

This article was downloaded by: [EUI European University Institute]
On: 12 February 2014, At: 06:17
Publisher: Routledge
Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: Mortimer House, 37-41 Mortimer Street, London W1T 3JH, UK



Journal of Genocide Research

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/cjgr20>

Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: disruptive empathy and binationalism in Israel/Palestine

Bashir Bashir & Amos Goldberg

Published online: 12 Feb 2014.

To cite this article: Bashir Bashir & Amos Goldberg (2014) Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: disruptive empathy and binationalism in Israel/Palestine, *Journal of Genocide Research*, 16:1, 77-99

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14623528.2014.878114>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE

Taylor & Francis makes every effort to ensure the accuracy of all the information (the "Content") contained in the publications on our platform. However, Taylor & Francis, our agents, and our licensors make no representations or warranties whatsoever as to the accuracy, completeness, or suitability for any purpose of the Content. Any opinions and views expressed in this publication are the opinions and views of the authors, and are not the views of or endorsed by Taylor & Francis. The accuracy of the Content should not be relied upon and should be independently verified with primary sources of information. Taylor and Francis shall not be liable for any losses, actions, claims, proceedings, demands, costs, expenses, damages, and other liabilities whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with, in relation to or arising out of the use of the Content.

This article may be used for research, teaching, and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproduction, redistribution, reselling, loan, sub-licensing, systematic supply, or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden. Terms & Conditions of access and use can be found at <http://www.tandfonline.com/page/terms-and-conditions>

Deliberating the Holocaust and the Nakba: disruptive empathy and binationalism in Israel/Palestine

BASHIR BASHIR and AMOS GOLDBERG

This article develops a theoretical framework for shared and inclusive Jewish and Palestinian deliberation on the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba. It argues that a joint Arab-Jewish public deliberation on the traumatic memories of these two events is not only possible, however challenging and disruptive it may be, but also fundamental for producing an egalitarian and inclusive ethics of binationalism in Israel/Palestine. In order to develop this conceptual framework, we first present some examples, most notably Elias Khoury's epic novel *Gate of the sun (Bab al-Shams)*, which bring the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba together in a fashion that disrupts the dominant, antagonistic and exclusionary Israeli and Palestinian national narratives. We then interpret Dominick LaCapra's notion of 'empathic unsettlement', which transforms 'otherness' from a problem to be disposed of into a moral and emotional challenge, as a political concept that best captures and explains the disruptive potential of a joint deliberation on these traumatic events. The figure of the refugee, constitutive of Palestinian and Jewish histories and identities, we suggest, serves as a herald of this binational and disruptive ethics. We conclude that 'empathic unsettlement' also has a productive and transformative potential which gives further (however partial and initial) meaning, shape and content to the ethics and democratic politics of binationalism heralded by the refugee.

Introduction

This article develops a theoretical framework for shared and inclusive Jewish and Palestinian deliberation on the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba.¹ It argues that a joint Arab-Jewish public deliberation on the traumatic memories of these two events is not only possible, however challenging and disruptive it may be, but also fundamental for producing an egalitarian and inclusive ethics of binationalism in Israel/Palestine. We contend that there are several reasons justifying common deliberations on these two foundational events.

Firstly, the Holocaust and the Nakba are defining events in the political consciousness and collective identity of the two increasingly intertwined peoples, and both generate a dominant collective awareness that incorporates elements of victimhood. Thus, in Arab-Jewish debates and conversations it has become very hard to address one without mentioning the other.

Secondly, the two events are historically related. It is beyond the scope of this article to fully discuss the exact ways in which this is the case, but it is clear that the events of 1947–48 in Palestine/Israel—namely, the establishment of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba—were in various direct and indirect ways strongly influenced by the events in Europe between 1933 and 1945.² They have emerged as inseparable in light of the seeming intractability of the conflict.

Thirdly, the ‘ethics of catastrophe’, for which the Holocaust serves as its major trope and symbol, is mainly premised on the ‘rejection of the metaphysics of comprehension’.³ Therefore, while ‘the metaphysics of comprehension’ demands and emphasizes closure, consensus and unity, the ‘ethics of catastrophe’ insists on acknowledging the constitutive yet disruptive role of various forms of ‘otherness’ in the social and political domains. The mainstream and endorsed national narratives of the Holocaust and the Nakba largely operate according to ‘the metaphysics of comprehension’ rather than the ‘ethics of catastrophe’. Stated differently, they produce and reinforce total comprehension and essentialist identities that oppress the disruptive ‘otherness’. One way of restoring the critical and ethical force and meaning of these two catastrophic events, we argue, is by discussing them together in a disruptive fashion.

Fourthly, and intimately linked to the previous point, these two ‘foundational pasts’⁴ are deeply exclusionary and conflicting in current dominant Jewish and Palestinian identity politics. They are often used to demonize the other side and establish a complete self-justification. Hence, they further widen the gap between the two peoples and disable the possibilities of conducive Jewish-Arab discussion on the question of Israel/Palestine. The unavoidable inseparability and interdependence of Arab and Jew means that productive engagement between the two memories, histories and identities has become both inevitable and timely. This productive engagement, we argue, produces a conceptual frame within which these two mutually and radically exclusionary traumatic memories can become politically and ethically transformative in establishing a common, even if minimal, binational ‘we’ and ethics.⁵

Before we proceed to describe the structure of the article and its various sections, it is critical to mention at least two important caveats. First, we must stress at this point that we do not suggest that these two disastrous events are identical, or even similar in extent and character. Indeed, as Gilbert Achcar argues in his book *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, although the Nakba is a catastrophic event that should not be undermined, ‘the Holocaust was clearly incomparably crueler and bloodier than the Nakba’.⁶ Nonetheless, when it comes to the manner in which they are remembered, narrated, historicized and understood, it may be possible to associate them in a helpful way.

Second, when we invoke public deliberation, we do not refer to thin and confining liberal notions of public deliberation but to thick and robust notions of deliberation. More specifically, unlike the conventional and restrictive liberal notions of democratic deliberation (e.g. Habermas and Rawls) that place ‘public reason’ at their centre, privilege rational argumentation and demand bracketing particularities and asymmetries for the sake of achieving legitimate democratic

decisions, our notion of public democratic deliberation is more expansive by respecting not only ‘rational and reasonable arguments’, but also other modes of speech, such as testimony, storytelling and narrative. These latter modes of discourse are exceptionally important not only because they allow for contestation (rather than consensus) and deliberation from within particularities/contextualized positions, but also because these modes are central to deliberating the memories and histories of the Holocaust and the Nakba.⁷ Civil partnership within the public sphere is not necessarily achieved through agreement, but first and foremost through debate and contestation, which in itself situates adversaries in a joint discursive framework.

This article is divided into three sections. The first section identifies and explores some of the fundamental difficulties and challenges that face such a joint deliberative enterprise. Unlike the conventional Jewish and Palestinian discussions on the Holocaust and the Nakba, which usually follow and reinforce exclusionary, dichotomous and self-referential logic that excludes and demonizes the other, the second section presents some examples, most notably Elias Khoury’s epic novel *Gate of the sun (Bab al-Shams)*, which bring the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba together and thus challenge and disrupt this exclusionary and binary logic. We interpret Dominick LaCapra’s notion of ‘empathic unsettlement’, which transforms ‘otherness’ from a problem to be disposed of into a moral and emotional challenge, as a political concept that best captures and explains the disruptive potential of a joint deliberation on the Holocaust and the Nakba. The third section proposes to move from the critical potential of the notion of ‘empathic unsettlement’ as an ethics of disruption to its more productive potential. We suggest that its productive potential transcends intractable and antagonistic binary politics and gives rise to a binational approach to the question of Israel/Palestine *vis-à-vis* the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba. In this section, similarly to Judith Butler, we focus on the centrality of the figure of the refugee, constitutive of Palestinian and Jewish histories and identities, in contributing to the development of an egalitarian ethics of binationalism. More specifically, we claim that the figure of the refugee, a product and victim of the ethnically homogenizing modern nation-state, who is intimately connected to both the Holocaust and the Nakba, serves as a herald of disruptive politics; a politics that challenges the rigidity and dichotomy of identity politics and favours empathy, partnership, joint dwelling and integration instead of separation, segregation, and oppressive assimilation in Israel/Palestine.

Difficulties

To deliberate on these traumatic and foundational pasts under present conditions of animosity and asymmetry is exceptionally challenging.⁸ After all, creating such an enterprise is not a technical matter. As we have stated, not every exchange of words turns into a public deliberation, and not every shared discussion generates civil partnership. Regrettably, an inclusive and joint public sphere seldom evolves among Jews and Palestinians, even more so when it comes to the Holocaust and

the Nakba.⁹ This is first and foremost because the traumas of the Holocaust and the Nakba continue to be experienced first-hand by each of the societies and constitute an open wound, and anything perceived to reframe it in an unorthodox manner generates extreme reactions.¹⁰

Several additional factors make it yet more difficult to conduct an egalitarian and inclusive deliberation in these contexts. On the one hand, the Holocaust is indeed an event of enormous proportions in modern history. Some go so far as to contend that it is a unique or unprecedented occurrence.¹¹ To Jews and large sections of the western world, the Holocaust has become the ultimate symbol of evil and human criminality.¹² The Holocaust, some have argued, is the best candidate to serve as a ‘global memory’ and the measuring reference for crimes against humanity.¹³ As such, any comparative discussion of the Holocaust with another event, but especially the Nakba, is liable to be perceived by Jews and many others as a reductive, tasteless or even morally and politically questionable banalization of the topic.¹⁴

On the other hand, most Jews today live under completely different and better historical conditions in comparison to the 1930s and 1940s. As Yehuda Bauer stated in the 1970s, Jews after the Holocaust emerged from a complete state of powerlessness.¹⁵ Holocaust survivors inevitably bear the scars of this terrible trauma on their bodies and souls, as do their successors, albeit in different ways.¹⁶ Yet Jews now live in a strikingly different period: Israel is a reasonably well-established state in possession of nuclear weaponry; the Jews are one of the most successful ethnic groups in the US; and antisemitism does not exist in the same ways it did prior to World War II, at least in Europe and the US.¹⁷ The Jews, as individuals and as a group organized in collective institutions (e.g. the State of Israel), are far from being powerless historical agents as they were during the 1930s and 1940s.

By contrast, since the Nakba most Palestinians largely live under conditions of statelessness, occupation and dispersion. The Nakba is an explicitly continuing present, and its consequences are still unfolding and affecting contemporary Palestinian life. Its aftermath of suffering and political weakness affects nearly every Palestinian, Palestinian family and the Palestinian collective on an almost daily basis.¹⁸

But beyond all this, a deeper asymmetry in the context of these two events renders joint discussion even more charged. The Palestinians bear no responsibility whatsoever for the Holocaust that occurred in Europe.¹⁹ The Holocaust is a case of genocide that grew out of European racism and World War II. It was German and European antisemitism and the failure of nationalism to include Jews that gave rise to ‘the Jewish question’ in Europe, and were among the primary ideological factors that led to the Holocaust. The State of Israel, however, generated and was fully involved in the events of the Nakba. The *Haganah*, the *Palmach*, the *Etsel* and the *Lehi* (the pre-state Zionist armed forces) and, subsequently, the Israeli army caused the Palestinian national devastation during the confrontation of 1947–48, which, among other phenomena, manifested itself in the expulsion or flight of many Palestinians, making some

750,000 of them refugees.²⁰ And since the end of the war, it is the State of Israel that has prevented and continues to prevent the return of these refugees. Likewise, it passed the Absentees' Property Law that confiscated all land and property left behind by the refugees, and placed its Palestinian citizens under military rule from 1948 until 1966, citizens who continue to experience discrimination to this day. The State of Israel has also controlled the occupied territories of the West Bank and Gaza since 1967 by means of a discriminatory occupation regime that deprives the Palestinians of most of their individual and collective rights. Many Palestinians therefore regard Zionism and the State of Israel as bearing prime responsibility for their catastrophe and suffering. Whether or not one accepts Israel's justifications of these events as legitimate acts of self-defence, the State of Israel is certainly not an uninvolved party in the Palestinians' ongoing catastrophe and suffering, which was not the case with the Palestinians and the Holocaust. The actual events in Palestine/Israel place the Jews and the Palestinians in different political and moral positions, which makes it extremely difficult to conduct a joint and egalitarian civil conversation in such an asymmetrical context.²¹

In the context of the Holocaust, these issues are in fact far more complex. The vast majority of Israeli Jews generally perceive the Holocaust as a catastrophe that justifies their Zionist position favouring a Jewish nation-state on the land of Israel/Palestine. There is a prevalent sense among many Jews, including many Holocaust survivors, that they must establish a robust sovereignty of their own in the wake of the Holocaust.²² Thus, it follows that any denial of the Holocaust or its dimensions, or antisemitic utterances, as enunciated by some Arab and Palestinian leaders, let alone the rejection of Jewish sovereign existence itself, generates among many Jews considerable anger and existential anxiety that harks back to those horrific events.

The majority of the Palestinians, for their part, perceive Zionism as a European colonial movement that emerged as one of the many responses to the 'Jewish problem', itself a European problem exacerbated by the Holocaust.²³ The very attempt to find and then implement a solution to such a European question in Palestine, as well as Zionism's frequent use of colonial discourse and practice manifested in expressions such as 'progress', 'modernity' and 'settlement', aroused resistance among Arabs generally and Palestinians in particular. Confronting Zionism is regarded by many Palestinians as a legitimate, even necessary and justifiable form of anticolonial resistance. Within this context, the Holocaust is perceived as a catastrophe for which the Arabs were compelled to pay, even though they bore no responsibility for its occurrence. Moreover, some Palestinians believe that Zionism and the State of Israel have made cynical political usage of the Holocaust in order to divest themselves of responsibility for their actions towards the Palestinians and to suspend the latter's collective and individual rights.²⁴ Indeed, this instrumental use of the Holocaust has been identified and critically explored by the research of scholars such as Idith Zertal, Moshe Zuckermann and others.²⁵

In light of the above, it appears that the equality and symmetry that could enable the debate to establish some common public egalitarian sphere are generally absent from this discussion. This brings us back to the question of whether and under what conditions Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs are capable of creating a public sphere, however confined and local it may be, within which a common civil and democratic deliberation on the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba can take place. And even if this is a deliberation between adversaries, it still establishes and rests upon some sort of partnership.

The ethics of disruption

Elias Khoury's novel *Gate of the sun (Bab al-Shams)*²⁶ narrates the Palestinian catastrophe/Nakba. During one of Khaleel's monologues, the novel's narrator and protagonist, to Younes, a hero of the Palestinian struggle who lies unconscious on his deathbed in a hospital in one of the refugee camps in Beirut, Khaleel says:

But tell me, what did the [Palestinian] national movement posted in the cities do apart from demonstrate against Jewish immigration?

I'm not saying you weren't right. But in those days, when the Nazi beast was exterminating the Jews of Europe, what did you know about the world?

... [D]on't worry, I believe, like you, that this land must belong to its people, and there is no moral, political, humanitarian, or religious justification that would permit the expulsion of an entire people from its country and the transformation of what remained of them into second-class citizens... But tell me, in the faces of the people being driven to slaughter, don't you see something resembling your own?

Don't tell me you didn't know, and above all, don't say that it wasn't our fault.

You and I and every human being on the face of the planet should have known and not stood by in silence, should have prevented that beast from destroying its victims in that barbaric, unprecedented manner... because their death meant the death of humanity within us.²⁷

This critical passage that the narrator directs at the Palestinian national movement, which failed to recognize the 'unprecedented barbarity' that occurred in Europe and the refugee status of the Holocaust survivors, should be read in the context of the divergent positions on the Holocaust among Palestinian and Arab intellectuals. While some of them were sceptical and others flatly denied its occurrence, another influential current of thought, to which Khoury adheres, not only recognized the Holocaust but sought to instil awareness of its importance and the centrality of its memory in shaping modern Jewish and western identity and history.²⁸

Moreover, we claim that this passage may also serve as a key to the issue at hand, since it marks the problematic aspects of simultaneously addressing the Holocaust and the Nakba and the anxiety that this arouses. This is primarily an anxiety about foregoing absolute justice, which is shared by both Jews and Palestinians. The Nakba underlines Palestinian political justice, while the Holocaust currently underpins many Jews' ultimate claim to justice. Yet the willingness to weave the catastrophe of the other side into each party's national narrative does not imply a dismantling of the core justification of the national narrative. Or, in

the words of the narrator in *Bab al-Shams* who here refers to the Palestinian perspective, acknowledging the Holocaust does not undermine the justness of the Palestinians regarding the wrong done to them or to question ‘that this land must belong to its people’.

Taking account of the origin of the Jews who came to Palestine does not, from the narrator’s viewpoint, detract from the claim to justice on the part of the Palestinians. Neither does it imply that things would necessarily have turned out differently had the Palestinians taken into account why Jews came to Palestine. In other words, this empathy towards the Jewish victims of the Holocaust does not amount to a complete identification with them and their point of view. It does retain one’s otherness in relation to the ‘other’. It does not erase difference. But, nonetheless, from this very position the narrator, and seemingly Khoury himself, demands that this be recognized for two reasons. First, because of some sort of identification, when he asks ‘in the faces of the people being driven to slaughter, don’t you see something resembling your own?’. And second, because of the moral obligation that constitutes entry to history—‘their death meant the death of humanity within us’, and as he continues referring to the consequences of the Palestinian national movement’s failure to acknowledge this ‘death of humanity’, he says ‘but we—you were outside of history so you became its second victim’.²⁹ The narrator demands from the Palestinians then a double move: acknowledging themselves as different from the Jewish other while also identifying with their suffering.

It is noteworthy that Khoury’s narrator assigns, in a Levinasian gesture, a critical significance to the ‘face’ of the other as an indicator of ethical commitment. As Levinas argues, the contact with alterity, responding to and engaging with the claims/demands of those who are not well known to us and with whom we did not choose to dwell, animates the ethical scene. This infinite constitutive alterity makes itself known through the face of the person who generates infinite ethical demands and obligations. According to Levinas, the ‘face’ commands us to preserve life and not to kill.³⁰

Khoury’s protagonist’s views on the memories of the Nakba and the Holocaust could be understood within this Levinasian conceptual framework of radical ethical obligation towards the other. But there is also a fundamental difference. Whereas Levinas places strong emphasis on the ‘otherness’ of the face, Khoury’s narrator combines this notion of otherness with a sense of empathy. For him, it is not only about otherness but also about empathy and resemblance.

Furthermore, in response to the applicability of his ethical frame to the oppression of the Palestinians, Levinas insisted that his proposed ethical frame is not universally applied. It is culturally and geographically restricted. He claimed that he meant to extend ethical obligations to those who are bound together, keeping in mind those with Judeo-Christian and classical Greek origins.³¹

Following Hannan Hever,³² we further deliberate on Khoury’s narrator’s notion of otherness and empathy in regard to the Nakba and the Holocaust by means of the concept of ‘empathic unsettlement’ coined by Dominick LaCapra in his

protracted discussion of trauma and the Holocaust.³³ This concept manages to closely and convincingly link memory, ethics, history and trauma in a way that we believe suits our and Khoury's notion of empathy. But before further elaboration on the usefulness of empathic unsettlement, we should note that in utilizing LaCapraian psychoanalytical concepts, we are not seeking to reduce the narrative of conflict to the realm of psychology. Like LaCapra,³⁴ who declares that he is not using these concepts in the orthodox way, we try to extract from this conceptual world a theoretical structure that facilitates understanding and analysis of political reality. Otherwise stated, it is through politically conceptualizing 'empathic unsettlement' that we hope to offer a path towards that common civil partnership with which we began this article.

Dominick LaCapra contrasts empathy and empathic unsettlement with complete identification: 'empathy is mistakenly conflated with identification or fusion with the other In contradistinction to this entire frame of reference, empathy should rather be understood in terms of an affective relation, rapport, or bond with the other recognized and respected as other'.³⁵ Identification follows the risky fantasy of universal likeness, which seeks homogeneity and eradicates difference.³⁶ It operates on one of two levels—appropriation or subjugation—since, if it is to occur, the individual must either reduce the other to his own concepts or subjugate himself to the concepts of the other. Thus, identification is always connected to narcissistic impulses and indicates a type of illusion that is potentially aggressive and violent.³⁷

As we have argued, Khoury's narrator is aware of this and rejects this form of identification. He refuses to relinquish his point of view for that of the enemy even as the latter has experienced extreme trauma in the form of the Holocaust. Nevertheless, he finds some resemblance: 'don't you see something resembling your own in the faces of the people being driven to slaughter?'. But what is the significance of this recognition? How does it exert an influence? And what does it mean? The narrator gives us no immediate or unequivocal answer to these questions. This response is suspended for the time being³⁸—it only destabilizes an overly stiff narrative.

This, in fact, is how empathic unsettlement undermines meaning. For, by contrast to identification, which seeks to blur the distance between the self and the other, empathic unsettlement requires the subject to make, like Khoury's narrator, two opposite movements simultaneously. On the one hand, it recognizes the fundamental inherent otherness of the individual who experiences the trauma, defined as an excessive experience that transcends the existing array of social symbols and images.³⁹ On the other hand, and despite the recognition of the radical and ineradicable otherness of those who experience trauma, empathic unsettlement calls for a sense of empathy towards them. Therefore, the ethics of trauma is an ethics of disruption that compels us to react empathetically to others while being fully aware of their otherness; and at the same time to recognize the component of trauma that disrupts and prevents any structure, narrative or relationship from reaching wholeness and closure. As LaCapra indicates:

At the very least, empathic unsettlement poses a barrier to closure in discourse and places in jeopardy harmonizing or spiritually uplifting accounts of extreme events from which we attempt to derive reassurance or a benefit . . . but involve affect and may empathetically expose the self to an unsettlement, if not a secondary trauma, which should not be glorified or fixated upon but addressed in a manner that strives to be cognitively and ethically responsible as well as open to the challenge of utopian aspiration.⁴⁰

The forms and consequences of the empathic unsettlement required to address traumatic events cannot be predictable or known. Its role is precisely this—to disrupt. It emanates from a fear of any type of closure, to which all political discourse aspires and which itself is a harbinger of fascist logic.⁴¹

Disruption is the key word here, since it is located between the two poles that trauma is liable to generate: disruption neither completely dismantles the discourse (as a field of distinctions), nor does it fortify dichotomous opposition. It introduces some rather indigestible otherness to the discursive sphere, which emanates from some ethical commitment to those experiencing the trauma, but that cannot necessarily be formulated immediately. As such, empathic unsettlement disrupts and constantly undermines every ‘redeeming narrative’ of suffering that offers a melancholic pleasure,⁴² and this is the source of its considerable political value. One might say that it compels us to take the otherness of the other seriously. It operates in the twilight zone between full identification that appropriates the other or requires her to submit to the concepts of the ‘self’, and outright alienation, which generates a sphere from which communication is absent, in which only power dictates. The weakened identification experienced as part of empathic unsettlement is therefore sensed not only *vis-à-vis* the person experiencing the trauma as someone who is suffering, but first and foremost as an ‘other’ in whose core experience there is something that goes beyond the symbolic and political contours that purport to represent him. And this turns him into a symbol and manifestation of intense ethical commitment towards radical otherness.

This is the precise demand that Khoury’s narrator makes of his interlocutor when he asks him: ‘in the faces of the people being driven to slaughter, don’t you see something resembling your own?’. This type of empathic partnership leads neither to appropriation nor to submission. It likewise does not necessarily or immediately produce practical results. It does, however, create a type of disruption. It prevents a harmonious closure of the narrative, exposing it to new, even if yet unforeseen, possibilities.

For LaCapra, this is an essential component in working through the trauma as it confronts a tendency to fetishize a national redemptive narrative in cases of massive collective trauma, which violently excludes any otherness in a kind of a scapegoat mechanism. In such cases, as Vamik Volkan warns us and as we stated above regarding our context, ‘past [traumatic] events may become the fuel to ignite the most horrible human dramas’.⁴³ Introducing a disruption into a tightly foreclosed national traumatized narrative, as in the cases of the dominant Palestinian and Israeli national narratives, is therefore essential.

In fact, Khoury himself critically reflects on such kinds of fetishized narratives in many parts of *Bab al-Shams*. Thus, for example, the narrator warns: ‘We

mustn't see ourselves only in their mirror, for they're prisoners of one story, as though the story had abbreviated and ossified them. Please, father [Yunis]—we mustn't become just one story Believe me, this is the only way, if we're not to become ossified and die'.⁴⁴ Indeed, it seems that many Jews and Palestinians are trapped in such a fetishized, exclusionary and deadly closed traumatic narrative which empathic unsettlement disrupts and undermines.

Khoury is not the only example of this type of empathic unsettlement. It also happens in Jewish Israeli literature. One of the 'prophets' of this unsettling binding of the Holocaust and the Nakba in Jewish Israeli literature was the poet Avot Yeshurun. In 1952, he published a poem in this spirit, 'Passover over caves', which raised a huge controversy and marginalized him for more than two decades. He was even more explicit and radical in his 1958 poetic prose titled 'Reasoning': 'The Holocaust of the Jews of Europe and the Holocaust of the Arabs of Eretz Yisrael [Palestine] are one Holocaust of the Jewish people. The two gaze directly into one another's face'.⁴⁵

Another interesting example is the Palestinian author Ghassan Kanafani's 1969 novella *Returning to Haifa*, which was staged by the widely famous and celebrated Israeli Cameri theatre group in 2008.⁴⁶ The plot is about a Palestinian couple who fled Haifa in horror in April 1948, leaving behind their baby. After the 1967 war, they return from Ramallah to visit their home, which is now occupied by Holocaust survivors. The Holocaust survivors also adopted the left-behind child and raised him to become an Israeli soldier. The encounter between the two couples and the heartbreaking dilemma of the child is extremely unsettling to all readers/viewers—Jews, Palestinians or others. The play's actors were both Jews and Palestinians and the process they underwent during the production was extremely empathically unsettling. Peter Marks described this in the *Washington Post*:

In rehearsals, the passions of the Israeli Jewish and Israeli Arab actors sometimes could not be contained by what was on the page. There were many instances where the actors said, 'I have to have a line now, because I have to respond!'. And we said: 'Say it!' Gaon [the playwright] recalls. Some of these improvisations made their way into the script. 'Every side wants all of its story to be told, all of it', the playwright adds. 'And that's the whole deal, that's what the play is about: It's very comfortable to be surrounded by your own story, but what do you do when you find someone who is opposite to you?'.⁴⁷

Indeed, the play managed to stimulate precisely what we call an empathically unsettling shared public deliberation inside and outside the theatre.⁴⁸

It is also worth mentioning in this context the recently published Hebrew book by the historian Yair Auran, *The Holocaust, the rebirth and the Nakba*.⁴⁹ Relevant for our discussion here is the book's title. 'From Holocaust to rebirth' (MiShoah Letekumah) is the most rigid form of the Zionist teleological redemption narrative with its ultimate closure whose positive ending redeems its catastrophic beginning and lends some meaning to it. Adding the Nakba to the title in the same continuum fundamentally disrupts and unsettles this narrative, although, as is evident in the book's content, does not abolish it altogether.

Such unsettling deliberations are not only textual or theatrical: they also manifest themselves in the activities and the symbolic discourse of small Jewish and Palestinian joint political groups. One can mention, for example, Zochrot. According to its website, ‘Zochrot will act to promote Israeli Jewish society’s acknowledgement of and accountability for the ongoing injustices of the Nakba and the reconceptualization of Return as the imperative redress of the Nakba’.⁵⁰ However, as such, much of Zochrot’s activities and discourse follow Holocaust remembrance habitus and discourse, for instance special emphasis on victims’ and perpetrators’ testimony and tours to the ruins of Palestinian villages. Even its very name is an unsettling of a very loaded Holocaust-related signifier. As the cultural scholar Louise Bethlehem asserts: ‘The linguistic subversion present as a willed *différance* is played out in the very name of the organization itself. Zochrot is the feminine plural form of the verb to remember—an imperative which is routinely associated with the Holocaust for Jewish Israelis’.⁵¹ As [Figure 1](#) demonstrates, this unsettling slippage of signifiers seems to have gone beyond Zochrot.

Saleh Diab, depicted in this photo, is one of the leading activists in the joint Palestinian-Jewish struggle against the Judaization of the Palestinian neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah in East Jerusalem. His family, originally from Jaffa, was expelled during the Nakba events of 1948. Together with some twenty-seven other families, they settled in Sheikh Jarrah in 1953. Following long juridical discussions in Israeli courts in which the alleged (prior to 1948) Jewish land owners claimed back their property in the neighbourhood, some of these Palestinian families were recently evicted from their homes while others remain under this threat. The photo was taken in May 2013 during a joint Jewish and Palestinian demonstration against these processes. As Saleh noted, they deliberately chose the slogan (i.e. Nakba survivor) on his shirt because the word ‘survivor’ is automatically associated in Israeli as well as in American culture with Holocaust survivors. It seems that while the slogan implicitly acknowledges the catastrophic fate of the Jews, it also wishes to provoke a moral reaction to the Nakba.

Another interesting case is the Holocaust exhibition displayed on 27 January 2009 in the village of Naalin—a village that has become the symbol for the Palestinians’ struggle (supported by Israelis against Israel’s construction of the separation wall in the West Bank). To mark the international Holocaust day of remembrance, the village, whose inhabitants suffer severely from the Israeli military oppressive measures against their ongoing struggle against the wall, erected a display of photographs purchased from Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum and invited the public to learn more about the persecution of the Jews (see [Figure 2](#)).⁵² This exhibition was initiated by Khaled Kasab Mahameed, a lawyer from Nazareth, who mounted a small Holocaust exhibition on the ground floor of his home. He dedicated many years of his life to promoting historical knowledge of the Holocaust among Palestinians. He believed that without understanding the Holocaust, the Palestinians could not really understand the Israeli Jewish society and politics, and therefore could never reach an agreement with them.

The exhibition in Naalin was indeed unsettling in two ways. On the one hand, and as the photo demonstrates, the Palestinian inhabitants who suffer



Figure 1. Saleh Diab, Palestinian activist, during a joint Jewish-Palestinian demonstration against the Judaization of the Palestinian neighborhood of Sheikh Jarah in East Jerusalem. (Copyright Amos Goldberg)

tremendously because of their struggle against the wall were willing to confront the catastrophic history of their enemy. On the other hand, the sign in this exhibition stated: 'Merkel, why should we Palestinians continue to pay the price for the Holocaust?'. The message of this exhibition to Israeli Jews was: 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. This is precisely the message we saw in Khoury's novel.

Each of these various examples, and many others of empathic unsettlement, deserves a lengthy ethnographic description and analysis, but that is beyond the scope of this article.⁵³ They all demonstrate different and at times contradicting ways by which small groups of Jews and Palestinians in various social and political arenas and contexts struggle to jointly establish a new empathic and unsettling discourse on the two catastrophes. These examples offer more than merely bringing the Holocaust and the Nakba together to create some kind of rupture in the foreclosed national narratives.



Figure 2. A Palestinian visiting at the Holocaust exhibition displayed in 2009 in the Palestinian village Naalin. (Copyright Khaled Kasab Mahameed)

More specifically, perhaps we can locate the disruptive ‘other’ in both traumatic narratives in a way that would make empathic unsettlement more meaningful and constructive, that is, by creating a joint and egalitarian Jewish and Palestinian binational ‘we’ and ethics that many of the groups and individuals mentioned above seek to achieve, even if sometimes it is not their officially stated aim. To make this claim, we first elaborate on the figure of the refugee in order to return to what we consider the radical implications of empathic unsettlement in our context. The figure of the refugee takes us from the disruptive potential of empathic unsettlement, important in itself, to its productive potential that gives rise to binationalism.

Empathic unsettlement and binationalism

As we have shown, Khoury offers what we named a kind of empathic unsettling recognition towards the Jewish refugees. Edward Said proposes a similar position with regard to this disruptive power in the Israeli–Palestinian context, at the centre of which stands the figure of the refugee (or of a people that seeks refuge). In his reading of Freud’s *Moses and Monotheism*, Said recasts Moses, an Egyptian, among the refugees and traces the diasporic origin of Judaism and Jewish identity. Put differently, he emphasizes the constitutive role non-Jewish

others played in the formation of what he calls the ‘irremediably diasporic, unhoused character’ of Jewish life.⁵⁴ He argues that Palestinian identity and history are also constitutively diasporic and have been constructed in relation to alterity and under conditions of dispersion, exile, plurality and heterogeneity.⁵⁵ Said concludes that these Palestinian and Jewish experiences of refugeeism give rise to disruptive and diasporic politics that invites adversarial partnership and joint dwelling instead of separation and segregation; they challenge the ethnically homogenizing and exclusionary drives of the existing mainstream political order and identity politics discourse in Palestine/Israel.

It is thus no coincidence that the figure of the refugee (‘Jews fleeing European antisemitism’),⁵⁶ a disruptive presence, plays such a major role in our interpretation of empathic unsettlement. For, as Hannah Arendt and subsequently Giorgio Agamben have pointed out,⁵⁷ the refugee is precisely the one who stands outside the political order, and is thus by definition a figure that disrupts the established order of things. In many cases, the refugee is from the outset created as a result of the aspiration towards homogeneity by modern societies and in particular the ethnically exclusive nation-state. The nation-state, in certain circumstances, is inclined to ‘cleanse’ or to ‘purify’ itself of every ‘stranger’ or ‘other’ that spoils the picture of complete, unified and close-knit identity that it seeks to create. And when she is uprooted or expelled because she is different, because of her political position or ethnic origin, because she is perceived to be an enemy or for any other reason, the refugee loses her civil status and is therefore no longer protected by the law and inevitably becomes a permanent victim. An empathic view of the refugee disrupts the validity of the foundations of the political order that created her in the first place and now abandons her to her fate. For the refugee, more than any other figure, also constitutes the most radical threat to this aspiration for some utopian ethnic homogeneity. And as soon as she unwillingly becomes a refugee, her radical ‘incompatibility’, which sparked the crime against her in the first place, is merely exacerbated. The refugee is thus on the one hand a paradigmatic figure since she symbolizes a prevalent and pervasive modern phenomenon, while at the same time arousing disquiet and presenting an enormous threat to the existing social and national order.

The refugee issue was high on the international agenda in the period preceding World War II partly because of the Nazis’ persecution of the Jews, although Armenian refugees were prominent in European and American consciousness in the 1920s.⁵⁸ By the late 1930s, however, they became identified above all with the ‘Jewish problem’. Following the war and the Holocaust, Jews remained the most problematic group of refugees on Europe’s political agenda. Many countries did not want them back, and many displaced persons refused to return to their former homeland.

As such, the figure of the refugee historically links the Holocaust to the Nakba, both of which are located on a plane on a type of continuum, despite the radical difference between the two events. Written in 1951, the words of Hannah

Arendt,⁵⁹ who herself underwent the refugee experience and wrote a fair amount about it, are worthy of extensive citation:

Hitler's solution of the Jewish problem first to reduce the German Jews to a nonrecognized minority in Germany, then to drive them as stateless people across the borders, and finally to gather them back from everywhere in order to ship them to extermination camps, was an eloquent demonstration to the world how really to 'liquidate' all problems concerning minorities and stateless. After the war it turned out that the Jewish question, which was considered the only insoluble one, was indeed solved—namely by means of a colonized and then conquered territory—but this solved neither the problem of the minorities nor the stateless. On the contrary, like virtually all other events of our century, the solution of the Jewish question merely produced a new category of refugees, the Arabs, thereby increasing the number of stateless and rightless by 700,000 to 800,000 people. And what had happened in Palestine . . . was then repeated in India on a large scale Since the Peace Treaties of 1919 and 1920, the refugees and stateless have attached themselves like a curse to all the newly established states on earth which were created in the image of the nation state.⁶⁰

According to this political thinking, refugees and stateless persons are not merely unfortunate beings deserving of pity and empathy. They are above all symptomatic of the ethnically exclusive nation-state's modern political structure, which encompasses intrinsic and potentially disastrous dangers, whose severity may vary from case to case, even though they are located on the same general conceptual plane and follow fairly similar logic. The refugee, whose radical difference within a given political order has turned her into what she is, becomes yet more different and threatening once she becomes a refugee who lacks a place and the protection of the political order. As such, she is almost completely exposed to all the ills of this world. This is why empathy towards the refugee is unsettling, since it is directed at the traumatic element within the modern nation-state. For this reason, empathy towards the refugee, especially the one coming to your territory or the one for whose refugeeism you are responsible, is not an easily acquired and non-political pleasurable identification. It forces one to reconsider the political system that produced the refugee in the first place and to translate this empathy into an inevitably unpopular political action. It is an empathy that casts very worldly responsibility towards the refugee.

Perhaps no one experienced at first hand these tendencies of the nation-state with more intensity than European Jews.⁶¹ From the European perspective, always seen to possess a dual (local and Jewish) identity, the 'Jew' was perceived as someone who transcended borders, who was often multilingual and multicultural, whose religion was different and who hailed from a different ethnic origin, constantly challenging and disrupting this desire for homogeneity. The Jews of different societies and nation-states in eastern and western Europe suffered from this image in very different ways, not only in Nazi Germany but also in interwar Poland (and more severely in the latter half of the 1930s), in Romania, certainly in Russia, as well as in France and in other places. To be sure, one cannot explain the fate of the Jews in every location only by this context of the national urge towards homogeneity. Nevertheless, once the Jews

were marked as ‘others’ whose belonging to the political structure of the nation-state was questionable, they inevitably became an object of some sort of persecution, discrimination or exclusion, and frequently also of expulsion or murder. The most extreme example of this tendency is Nazi Germany’s self-conceptualization as a *Volksgemeinschaft* of which the Jews were its major victims.⁶²

The Nakba appears to be a further such example. It, too, was the outcome of national and colonial confrontation in which the victorious Jewish side’s aspiration to ethnic homogeneity within its state was among the factors that created the large number of Palestinian refugees. From the mid 1930s onwards, during the course of its struggle against the Palestinians, Zionism, or at least its mainstream variants, largely adopted the (east-central) European model of ethnocentric nationalism, which is constantly engaged in defining the ethnic identity of the nation-state and its projects of ethnic exclusivity and homogenization.⁶³ At the same time, the majority of Palestinian Arabs refused to recognize the legitimacy of the new Jewish settlement and the growing Jewish nationalism in Palestine, and therefore they rejected the 1947 partition plan, opposed Jewish nationalism and settlement in Palestine and viewed them as a colonialist outpost of western imperialism. In these contexts the non-Jewish ‘other’, namely the Palestinians, became an alarming threat to the very legitimacy of Jewish sovereignty on the one hand, and a threatening ethnic presence on the other. The modern logic of ethnic cleansing and homogeneity, particularly during wartime, almost inevitably led to the Nakba.

Thus, even if the Holocaust and the Nakba are incomparable events of different magnitude, in other senses they structurally share, albeit partially, the same type of dangerous political rationale, together with many other historical phenomena. We underscore the ‘partially’ since neither the Holocaust nor the Nakba, nor the other events to which we have alluded, can be entirely reduced to this political logic alone. Yet this historical and political context, however unsatisfactory, is certainly important and essential to understanding these events. The refugee is therefore a major political and cultural figure who, despite all the difference, links the Jewish Holocaust to the Palestinian Nakba and stands as a figure of radical critique of the exclusionary ethnic model of the nation-state.

More specifically, the Palestinian and Jewish refugees of the Nakba and the Holocaust not only serve as disruptive and alarming reminders of the exclusionary forces of identity politics in Israel/Palestine, but also as a challenge to the statist mainstream Palestinian and Israeli politics that view exclusive and separate ethnic nation-states as the ultimate and desired institutional frame within which the political rights of the respective peoples are realised and protected. Consequently, one could view the refugee as a herald of alternative and creative forms of politics, ones premised on partnership, cooperation, joint dwelling and integration rather than on segregation, balkanization, separation and ghettoization. In what follows, we suggest that these are the disruptive and productive potentials of LaCapra’s ‘empathic unsettlement’ that give further—however partial and

initial—meaning, shape and content to the alternative and integrationist forms of politics heralded by the refugee.

How, then, does LaCapra's 'empathic unsettlement' confront these problems of refugeeism, otherness, collective trauma and an egalitarian public deliberation that could bear the mark of a shared 'we'? As we have seen, 'empathic unsettlement' transforms 'otherness' from a problem to be disposed of into a moral and emotional challenge. It requires a type of paradoxical action, namely to empathize precisely with that alienating, traumatic and hard-to-digest element of radical otherness. Empathic unsettlement enables this traumatic otherness that breaks out of the political, social and discursive structures to render, in a controlled manner and through a paradoxical identification, the preordained narratives more flexible, and to enhance receptiveness to new structural possibilities that seek to reduce the very likelihood that these traumas will be generated. Moreover, according to LaCapra, in response to this disruptive and excessive otherness that transcends discursive political structures and the existing array of images, empathic unsettlement seeks to avoid two extreme situations. Each of these is a temptation that lurks amidst the encounter of the individual or collective subject with the unsettling otherness of trauma.

One such possible extreme reaction is the validation and extreme entrenchment of unbridgeable dichotomies. This exceptional rigidity and lack of flexibility is a prevalent response to trauma. It is demonstrated in the Jewish–Palestinian case by the present mainstream political system with regard to Jewish–Palestinian relations: exacerbation of the dichotomy between Israeli–Jew and Palestinian–Arab as two national identities that establish themselves above all through the rejection of the other identity. As such, they maintain themselves as political and cultural identities that are unable to generate even the most partial common sphere and sense of 'we'. Moreover, according to LaCapra, such dichotomies are extremely dangerous, as he notes in regard to the Holocaust:

I think the binary opposition is very closely related to the scapegoat mechanism and that part of the process of scapegoating is trying to generate pure binary oppositions between (self-identical) self and (totally different) other, so that the other (let's say in the context of the Holocaust, the Jew) becomes totally different from the Nazi, and everything that causes anxiety in the Nazi is projected onto the other, so you have a pure divide: Aryan/Jew—absolutely nothing in common.⁶⁴

On the other hand, empathic unsettlement likewise seeks to avoid the post-traumatic collapse of all distinctions into a single indistinct jumble. Therefore, we believe that the translation of empathic unsettlement into political concepts produces thinking along binational lines as a moral and political principle (that is not necessarily manifested in a binational state). It does not reject the existence of two separate communitarian collectives, however internally diverse, but refuses to accept that the removal and exclusion of the one by the other provides the only solution to the traumatic experience of each of the collectives and to the encounter with trauma of the other collective. On the contrary, working through the traumas demands that the national dichotomies are made more flexible

without dismantling them altogether. Indeed, Khoury himself adopts a position along these lines in an interview he gave to the Israeli cultural critic Liron Mor: 'I hope that a binational state will exist in Palestine-Israel', and he even further expands this idea to multi-nationalism which would encompass the whole region.⁶⁵

In conclusion, let us be more concrete on our proposed binationalism and briefly utilize its meaning in relation to other notions of binationalism, most notably Judith Butler's. Following Edward Said, Judith Butler argues that the constitutively diasporic Jewish and Palestinian identities and histories considerably contribute to giving rise to binationalism in Israel/Palestine. Butler further argues that the increased political, economic and demographic entanglements and entwinements in Palestine/Israel have created a *de facto* binationalism, namely a 'wretched form of binationalism'⁶⁶ premised on oppression, discrimination, colonial expansion and occupation and hatred and mistrust. Her ethical and relational notion of binationalism is grounded on different principles, namely democratic values of equality, justice and cohabitation. She argues that it is through the conditions of dispersion (geographic and ethical) and cohabitation that we can think about such democratic values. Dispersion (conditions of heterogeneity and plurality) involves a relation to alterity. This relationality, she insists, destabilizes and interrupts ontological claims and goes beyond identity and nation as constitutive frameworks.⁶⁷

While the binationalism that stems from our reading of empathic unsettlement has few similarities with Butler's account of binationalism (including largely agreeing with her analysis of the refugee and her diagnosis of the realities on the ground in Israel/Palestine), it nevertheless remains considerably different. Unlike Said, Butler and other scholars who equate binationalism with a binational state as the ultimate institutional governing frame, our proposed binationalism can be achieved within the frame of several institutional arrangements. Put differently, various forms of governing polities such as federation, confederation, parallel state structure, condominium, binational state and/or expansively cooperative, overlapping and interlinked two-state solution can realise and respect the egalitarian individual and collective national rights of Arabs and Jews in Palestine/Israel. Moreover, Butler's binationalism seems to run the risk of collapsing into a radical individualistic liberalism. For when she argues that her notion of binationalism leads to a 'postnational polity' that 'would eradicate all forms of discrimination on the basis of ethnicity, race, and religion',⁶⁸ this postnational state seems closer to classical liberalism of benign neglect/difference-blind or excessive individualism and destabilizing differentiation and pluralization than to agonistic relational binationalism. Our proposed binationalism, denoted by 'empathic unsettlement', allows for more ontological stability than Butler's excessive individualistic hybridity and radical alterity. Otherwise stated, our binationalism endorses a thin form of communitarianism that acknowledges the role ethnicity and nationalism play in Israel/Palestine. More precisely, our account recognizes the right to national self-determination of both national groups while insisting that this right ought not be realised in the form of an exclusive ethnic state.

Our emphasis on some degree of ontological stability resonates with LaCapra's claim that 'deconstruction does not blur or undermine all distinctions; it leaves you with a problem of distinctions that are, if anything, more difficult and more necessary to elaborate, given the fact that you cannot rely on simple binaries It is *not* a pure binary opposition but rather involves a notion of difference, but a difference that's not a pure or total difference'.⁶⁹ LaCapra's ethics, as our notion of binationalism, seeks a middle ground between complete separation on the one hand and blurring all (ethnic and communal) distinctions on the other. As LaCapra notes, '[d]econstructing a binary opposition does not automatically cause it to go away or to lose its often constraining role in social and political reality'.⁷⁰ This is particularly valid in intractable conflicts such as the case of the Jews and the Palestinians in Palestine/Israel. Similarly, our attempt in this article has been to suggest a way to jointly think and deliberate on the two traumatic memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba without conflating them but also without completely separating them as if they have nothing to do with one another. A joint discussion on the Holocaust and the Nakba informed by the requirements and effects of empathic unsettlement does not only require expansive public deliberation that nourishes civic virtues of tolerance, reciprocity, mutual legitimacy and active engagement in public affairs. It also gives rise to an adversarial democratic politics that necessitates achieving compromises, forming alliances likely to cut across ethnic and national lines, and paving the way for creative thinking and challenging existing paradigms. Finally, it is precisely in the context of the policing dominance and hegemony of paradigmatic and foreclosed narratives and epistemologies that we view this joint article as a modest contribution to identifying possible venues for alternative thinking and democratic joint dwelling.

Acknowledgements

For comments on earlier versions of the article, our thanks go to the journal editors, Rachel Busbridge, Alon Confino, Azar Dakwar, Avner de-Shalit, Yasmine Haj, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, Adel Manna, Sidra Ezrahi and four anonymous referees. We also wish to thank the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute for hosting the project from which this article emerged.

Endnotes

- 1 Nakba is an Arabic word that means catastrophe and it has been used to refer to the dispossession, expulsion and national ruin of Palestinians before and after 1948.
- 2 For a related and careful historical analysis, see for example Yehuda Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2001), pp. 241–260; Arieh J. Kochavi, *Post-Holocaust politics: Britain, the United States, and Jewish refugees, 1945–1948* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2010); Yair Auron, *The Holocaust, the rebirth and the Nakba* (Tel Aviv: Resling, 2013) (Hebrew).
- 3 Robert Eaglestone, *The Holocaust and the postmodern* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 3.
- 4 Alon Confino, *Foundational pasts: the Holocaust as historical understanding* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).
- 5 There have been several attempts that mainly sought to write joint or parallel Palestinian/Israeli narratives. See for example Adel Manna and Motti Golani, *Two sides of the coin: independence and Nakba 1948: Two*

- narratives of the 1948 war and its outcome (Dordrecht: Republic of Letters, 2011). Nevertheless, our aim in this article is indeed different. We aspire to identify the enabling conditions and the guiding principles of such a joint discussion.
- 6 Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*, p. 18.
 - 7 For a relevant critique of the Habermasian notion of public deliberation, see Bashir Bashir, 'Reconciling historical injustices: deliberative democracy and the politics of reconciliation', *Res Publica*, Vol. 18, No. 2, 2012, pp. 127–143; Lynn Sanders, 'Against deliberation', *Political Theory*, Vol. 25, No. 3, 1997, pp. 347–376.
 - 8 See also Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional memory: remembering the Holocaust in the age of colonization* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009), pp. 199–226, to which some of the ideas presented here owe much.
 - 9 See for example the debate in Saree Makdisi et al., 'The architecture of erasure', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 36, No. 3, 2010, p. 618.
 - 10 See, for example, in a very different context, the debate over Timothy Snyder's argument suggesting to reframe the Holocaust within east Europe's catastrophic history in the 1930s and 1940s in *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin* (New York: Basic Books, 2010). For the debate, see the review forum in this journal: 'Review forum: Timothy Snyder, *Bloodlands: Europe between Hitler and Stalin*', *Journal of Genocide Research*, Vol. 13, No. 3, 2011, pp. 313–352.
 - 11 See for example Steven Katz, *Historicism, the Holocaust and Zionism: critical studies in modern Jewish thought and history* (New York: New York University Press, 1992), pp. 162–192; Bauer, *Rethinking the Holocaust*; Saul Friedländer, *Memory, history and the extermination of the Jews of Europe* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1993), p. 113.
 - 12 Daniel Levy and Natan Sznajder, *The Holocaust and memory in the global age* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006); Jeffrey C. Alexander, 'On the social construction of moral universalism: the "Holocaust" from mass murder to trauma drama', *European Journal of Social Theory*, Vol. 5, No. 1, 2002, pp. 5–86; Tony Judt, *Postwar: a history of Europe since 1945* (New York: Penguin Press, 2005).
 - 13 See for example Avishai Margalit, *The ethics of memory* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); John Torpey, *Making whole what has been smashed: on reparation politics* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006); Elazar Barkan, *The guilt of nations: restitution and negotiating historical injustices* (New York: Norton, 2000). According to Karin Fierke, it is precisely this exceptionalism positioning the Holocaust as a benchmark for 'global memory' that blocks the memory of the Nakba. See Karin Fierke, 'Who is my neighbor? Memories of the Holocaust/al Nakba and a global ethic of care', *European Journal of International Relations*, published online, 24 October 2013, pp. 1–23, available at: <http://ejt.sagepub.com/content/early/2013/10/21/1354066113497490>.
 - 14 During the mid and late 1980s, *Historikerstreit* in Germany was on the issue of comparison and banalization of the Holocaust. See for example Richard J. Evans, *In Hitler's shadow: xWest German historians and the attempt to escape from the Nazi past* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1989); Martin Broszat and Saul Friedländer, 'A controversy about the historicization of National Socialism', *Yad Vashem Studies*, Vol. 19, 1988, pp. 1–47.
 - 15 Yehuda Bauer, *The Jewish emergence from powerlessness* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1979).
 - 16 See Marianne Hirsch, *The generation of postmemory: writing and visual culture after the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012).
 - 17 The question of when and in what sense a traumatic event ends is a very complicated and contentious, yet conceptually underexplored, issue. Indeed, it is beyond the scope of this article to navigate through this complex issue in relation to genocides. For related literature on the theme, see Jens Meierhenrich, 'How genocides end: an analytical framework', unpublished paper, Harvard University, 5 May 2008; François Furet, *Interpreting the French revolution* (Cambridge and Paris: Cambridge University Press and Editions de la Maison des Sciences de l'Homme, 1981), pp. 1–79; Yehuda Elkana, 'The need to forget', *Haaretz*, 2 May 1988, available at: www.einsteinforum.de/fileadmin/einsteinforum/downloads/victims_elkana.pdf.
 - 18 On the centrality of the Nakba in Palestinian identity and nationalism, see Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian identity: the construction of modern national consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), pp. 177–210; Yezid Sayigh, *Armed struggle and the search for state* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp. 25–57; Baruch Kimmerling and Joel S. Migdal, *The Palestinian people: a history* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 214–239; Nur Masalha, '60 years after the Nakba: historical truth, collective memory and ethical obligations', *Kyoto Bulletin of Islamic Area Studies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, 2009, pp. 37–88; Ahmad H. Sa'di and Lila Abu-Lughod (eds.), *Nakba: Palestine, 1948, and the claims of memory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); Mustafa Kabha (ed.), *Towards a historical narrative of the Nakba: complexities and challenges* (Haifa: Mada-Arab Center for Applied Social Research, 2006).
 - 19 The issue of the Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini's links to the Nazis inevitably arises in this context. Yet this matter may be regarded as a moral stain and a political error deserving of strong condemnation (see Azmi Bishara, 'The Arabs and the Holocaust: an analysis of the problematical nexus', *Zmanim*, Vol. 13, No. 53,

- 1995, pp. 54–71 [Hebrew]). It had, however, no effect on Nazi policy towards the Jews, nor on the murderous implementation of this policy. This may be an important symbolic issue, but has no historical importance with regard to the final solution. Nevertheless, as Peter Novick has noted in *The Holocaust in American life* (Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin, 1999), p. 158, the Mufti was accorded an entry in Israel Gutmann (chief editor), *Encyclopedia of the Holocaust* (Jerusalem and New York: Yad Vashem and Macmillan, 1990) twice as long as those of Goebbels and Goering. A number of works have been written on the attitude of the Arab world and the Palestinian National Movement towards the Holocaust, which reach virtually opposite conclusions. See Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*; Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From empathy to denial: Arab responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2009); Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi propaganda for the Arab world* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2009).
- 20 The Nakba has been analysed as ethnic cleansing by Ilan Pappé, *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford: Oneworld Publications, 2006), and Nur Masalha, *Expulsion of the Palestinians* (Washington, DC: The Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). This analysis in turn drew sharp criticism, for example from Seth J. Frantzman, who rejects the assertion of ethnic cleansing as well as Pappé's book's academic value: 'Review of Ilan Pappé, *The ethnic cleansing of Palestine*', *Middle East Quarterly*, Vol. 15, No. 2, pp. 70–75. Recently, some scholars have attempted to understand 1948 within a global perspective and comparative modern history of ethnic cleansing and forced migration, while staying away from polemics and accusations. Richard Bessel and Claudia Haake view 1948 within a history of forced removal in the modern world, arguing that the concept of forced removal 'can perform descriptive and explanatory work of a kind that the frameworks offered by "genocide" or "ethnic cleansing" seldom attempt or cannot undertake'. Bessel and Haake, 'Introduction: forced removal in the modern world', in Bessel and Haake (eds.), *Removing peoples: forced removal in the modern world* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 5. Alon Confino placed 1948 in a global history of modern forced migration, arguing for the benefits of this concept over ethnic cleansing both on grounds of method and of public debate because ethnic cleansing is now associated with a tribunal and prosecutorial atmosphere that blocks discussion and leads to reflexive denials. Alon Confino, 'Miracles and snow in Palestine and Israel: Tantura, a history of 1948', *Israel Studies*, Vol. 17, No. 2, 2012, pp. 25–61.
 - 21 The disjuncture of Arab Jews after 1948, although the Palestinians were not involved in it and later even denounced it, is often held up as a sort of equal population exchange with the Palestinian refugees. See Irwin Cotler, David Matas and Stanley A. Urman, 'Jewish Refugees from Arab countries: the case for rights and redress', 5 November 2007, available at: <http://www.justiceforjews.com/jjac.pdf>. On Palestinian opposition to this disjuncture, see Nabil Shaath, 'The democratic solution to the Palestine issue', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 1997, p. 15.
 - 22 See for example Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between memory and hope: the survivors of the Holocaust in occupied Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002); Hagit Lavsky, *New beginnings: x Holocaust survivors in Bergen-Belsen and the British zone in Germany, 1945–1950* (Detroit, MI: Wayne State University Press, 2002). For a different view, see Idith Zertal, *From catastrophe to power: Holocaust survivors and the emergence of Israel* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1998).
 - 23 See for example Article 19 of the Palestine National Charter of 1964, available at: <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12363>; and Article 22 of the Palestine National Charter of 1968, available at: <http://www.un.int/wcm/content/site/palestine/pid/12362>; Edward Said, *The question of Palestine* (New York: Times Books, 1979).
 - 24 Report of a radio address by Mahmoud Darwish on the fiftieth anniversary of the Nakba, available at: <http://www.festivaldepoesiademedellin.org/pub.php/en/Diario/03.html?print>; Edward Said, 'Israel-Palestine: a third way', *Le Monde Diplomatique*, September 1998.
 - 25 Idith Zertal, *Israel's Holocaust and the politics of nationhood* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Moshe Zuckermann, *Zweierlei Holocaust: der Holocaust in den politischen Kulturen Israels und Deutschlands* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 1988).
 - 26 The epic novel *Bab al-Shams* by Elias Khoury was originally published in Arabic in 1998 marking 50 years since the Nakba. It soon became acknowledged as one of the masterpieces in Palestinian and Arab literature. See for example Adina Hoffman, 'Recollecting the Palestinian Past', *Raritan*, Vol. 26, No. 2, 2006, pp. 52–61.
 - 27 Elias Khoury, *Gate of the sun (Bab al-Shams)*, trans. Humphrey Davies (New York: Archipelago Books, 2006), pp. 295–296.
 - 28 See Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust*. In March 2001, Khoury signed a statement along with 13 other Arab intellectuals (including Mahmoud Darwish, Samir Kassir and Adonis) opposing the holding of a Holocaust denial conference in Beirut.
 - 29 Khoury, *Gate of the sun*, p. 296.
 - 30 Emanuel Levinas, 'Peace and proximity', in Adriaan T. Peperzak, Simon Critchley and Robert Bernasconi (eds.), *Emmanuel Levinas: basic philosophical writings* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), pp. 161–170.

- 31 Emmanuel Levinas, 'Ethics and politics', in *The Levinas reader*, ed. Sean Hand (Oxford: Blackwell, 1989), p. 289.
- 32 Hannan Hever, 'The post-Zionist condition', *Critical Inquiry*, Vol. 38, No. 3, 2012, pp. 630–648.
- 33 Dominick LaCapra, *Writing history, writing trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).
- 34 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 141.
- 35 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 212.
- 36 Zygmunt Bauman, *Postmodernity and its discontents* (New York: New York University Press, 1997), pp. 5–16.
- 37 Sigmund Freud, 'Totem and taboo and other essays', in *The Standard Edition of the Complete Psychological Works of Sigmund Freud*, ed. and trans. James Strachey (London: Hogarth Press, 1955), p. 13; Jacques Lacan, 'The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I as revealed in psychoanalytic experience', in Lacan, *Ecrits: a selection* (New York: W. W. Norton, 1977), pp. 1–7.
- 38 This theme returns again as a dominant one towards the end of the novel: Elias Khoury, *Gate of the sun*, p. 397.
- 39 See for example LaCapra, *Writing history*, pp. 90–94.
- 40 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 41.
- 41 As Saul Friedländer sums up the ethics of the French philosopher Lyotard, 'the striving for totality and consensus is, in Lyotard's view, the very basis of the fascist enterprise'. Saul Friedländer, 'Introduction', in Friedländer (ed.), *Probing the limits of representation* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 5.
- 42 See Amos Goldberg, 'The victim's voice in history and melodramatic aesthetics', *History and Theory*, Vol. 48, 2009, pp. 220–237.
- 43 Vamik D. Volkan, 'Transgenerational transmissions and chosen traumas: an aspect of large-group identity', *Group Analysis*, Vol. 34, No. 1, March 2001, p. 95.
- 44 Khoury, *Gate of the sun*, p. 275.
- 45 Avot Yeshurun, *Hashever Hasuri Afrikani* (Tel Aviv: Siman Kri'a, 1974) (Hebrew), p. 130. For more on this, see Hannan Hever, "'The two gaze directly into one another's face": Avot Yeshurun between the Nakba and the Shoah—an Israeli perspective', *Jewish Social Studies*, Vol. 18, No. 3, 2012, pp. 153–163.
- 46 Ghassan Kanafani, 'Returning to Haifa' in *Palestine's children* translated by Barbara Harlow and Karen E. Riley (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2000), pp. 149–196.
- 47 Peter Marks, "'Return to Haifa" crosses borders of war', 22 January 2011, available at: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/21/AR2011012107180.html>.
- 48 On the extensive debates that the play generated, see <http://vimeo.com/18436295>.
- 49 Auron, *The Holocaust*.
- 50 See <http://zochrot.org/en>.
- 51 Louise Bethlehem, 'Apartheid: a double crossing', March 2011, available at: <http://zochrot.org/en/content/apartheid-double-crossing>.
- 52 Roi Mandel, 'Naalin holds Holocaust exhibit', 27 January 2009, available at: <http://www.ynetnews.com/articles/0,7340,L-3662822,00.html>.
- 53 See for example the skit by the Israeli performance artist and poet Natalie Cohen Waxberg: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gPLGczT6Hjw>. Educational deliberations that largely follow our proposed empathically unsettling direction took place at the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute, and are regular activities of the Center for Humanistic Education at the Ghetto Fighters' House (<http://www.gfh.org.il/eng/?CategoryID=86>). Educational deliberations, informed by empathic unsettling, also stand at the basis of the activities of the joint Jewish Palestinian village of Neve Shalom/Wahat al-Salam (Oasis of Peace) (wasns.org/).
- 54 Edward Said, *Freud and the non-European* (London: Verso, 2003), p. 53.
- 55 Said is not the only Palestinian intellectual who emphasizes the diasporic identity of the Palestinians following the Nakba of 1948. Mahmoud Darwish's poetry extensively refers to the centrality of exile in the formation of Palestinian identity. However, unlike Said, Darwish did not propose an alternative solution to the two-state solution or explicitly favour binationalism. For more on Darwish's focus on exile, see Hala Khamis Nassar and Najat Rahman (eds.), *Mahmoud Darwish, exile poet: critical essays* (Northampton: Olive Branch Press, 2008).
- 56 Said, *The question of Palestine*, p. 119.
- 57 Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as pariah: Jewish identity and politics in the modern age* (New York: Grove Press, 1978), pp. 59–66; Giorgio Agamben, 'We refugees', *Symposium*, Vol. 49, No. 2, 1995, pp. 114–119.
- 58 Keith David Watenpaugh, 'The League of Nations' rescue of Armenian genocide survivors and the making of modern humanitarianism, 1920–1927', *American Historical Review*, Vol. 115, No. 5, 2010, pp. 1315–1339.
- 59 Some scholars have challenged the usefulness and guidance of Arendt's intellectual contributions on modern nation-state, violence, statelessness and refugees to our contemporary times. See for example A. Dirk Moses, 'Das römische Gespräch in a new key: Hannah Arendt, genocide, and the defense of imperial civilization', *Journal of Modern History*, Vol. 85, No. 4, 2013, pp. 867–913.

- 60 Hannah Arendt, *The origins of totalitarianism* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1973), p. 290. See also Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Binationalism and Jewish identity: Hannah Arendt and the question of Palestine" in Steven E. Aschheim, ed., *Hannah Arendt in Jerusalem* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001), pp. 165–180.
- 61 Yet it was not only the Jews who suffered from the desire for homogeneity on the part of the nation-state (or ethnically dominated empires). Many European minorities, including Greeks, Armenians, Ukrainians, Belarussians and Germans, likewise suffered from this inclination, which led to a prolonged series of discrimination, exclusion, expulsion, ethnic cleansing, mass killings, genocide and even to the Holocaust itself. On the link between genocide and ethnic cleansing and the nation-state, see Eric D. Weitz, *A century of genocide: utopias of race and nation* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005); Donald Bloxham, *The Final Solution: a genocide* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009); Michael Mann, *The dark side of democracy: explaining ethnic cleansing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Mark Levene, *Genocide in the age of the nation-state, Vol. 2, The rise of the west and coming genocide* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2005); Benjamin Lieberman, "'Ethnic cleansing' versus genocide?", in Donald Bloxham and A. Dirk Moses (eds.), *The Oxford handbook of genocide studies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), pp. 42–60.
- 62 Michael Wildt, *Hitler's Volksgemeinschaft and the dynamics of racial exclusion* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2011); Peter Longerich, *The Wannsee Conference in the development of the 'Final Solution'*, trans. Ian Gronbach and Donald Bloxham, Holocaust Education Trust Research Papers, Vol. 1, No. 2 (London: Holocaust Educational Trust, 1999–2000); LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 165; Zygmunt Bauman, *Modernity and the Holocaust* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989).
- 63 Dimitry Shumsky, 'Brith Shalom's uniqueness reconsidered: Hans Kohn and Autonomist Zionism', *Jewish History*, Vol. 25, Nos. 3–4, 2011, pp. 339–353. For an illuminating comparison between the situation of the Jews in interwar Poland and the Palestinians in Israel, see Yoav Peled, 'The viability of ethnic democracy: Jewish citizens in inter-war Poland and Palestinian citizens in Israel', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Vol. 34, No. 1, 2011, pp. 83–102.
- 64 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 149.
- 65 See <http://haemori.wordpress.com/tag/%D7%91%D7%90%D7%91-%D7%90%D7%9C-%D7%A9%D7%9E%D7%A1/> (Hebrew). For more on the cultural and historical roots of this regional approach, which capitalizes on the cultural diversity of the Levantine, see for example Ammiel Alcalay, *After Jews and Arabs: remaking Levantine culture* (Minneapolis, MN: Minnesota University Press, 1993).
- 66 Judith Butler, *Parting ways: Jewishness and the critique of Zionism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2012), p. 210.
- 67 Butler, *Parting ways*, pp. 5–6.
- 68 Butler, *Parting ways*, pp. 16 and 208.
- 69 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 150.
- 70 LaCapra, *Writing history*, p. 150.

Notes on contributors

Bashir Bashir teaches political philosophy in the Department of Political Science at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His primary research interests are democratic theories of inclusion, conflict resolution and the politics of reconciliation, deliberative democracy and multiculturalism. Bashir is the co-editor with Will Kymlicka of *The politics of reconciliation in multicultural societies* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Amos Goldberg is Senior Lecturer in Holocaust Studies at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. His major fields of research are cultural history of the Jews in the Holocaust, Holocaust historiography and Holocaust memory in a global world. Among his publications is his recent book (in Hebrew) *Trauma in first person: diary writing during the Holocaust* (Or Yehuda: Ben Gurion University Press and Kinneret-Zmora-Bittan–Dvir, 2012). His co-edited book with Bashir Bashir on the memories of the Holocaust and the Nakba will be published in Hebrew in 2014.