

COLLECTIVE MEMORY OF TRAUMA

The Otherization of Suffering in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict

By Shannon Andrea Thomas

In the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the tragedies of the Holocaust and the *Nakba* (Ar. catastrophe) inform the respective foundational narratives of victimhood, nationalism, and rebirth. The death of over six million Jews in the Holocaust and the loss of homeland for Palestinian refugees in the 1948 Nakba, while not comparable in quantitative or qualitative scale, hold a similar position in the hearts and minds of Israelis and Palestinians. These events represent historical injustices that galvanize both peoples' modern national struggles. Despite the striking parallels, negating the other side's narrative of suffering is a basic characteristic of the conflict. This thesis studies the function of collective memory of trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing specifically on how the Holocaust and the Nakba are mobilized to construct national identities predicated on the rejection of the Other's victimhood. My inquiry is based on textual and visual analyses of materials created by official museums and institutions, K-12 history textbooks, and public writings and speeches devoted to memorializing trauma, seeking to demonstrate how collective memory is shaped and transmitted to future generations. I also analyze existing surveys of Israelis and Palestinians in order to gauge public opinion about one's own and the Other's historical trauma. I hope to add to the existing body of literature on cultures of victimhood in this conflict by demonstrating the link between the promotion of ultimate suffering and the minimization of the Other's tragedy in creating exclusive national narratives.

I. Introduction

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has persisted since the beginning of the 20th century, and widespread suffering and violence have entrenched conflict actors in oppositional narratives. Both peoples are deeply scarred by their history of tragedy; *Ha'Shoah* (Heb. catastrophe, Holocaust) and *al-Nakba* (Ar. catastrophe, or the expulsion of Palestinians in 1948) are translated as “The Catastrophe.” In Israeli society, the Holocaust is widely remembered as the most exceptional and horrific demonstration of man’s inhumanity, the culmination of centuries of Jewish persecution, the justification for a Jewish state, and the precedent for the heroic battle for the founding of Israel. For Palestinians, the Nakba is memorialized as the tragic uprooting of a long history of Palestinian culture and society, the paramount trauma shaping calls for a homeland, the injustice demanding a right of return, and the catalyzing force for redemption and resistance for a Palestinian state. Although one cannot equate “mass extermination with mass dispossession..., the symmetries between the various terms—Shoah/Nakba, displaced person/refugee, Law of Return/Right of Return, UNRRA/ UNRWA [United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration/United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees] —should give us pause.”¹ Despite these striking parallels, “the way that a majority of people on each side perceives the collective identities of both sides, Israelis and Palestinians, negates the very existence of the ‘opposing’ entity.”²³ This perception is largely framed because accepting the narrative of the other side is seen as undermining one’s own national story, which is founded on notions of moral superiority and ultimate suffering. As such, there is a trend of minimization and erasure, with some Israelis outright denying the Nakba, and some Palestinians doing the same to the Holocaust. This thesis studies the function of collective memory of trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, focusing specifically on how the Holocaust and the Nakba are mobilized to construct national identities predicated on the rejection of the Other’s victimhood.

A. Approach

Considering the sensitive nature of these traumas and the deep-rooted pain that accompanies them, one must take care not to imply any direct parallels between the Holocaust and the Nakba. My goal is to show how the complexity and power disparities in the conflict will differentially shape memory in both societies—not to place Israeli and Palestinian suffering in competition. While it is certainly possible to note the similarities of national identity construction, heroization, and minimization of the Other in both the Holocaust and Nakba, the contexts are quite dissimilar. On the one hand, “the Nakba, epitomizing Palestinian suffering, [has been] reconstructed as a founding myth in the Palestinian national identity, fulfilling, wittingly or unwittingly, a similar role to that of the Holocaust, the epitome of Jewish suffering, in Israeli society.”⁴ This situation has contributed to cultures of victimhood that share similar features. However, the positionings

1 Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (New York: Metropolitan, 2010), 23.

2 Robert I. Rotberg, *Israeli and Palestinian Narratives of Conflict: History’s Double Helix* (Bloomington: Indiana UP, 2006), 148.

3 While in 1993 Oslo Accords the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) recognized Israel’s right to exist, it has not acquiesced to Israel’s demand for recognition as a Jewish state. In the same agreement, Israel recognized the PLO as the representative of the Palestinian people, but still does not recognize Palestinian statehood.

4 Meir Litvak and Esther Webman. *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 35.

of the Holocaust and the Nakba are distinct and not completely comparable, and it is a difficult task to discuss these two traumatic and delicate situations. I would like to emphasize that this thesis does not equate these events in size or scale, and also does not attempt to compare levels of victimhood or suffering. Rather, it tries to demonstrate how trauma has played a formative role in both societies. Another complexity to bear in mind is the disparity in roles of the conflict actors. Jews suffered at the hands of Nazi Germany, a third party not represented in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, whereas the Palestinian trauma was directly the result of the creation of the state of Israel. Palestinians see the ongoing occupation of the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) as an extension of the Nakba and continued persecution by Israel, arguably making them even less amenable to recognition of the Israeli Other. While one could argue that some Israelis consider the threat of larger Arab aggression and Palestinian resistance as a looming second Holocaust,⁵ the Nazi regime, and not the Palestinians, were responsible for the trauma experienced on the Israeli side. Finally, I strive to remain cognizant of structures of power and dominance in this conflict. Israel approaches this conflict from a position as an established state with a strong economy and developed military, while the Palestinians act from a relative position of disempowerment, statelessness, and occupation. This power polarity does not excuse the minimization and erasure of the Other, but it may be a factor in explaining the tactics, motivations, and perspectives of the conflict actors in a chain of victimhood.⁶ A deeper understanding of current power dynamics is essential to effectively analyzing how memory is constructed and passed to the next generation in Israeli and Palestinian societies.

This thesis seeks to further understand the interconnected mobilization of national cultures of victimhood in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Contributing to this trend, memory is witnessed and relived by both survivors of trauma and preceding generations. My research utilizes Marianne Hirsch's term "*post-memory*" to describe what Abu Lughod et al see as "a hybrid form of memory that distinguishes itself from personal memory by generational distance and from a deep personal connection."⁷ The phenomenon reaches beyond one's own discrete memory of an event, transmitting the memory and importance of the Holocaust and the Nakba from survivors to their children and grandchildren. Trauma and personal sense of victimhood may be fully embodied in future generations, and "perceptions of the present and self-identity are overwhelmed by vestigial images and symbols from the past, revealing the extent to which the events of the Holocaust shapes the next generation's internal representations of reality."⁸ Post-memory similarly applies to Palestinian collective memory of the Nakba, which is immortalized generation after generation, fueling the national aspiration for right of return, including in the hearts of those who were not direct refugees of 1948. Michael Milstein explains that "the refugee problem is described as a *living site of memory* for perpetuating the reminiscence of the Nakba,"⁹ as a form of "active past" that is not solely lodged in history, but is relived as a daily experience by the entire society.¹⁰ Essential to my analysis in this thesis, these sites of memory—monuments,

5 Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 359.

6 Ilan Pappé and Jamil Hilal, "Fear, Victimhood, Self and Other: On the Road to Reconciliation." *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 163.

7 Lila Abu Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di. *Nakba*. (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 33.

8 Ibid, 35.

9 Michael Milstein, "The Memory that Never Dies: The Nakba Memory and the Palestinian National Movement" in *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity*, ed. Meir Litvak (New York City, NY: Palgrave-Macmillan, 2009), 48.

10 Ibid, 48.

parades, keys to deserted Palestinian homes, and a protracted presence of refugee camps—serve as reference points for broader collective memory linked to an ongoing past.

The analyses throughout this work focus on the concept of trans-generational collective memory and seek to engage with the question of how post-memory of trauma is preserved for posterity through living sites of memory. The research relies on analyses of materials created by official museums and institutions devoted to memorializing trauma, history textbooks, personal narratives, public texts and speeches, cultural symbols, and surveys and polling of Israeli and Palestinian public opinion. I approach these sources through a framework of discourse analysis, seeking to better understand the effect of institutions in shaping memory, as well as the actual implications of nationalist efforts to mold Israeli and Palestinian public opinions. My methodology relies on textual and visual analysis of descriptions, images, and symbols used to memorialize the Holocaust and Nakba, in order to understand how these events are represented officially and unofficially in the public sphere, and thus how collective memory is shaped and transmitted to the next generation.

In interrogating how collective memory of the Self is established through living sites of memory, I also seek to analyze the simultaneous de-emphasis and erasure of the Other's suffering. Ilan Pappé argues that "the negation of the Other, of his or her suffering and catastrophe, becomes a constitutive element in national identity formation. . . . This is especially the case when conflicts range over the definition of identity in a given territorial entity or over the definition of the territory itself."¹¹ For both Israelis and Palestinians, a subversion of the Other's narrative of suffering is deemed necessary to justify one's own moral standing, resulting in further otherization and a lack of recognition of the most fundamental framing traumas in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Therefore, the construction of collective memory to create a sense of national identity inherently relies on the destruction and silencing of the Other's version of history. Acceptance of alternative narratives would complicate and weaken the cohesive foundation of the nationalist project.

This delegitimizing tendency is dangerous as it contributes to the dehumanization of the conflict actors. By obscuring the face of the Other and removing the humanizing history of pain, it becomes easier to view one's counterpart through hatred and violence, constructing a straw enemy rather than a fellow human with an empathetic narrative of tragedy.¹² Mired in past memory and viewing the Other through a lens of historic ills makes it impossible to surmount the current violence, which will always be framed through a strict victim-perpetrator dichotomy. The current polemical works on the topic of trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict focus primarily on either the promotion of one group's collective memory, or the willful disenfranchisement of the opposing narrative. This thesis attempts to investigate how these two trends work together and rely on one another in order to bolster a cohesive national narrative, and to understand how the chasm between these two narratives perpetuates otherization and conflict. Through the internalization of the historical contexts, the ramifications of each other's traumas, and the linkage between narrative promotion and narrative erasure, there is potential to plot paths forward toward mutual recognition. That is to say that by understanding collective memory of trauma, it is possible to demystify the history of denial and delegitimization of the Other, and to understand the deep-seated need for mutual recognition and validation in both Israeli and Palestinian societies.

11 Pappé, "Fear, Victimhood, Self and Other: On the Road to Reconciliation," 168.

12 Eyal Naveh, "Learning Each Other's Tragedy." Interview by Shannon Thomas in. Jerusalem, Israel, August 12, 2013.

II. Parallel Sites of Living Memory

The focus of this chapter is to demonstrate the parallels and divergences in Israeli and Palestinian identity formation by utilizing living sites of memory to show how trauma has become essential to both nations' narratives. Aside from individual memory, official remembrance is actively deployed to advance discrete political agendas, as "nation-building involves emotional setting of place for the national community, through memories, histories, imaginations, myths, and symbols."¹³ The establishment of living sites of memory¹⁴ furthers this objective, creating societal institutions and/or physical manifestations of memory that perpetuate the feeling of trauma in the present. In the institutionalization of such sites, state actors and elites wield power to control knowledge, and work to create a hegemonic, uniting national narrative. National history "is born not just from the recollection of the past, but from an intense purpose of the groups in conflict, . . . selectively unearthing the version from history to legitimize its own hegemonic interpretation of nation."¹⁵ Analysis of official independence documents, holidays, Holocaust museums, Nakba memorials, recorded histories, and history textbooks demonstrates this dual-effort of accentuating and erasing history in pursuit of a cohesive and unmarred national narrative.

The connections between Israeli and Palestinian foundational histories are multitude: through the construction of collective memory, both peoples strive to reshape the events of history, claim a narrative of victimhood, and legitimate their right to territory by emphasizing their historical ties to the land. Both Israelis and Palestinians assert their longing for return to a recovered homeland, whether to the sacred holy sites in Jerusalem or to the villages of their ancestors. Both Israelis and Palestinians fold their catastrophes, whether of the Shoah (Heb. catastrophe, Holocaust) or the Nakba (Ar. catastrophe, expulsion in 1948), into a larger history of persecution, perpetuating multi-generational cultures of victimhood. Both, peoples turn their eyes away from the suffering of the Other to avoid shattering their carefully constructed sense of national identity. In this chapter, I attempt to unpack the congruencies in memorializing the Self and silencing the Other, in order to understand how these tailored versions of history are utilized to bolster the conflict actors' national projects.

A. *Independence Documents*

In the quest to mold national identity, memory moves beyond the realm of individual victimhood and is imparted trans-generationally, becoming established as collective post-memory of a society even decades after the initial trauma. Yael Zerubavel posits that in the process of commemoration, "collective memory can transform historical events into *political myths* that function as a lens through which group members perceive the present and prepare for the future."¹⁶ This is clearly demonstrated in the independence documents of both Israeli and Palestinian societies, both of which link a history of trauma to the founding of statehood. The Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel proclaims:

¹³ M. H. Ilias, *Space, Memory and Jewish National Identity* (New Delhi, India: New Century Publications, 2008), 85.

¹⁴ Lila Abu Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di. *Nakba* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 35.

¹⁵ Ilias, *Space, Memory and Jewish National Identity*, 15.

¹⁶ Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 9.

The catastrophe which recently befell the Jewish people—the massacre of millions of Jews in Europe—was another clear demonstration of the urgency of solving the problem of its homelessness by re-establishing in Eretz-Israel the Jewish State, which would open the gates of the homeland wide to every Jew and confer upon the Jewish people the status of a fully privileged member of the community of nations.¹⁷

Here, the fledgling Israeli government affirms a direct link between the Shoah and the creation of the Israeli state, framing the Holocaust as an affirmation of the Zionist movement. Later, the document asserts that the immigration by survivors of the Holocaust directly contributed both to the strengthening of Eretz-Israel and the war effort against the Nazis. The Declaration states that the Yishuv [Heb. settlement, or pre-Israel Jewish settlement in Palestine], “by the blood of its soldiers and its war effort, gained the right to be reckoned among the peoples who founded the United Nations.”¹⁸ This heroization of Holocaust survivors further works to legitimize the state enterprise, playing on the recurring theme of sacrifice in Jewish history (to be discussed below).

In a similar way, the Palestinian Declaration of Independence in 1988 (which did not result in national independence) positions the Nakba as the lens through which to view the Palestinian struggle for nationhood. Written by Mahmoud Darwish and delivered by Yasser Arafat, this document emphasizes the ongoing catastrophe of Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands by underscoring Palestinian history of oppression and expulsion. The Nakba and abrogation of self-determination is framed as an abandonment by the international community and a willful attempt to destroy the Palestinian people:

At a time when the modern world was fashioning its new system of values, the prevailing balance of power in the local and international arenas excluded the Palestinians from the common destiny, and it was shown once more that it was not justice alone that turned the wheels of history. The deep injury already done the Palestinian people and therefore aggravated when a painful differentiation was made: a people deprived of independence, and one whose homeland was subjected to a new kind of foreign occupation, was exposed to an attempt to give general currency to the falsehood that Palestine was “a land without a people.”¹⁹

The denial of sovereign rights by the British mandate, the international community, and Zionist immigration are implicated in the Palestinian culture of victimhood preceding the Nakba. However, it is the actual expulsion and displacement from historic Palestine that is seen as the ultimate trauma:

The occupation of Palestinian territory and parts of other Arab territory by Israeli forces, the uprooting of the majority of Palestinians and their displacement from their homes by means of organized intimidation, and the subjection of the remainder to occupation, oppression and the destruction of the distinctive features of their national life, are a flagrant violation of the principle of legitimacy and of the Charter of the

17 Israel. Ministry of Foreign Affairs. *Declaration of the Establishment of the State of Israel*. Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 May 1948.

18 Ibid.

19 Palestinian Liberation Organization. *Document: Palestinian Declaration of Independence, 15 Nov 1988*. *Document: Palestinian Declaration of Independence, 15 Nov 1988*. Al-Bab, 15 Nov. 1988.

United Nations and its resolutions recognizing the national rights of the Palestinian people, including the right to return and the right to self-determination, independence and sovereignty over the territory of its homeland.²⁰

In this way, the Nakba is tied to the Palestinian people's continuous marginalization, justifying the declaration of statehood and righting of historic wrongs.

It is interesting to note both the parallels and the differences in the deployment of trauma in these founding texts. While the Israeli and Palestinian declarations incorporate their trauma as a means for legitimizing claims to statehood, they do so for markedly different reasons. In the Israeli text, the Holocaust is a justification and causal factor for the victorious creation of the state of Israel, whereas the Palestinian document positions the Nakba as the root cause of their statelessness. Whereas the *presence* of Israel is framed as the redemption of suffering in the Holocaust, the *absence* of a Palestinian state is the catalyst for resistance through the statehood declaration.

B. *Cycles of Persecution*

In both Israeli and Palestinian commemoration, the seminal events of the Holocaust and the Nakba do not act simply as foundational myths, but as the zenith of a broader cycle of persecution. In the shaping of Holocaust memory, the trauma is structured not as a discrete occurrence, but as part of a cycle that is doomed to repeat itself unless the Jewish people achieve a safe-haven. As such, collective memory of the Holocaust "transcends the recollection of any particular episode in an ancient catastrophe. It is rather the realization of structural contrast in Jewish historical experience, built around the dramatic polarity of two great historical 'departures' (Egypt/Jerusalem—Exodus/Exile),"²¹ with a later parallel found in the expulsion of Jews from Iberia after the Spanish Inquisition. This ties into the "lachrymose conception of Jewish history," often attributed to 19th century Jewish historian Heinrich Graetz, who theorized that the two main, consistent elements of the Jewish experience are scholarship and suffering.²² In this understanding, the Jewish people would continue to be plagued by persecution in whatever land they resided. Following the outbreak of pogroms in Russia in the 1880s, Zionist theorists including Theodor Herzl concluded that Jewish assimilation was impossible and the only solution to preventing continual oppression was creating a Jewish state.²³ Hence, the state of Israel came to be viewed as a returning home, and as the only hope to break the cycle of Jewish persecution. The feeling that there was *eyn brera* [Heb. no choice] for the survival of the Jewish people other than the state of Israel became compounded after the Holocaust. Fearing the total annihilation of the Jewish community in Palestine at the hands of hostile Arab neighbors, the Yishuv justified a hawkish ethos to ascertain Jewish security and prevent a second Holocaust.²⁴

Adding to the importance of cycles in Israeli memory, the Holocaust also represents the juncture between exile and rebirth, acting as a bookend in the Zionist periodization of Jewish

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Yosef Hayim Yerushalmi, *Zakhor: Jewish History and Jewish Memory*. (Seattle: University of Washington, 1996), 44.

²² Nils H. Roemer, *Jewish Scholarship and Culture in Nineteenth-century Germany between History and Faith*. (Madison, Wis.: University of Wisconsin Press, 2005), 94.

²³ David Engel, *Zionism*. (Harlow, England: Pearson/Longman, 2009), 38.

²⁴ Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881-1948*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 359

history. In the Zionist narrative, the period of exile marks a gap between the romanticized age of Jewish Antiquity and the age of National Revival. In the master commemorative narrative ascribed by the Israeli state and calendar, Masada and the Bar Kokhba revolts mark the transition from Antiquity to exile, while the battle of Tel Hai in the Galilee in 1920 signifies the onset of the Zionist National Revival and re-connection with the physical land of Eretz-Israel.²⁵ This historical timeline serves to emphasize Jewish roots in the Biblical land of Israel, while de-emphasizing the lived experiences of the diaspora, relegating the period of exile to the shadows of history. Simultaneously, the Holocaust is framed as the ultimate signification of failed life in exile and the atrocious outcome of attempted assimilation. In this light, Masada²⁶ is viewed as a counter-narrative to what was perceived as Jewish powerlessness in the Holocaust, with the futile stand against the Romans being used to glorify Jewish resistance and sacrifice for a greater cause, even in the face of certain death. The emphatic heroization of Masada framed the mass-suicide as a glorified *kidush ha-shem* [Heb. sanctifying the name of God] rather than a defeat. This sentiment was transmitted to Israeli narratives surrounding the Holocaust, calling the Warsaw Ghetto rebellion the “Masada of Warsaw.”²⁷ Masada was similarly linked to the Zionist victory at Tel Hai in the 1940s Yishuv educational program, emphasizing that “the chain has not been severed from Masada to Tel Hai,” in that the Jewish people would continue to die on their feet rather than live on their knees.²⁸ The very name of the Tel Hai settlement embodied the symbiosis of destruction and rebirth with the combination of the word *tel* [Heb. mound] and *hai* [Heb. living], connecting the life of Zionism to Jewish sacrifice. In a way, the Masada, Tel Hai, and Warsaw rebels became co-opted as icons of sacrifice for the Jewish nation, partaking in the resistance that eventually lead to the creation of Israel (this will be discussed further in Chapter Two).

The motifs of ongoing oppression and resistance are also utilized in Palestinian remembrance, exemplified in the memorialization of Nakba Day. While a sense of Palestinian identity has evolved as a complex interplay of religion, geography, village-ties, Arabism, and anti-Zionism, perpetual statelessness and lack of sovereignty has prevented the same sort of centrally constructed nationalism seen in Israel.²⁹ Because Palestinians did not have official (though limited) self-governance until after the Oslo Accords in 1993, the first state-sponsored Nakba Day events occurred on May 15, 1998. The Palestinian National Authority (PNA) sought to create a united narrative of its own, reclaiming the memory of the Nakba as a site for resistance to the ongoing catastrophe of Israeli occupation. Mahmoud Darwish, who spoke about the lived experience of the Nakba in everyday Palestinian existence and resistance, marked the commemoration with his seminal speech:

Today, as we confront half a century of Nakba and resistance, pained at the continuing tragedy of our recent past, we cast our sights to the future that we are molding in hope and in the promise of freedom and justice. For we have vanquished all attempts at our obliteration and denial and at the eradication of the name of Palestine from the map of Palestine. On the fiftieth anniversary of one of the greatest crimes of the age, committed against the gentle people and land of Palestine, we stand in reverence in the sight of the

25 Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 35.

26 The Roman siege of the Masada mountaintop fortification, resulting in the mass suicide of Jewish rebels and their families, was one event in the Third Jewish-Roman War, a conflict resulting in Jewish defeat, genocide, and exile.

27 Ibid, 74.

28 Shapira, *Land and Power*, 317.

29 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 10.

martyrs who had offered their lives as a libation to the continuity of the land and its immortal name, in defense of our identity and sovereign existence on our land – a land infused with the words of God to humanity as with our ancestral blood.³⁰

The speech plays on themes of martyrdom for the nation, perpetuation of trauma, a culture of victimhood, and redemption from the ashes of catastrophe to reclaim one's homeland. This portion of his words glorifies sacrifice for the Palestinian national cause, grounding a national connection to the land through "ancestral blood." The allusion of blood ties to the land can be interpreted as direct praise of fallen freedom fighters, and as an espousal of the Palestinians who are physically buried in the earth. Their lives, deaths, and bodies become a sanctification of the land and a justification for a Palestinian state.

Another important congruence between collective memory of the Nakba and the Shoah is highlighted in Darwish's speech—that of a long history in the land of Palestine, and of a catastrophe lodged in a larger framework of oppression. Much like the Israeli justification of their right to the holy land based on Biblical ties, Darwish calls upon Palestinians' protracted connection to Arab civilization in historic Palestine, and closes with the line: "nor can Jerusalem be replaced as our capital or extracted from our land and our being: It is the home of our souls and the soul of our homeland, forever."³¹ As such, the Nakba and Palestinian society as a whole are positioned within the context of a multi-generational relationship to the land, a history of injustice, and deprivation of self-determination. Indeed, the Palestinian metanarratives engrain a number of pivotal events in the conflict, including the 1917 Balfour declaration, the institution of the British Mandate over Palestine (1920-1948), the beginning of the Zionist movement, the 1936-1939 Palestinian revolt, the 1948 Nakba, the 1967 War, the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, the removal of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) from Lebanon, the Sabra and Shatila massacre in 1982, and other instances of Palestinian oppression.³² This metanarrative places the Nakba at the heart of the politically motivated historical framing of dispossession and resistance, focusing on a politicized collective narrative of peoplehood rather than individual memory.

Additionally, the speech constructs the Nakba not as a singular occurrence, but as an ongoing trauma that has spanned Palestinian history since 1948:

Fifty years since the Nakba were not spent in grief over a painful memory. The past has not entirely departed, nor has the future entirely arrived yet. The present is an open potential to struggle. For 50 years, Palestinian history has stood witness to epics of perseverance and resistance, to confronting the implications, consequences and injustices of the Nakba. For half a century Palestinian history became a living pledge to future generations for their right to a life of freedom and dignity on their own land. We have begun painstakingly the nation-building process, to ensure a free homeland for a free people. The state of Palestine is returning to contemporary history after 50 years of forced eviction, a state embodying the principles and practice of democracy, separation of powers, human rights, gender equality, accountability, and the rule of law.³³

30 Mahmoud Darwish, "Palestinian People's Appeal on the 50th Anniversary of the Nakba." Nakba Day, Ramallah, West Bank. 15 May 1998. <http://www.arabicnews.com/ansub/Daily/Day/1980514/1998051435.html>.

31 Darwish, "Palestinian People's Appeal on the 50th Anniversary of the Nakba."

32 Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), 47.

33 Darwish, "Palestinian People's Appeal on the 50th Anniversary of the Nakba."

Clearly, the Nakba is not simply an event relegated to history books, but is a living, ever-present reality that is not only remembered by those who suffered through it, but also by subsequent stateless generations. This is important to grapple with in understanding the sense of ever-present threat that faces Palestinians. One could argue that similar to lachrymose Jewish conception of history, the feeling of disenfranchisement and persecution felt by Palestinian society, has become a primary theme in the collective psyche. As assimilation of Palestinian refugees in the diaspora is often unwanted by both the refugees and the host states, Darwish's speech indicates that the only viable solution to ongoing disenfranchisement would be the creation of a Palestinian state.

C. Historical Chronology

I now turn to the connections created through the relational positioning of Holocaust and Nakba commemoration on national calendars. In 1953, the Israeli Knesset established Yad Vashem [Heb. Hand/Memorial and name, the Martyr's and Heroes Remembrance Authority] and Yom HaShoah, [Heb. Holocaust Day]. Today, Yom HaShoah is an essential part of the Israeli Calendar, falling on the twenty-seventh day of Nissan and beginning on sundown the previous evening, in traditional Jewish religious custom. On this day, all places of business are closed, radio and television play narratives and names of Holocaust survivors, an official ceremony is held at Yad Vashem, and a siren blares throughout Israel for two minutes at sundown and 11:00 a.m., causing everyone to stop whatever they are doing. "The linking of historical events to particular days within the Israeli calendar or particular geographical sites likewise reshape the meaning of the past,"³⁴ and the positioning of Holocaust Day stands out particularly. It is followed closely by two more holidays, Yom HaZikaron [Heb. Day of Remembrance] and Yom HaAtzmaut [Heb. Independence Day]—the first, memorializing Israel's fallen soldiers and the second, celebrating Israeli Independence Day. The chronological connection between these commemorative events in the Israeli calendar suggest a direct linkage between the Holocaust and its heroes, the soldiers martyred for Israel's existence, and the creation of Israel in and of itself, all of which coalesces into a unified narrative in support of Zionism.

By emphasizing and silencing different events, Israel has managed to create a hegemonic, authoritative narrative of its history while allowing for *collective amnesia* to erase the Palestinian counter-narrative. The irony of this erasure is tangible, considering that the Israeli celebration of independence is directly correlated with the Palestinian mourning of the Nakba. Since 1998, the PNA officially declared Nakba Day on May 15, the day after Yom HaAtzmuot when translated to the Gregorian calendar. Looking at the 65th anniversary of the Nakba celebration on May 15, 2013, one can see additional parallels with Yom HaShoah, including the notable blaring of a siren for 65 seconds in recognition of the catastrophe that befell the Palestinians as a people 65 years prior.³⁵ However, in 2011, this *collective amnesia* separating these two events was instituted into Israeli law by banning of Nakba commemoration, prohibiting any activity "which would entail undermining the foundations of the state and contradict its values."³⁶ The proximity of these two commemorations, one of victory and one of loss, and their direct opposition to each other demonstrates not only the stark divide between understandings of history, but also the striking parallel in methods of remembrance.

34 Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, xix.

35 Carlo Davis, "Nakba Day 2013: Palestinians Mark 65th Anniversary Of 1948 Displacement." (*The Huffington Post*, 15 May 2013). http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2013/05/15/nakba-day-2013-palestinians_n_3278672.html.

36 "Israel Bans Events Commemorating the Nakba," *Ma'an News*, March 24, 2011. Accessed March 15, 2014. <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=371548>.

D. National Memorials

While both societies are striving for official national memorialization of trauma through museums, the financial backing, institutional capacity, and government resources available to the Israeli and Palestinian polities differ drastically. In Israel, there is a wealth of museums run both by the government and by private organizations to raise awareness and propagate memory of the Holocaust. Conversely, the relative disenfranchisement of the Palestinian people and lack of political sovereignty have resulted in less formal memorialization (village books will be discussed later in this chapter) and few institutionalized museum initiatives.

The Israeli government's passing of the Yad Vashem Law of 1953 formally legislated the creation of the Yad Vashem memorial museum, which hosts remembrance activities on Yom HaShoah, and is charged with commemoration, documentation, research and education surrounding the Holocaust. The name Yad Vashem [Heb. hand/memorial and name] refers to a quote in Isaiah, chapter 56, verse 5: "And to them will I give in my house and within my walls a memorial and a name (a "yad vashem") . . . that shall not be cut off."³⁷ The name itself, and the scripture to which it makes reference, embodies the vital nature of memorializing the history and victims of the Holocaust. As this museum was established through Israeli law and is the central institution for Holocaust memorialization for the Israeli population, an understanding of its portrayal of the Holocaust and Israel is essential to comprehending the political project of shaping collective memory. Additionally, Yad Vashem has an extensive physical and online presence including accessible newsletters, educational resources, virtual tours of their photo collections, narrative archives, and online exhibits, all of which thoroughly relay the Israeli historical narrative and individualized, humanizing testimony. Indeed, "the Museum complex, visited by thousands of people daily, provides information and creates an experiential encounter with Holocaust history. The displays—including personal artifacts, authentic photographs, original artwork and survivor video testimonies—emphasize the unique human stories of the Jewish population in Europe during those terrible years."³⁸ With 112,000 survivor testimonies, over 420,000 photographs, and approximately 2.6 million names collected to this date, Yad Vashem represents the highest authority in Israel on commemoration of the lived experiences of the Holocaust.

Aside from individual experiences, however, the establishment gives voice to the Israeli master narrative about the connection between the Shoah and Zionism. This is enshrined in the very spatial arrangement of the buildings (Figure 1)³⁹, as explained in the description of the Holocaust History Museum.

Its 180 meters—long linear structure in the form of a spike cuts through the mountain with its uppermost edge—a skylight—protruding through the mountain ridge. Galleries portraying the complexity of the Jewish situation during those terrible years branch off this spike-like shaft, and the exit emerges dramatically out of the mountainside, affording a view of the valley below. Unique settings, spaces with varying heights, and different degrees of light accentuate focal points of the unfolding narrative.

37 "About Yad Vashem." *About Yad Vashem*. Yad Vashem, Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/about/#!prettyPhoto>.

38 Ibid.

39 Figure 1, Yad Vashem, *Museum Complex*, April 3, 2014. <http://www.yadvashem.org/yv/en/museum/index.asp>.

FIGURE 1

THE INTERIOR OF THE HOLOCAUST HISTORY MUSEUM



As described to me on a tour of the museum, the building is structured so that while the guest can see the light at the end of the tunnel, one must navigate all the twists and turns of the segmented building and view the entire history of the Jewish people in Europe, pre-Holocaust to after the war (Figure 1).⁴⁰ Light from the exit permeates throughout, insinuating a glimmer of hope: a view of Jerusalem (Figure 2).⁴¹ Formatting the museum in this way sends a clear message that the founding of the State of Israel was the redemption of the Holocaust, and that the safe haven provided by Israel will prevent an atrocity of that magnitude from occurring again in the future. This is a theme throughout Holocaust memorials in Israel, with most exiting onto a scenic view of the countryside. Arguably, “these museums deliberately treat the landscape as a part of the history; indeed, as a resolution. From the start, that was one meaning the Holocaust took on: the founding of the State of Israel was seen as an answer to the Holocaust and a deliverance from it.”⁴² What is not clear from this breathtaking view is the echoing silence of the Palestinian narrative, as the erased village of Deir Yassin is visible from the balcony of Yad Vashem. The website Deir Yassin Remembered, which serves to memorialize the massacre of the Palestinian inhabitants of the village of that name in the 1948 War, features images of the former village as seen from Yad Vashem. “Upon exiting this portion of the museum, a visitor is facing north and looking directly at Deir Yassin. There are no markers, no plaques, no memorials, and no mention from any tour guide. But for those who know what they are looking at, the irony is breathtaking.”⁴³ While some gaze upon the Judean hills and see the redemption of the Jewish people, others are reminded of the most egregious acts of violence against Palestinians during the Nakba.

In Palestinian memorials, the story of the Nakba attests to Palestinian ties to the land, while directly ignoring Israel’s presence or legitimacy. Until the recent shift towards limited sovereignty under Oslo, “inside Israel, the West Bank, and Gaza as well as the diaspora, the political actors have never been consistently able to . . . establish and run museums and other cultural institutions,

40 Ibid

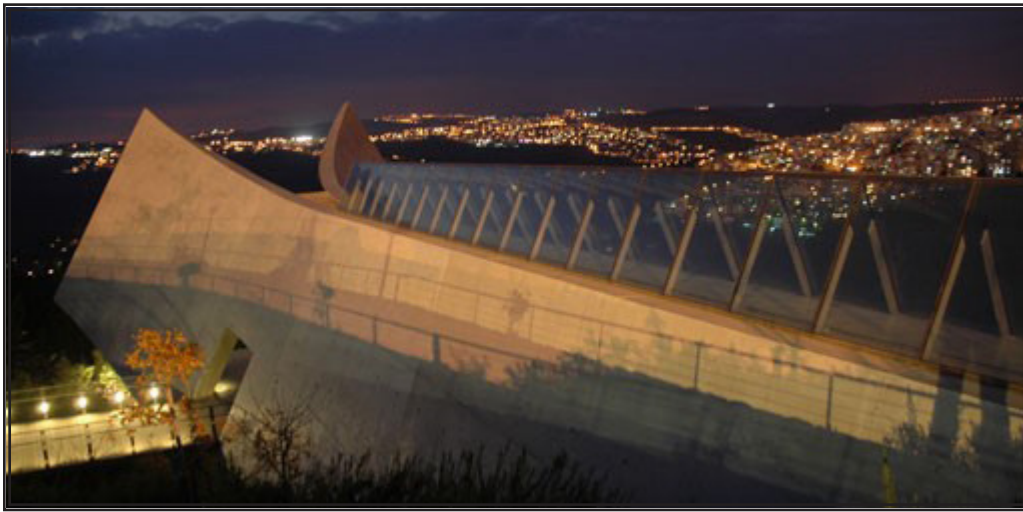
41 Figure 2, Yad Vashem, *Museum Complex*, April 2, 2014.

42 Edward, Rothstein, “Holocaust Museums in Israel Evolve.” *The New York Times*, September 3, 2012. Accessed February 25, 2014. http://www.nytimes.com/2012/09/05/arts/design/israels-holocaust-museums-evolve-in-message-and-methods.html?_r=0

43 “Deir Yassin Remembered Photographs.” Deir Yassin Remembered—. <http://www.deiryassin.org/pictures.html>.

FIGURE 2

VIEW OF THE YAD VASHEM BALCONY AND JERUSALEM



control media, and create and run other bodies that define state sovereignty.”⁴⁴ However, with the rise of the PNA following Oslo, more authority was vested in the government to establish a national narrative through living sites of memory. One such method was the revitalizing of the Palestinian educational system, which had been primarily dominated by UNRWA, Jordanian, and Egyptian texts pre-Oslo. These texts served a discrete purpose to bolster both the PNA and Palestinian identity through the educational system.

The textbooks are generally conceived with a nationalist framework. It is possible to say that the new curriculum is designed to serve several goals, chief of which are the inculcation of the Palestinian national and cultural identity and legitimization of the Palestinian Authority... The new Palestinian textbooks continue with the effort of strengthening an awareness of Palestinians as a nation. They attempt to do this by incorporating the symbols of Palestine, its people, national and religious heroes, poets and playwrights, national institutions, flag and emblems, maps, police and security forces, national and religious holidays, currency, geography, history, culture, and religion in multiple contexts across the curricula.⁴⁵

Following the Palestinian Authority Ministry of Education’s introduction of a new curriculum for first and sixth grade, the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI) released a report on the newly instituted textbooks. While they found that direct anti-Israel incitement had decreased, there is little or no mentioning of Israel whatsoever in any of the texts, and pictures of the Middle East displayed historic Palestine without the borders of Israel included.⁴⁶ MEMRI also comments on the vitriolic debate that ensued when one Minister suggested the inclusion of a section on the Holocaust in the curriculum (this will be dealt with more extensively in Chapter Three).

44 Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 11.

45 Israeli/Palestinian Center for Research and Information, *Analysis and Evaluation of the New Palestinian Curriculum Reviewing Palestinian Textbooks and Tolerance Education Program Grades 4 & 9*, Submitted to: The Public Affairs Office US Consulate General Jerusalem, June 2004, 35.

46 Goetz Nordbruch, *Narrating Palestinian Nationalism: A Study of the New Palestinian Textbooks*. (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Media Research Institute, 2002), 15.

This mobilization of the Nakba narrative by the PNA is certainly not the first mechanism of remembrance or resistance used in Palestinian society. Following the War of 1948, Palestinians found themselves displaced and the fabric of their society utterly destroyed. A combination of “past tragedies and lived indignities both reinforced Palestinians common consciousness and pinned it to right of return. . . [and] the nationalist awakening of youth marked a transition from a resigned *jīl al-nakba* (Ar. generation of disaster) to the activist *jīl al-thawra* (Ar. generation of revolution).”⁴⁷ Beginning in the 1960s, the Palestinian Liberation Movement acted as the umbrella organization for this new emphasis on Palestinian resistance, using armed struggle and terrorism as the unifying strategy for national liberation.⁴⁸ However, as factionalism befell the Palestinian *fedayeen* [Ar. militants, freedom fighters] and the PLO ousted from both Jordan and Lebanon, Palestinians sought another mechanism for national self-expression: village books. These books, initially compiled unofficially by villagers, chronicle detailed histories of Palestinian towns before 1948, often containing photographs, land deeds, keys to former homes, and family narratives. “The sudden flourishing of village books in the later 1980s reflects the fundamental shift in where Palestinians are investing their voices. No longer are they relying on a distant and compromised PLO leadership to represent and define them; rather they are creating elaborate dossiers in the form of village books to tell who they were, who they are today, and why their histories are important.”⁴⁹ Over time, however, the collection of oral testimonies became more formalized, with organizations like Birzeit University’s Center for Research and Documentation of Palestinian Society (CRPDS) working to compile and publish the histories of decimated Palestinian villages. With the advent of the Internet, these testimonies have proliferated. Now the entire content of Walid Khalidi’s *All that Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*⁵⁰ is available online, and audio-visual testimony of refugees on sites like Palestine Remembered and The Nakba Archives are available at the click of a button. The Palestine Remembered “About Page” lists some of its goals as “to preserve the memories and the experiences of the Palestinian people around the world,” and “to provide a comprehensive source of information about the villages and cities that were ethnically cleansed, looted, and destroyed by the Israeli army.”⁵¹ These goals clearly outline the Palestinian need for trans-generational post-memory to preserve their people’s history before 1948, and the remembrance of the atrocities perpetrated against the Palestinian people. The website is available in Arabic, English, and Hebrew, simultaneously demonstrating that an additional part of its purpose is to educate the West and to reach out to Israelis in the name of humanizing the Palestinian experience.⁵² These Internet platforms do not by any means lessen the importance of the physical memory books and other mechanisms of commemoration that are ever-present in Palestinian daily life. Simply walking through the streets in Palestinian neighborhoods and refugee camps, one may see constant reference to emptied and/or destroyed regions in the names of streets and businesses: Lubyia Street and Safad Street in Yarmouk Refugee Camp in Damascus, Al-Sarees Electronics and Aykirmawi Grocery in Amman. These more traditional manifestations of Nakba memory are treasured as organic and personal living sites of memory for Palestinians

47 Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement*. (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011). 64.

48 Ibid 64.

49 Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories*, 51.

50 Walid Khalidi, *All That Remains: The Palestinian Villages Occupied and Depopulated by Israel in 1948*. (Washington, D.C.: Institute for Palestine Studies, 1992). 1.

51 “Purpose.” *Palestine Remembered’s Mission Statement*. Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.palestineremembered.com/MissionStatement.html>.

52 Ibid.

to maintain connections to their villages. However, the importance of the online village books lies in the newfound accessibility of the Palestinian story as a means of both remembrance and raising awareness in the act of resistance to Israeli occupation.

In a similar vein, the assertion of Palestinian connectedness to homeland is evident in the creation of the new, innovative Palestinian Museum. The museum was conceptualized out of the “need to establish a modern historical museum in Palestine dedicated to preserving and commemorating the Palestinian past, in particular the Nakba (Catastrophe) of 1948—the watershed event of 20th century Palestinian history which led to the displacement and dispossession of 750,000 Palestinians.”⁵³ In doing so, the museum represents one of the few well-

FIGURE 3

THE PALESTINIAN MUSEUM BUILDING



funded, official efforts by the PNA to shape a narrative around the Nakba and pass on its memory to future generations. Part of this effort, which is now in its construction phase, is to create a natural space that is integrated with the environment surrounding the facilities. The museum’s projected layout shows the importance of the land to the Palestinian narrative, with open windows celebrating the view of Ramallah (Figure 3),⁵⁴ an emphasis on endemic plant life, and an outlook on the Mediterranean (Figure 4)⁵⁵—a tacit allusion to the right of return, as residents of the West Bank from villages near the coast can no longer access the sea without Israeli permits. However, similar to the case of Yad Vashem, this memorial fails to recognize validity of the Other’s claim to the area, refusing to use the word “Israel” in some of its descriptions. For instance, in speaking about partnering with other memorial institutions, cities/regions like Jaffa, Haifa, Nazareth, Acre, Shefaram, Sakhnin, Rama, Kufr Yassif, and the Negev are said to be in “1948 Areas” rather than within Israel proper. Neither Yad Vashem nor the Palestinian Museum seem ready to take steps to recognize the mere presence of the Other, let alone to formally acknowledge the other side’s narrative.

Despite the fact that the respective memorialization mechanisms employ many of the same motifs, the divergence between the two narratives nonetheless seems unbridgeable. In creating a unified, monolithic narrative of self, the humanity and story of the Other is subverted or erased to avoid contradiction. For both Israeli and Palestinians, “the construction of the master commemorative narrative exposes the dynamics of remembering and forgetting that underlie the construction of any commemorative narrative: by focusing attention on certain aspects of

53 “The Palestinian Museum.” *The Palestinian Museum*. Welfare Association’s Board of Trustees, Accessed February 25, 2014. <http://www.palmuseum.org/language/english>.

54 Figure 3, Henegha Peng, . *Palestinian Museum Slideshow*, <http://www.palmuseum.org/multimedia/the-building#ad-image-0>.

55 Figure 4, Henegha Peng, . *Palestinian Museum Slideshow*, <http://www.palmuseum.org/multimedia/the-building#ad-image-0>.

the past, it necessarily covers up others that are deemed irrelevant or disruptive to the flow of the narrative and ideological message.”⁵⁶ Collective memory is simultaneously accompanied by collective amnesia, blinding the conflict societies to counter-histories that do not fit within the schema of their constructed identities.

FIGURE 4

“THE MUSEUM OVERLOOKS THE MEDITERRANEAN SEA”



III. From Destruction to Redemption

While there is a weighty emphasis on historical trauma in the Israeli and Palestinian narratives, victimhood does not comprise the entirety of national identity—rather, victimhood is re-wielded as a badge of honor-demonstrating heroism and resistance in the face of oppression. This chapter will explore how cultures of victimhood are not passively developed, but instead serve as political tools in creating a triumphant and resilient nationalism. Both Israeli and Palestinian societies made this conceptual shift from destruction to redemption, using the memory of trauma as a catalyzing force to reconstruct their respective pasts in service of national narratives. In the Israeli case, there has been a national realization through the creation the state of Israel. For Palestinians, the struggle to concretize memory around the Nakba comes in the midst of perpetual exile and statelessness, as full redemption is still far from being achieved. In both national narratives, however, there is tension between depicting “cultures of victimhood” that face continuous persecution and demonstrating the will to emerge victorious over suffering to claim national strength and renewal. In the Israeli narrative, this tension is reflected in the heroization of Jews in the Holocaust, whereas in the Palestinian narrative, the depiction emphasizes a generational transition from catastrophe to resistance. While these situations cannot be framed as equivalent, it is striking to note that collective memory of both actors in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is molded to emphasize victory and perseverance stemming from narratives of trauma.

A. Holocaust and Heroism

In order to understand the current Israeli attitudes toward the Holocaust and its survivors, one must first understand the historical context surrounding the shifting role of the Shoah in the Zionist narrative. For a number of years immediately following the Holocaust, there was a resounding silence around the experiences of Holocaust victims and immigrants, as the

⁵⁶ Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 8.

assumedly weak Jews of the diaspora (whose experiences did not resonate with the spirit of Labor Zionism) stood as an antithesis to the Sabra, or the Jewish pioneer of the Yishuv.⁵⁷ The use of the word Sabra, tied to the Hebrew word *tzabar* [Heb. prickly pear cactus], spread rapidly in the 1930s, and was utilized to make a distinction between the “Old Jew” and the “New Jew,” or Jew native to Palestine:⁵⁸

The Sabra became mythological—and necessarily also archetypal—figure that forms the mold by which the Israeli-born would be shaped. The superior Sabra is characterized not only by what he possesses, but also by that which he does not have; he has no fear, weakness, or timidity; he has none of the exilic spirit [*galutiyut*]. He is the product of the Land of Israel, the outcome of generations’ hopes, and he stands in contrast to the Jew of Exile.⁵⁹

The Yishuv textbooks written between 1930 and 1948 characterized the Diaspora Jewish community with some of the same anti-Semitic stereotypes employed in Europe at that time.⁶⁰ The “Old Jew” was depicted often with a hunched back, bent gait, and “Jewish nose” whereas the Sabra was shown to be strong, muscular, virile, and handsome—a new product of the land rather than the old product of religious scholarship.⁶¹ These books went so far as to imply that “the Jews of the Diaspora were punished justly for their refusal to acknowledge the truth of Zionism, and they reverberate with the Yishuv’s disappointment over the lack of response from Diaspora Jewry to Zionism’s call to settle in Palestine [before WWII].”⁶² Because of this polarization of Israeli society, the displaced survivors of the Holocaust who immigrated to Israel following WWII were consigned to the periphery of society. Their stories were met with disinterest, blame, and dissuasion from speaking publicly. This perception combined with the horror, guilt, and pain associated with the deaths of millions of Jews (oftentimes family and friends of the already-Israeli citizens) created an overwhelming silence around the events of the Holocaust. This contributes to a separation or “a strange wall between Holocaust survivors and the native Israelis... Ben Gurion called it “a barrier of blood and silence and agony and loneliness.”⁶³

Even after the influx of Holocaust survivors to Israel, Israeli textbooks in the 1950’s and 60’s emphatically glorified armed resistance as a counter image to what was seen as a passive acceptance of certain death. The fate of Holocaust victims “seemed to affirm what Zionist education had claimed, that the future belonged to the national revival in the Land of Israel; Jewish life in exile could lead only to death and destruction.”⁶⁴ For this reason, mention of the Holocaust in national commemoration was often paired with emphasis on the ghetto uprisings or other means of revolt. This seems to suggest that these heroic actions were a superior exception to the larger Holocaust experience. Yael Zerubavel intimates that this reluctance to incorporate the victims and narratives of the Holocaust into the master commemorative narrative of Israel is tellingly demonstrated by the fact that the Knesset⁶⁵ did not pass legislation establishing Yad

57 Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust* (New York: Henry Holt and Co, 1991), 80.

58 Oz Almog, *The Sabra: The Creation of a New Jew* (Berkeley: University of California, 2000), 4.

59 Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1995), 26.

60 Almog, *The Sabra*, 78.

61 Ibid, 79.

62 Ibid, 78.

63 Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, 179.

64 Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 75.

65 Israeli parliament

Vashem [Heb. Hand/Memorial and Name] and a day of commemoration until 1953. It then took six more years before making observance of Yom Ha'Shoah ve Ha'Gevura [Heb. Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Day] mandatory by law, and even then there was a clear distinction between the categories of Holocaust and heroism in the holiday name.⁶⁶ Despite this seeming hesitancy, the Declaration of the State of Israel and the Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Act (Yad Vashem) began to develop consensus around the collective memory of the Holocaust. "The Holocaust had proven once again that the only solution to the Jewish problem was an independent state in Israel,"⁶⁷ that the rest of the world was hostile to Jews and necessitated the Law of Return, that the "Holocaust and heroism" went hand in hand in the fulfillment of a Jewish nation, and yet that the Holocaust was still a taboo subject.

While a sense of collective memory began to cohere around the Holocaust, the personal stories of survivors were still viewed with derision and silencing, creating a separation between public and private memories. Even as the Holocaust and Redemption were promoted as dual poles of the Israeli foundation myth, "collective memory was a blanket that hid all vestige of private memory, personal experience."⁶⁸ This logic was turned on its head during the Eichmann Trial in 1961, as testimony of survivors flooded the public sphere, creating a national affiliation with the pain and stories of the Holocaust victims and describing the deceased as the inheritors of the State of Israel. Tom Segev's work demonstrates Prime Minister Ben Gurion's quest during the Eichmann Trial to create a link between the Holocaust and heroism, by enlisting both the deceased victims and survivors as sacrificial champions for the redemptive creation of the State of Israel. Indeed, the judges of the trial stated, "the terrible slaughter of the millions of Jews by Nazi criminals, which almost obliterated European Jewry, was one of the great causes of the establishment of a state of survivors. The state cannot be disconnected from its roots in the Holocaust of European Jewry."⁶⁹ This politicization of survivors' testimonies is a clear example of constructing nationalism and collective memory based on the history of trauma, justifying the state endeavor because of the Jewish plight. Institutionalization of Holocaust memory through passing the Holocaust and Heroism Memorial Act and establishing Heroism Memorial Day has "established the link between the victims of the Holocaust and the State of Israel and the symmetry between Holocaust and heroism"⁷⁰ as essential to national identity.

B. *Nakba and Resistance*

Tension also exists between the Palestinian conceptualization of the Nakba as perpetuated victimhood on the one hand and as a catalyst for the Palestinian national struggle on the other. Much like post-memory of the Holocaust in Israel, Sa'di and Abu Lughod's *Nakba* emphasizes how Palestinians "grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own stories are displaced by the stories of a previous generation, shaped by traumatic events that they can neither understand nor re-create."⁷¹ While Rashid Khalidi iterates that there is undoubtedly a long-standing Palestinian connectedness to the land,⁷² the Nakba has come to hold a unique

66 Ibid, 75.

67 Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, 185.

68 Anita Shapira, "The Holocaust: Private Memories, Public Memory," *Jewish Social Studies: History, Culture, and Society* 4, no. 2 (1998): 40-58.

69 Segev, *The Seventh Million*, 356.

70 Ibid., 435

71 Abu Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di. *Nakba* (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 21.

72 Khalidi, Rashid. *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York:

position in Palestinian consciousness, particularly in the context of ongoing Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. Indeed, “although Palestinians had various forms of identity before 1948, including a sense of themselves as Palestinians, there is little doubt that the catastrophe, in all its dimensions, has not just determined their lives but has since become a key site of Palestinian collective memory and national identity.”⁷³ For many, the Nakba represents a perpetuated culture of victimhood, facing years of dispossession, displacement, and continual occupation. As such, “the past is neither distant nor over (and) exile is neither transitional nor transitory; it is an inherited state.”⁷⁴ The emphasis on storytelling and oral history in all of the articles of Abu Lughod and Sa’di’s collection demonstrates how memory of Palestine and a longing for return is passed down through generations, becoming both historical reality and a living present in post-memory. The Nakba holds a similar place in post-memory for the Palestinians as the Holocaust does for the Israelis, representing the continuous threat of persecution and erasure, creating a mentality of victimization, and necessitating a national homeland.

However, this notion of cultural victimhood is not accepted passively, but is challenged through the romanticization of the national struggle for a homeland. In the 1960s with the rise of Yasser Arafat’s Fatah faction of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), Palestinians perceived a shift from *jil al-nakba* (Ar. generation of disaster) to the activist *jil al-thawra* (Ar. generation of revolution), emphasizing sometimes violent resistance and raising the nationalist call for the reclamation of all of historic Palestine and for right of return.⁷⁵ Some date this transition towards *al-thawra al-Filastinia* (Ar. The Palestinian Revolution) to January 1, 1965, when Fatah announced its first military engagements in Israel; e others date the resistance to March 21, 1968, with the beginning of the Battle of Karamah.⁷⁶ This violent revolutionary attitude relied heavily on the utilization of armed struggle as a central uniting factor among all factions of the PLO. While these revolutionaries may have been viewed as terrorists from Israeli and international perspectives, the *fidā’iyyīn* (Ar. One who sacrifices himself) were viewed as heroes, freedom fighters, and martyrs in Palestinian society. It is clear that “by the end of the 1960s, the *fidā’iyyīn* had come to dominate Palestinian symbolic politics, becoming the center of a constructed heroic national narrative of steadfastness and resistance. Armed struggle became the central element of the ‘imagined community’ of the Palestinians.”⁷⁷ This heroization is still prevalent today, with posters praising martyrs plastering the walls of Palestinian cities, villages, and refugee camps (this will be addressed below).

Similar to the governmental mobilization of the Holocaust narrative in Israel, the centralization of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) following Oslo promoted a rapid deployment of living sites of memory in order to re-appropriate the Nakba narrative for the purpose of resistance and political legitimacy. Also akin to the shift from Holocaust to heroism, the evolution of the founding myth in Palestinian society ties the “generation of the Nakba” to the “generation of revolution.” The PNA actively sought this connection, utilizing textbooks, memorials, and the national celebrations to mold Palestinians’ historic trauma into a motivation

Columbia University Press, 1997), 7.

73 Abu Lughod et al., *Nakba*, 4.

74 Ibid, 19.

75 Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 64.

76 Dina Matar, *What It Means to Be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011), 94.

77 Matar, *What It Means to Be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood*, 94.

for political goals of national sovereignty. Much like in the Eichmann trial, the first national PNA commemoration of the Nakba on its 50th anniversary released a large quantity testimonies as the “Nakba was reconstructed as a founding myth to shape the memory of the past while serving as a springboard for a more hopeful future.”⁷⁸ In addition, living sites of memory such as the March of Million on Nakba Day, the emphasis on oral representation, and the keys and village names held aloft during the proceedings all activate the collective memory of the Nakba as a catalyst for resistance to occupation by asserting Right of Return to historic Palestine. While certainly memorialization of the Nakba as tied to resistance is reliant on individual Palestinian’s agency, it is vital to understand how the PNA and other elite choose to glorify resistance as integral to national redemption.

C. *Examples in Living Sites of Memory*

In the Israeli and Palestinian contexts, resistance is lionized in the official and unofficial living sites of memory. As mentioned previously, there has been a concerted effort to move from an experience of victimhood to an emphasis on heroism in both societies (though in Israel following the Eichmann trial, this shift included commemoration of non-heroic suffering as well). This is done both to reframe history in a more positive light that bolsters the national project, and to catalyze continued national pride in either continuing to defend or winning a sovereign state.

This process is explicitly clear in the establishment of Beit Lohamei Haghetatot [Heb. Ghetto Fighters’ House], which is an Israeli national monument founded in 1949 by Holocaust survivors, members of the Jewish underground in Poland, and activists in partisan groups. The Ghetto Fighters’ House memorial, founded on the kibbutz by the same name, has the stated purpose of focusing specifically on the heroism of ghetto uprisings, while simultaneously representing the entirety of the Holocaust experience. On the one hand, the museum claims that its mission is to tell the story of the Jewish people in the 20th century, but it argues that “at the center of this chronicle are the manifestations of Jewish resistance: the organized uprisings of Jews in the ghettos and camps, and the Jews who fought in partisan units and the armies of the Allied forces.”⁷⁹ It fits into the Sabra mentality following World War II, as residents of the Yishuv and the early Israeli state differentiated between what they viewed as the Diaspora Jews being led “like sheep to the slaughter” and the honorable partisans who took up arms after adopting the Zionist ethos of strength and defense.⁸⁰ The individuals who revolted were particularly extolled, hence the title of the memorial holiday is not solely Holocaust Day, but Yom HaShoah Vehagevurah [and Heroism Day], and falls on the 27th of Nissan, which marks the fiercest fighting in the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising.⁸¹ Interestingly, in the establishment of the Martyrdom and Heroism Remembrance Authority in 1953, the Knesset created nine categories of Jews who died in the Holocaust, dividing out the ghetto fighters and soldiers into a separate and more honored status. This prioritization of heroism in the Holocaust narrative contributes to the master Israeli commemorative narrative, as discussed in Chapter One. Just as the prevalence of Masada, the Bar Kokhba Revolt, and Tel Hai were framed as the main points of Jewish periodization and national revival, the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising is framed as the epitome of Jewish strength

78 Meir Litvak and Esther Webman, *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 33.

79 “The Ghetto Fighters’ House Mission,” The GFH Mission, accessed Apr. 2014, <http://www.gfh.org.il/eng/>.

80 Almog, *The Sabra*, 85.

81 Dina Porat, *Israeli Society, the Holocaust and Its Survivors* (London: Vallentine Mitchell, 2008).

and associated with Sabra spirit. This focus on Warsaw and revolt, despite the relative rarity of violent uprisings in the larger schema of the Holocaust, results in the de-emphasis of less extolled diaspora experiences. A senior cabinet member, Pinhas Sapir, declared in the Knesset that “[w]e have a Warsaw Ghetto complex, a complex of the hatred of the Jewish people, just as we are filled with the Masada complex.”⁸² Perhaps it was because of this overemphasis on the Warsaw Uprising, which represented a relatively small aspect of the Holocaust experience, that the Ghetto Fighters’ House was created as the *first* Holocaust museum in the world, even before the more all-encompassing Yad Vashem.

Notwithstanding the effort to glorify underground fighters as the Jews representing the Zionist spirit, the Ghetto Fighters’ House and collective memory of the Holocaust in general seeks to depict the suffering of all Diaspora Jews during the Holocaust as an act of resistance in service of the Jewish State. The Ghetto Fighters’ House presents the strength of the Jewish people as a whole, enlisting “the unceasing attempts to preserve human dignity and carry out armed resistance, which was the pinnacle of the Jewish struggle”⁸³ as acts of heroism and rebellion. While still stressing armed resistance against the Nazis, the Jewish Resistance during the Holocaust Exhibition also seeks to broaden the definition of resistance by including daily acts of survival, as demonstrated in the poem “Resistance is...” by Haim Guri and Monia Avrahami, which is a part of the exhibition:

To smuggle a loaf of bread—was to resist.

To teach in secret—was to resist.

To gather information and distribute an underground newsletter—was to resist.

To cry out warning and shatter illusions—was to resist.

To rescue a Torah scroll - was to resist. To forge documents—was to resist.

To smuggle people across borders—was to resist.

To chronicle events and conceal the records—was to resist.

To extend a helping hand to those in need—was to resist.

To dare to speak out, at the risk of one’s life —was to resist.

To stand empty-handed against the killers—was to resist.

To reach the besieged, smuggling weapons and commands—was to resist.

To take up arms in streets, mountains and forests—was to resist.

To rebel in the death camps—was to resist.

To rise up in the ghettos, amid tumbling walls, in the most desperate revolt humanity has ever known

This poem positions the everyday lives and acts of survival as manifestations of resistance. The placement of this exhibition in the Ghetto Fighter’s House, considering the museum’s largely

82 Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots*, 210.

83 “The Ghetto Fighters’ House,” Jewish Resistance During the Holocaust, accessed April 1, 2014. <http://www.gfh.org.il/Eng/?CategoryID=61&ArticleID=73>.

Zionist message, frames these ordinary aspects of maintaining human dignity as supportive of the Jewish state's realization. The articles of the Yad Vashem Law support this assertion, as the legislation "endows the six million murdered Jews with a 'commemorative Israeli citizenship. . . to signify that they in their death have become part of their people.'"⁸⁴ In contradiction to the simultaneous trend of elevating armed resistance, the effort in Israeli society to frame the victims of the Holocaust as martyrs for Zionism seeks to correlate the ideas of Holocaust with heroism.

While Palestinian society does not have the same level of financial or institutional resources as Israel, and therefore lacks the same sort of formal national museums, resistance and rebellion has nevertheless been historically lauded in Palestine. Even predating the creation of Israel, the 1936 rebellion⁸⁵ "served to establish Palestinian nationalism as a fact and both Intifadas borrowed part of its symbols (e.g. the *kufiyyeh*, and the name of Shaykh Izz ad-Din al Qassam⁸⁶) and forms of resistance (especially the general strike).⁸⁷ After the establishment of Israel in 1948, however, violent resistance in an attempt to reclaim Palestine came to the forefront of rebellions. Particularly under the rise of the Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO), armed struggle came to be the crux of Palestinian resistance, and the *fedayeen* were praised as freedom fighters and martyrs with their families compensated in the case of their death.⁸⁸ Glorification of martyrs, encompassing both those who carried out armed attacks on Israeli civilians and those who were killed without provocation, can be seen throughout the streets of Palestinian villages and refugee camps in the form of murals (Figure 1)⁸⁹, posters (Figure 2)⁹⁰, and official memorials.

Violent resistance took lower priority to other forms of popular struggle, however, during the First Intifada from 1987-1991. Known as the *Intifada al-Hijara* (Ar. Uprising of the

FIGURE 1

MURAL OF MARTYRS IN AIDA REFUGEE CAMP



84 Porat, *Israeli*

85 1936-39 Arab

86 Muslim leader

military wing of Hamas are titled

87 Ilan Pappé and Jamil Hilal, "Reflections on Contemporary Palestinian History," *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 192.

88 Wendy Pearlman, *Violence, Nonviolence, and the Palestinian National Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2011), 68.

89 Figure 1, Alice Pope, *Martyrdom Mural*. Photograph. Aida, West Bank: Olive Tree Initiative Delegation, 2012.

90 Figure 2, Alice Pope, *Martyrdom Posters*. Photograph. Jenin, West Bank: Olive Tree Initiative Delegation, 2012.

Stones), this primarily non-violent revolt utilized mass boycotts, mass demonstrations, strikes, petitions, the popularization of stone-throwing, and the flying of Palestinian flags (which was illegal) to resist Israeli occupation.⁹¹ Organized by local popular committees rather than the PLO leadership located in Tunis, the Intifada rallied Palestinian citizens in civil disobedience through a series of leaflets that were secretly printed and distributed. The first communiqué, which was released January 4th 1998 by the United National Leadership of the Intifada, read:

In the name of God, the merciful, the compassionate. Our people's glorious uprising continues. We affirm the need to express solidarity with our people wherever they

FIGURE 2

MARTYRDOM POSTERS IN JENIN



are. We continue to be loyal to the pure blood of our martyrs and to our detained brothers. We also reiterate our rejection of the occupation and its policy of repression, represented in the policy of deportation, mass arrests, curfews, and the demolition of houses. We reaffirm the need to achieve further cohesion with our revolution and our heroic masses. We also stress our abidance by the call of the PLO, the Palestinian people's legitimate and sole representative, and the need to pursue the bountiful offerings and the heroic uprising. For all these reasons, we address the following call: All sectors of our heroic people in every location should abide by the call for a general and comprehensive strike until Wednesday evening, 13 January, 1988. The strike covers all public and private trade utilities, the Palestinian workers and public transportation. Abidance by the comprehensive strike must be complete. The slogan of the strike will be: Down with occupation; long live Palestine as a free and Arab country.

This document not only exalts martyrs and those who died in resistance activities, but actively frames all the member of the Palestinian society as heroic. The mere acts of subsisting and persevering through occupation are glorified. As was seen in the enlistment of Holocaust victims (those who died) and survivors in the nationalist project, Palestinians are praised for maintaining human dignity and national pride in the face of oppression, and as such, all contribute to the creation of a proud and heroized Palestinian national identity.

This same trend is notable in the textbooks created by the PNA, which laud resistance

91 Mazin B. Qumsiyeh, *Popular Resistance in Palestine: A History of Hope and Empowerment* (London: Pluto, 2011), 135.

through the ideal of jihad [Ar. struggle]. “Jihad is indirectly glorified. References to martyrs, martyrdom, and the need to defend the ‘homeland’ and regain it appear both in historical and present-day context, especially the language arts, social studies, national education, and religious education textbooks.”⁹² However, Sami Adwan’s analysis of these post-Oslo textbooks argues that the notion of jihad is misconstrued, as it is not an act of aggression but simply a call for defense of the homeland if first attacked.⁹³ Adwan also argues that violence is meant to be the last resort after all options are exhausted, and that the glorification of martyrs in Palestinian textbooks is no different than the valorization of Israeli national leaders and military heroes, including those in Haganah, Etzel, and Irgun. Even so, while there is no direct call for jihad against Israelis or Jews, the current political context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems to indirectly imply anti-Zionist resistance and even valorize violence against Israeli civilian populations.⁹⁴

D. Conclusion

Resistance and survival despite persecution are emphasized in the reconstruction of national memory, framing the painful collective memory of trauma as something that can be overcome. Instead of solely reproducing cultures of victimhood, there is a determined effort to reconstitute Israeli and Palestinian societies as resilient and heroic, overcoming their past sufferings. While Israelis seek to mold remembrance of the Holocaust in order to link their catastrophe to the redemption of the Jewish people and creation of Israel, Palestinians struggle to create a new vision for the future by utilizing their perpetuated trauma as a catalyst for resistance.

IV. Otherization of Suffering in the National Project

In creating a cohesive and exclusive narrative of nationalism, the Self comes in direct conflict with the Other. The factor “critical for the formation of the national self is the constituting of an Other to this national identity. . . . As Michel Foucault has argued, in the field of knowledge construed by nationalism the Other—the ‘enemy’—occupies the negative pole of that field.”⁹⁵ This chapter seeks to explore the phenomenon of otherization in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, analyzing how bolstering identity formation based on past traumas is directly tied to minimization, erasure, and direct negation of elements that undermine one’s own narrative.

In previous chapters, I have discussed Israeli and Palestinian cultures of victimhood, as well as their emphasis on shifting from destruction to redemption. I now seek to expand this inquiry to interrogate how creation of the Self is integrally tied to the destruction of the Other. In the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, elites struggle to maintain a homogenous and self-righteous narrative by silencing alternative histories that might problematize their legitimacy. Because both Israelis and Palestinians rely so heavily on history of trauma to justify their claims to the

92 Israeli/Palestinian Center for Research and Information, “Reviewing Palestinian Textbooks and Tolerance Education Program Grades 4 & 9,” *Analysis and Evaluation of the New Palestinian Curriculum* (Submitted to: The Public Affairs Office US Consulate General Jerusalem, 2004), 27.

93 Sami Adwan, “Schoolbooks in the Making: From Conflict to Peace,” *Palestine-Israel Journal of Politics, Economics, and Culture* 8, no. 2, (2001): 5.

94 IPCRI, *Analysis and Evaluation of the New Palestinian Curriculum*, 27.

95 Ilan Pappé and Jamil Hilal, “Fear, Victimhood, Self and Other: On the Road to Reconciliation.” *Across the Wall: Narratives of Israeli-Palestinian History* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010), 159.

land, they engage in a second conflict—not simply over who has control of territory, but who has control over history and national collective memory. If victimhood is utilized to buttress a national-self with sovereign rights over historic Palestine/Israel, then acknowledgement of “the other’s victimhood, or beyond that, recognizing [oneself] as the victimizer of the Other is perhaps the most terrifying ghost train one can decide to embark upon.”⁹⁶ Because of this,

both sides identify themselves as victimized by the other, and there is an underlying fear that the acknowledgment of the tragedy of the “other” will justify moral superiority and imply acceptance of their collective memory. For the Palestinians, accepting Jewish pain around the Holocaust means accepting the moral ground for the creation of the State of Israel. For the Israelis, accepting the pain of the 1948 Palestinian refugees means sharing the responsibility for their plight and their right of return.⁹⁷

On the one hand, Palestinians (and others) assert themselves as the victims of the victims, decrying the fact that they were punished for the evils perpetrated by the Nazis. Some would argue “that the Jewish tragedy, which peaked in the Shoah, also culminated in the Palestinian tragedy, the Nakba” as Edward Said suggested that “the Jewish tragedy led directly to the Palestinian catastrophe”⁹⁸ Of course, Palestinian society is not monolithic, and the Holocaust has been approached in a number of ways: separating the issue of the sympathetic humanitarian crisis from the negative political consequences for Palestinians (allowing for commiseration), minimizing the Holocaust with some tending towards denial as a means to delegitimize the Zionist project, and blaming Zionism and Jews directly for their suffering.⁹⁹ However, all of these perspectives are incapable of fully empathizing with the Israeli understanding of the Holocaust, as that would in some ways legitimize the need for a Jewish national home—the manifestation of which has contributed to the Nakba and the destruction of historic Palestine.

In a similar way, there is an effort in Israel to erase the Nakba from national histories. Again, this is certainly not true for all Israelis, some of whom actively commemorate the Nakba and position themselves as allies to the Palestinian community. This empathy, however, is not the general approach to the Nakba in Israeli society. More often, an avoidance of recognizing the inherent connection between the establishment of the Jewish state and the dispossession of the Palestinians is used to evade the idea that Israel was founded on an “original sin,” as it problematizes the notion of Israel as the sole victim. This minimization of the Other’s claims can be approached in a number of ways:

The first is the myth of ‘a land without people for a people without land.’ The second strategy is recognizing that the Nakba took place but denying it carries any moral or practical implication, and making an exaggerated connection between the Palestinians and the Nazis. The third strategy for dealing with 1948 is addressing the moral weight of the Palestinian Nakba unapologetically, as more clearly articulated by Benny Morris in a 2004 interview with Ha’aretz, in which he declared his disappointment that the Nakba

⁹⁶ Ibid, 161.

⁹⁷ Ibid, 319.

⁹⁸ Gilbert Achcar, *The Arabs and the Holocaust: The Arab-Israeli War of Narratives* (New York: Metropolitan, 2010), 18.

⁹⁹ Meir Litvak and Esther Webman. *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust* (New York: Columbia UP, 2009), 36.

was not more thorough.¹⁰⁰

For both Israelis and Palestinians, a subversion of the Other's narrative of suffering is deemed necessary to justify one's own moral standing, resulting in further otherization and a failure to recognize the fundamental traumas experienced by both sides in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

A. *Erasures and Silences: Collective Memory and Collective Amnesia*

In the quest to shape history and exclude aspects of the past that do not fit in to one's national narrative, there is a tendency on both sides to minimize or physically erase the presence of the Other. To recognize the presence and needs of the Other is to recognize the legitimacy of their claims, and as such is counterproductive to the national project. Because of this, alternative versions of history are often sidelined or completely overwritten in a process of creating *collective amnesia*.

This process can be clearly seen in very literal terms in the formation of some of Israel's memorial monuments. In Rochelle Davis' *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced*, the author writes about her search for two former Palestinian villages she encountered in Palestinian village memory books. Both located in West Jerusalem, the villages of Bayt Mashir and Suba were largely destroyed and depopulated in 1948, and were replaced with the Israeli towns Beit Meir and Kibbutz Tzova, respectively. According to Davis, "the geography is such that without knowledge of the Palestinian villages' existence in the past, it would be impossible to know they were once here."¹⁰¹ The Israeli conception of a united Jerusalem does not pay credence to the memory of its former Palestinian residents, their homes, or their history on that land. The new, repurposed geography of the space formerly inhabited by Palestinians strengthens this chapter's argument. Bayt Mashir/Beit Meir and Suba/Kibbutz Tzova are now located in Ya'ar HaKdoshim [Heb. Martyrs' Forest], which was established in 1951 to commemorate the death of six million Jews in the Holocaust. The map of the region displays commemorative locations, pathways, and the two Israeli towns, but makes no mention of the Palestinian villages destroyed in the War of 1948/Nakba/War of Independence.¹⁰² The tragic irony in this case demonstrates how the quest for a glorified and heroized national identity comes at the cost, or perhaps with the necessity, of physically burying a past that contradicts the state narrative. This memorial forest would not serve its purpose in commemorating Holocaust victims if visitors associated the ground with the Nakba. Neither would the victory of a return to Jerusalem be so ubiquitously sweet if cognitively paired with the eventual ramifications of Zionist immigration and then dispossession of another people. Although this is a singularly dramatic case, it is not at all uncommon to see Palestinian villages renamed, repopulated, or erased entirely. Furthermore, this is not the only instance of collective memory engendering collective amnesia, as the Simon Wiesenthal Center's new Museum of Tolerance in Jerusalem is currently being constructed on top of Mamilla Cemetery, a Muslim burial site. The Center, meant to provide commemoration for the Holocaust and to promote "Jewish Unity and Universal Respect"¹⁰³ provides a literal example of the negation and

100 Ronit Lentin, *Co-memory and Melancholia: Israelis Memorialising the Palestinian Nakba* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2010), 10.

101 Rochelle Davis, *Palestinian Village Histories: Geographies of the Displaced*. (Stanford, CA: Stanford UP, 2011), 2.

102 Ibid. 2.

103 "Museum of Tolerance Jerusalem Promoting Jewish Unity and Universal Respect." *Home*. Accessed March 18, 2014. <http://www.wiesenthal.com/site/pp.asp?c=lsKWLbPJLnF&b=5505225>.

overwriting of alternative histories.

The power over naming also allows a Hebraization of formerly Palestinian areas, and a prioritization of Israeli history over other narratives. This is evident in the geographic history of the region, as Meron Benvenisti's *Sacred Landscape* thoroughly demonstrates. Immediately following the 1948 War, Prime Minister Ben Gurion tasked a group of cartographers with the job of assigning all of the natural landmarks throughout the new territory with Hebrew names, overwriting the Arabic ones which these features were once assigned. Similarly, a majority of the former Palestinian villages were either renamed completely or given Hebraized versions of their previous titles, effectively erasing their Arab heritage in the new mapping system.¹⁰⁴ While initial versions of the maps included the names of destroyed Palestinian towns, "the Israeli cartographers certainly had no intention of commemorating the Palestinian catastrophe... They wasted no time on their efforts to produce a 'flawless Hebrew map,' which would erase in print what had already been eradicated in actuality—or that 'should have been.'"¹⁰⁵ Utilization of names as a mechanism of asserting control continues today. Examples of the linguistic power plays include references in Israeli media to Jerusalem as *Yerushalaim* (Hebrew) rather than *al-Quds* (Arabic), the West Bank as Judea and Samaria, and the Palestinian neighborhood of Silwan as "the City of David."¹⁰⁶ In this way, "naming is an attempt to privilege one dimension of a complex reality at the expense of others, with the ultimate aim of blotting the others out, or decisively subordinating them to Israeli domination."¹⁰⁷

This process of collective amnesia and erasure also takes places in the *literal* writing of histories. This was of paramount importance to Israeli Prime Minister David Ben Gurion in the years following the establishment of the state of Israel.

By the end of the 1950s, Ben-Gurion had reached the conclusion that the events of 1948 would be at the forefront of Israel's diplomatic struggle, in particular the struggle against the Palestinian national movement. If the Palestinians had been expelled from their land, as they had maintained already in 1948, the international community would view their claim to return to their homeland as justified. However, Ben-Gurion believed, if it turned out that they had left "by choice," having been persuaded by their leaders that it was best to depart temporarily and return after the Arab victory, the world community would be less supportive of their claim.¹⁰⁸

Despite many historians' agreement that around 120 of 530 depopulated Palestinian villages faced some form of forcible expulsion, Ben Gurion sought to prove that the Nakba was not the fault of Israel, but a willing departure from Palestinian homes. As such, he tasked the Shiloah Institute with collecting information around the flight of Palestinians in 1948. Iraqi Jewish immigrant Rony Gabbay headed this research project, and was given near-full access to Shin Bet archives

104 Meron Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape: The Buried History of the Holy Land Since 1948*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 12.

105 Benvenisti, *Sacred Landscape*, 41.

106 Rashid Khalidi, *Palestinian Identity: The Construction of Modern National Consciousness* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), 14.

107 Ibid, 15.

108 Shay Hazkani, "Catastrophic Thinking: Did Ben-Gurion Try to Rewrite History?" *Ha'aretz* May 16, 2013. Accessed May 1, 2014. <http://www.haaretz.com/weekend/magazine/catastrophic-thinking-did-ben-gurion-try-to-rewrite-history.premium-1.524308>

on the war. When he reported his findings—that there was forcible expulsion and destruction of property done by the Haganah, and that the Arab armies rarely encouraged populations to flee, Ben Gurion was displeased with the results.¹⁰⁹ He then hired another researcher, Moshe Ma'oz, to create a second report that stated, “Our intention is to prove that the flight was caused at the encouragement of the local Arab leaders and the Arab governments and was abetted by the British and by the pressure of the Arab armies (the Iraqi army and the Arab Liberation Army) on the local Arab population.”¹¹⁰ Despite evidence to the contrary, the theory that Palestinians abandoned their homes by choice became the new argument in mainstream Israeli society, and File GL-18/17028, titled “The Flight of 1948” is one of the unclassified documents about the 1948 War that demonstrates the attempted shaping of historical memory. This battle to control thought and memory demonstrates that the physical burying of the past is insufficient—alternative memories must be torn down and reconstructed in a way that supports the national narrative.

Erasure of alternative histories is simultaneously true for primary school textbooks, which play a major role in the construction of collective memory. These textbooks “provide a sense of continuity between the past and present, transmitting accepted historical narratives; and they alter, or rewrite, the past to suit contemporary needs.”¹¹¹ This analysis must be contextualized and complicated because of the vast distinction in sovereignty and infrastructure between Israel and Palestine to create such nationally-oriented educational materials. Most scholarship on this topic argues that the sheer amount of time between the founding of Israel and the present day has allowed Israeli texts to evolve and incorporate more accommodating views on the Nakba and Palestinians, as the national textbooks are now in the third and more pluralistic iteration.¹¹² However, in the Palestinian case, the Palestinian Ministry of Education was not formed until 1994 after the Oslo Accords and has only had a brief period to develop a more inclusive academic framework. Moreover, the majority of these new national textbooks were created during the early 2000s, in the throes of the Second Intifada, and thus reflect a more extremist nationalistic attempts by elites to construct a shared national identity and collective memory.¹¹³

A recent survey of the new Palestinian national history textbooks found a large trend towards delegitimizing Israel and silencing the Holocaust. The presence of Israel is noticeably lacking in graphics and illustrations, suggesting that Palestine incorporates all of historic Palestine and the territories of the British Mandate—erasing the existence of the modern state.¹¹⁴ Additionally, rather than referencing participants in the 1948 War as Israelis or Israeli forces, the texts employ malevolent epithets like “Jewish throngs” or “Jewish terrorist organizations.” These examples demonstrate a strong apprehension towards legitimizing Israel in any way, and overall, “the general impression... in reading the Palestinian textbooks, is that the whole issue of Jewish immigration into Palestine is considered illegal or illegitimate.”¹¹⁵ Nathan Brown’s analysis of PNA textbooks and the work done by the PNA Curriculum Development Center has additionally found while anti-Semitic incitement may have been lessened in the most recent generation of textbooks, they still tend strongly towards anti-Israel defamation.

109 Hazkani, “Catastrophic Thinking: Did Ben-Gurion Try to Rewrite History?”

110 Ibid.

111 Elie Podeh, “Right of Return versus Law of Return.” *Exile and Return: Predicaments of Palestinians and Jews*. By Ann Mosely Lesch and Ian Lustick (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 2005), 41.

112 Ibid, 44.

113 Ibid, 51.

114 Goetz Nordbruch, *Narrating Palestinian Nationalism: A Study of the New Palestinian Textbooks* (Washington, D.C.: Middle East Media Research Institute, 2002), 15.

115 Podeh, *Right of Return versus Law of Return*, 49.

The open calls for Israel's destruction found in the previous books are no longer present. However, given the de-legitimization of Israel's existence, together with teachings such as the obligation to defend Islamic land, the seeking of Israel's destruction has merely been shifted from the explicit to the implicit... Another change is that certain overtly anti-Semitic references defining Jews and Israelis as "treacherous" or 'the evil enemy', common in the previous books, are likewise not present. However, given the books' portrayal of Israel as a foreign colony that massacred and expelled Palestinians, the defamation of Israel continues even if the word "enemy" has been removed.¹¹⁶

The cases mentioned do not directly silence or erase the history of the Holocaust. Instead, , they deny the practical implications of mass Jewish immigration during the British Mandate and Zionism as a whole, which they blame for the destruction of their homeland.

However, the backlash against the Palestinian Authority Undersecretary for Planning and International Communication, Anis Al-Qaq, demonstrates heated opposition to include Holocaust narratives in Palestinian schools. When Al-Qaq stated at an education symposium, "I believe that Palestine and the entire Arab world need to learn about the Holocaust, and therefore this subject should be included in the school curriculum. ... We cannot be proud of anything, until we know about the subject [of the Holocaust],"¹¹⁷ he was met with a vitriolic reaction. His speech was the only text omitted from the report on the symposium, and his words engendered anger in Palestinian scholastic circles. The statements made by Dr. Musa Al-Zu'but, chairman of the Education Committee of the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC), revealed such hostility:

There will be no such attempt to include the history of the Holocaust in the Palestinian curriculum. ... The Holocaust has been exaggerated in order to present the Jews as victims of a great crime, to justify [the claim] that Palestine is necessary as a homeland for them, and to give them the right to demand compensation. When the history of the Holocaust is taught [in the Palestinian schools], it must be explained to the students that the Holocaust was inflated and that we, the Palestinians, had to live with the results: Our country, Palestine, was lost and was occupied by Israel. It is better to teach the students about what is happening to our people... We [the Palestinians] have no interest in teaching the Holocaust. If the purpose is to express sympathy, this is useless for us, since we are the ones who suffered as a result.¹¹⁸

This comment, made by a Palestinian political leader demonstrates aggressive minimization of the Holocaust, bordering on denial, arguing that the Shoah was exaggerated as a way to legitimize the dispossession of Palestinians. Although it can be argued that the Holocaust was used by the Zionist project to justify the need for a Jewish state, the comment by Musa Al-Zu'but seems to imply that the Holocaust is not a great tragedy, and certainly not one that deserves Palestinian consideration or empathy. Isam Sisalem, a prominent Palestinian historian, responded to Al-Qaq's suggestion of including the Holocaust in the curriculum with similar incredulity.

The Nuremberg courts exploited [Jewish] lies to divide Palestine, claiming that the Jewish community had suffered annihilation and was in need of a homeland in which

116 Nathan J. Brown, *Democracy, History, and the Contest over the Palestinian Curriculum* (Washington D.C.: George Washington University, 2001), 6.

117 Nordbruch, *Narrating Palestinian Nationalism*, 61.

118 Ibid, 61.

to settle. What interests us, however, is our own people who suffered from the exile and destruction of thousands of its people. We are more entitled [than the Jews] to the support of all of the nations...The Zionist movement exploited it in order to disguise its loathsome crimes in Palestine. It also continues to extort the European states to this very day. The truth is that the Zionist leaders negotiated with the Nazis and signed agreements with them under which many Jews were expelled to Palestine.¹¹⁹

His argument goes beyond the mere minimization of the Holocaust, and suggests that accounts of Jewish extermination were falsified. Moreover, he employs the anti-Semitic trope in stating that the Jews themselves were partially responsible for their own destruction because they extorted the international community and collaborated with the Nazis. These antagonistic sentiments are also visible in the recent backlash against an Al-Quds university professor leading a delegation of Palestinian students to Auschwitz. Through the “Hearts of Flesh—Not Stone” initiative, Professor Mohammed S. Dajani took a delegation of 27 students to Poland to learn about the Holocaust, while an Israeli student delegation travelled to Deheishe Refugee Camp to hear about the Nakba.¹²⁰ The hostility against Professor Dajani was so severe upon his return that he was branded a traitor and encouraged to go on a hasty vacation abroad to avoid potentially violent consequences.¹²¹ Despite the vitriol, he claims that he does not regret the decision and would do it again because it is vital to understand where the Other is coming from, and to commiserate with their history of suffering. Sheik Jamal Mansour, a Hamas leader, echoed this commitment to Holocaust memorialization in the history curriculum discussion: “It is not fair to deny the Holocaust or to diminish the importance of the persecution that the Jews have suffered. We must clearly condemn it and stand by the oppressed— whoever they may be—and against the oppressor.”¹²² Clearly, on both sides, there are those who are willing to empathize with the Other’s history of trauma, although it seems there is a predominant tendency to prioritize one’s own victimhood at the cost of mutual understanding.

B. *Statistics and Popular Opinion on Recognition*

The efforts to delegitimize the Other and shape an exclusive nationalism are reflected in opinion polling of Israelis and Palestinians. Collective memory on both sides of the Green Line have been shaped by personal histories, state building projects, and the fear produced by ongoing violence and the intractable nature of the conflict. The result has been increased alienation and inability to empathize with the Other, and this polarization is corroborated by various opinion polls over the past few years. From the years 2006–2009, the percentage of Palestinian citizens of Israel/Arab Israelis who denied the Holocaust jumped from 26.8% to 40.5%, and the percentage who believe that Israel has a right to exist as a Jewish and democratic state dropped from 67.5 to 51.6%, according to University of Haifa polling.¹²³

119 Ibid, 61.

120 William Booth, “Palestinian University Students’ Trip to Auschwitz Causes Uproar.” *Washington Post*. The Washington Post, 13 Apr. 2014. Web.

121 Ibid.

122 Nordbruch, *Narrating Palestinian Nationalism*, 64.

123 Sammy Smooha, *Arab-Jewish Relations in Israel: Alienation and Rapprochement* (Rep. Washington DC: US Institute for Peace, 2010).

FIGURE 1

7. What portion of the Palestinians wanted to initiate a war against the Jew following the UN resolution of '47 for the establishment of Israel?

No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	The vast majority of the Palestinians wanted to initiate war	26.8
2	The majority	33.6
3	About half	9.8
4	A minority	10.6
5	An insignificant minority	1.4
6	Do not know	17.8
	Total	100

8. What were the reasons for the departure of Palstinians refugees during the War of independence?

No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	The refugees left due to fear and calls of leaders to leave	40.8
2	The refugees left due to fear, calls of leaders and explusion by the Jews	39.2
3	The refugees were expelled by the Jews	8
4	Do not know	12
	Total	100

9. What portion of the Israeli-Arabs (excludig those in East Jerusalem) have planned or taken part in terroist activities against Israel since the War of Independence until today?

No.	Possible answers	% choosing this answer
1	Almost all Israeli-Arabs acted like it	4.8
2	Most of them acted like this	17
3	About half of them	15.6
4	A minority of them	35.8
5	An insignificant minority	17
6	Do not know	9.8
	Total	100

On the Israeli side, a 2008 poll (Figure 1)¹²⁴ by Rafi Nets-Zehngut and Daniel Bar-Tal discovered that only 39.2% of Israelis believe that the Israeli army was partially responsible for the expulsion of Palestinians, while 40.8% believe that the Palestinians fled willingly because of fear and pressure from Arab leaders.¹²⁵ In a broader survey throughout the Arab world (not specific to Palestinians), respondents were asked “When you watch a movie or program about the Jewish Holocaust, which of the following is closest to your feelings?” In this poll, 11% expressed empathy, 53% resentment, and 21% mixed feelings.¹²⁶ When a similar question— “When you watch a movie or program about the suffering of Palestinian refugees, which of the following is closest to your feelings—” was asked to Jewish Israelis, similarly unsympathetic responses emerged as 10% responded with empathy, 49% mixed feelings, and 30% resentment.¹²⁷ These numbers

124 Figure 1, Rafi Nets-Zehngut, and Daniel Bar-Tal, *The Israeli-Jewish Collective Memory of the Israeli-Arab/Palestinian Conflict*, (Rep. N.p.: International Peace Research Association, 2008).

125 Ibid.

126 Shibley Telhami, *The World Through Arab Eyes: Arab Public Opinion and the Reshaping of the Middle East* (New York: Basic Books, 2013), 59.

127 Ibid. 63.

seem to reflect unwillingness on both sides to recognize the suffering of the Other. Even more striking, the polls demonstrate that a depiction of the Other's victimhood arouses hatred and resentment more frequently than empathy. With both sides delegitimizing the core values of the Other's narrative—the very existence of the Holocaust and the Nakba—it seems that the conflict actors still remain a long way off from any form of rapprochement or recognition of alternative narratives.

V. Conclusion

This thesis argues that memory around the Holocaust and the Nakba is not objective fact but is socially constructed for a discrete purpose—to create a cohesive narrative of victimhood, survival, and national pride. Understanding the nationalist development of collective memory of trauma in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict allows one to reflect on both the past suffering and the present otherization that results from these exclusive narratives. In Chapter 1, my research attempts to demonstrate how the Holocaust and the Nakba have been memorialized as foundational myths for Israeli and Palestinian societies. This can be seen in an intentional process of institutionalized memorialization through living sites of memory such as statehood documents, national holidays, and museums. Chapter 2 then analyzes how these mechanisms of remembrance follow similar thematic trajectories of destruction and redemption, either used to justify the need for a Jewish state or to catalyze the continued struggle for a Palestinian one. In order to preserve this glorifying view of history, however, there is an underlying necessity to implicitly erase or actively subvert alternative narratives. Holocaust minimization and denial, as well as refutation of and silence around the Nakba, are addressed in Chapter 3, as I seek to explain how the bolstering of the Self's national narrative is predicated on dismissing the Other's complicating suffering. It is easier to create a heroic narrative of the Self overcoming victimhood if the Other is portrayed as a mere perpetrator, rather than a victim as well.

Because of this, my thesis emphasizes the centrality of collective memory's counterpart—collective amnesia. That is not to say that by pairing the Israeli and Palestinian counter-narratives together, one will reach some more enlightened truth or historical accuracy. Rather, contending with various versions of the past will allow a more nuanced grappling with contested facts, an insight into the blind spots of each perspective, and a consciousness of the paradigms which frame each side's collective memory. As is explained by Ahmad Sa'di and Lila Abu Lughod, "memory is not only what serves the identity of the group and its present interests, but also the depository of traces that may be valid in both defetishizing the existing and in understanding the processes that have led to the present as it is now, and to the criticism of this very present."¹²⁸ While memory can serve as a hegemonic force of inclusion of the Self and exclusion of the Other, this thesis seeks to deconstruct the process of memory formation and complicate the idea that one narrative is fact and the other fiction.

Bearing this in mind, my thesis is complicated by the fact that not all engagement with the Holocaust and the Nakba adheres to the tendency of otherization. In both Israeli and Palestinian societies, there are efforts to move towards recognition of and empathy with the other side's trauma. Just days before the submission of this thesis, President Mahmoud Abbas contradicted his Israeli detractors who have accused him of Holocaust denial. He came forward publically saying, "What happened to the Jews in the Holocaust is the most heinous crime to have occurred against

128 Abu Lughod and Ahmad Sa'di. *Nakba*. (New York: Columbia UP, 2007), 6.

humanity in the modern era. . . The Palestinian people, who suffer from injustice, oppression and denied freedom and peace, are the first to demand to lift the injustice and racism that befell other peoples subjected to such crimes.”¹²⁹ This statement suggests that perhaps one’s own victimhood has the potential to increase empathy, rather than diminish it. In a similar vein, the previously mentioned efforts of Al Quds University Professor Mohammed S. Dajani to take Palestinian student to Auschwitz, and the concurrent Israeli student visit to Deheishe Refugee Camp, run counter to the general proposition of this research. Societies are not monolithic, and it is impossible to concretely generalize an entire population. For while there certainly is hatred of the Other proffered by both Israelis and Palestinians, there are simultaneous expressions of respect and tolerance. Scholars have noted this move towards mutual recognition in the development of Israeli primary school history textbooks over the years. Elie Podeh argues that since 1948, Israeli textbooks have gone through a maturation process, and their third iteration is far more accepting of the Palestinian perspective. After the 1948 Ministry of Education program for Jewish-Arab Coexistence, primary school curriculum and textbooks have evolved to be more inclusive of the Nakba narrative, and many texts even chronicle some Israeli complicity in the creation of the Palestinian refugee crisis.¹³⁰ It is evident that exemptions to my thesis exist, and I am therefore limited in arguing that national collective memory unequivocally relies on denial of the Other.

My research has been framed to address the widespread phenomenon of trauma silencing in memory rather than the exceptional cases of mutual recognition, and therefore I do not delve into possible avenues of narrative-bridging. However, Meir Litvak and Esther Webman contest that “part of a necessary process of mutual rehumanization and transformation of the cycle of mutual denial into ‘a more morally responsible and historically constructive cycle of acknowledgement of the past, understanding, compassion, and ultimately forgiveness and reconciliation.’”¹³¹ Thus, it is necessary to reconstruct new forms of narratives that account for understanding of both peoples without diminishing the legitimacy of individual histories of trauma, as is done in the innovative dual-narrative history textbook *Side By Side* by Sami Adwan and Eyal Naveh. This groundbreaking project places accounts of the conflict from the Israeli perspective on one page, with the Palestinian perspective on the other, seeking to provide a more holistic opportunity to learn from both biases. However, Professor Naveh admitted that this formatting was the final compromise, and the shortcoming of the project was the historians’ inability to create one collective history of the conflict that could be accepted by both Israelis and Palestinians.¹³² Perhaps this endeavor is impossible, or perhaps there are ways in which the Holocaust and the Nakba can both be recognized without minimizing either experience or seeking to create an unnatural equivalency. While this thesis does not make such an attempt, it does provide insight into the otherization constructed through national collective memory and the traumatic divides that have prevented mutual recognition to this day.

129 Gregg Carlstrom, “Abbas calls Holocaust ‘most heinous crime,’” *Al Jazeera* (Tel Aviv), April 27, 2014, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2014/04/abbas-holocaust-was-heinous-crime-201442715735582213.html>.

130 Podeh, Elie. *The Arab-Israeli conflict in Israeli history textbooks, 1948-2000*. Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey, 2002.

131 Litvak, Meir, and Esther Webman. *From Empathy to Denial: Arab Responses to the Holocaust*. New York: Columbia UP, 2009. 324. Print.

132 “Learning Each Other’s Tragedy.” Interview by Eyal Naveh. Jerusalem, Israel, August 12, 2013.

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