to the question of the connection between ethnic cleansing and genocide, Ther refers to Norman Naimark's *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (2001) and relates to the idea that the Final Solution developed from policies of ethnic cleansing, giving the impression that this is an outlying opinion. Yet ever since Uwe Dietrich Adam's *Judenpolitik im Dritten Reich* (1972) or even since Raul Hilberg's *The Destruction of the European Jews* (1961), the view that ethnic cleansing—of Jews and

others—as a territorial solution preceded the implementation of the Final Solution has been accepted by the vast majority of Holocaust researchers. Furthermore, as Hilberg stressed on numerous occasions, the same officials, clerks, and professionals who engaged in the expulsion of the Jews and later in their murder, were also involved in the planning and implementation of the expulsion and starvation of other populations, so that the continuity (not the equivalence) between various aspects of Nazi population policy is evident and invites comparative or analogical discussion. In this context, we could also mention Heinrich Himmler's well-known memorandum to Hitler from May 1940, outlining his thoughts on demographic issues in occupied Poland. In this document, Himmler lists, in a single continuum, various methods of getting rid of different ethnic groups. Regarding the Jews, he makes clear that his intention is to expel them to Madagascar or some other colony. In the same memorandum, in a slightly different context but as a sweeping general statement, Himmler notes that the "Bolshevik method of physical extermination" should be rejected as "un-German and impossible."[16] The development of Nazi policy itself entails a connection between ethnic cleansing and extermination.

The analogical framework has another aspect, for which we draw on the work of a number of scholars, especially Raz Segal, as a contribution to the framework of integrative historiography, which would include the Holocaust, the Nakba, and many other events of mass violence. (It is interesting that none of the respondents commented on Segal's approach.) As many scholars have noted in recent years, the Holocaust could not have happened on the scale that it did without the participation of many members of other groups—Hungarians, Romanians, Slovaks, Croats, Poles, Bulgarians, and others, who did not necessarily share the Nazi antisemitic ideology—in the expulsion and murder of the Jews. Although the motives behind such actions were different, they were close to those at work in Palestine in 1948. These events often stemmed from a combination of radical nationalism and territorial expansionism ("greater Hungary," "greater Bulgaria," etc.), and involved the quasi-colonial ethnic cleansing of borderlands (although sometimes central regions were cleansed as well) of groups (including Jews) that undermined the demographic dominance of the majority group.

As for the relevance of the settler colonialism framework to both the Holocaust and the Nakba, much has been written on the relevance of an imperial and colonial framework to understanding Nazi violence in general and against the Jews in particular. As Tusan rightly reminds us, the first to identify the connection between genocide and colonialism was Raphael Lemkin. A broad (albeit not universal) consensus exists today that this is a significant point for understanding of Nazism (and not just Nazism), and, contrary to Jockusch's claim, we do not suggest otherwise. We argue that the Holocaust, as an event, is interwoven with broader colonial dynamics.

Both Ther and Jockusch doubt the relevance of the conceptual framework of colonialism in general and settler colonialism in particular to the case of Zionism and the State of Israel. As we wrote in the introduction to our book, we do not believe that settler colonialism provides an exhaustive paradigm for understanding and analyzing the complexity of Zionism and its

[16]Helmut Krausnick, ed., "Denkschrift Himmlers über die Behandlung der Fremdvölkischen im Osten (May 1940)," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 5, no. 2 (1957): 194–98, esp. 196–97. Translation from Christopher R. Browning, *The Path to Genocide: Essays on Launching the Final Solution* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), 17.

development in Palestine/Israel. Nevertheless, like many others, we are convinced that settler colonialism is relevant and constitutive to the Zionist case. Jockusch relies on Derek Penslar's work on the subject, which actually acknowledges that the Zionist movement was suffused with colonial tropes. Indeed the evidence provided by Penslar (and others) seems to run counter to Jockusch and Ther's claims. Ze'ev Jabotinsky, for example, in his 1923 essay "The Iron Wall," explained the violence that had already broken out in Palestine, and which he predicted would worsen within the colonial context:

> My readers have a general idea of the history of colonisation in other countries. I suggest that they consider all the precedents with which they are acquainted, and see whether there is one solitary instance of any colonisation being carried on with the consent of the native population. There is no such precedent. The native populations … have always stubbornly resisted the colonists.[17]

For Arab intellectuals, this was the primary framework for understanding Zionism from its inception. Indeed, most scholars of Zionism—including Anita Shapira, perhaps the foremost historian of Zionism, and Shmuel Noah Eisenstadt, the doyen of Israeli sociology, see at least some aspect of colonialism in Zionism.[18] Where they differ is on the extent to which this component should influence our understanding of the phenomenon. Rashid Khalidi, Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian, Nadim Rouhana, and many others have recently shown that the types of violence that Zionism and the State of Israel used against the Palestinians coincide with models of settler colonialism; Oren Yiftachel has demonstrated that the concept of space espoused by Zionism and the State of Israel is very much in keeping with this model, and Gershon Shafir has shown that the labor market that the Zionists developed in Palestine possessed the characteristics of this model.[19] Above all, we think the evidence indicates that Zionism and the State of Israel embody fundamental colonial racism and discrimination.

Although Philipp Ther is right that Palestinians within the Israel of the 1949 armistice lines (the pre-1967 borders) are citizens and can vote and be elected to parliament and be nominated to judgeships, they are confined to second-class status by structural discrimination. Immigration and land and property laws, among others, are manifestly discriminatory. The former grant automatic citizenship to all Jewish immigrants to Israel, while making it nearly impossible for noncitizen Palestinians to become citizens. The land laws are grounded in British emergency laws from 1945, imposed in order to circumvent the courts, and much land was taken not only from refugees but from Arab citizens of Israel after 1948. It thus comes as no surprise that, since the establishment of the State of Israel, more than seven hundred Jewish settlements have been built—many on the thousands of dunams of land expropriated from Palestinian Arabs (some of it taken from the thousands of refugees that Ther proposes should become naturalized and settle permanently in neighboring

[17] Ze'ev Jabotinsky, "The Iron Wall," November 4, 1923 (http://en.jabotinsky.org/media/9747/the-iron-wall.pdf).

[18] Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*, trans. William Templer (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1999), 57, 61, and throughout the book. Shmuel Eisenstadt, *Israeli Society* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1967).

[19] See, for example, Rashid Khalidi, *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism and Ressitance, 1917–2017* (New York: Metropolitian Books, 2020) Oren Yiftachel, *Ethnocracy: Land and Identity Politics in Israel/Palestine* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006); and Gershon Shafir, *Land, Labor, and the Origins of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict, 1882–1914* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

countries)—and not a single Palestinian settlement. In its reports, the Adalah Center has enumerated dozens of discriminatory laws in the Israeli legal code. This discrimination is built into the definition of the State of Israel as a Jewish state, further entrenched by the so-called Nation-State Law adopted in 2018. While a Muslim, Christian, Jew, or member of any other faith may, at least in theory, be of Dutch, Egyptian, Russian, or any other nationality, a Muslim or a Christian cannot be a Jew. Thus, the option of assimilation, or even inclusive and egalitarian integration and membership in the body politic, simply does not exist for non-Jews in the State of Israel as a Jewish state. We consider the racialized citizenship regime in Israel a clear expression of the settler colonial structure of the state.

Lana Tatour, who has examined the citizenship of Palestinian citizens of Israel, observes:

> Citizenship cannot be disassociated from the history and contemporary workings of settler colonialism as a structure of elimination. As the lived realities of indigenous peoples make clear, the acquisition of citizenship has not eradicated the violence of settler colonialism and the conditions of colonial subjecthood and alienage. On the contrary, citizenship has been instrumental in the process of governing indigenous peoples as surplus populations that ought to be managed, controlled and tamed.[20]

We thus find it hard to understand the argument advanced by Ther, who sees the state's attitude to Mizrahi and Ethiopian Jews as the clearest expression of Israeli racism and not the state's attitude to the Palestinian population under its rule. At the same time, as many have noted, there is a deep affinity between different types of discrimination (we have not even mentioned the inhabitants of the Occupied Territories, who live as noncitizens in a state of permanent occupation that threatens, at any moment, to become annexation, without rights being granted to the Palestinian inhabitants of the area).

The Holocaust and the Nakba—despite the enormous differences between the two events—inevitably share conceptual frameworks, both on the level of political history and on the level of the cultural history of memory and identity. Following Alon Confino, in his chapter in our book, we think that the important question is thus not whether it is justifiable to discuss the two events together but how they can be discussed together and why this type of discussion is still so rare.

One of the insights we found particularly interesting in this forum is Geoff Eley's attempt to explain the lack of a rich and extensive empirical history in our book. Such a history is replaced, he suggests, by subjective writing, characterized by "enunciating, declarative, confessional tones." Eley explains that when there is no real political context in which a strong empirical history is grounded, history becomes personal, and, to some extent, this is what dictated the nature of the entire volume. The connection between political circumstances and historical imagination is very interesting, which is why we have grounded our own historical thought in an egalitarian binational political theory that is informed by decolonization and historical reconciliation. In our opinion, this does not signify, as Jockusch suggests, that the entire project is a kind of political activism. That would be like saying that the YVOS's studies of the 1920s and 1930s, which were grounded in a Jewish diasporic national approach, were little more than political activism.

Teresa Koloma Beck's article deals head-on with the question of the silence in Germany surrounding this connection between the Holocaust and the Nakba. Beck especially notes

[20]Lana Tatour, "Citizenship as Domination: Settler Colonialism and the Making of Palestinian Citizenship in Israel," *Arab Studies Journal* 27, no. 2 (2019): 32–33.

the lack of interest in the Holocaust in the social sciences. A forthcoming edited volume confirms this observation and points to the fact that this tendency has only recently begun to change.[21] By its very nature, sociological thinking is comparative because it relies on abstract and often broad conceptualizations like "modernity" or "violence." Such comparative approaches are at a complete loss in the face of the idea of the uniqueness of the Holocaust, which, although not always expressed so explicitly, serves as a kind of reverential epistemological underpinning of many studies of the Holocaust—what Dirk Moses has called "Holocaust anxiety."[22] In Germany, this anxiety is even greater, as Beck notes briefly when touching on the Achille Mbembe affair, and it prevents any comparative discussion from becoming a part of public discourse—all the more so when such comparative discourse brings Israel and Zionism into the analogical equation. Yet at the heart of our book lies analogical thinking, of which, as we have noted, Zygmunt Bauman was one of the leading proponents with regard to the Holocaust.

In an article entitled "The Dream of Purity," Bauman wrote:

> Nazism and communism excelled in pushing the totalitarian tendency to its radical extreme—the first by condensing the complexity of the "purity" problem in its modem form into that of the purity of race, the second into that of the purity of class. Yet totalitarian cravings and leanings made their presence visible, albeit in a slightly less radical form, also in the tendency of the modem nation-state as such to underpin and reinforce the uniformity of state citizenship with the universality and comprehensivess [sic] of national membership.[23]

Despite the many differences between the phenomena, the aspiration to purity links the Holocaust and the Nakba, as well as many other events, and may underpin the enlightening words of Michelle Tusan, who concludes her contribution to this forum as follows: "Understanding genocide and ethnic cleansing as existing in both an historical and a relational context makes it harder to accept the inhumanity of humankind as a series of unfortunate but inevitable events. Most importantly, it means taking mass violence seriously as an agent of history that has played an important role in forging our recent global past."

We can only agree, and it is our belief that the power of our book lies in the fact that this insight arises from an intellectual partnership between Arabs and Jews and from the entwined specificities of the geographical space of Palestine/Israel.

[21] See Jan Burzlaff, "Histories in Motion: The Holocaust, Social Science, and the Historian," in *Social Science Research and the Holocaust*, ed. Jeffrey S. Kopstein, Jelena Subotic, and Susan Welch (forthcoming).

[22] A. Dirk Moses, "Anxieties in Holocaust and Genocide Studies," in *Probing the Ethics of Holocaust Culture*, ed. Claudio Fogu, Wulf Kansteiner, and Todd Presner (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2016), 332–54.

[23] Zygmunt Bauman, "The Dream of Purity," in *Postmodernity and Its Discontents* (New York: Blackwell Publishers 1997), 12.