

# The Return of the Displaced: Ironies of the Jewish-Palestinian Nexus, 1939–49

Omer Bartov

## ABSTRACT

*Zionist historiography presents the 1948 “War of Independence” as the culmination of the long Jewish quest for rights and justice, which reached its climax in the immediate aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. But as this article suggests, there were inextricable links between the fate of the Jews in Europe and the fate of Palestine’s indigenous inhabitants. For if the mass murder of European Jews allegedly demonstrated the urgent need for a Jewish nation-state, Jewish national hegemony was established by transforming the Arab majority in Palestine into a minority through mass expulsion. If the Nazi genocide of the Jews was presented as an inevitable consequence of the diaspora, the Palestinian Nakba and the near-erasure of the remaining material traces and memory of Palestinian presence in the state of Israel were perceived as a necessary precondition for the “normalization” of Jewish existence.*

*Key words: Holocaust, Nakba, nationalism, displacement, home(land)*

**I**n Zionist historiography, the year 1948 appears as the culmination of the long Jewish quest for rights and justice, which reached its climax in the immediate aftermath of World War II and the Holocaust. Having recently completed a two-decade research project on the transformation of an eastern European community of ethnic and religious coexistence into a community of genocide, I have come to consider the cardinal year of 1948 from a rather different perspective.<sup>1</sup>

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Indeed, I would like to suggest here that the links between the fate of the Jews in Europe, especially in its numerous multiethnic towns in the eastern parts of the continent, and the fate imposed by the triumphant political and military leadership of the emerging Israeli state on the land's Palestinian inhabitants, transforming a community of increasingly fraught coexistence into a community of ethnic cleansing and Jewish national hegemony, are both extraordinarily complex and filled with profound ironies.<sup>2</sup>

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## I. Two Catastrophes

Israeli politicians, scholars, poets, and writers have repeatedly invoked the relationship between the Holocaust and the establishment of the state of Israel, often for vastly different purposes.<sup>3</sup> Yet some of the more intricate aspects of these links have never been sufficiently explored, not least because they have to do with two incontrovertible and yet irreconcilable ideological axioms: first, that the mass murder of European Jews demonstrated the urgent need for a Jewish nation-state; and second, that Jewish national hegemony was established by transforming the Arab majority in those parts of Mandatory Palestine that became the state of Israel into a minority through mass expulsion. In both cases, the clock of history was reset to begin counting only after the catastrophe: the Nazi genocide of the Jews was presented as an inevitable consequence of the diaspora, which therefore had to be relinquished and forgotten, and the near-total destruction of Palestinian civilization had to be followed up with the erasure of its remaining material traces and the wiping-out of its memory, thereby allowing the newly created status of an “Arab minority” to appear as if it had always been such.<sup>4</sup>

The logic of this vast transformation was, so to speak, imprinted on the identity of the state at the very moment of its birth. As the Israeli Declaration of Independence of May 14, 1948, put it, this would be “a Jewish state in Erets Yisrael, which is the state of Israel.” This state, it was declared, would “be open to Jewish immigration and the gathering of the diasporas.” It would also “strive to develop the land for all its residents, [would] be based on the principles of liberty, justice and peace as was envisioned by the prophets of Israel,”<sup>5</sup> and would “maintain complete social and political equality for all its citizens without any religious, racial, or gender distinction.” Indeed, the new state would “ensure freedom of religion, conscience, language, education and culture” and would “protect all the holy sites of all religions.” The

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Palestinians, however, were mentioned only in a different, separate paragraph, which depicted the local population as hostile to this endeavor and yet magnanimously promised to tolerate its existence nonetheless.

We call—even in the midst of the bloody attacks conducted against us for months—upon the sons of the Arab people who are residents of the state of Israel to keep the peace and to take part in the building of the state on the basis of full citizenship and on the basis of appropriate representation in all its temporary and permanent institutions.

In other words, even as the state was being formed and hundreds of thousands of Palestinians were being expelled, the state promised those who might be able to remain in the country, a minority within a Jewish nation-state, equal individual (but definitely not national) rights.

Thus the Holocaust and the Nakba were both parallel and irreconcilable events. In the wake of the Holocaust, nothing could sound more right and just than the demand of the Zionists to have a state of their own. As the Declaration of Independence stated unambiguously,

The Holocaust that has recently occurred to the Jewish people, in which millions of Jews were slaughtered in Europe, proved definitively once more the need for a solution for the Jewish people, deprived of homeland and independence, by renewing a Jewish state in Erets Yisrael, which will open the gates of the homeland to every Jew and endow the Jewish people with the status of a nation of equal rights within the family of nations.

And yet, in the wake of the Nakba, nothing could sound more right and just than the demand of the Palestinians to be allowed back into their own land, from which they were brutally expelled. As the Palestinian Declaration of Independence of November 15, 1988, stated,

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 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.<sup>6</sup>

The strength of these two arguments is demonstrated by their astonishing resilience, which is, in turn, sustained by their interdependence. Even as the Holocaust has come to play an increasingly central role in Israeli political rhetoric and has, moreover, become a major element of political discourse at least throughout Europe and the United States, so too the Palestinian discourse of victimhood, resistance, and the right of return has persisted through numerous mutations and adaptations as a central focus of political and cultural discourse throughout the West and the Arab and Muslim world. Considering that, even after its 1967 expansion, Israel still takes up a minuscule space on the globe, while Palestinian refugees, notwithstanding the quadrupling of their population since 1948, are numerically overshadowed by more recent refugee and migration crises, the intense international focus on this conflict may seem disproportionate. That this interest has not diminished is due not only to the objective dangers that the conflict poses to the region and beyond but also, I would argue, to its inherent nature as a confrontation between two assertions of extreme victimhood and righteousness that appear to keep producing endless wrongs and injustices.

Yet another reason for the difficulty of sorting out the links between Jewish fate in Europe and the unfolding of events in Palestine is that they have often, indeed almost exclusively, been examined and analyzed by very different scholarly communities and have appealed to rather disparate constituencies. This too is somewhat ironic, considering the frequency with which one set of events has been rhetorically and politically pitted against the other, not to mention the fact that a considerable number of the protagonists of one event literally traveled to and participated in the other. Arguments such as “how could the Jews have done to the Palestinians what the Germans did to them” or “Israel will never let the Arabs carry out another Holocaust” clearly reflect the instrumentalization of the Holocaust, whereby either the Zionists or the Palestinians and other Arabs and Muslims are presented as the new Nazis. But beyond such vacuous demagoguery, thinking in more depth and with greater nuance about the effects of the realities and perceptions of Jewish life in eastern Europe on the violent creation of the Jewish state in Palestine, and considering how both have been subsequently presented in scholarship, political rhetoric, and popular discourse, can help us disentangle some of the murkier subplots that make up the largely exclusionary national narratives of 1948 and its long posthistory.<sup>7</sup>

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## II. Jews and Others in Eastern Europe

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At the core of the modern Jewish experience in eastern Europe was the question of nation and territory. East European nationalisms were all about land. A good example of this is the case of eastern Galicia, the context for my study on the city of Buczacz, located in the south-eastern part of that province. The beginning of nationalism in that region can be conveniently located around the time of the Spring of Nations in 1848. The momentum of that upheaval of peoples against monarchs unleashed national movements throughout the territories of the great multiethnic empires that straddled the lands of eastern and southeastern Europe. In the Balkans, these forces eventually pushed the Ottoman Empire out of Europe in a series of increasingly bloody wars and massacres. In the Habsburg Empire's Galicia, the values extolled by the 1848 revolutions also facilitated the creation of two new nations, one of peasants and one of Jews. The vast majority of people living in Galicia, the easternmost and poorest province of the empire, were serfs. By abolishing serfdom, the empire did not much improve the lot of the peasants and in some ways made it worse, as population growth led to the redistribution of ever-smaller plots of land; but it indirectly enabled peasants to acquire a new identity. In the parlance of nationalism at the time, the peasant masses awoke from their slumber and realized they were a nation.

In reality the peasants became the target of nationalizers, many of them priests and intellectuals, who strove to forge them into a nation both by attributing to them unique national characteristics and by insisting on the differences between them and their neighbors. In Galicia, this meant that the serfs who awoke from their slumber discovered that they were Ruthenians (later called Ukrainians) and that they had always been colonized and bossed around by the Polish lords and exploited by parasitic Jews. Liberation from serfdom, therefore, did not bring wealth and comfort but did make for the creation of a sense of group solidarity focused both on its alleged innate qualities and, at least as much, on resentment toward those whose marginally better economic circumstances appeared to derive from the peasants' own misery.<sup>8</sup>

The discourse of liberation and human rights also eventually brought about the emancipation of the Jews. Whatever the Jewish people had been prior to emancipation, and whatever linked Jewish communities near and far to each other, the "people of Israel" was no modern nation. It became that only in retrospect, in a Jewish nationalist and Zionist discourse that read future aspirations into a distant past

in ways not much different from the awakening of the peasants from their proverbial slumber. But the emancipation of the Jews in regions such as Galicia had a profound effect both on their self-perception and on their relations with their neighbors. If the Jews were no longer one of the estates that made up the population, identified since medieval times both by its religion and by its socioeconomic niche, then what were they? Jews were not in a hurry to discover that they were a nation, and Zionism took a long time to reach more than a few youngsters in the small towns of Galicia before World War I.<sup>9</sup> But emancipation enabled Jews to move out of the congested neighborhoods in which they were compelled to reside because of restrictions on their economic activities and to return to the villages and estates from which they had been banned in the early period of Austrian rule in the region. They leased or bought estates, manor houses, taverns, and various manufacturing facilities. They also came into increasing contact with the recently emancipated peasants who had discovered their identity but were plunging into poverty due to the scarcity of land, lack of skills, and meager economic opportunities. The Jews, it was said in the nationalist press circulating in the villages, were our misfortune: they brought alcoholism and greed, stole our land and our pride, and destroyed our culture; the bloodsuckers had no appreciation for the values of the Ruthenian nation, did not belong to the land, and acted only out of self-interest or as the lackeys of the Polish lords; they had no morals, values, dignity, or roots. Only their removal would allow the full emergence of a proud and healthy Ruthenian nation.<sup>10</sup>

But the masters, awarded autonomous rule in Galicia by the empire despite their minority status in that region, were the Poles. For the Poles, this was their land, part of the *kresy*, or borderlands of what had been the vast Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, even though it was torn off and annexed by the Habsburgs and renamed Galicia in 1772. It was there, according to Polish national lore, that Poland had guarded Europe for centuries from the barbarians in the East—the Tatars, the Cossacks, and the Muscovites—and the Ottoman heathens in the south; it was there that it had built castles and palaces, churches and monasteries, cities and towns, bringing culture to the peasants and all the benefits of enlightened and benevolent Polish rule. If the peasants had rebelled every once in a while, most famously in 1648 under the leadership of the Cossack Bogdan Chmielnicki (Bohdan Khmelnytsky), their savagery and destructive predilections only demonstrated their need for Polish civilization. Indeed, as Polish nationalist discourse in Galicia asserted, the Ruthenians, unlike those who began to speak of themselves as Ukrainians east of Galicia, were in

fact potential Poles who simply spoke a different dialect and adopted a somewhat different version of Christianity. They were, in that sense, Poland's little brothers (just as they were Little Russians for nationalizers in Moscow).<sup>11</sup>

As for the Jews, Polish nationalizers never took seriously the notion that they could become Poles. Especially in the *kresy*, Polish aspirations to transform the Ruthenian majority into Poles and thus eliminate the demographic imbalance never considered Jews as part of this endeavor and increasingly viewed them as hampering the nationalization of the region. To be sure, Ruthenian-Ukrainian nationalists, for their part, completely rejected the Polish assertion of brotherhood and increasingly spoke about Poles as colonizers and exploiters. In this manner, by the outbreak of war in 1914, Polish and Ruthenian-Ukrainian nationalists were pitted against each other, even if the Poles hypothetically wanted to absorb the Ruthenians whereas the Ruthenians wanted to kick the Poles out. The two groups agreed on only one thing, namely, that the Jews did not belong to the land, and thus they featured in neither nation's schemes for the future.<sup>12</sup>

But the Jews themselves also did not make claims on the land. Some might have done so had history turned out differently. The growing number of Jewish estate owners maintained a close relationship both to Polish and Ruthenian villagers and to the land itself. But even in that case, though they spoke Ruthenian in the villages and studied in Polish schools (often also reading German classics in the original and speaking Yiddish at home), and even when they tended toward some combination of Polish nationalism and loyalty to the Austrian emperor, they remained outside the nationalist discourse, if only because they also insisted on maintaining at least a modicum of Jewish identity. For such estate owners and their families, Jewishness was not a national identity but one that linked them to tradition and culture. But it did set them apart from their neighbors. As for the majority of Jews, they made no claims either on particular plots of land or on the land as a homeland. To be sure, they certainly saw themselves as an inherent part of their societies and insisted that they were playing an important, indeed crucial role in its social and economic progress. After all, it was for that purpose that Polish magnates had invited them to the region centuries earlier, enticing them with a raft of economic and legal privileges. In return, the Jews had developed the economy, commerce, manufacturing, and urban life, as they noted in response to the new exclusionary rhetoric of Polish nationalism, even as hundreds of thousands of them also left, mostly to North America, fleeing the poverty of the region along with multitudes of destitute peasants.

But that was not the way they were spoken about by their nationalizing neighbors. Whether seen as parasites by others or perceiving themselves as outside the competition over the land between Poles and Ukrainians, the Jews were in a place of their own.<sup>13</sup>

This sense of being elsewhere was also rooted in an internal Jewish discourse that predated nationalism and Zionism by centuries: it was one focused on transition. Within their own universe of history, myth, and lore, the Jews of eastern Europe had come from Ashkenaz, or Germany, not simply because they were invited there by Polish lords but also because they had been en route, as they had always been through faith and destiny, to Erets Yisrael. Traditional Jews could never entirely call the land in which they lived their own, because they were, almost by definition, in exile. This was not a diaspora that had to end, and the talk of Erets Yisrael was not a nationalist one. But they also could not fully strike roots and call any other land their own, since in the long run a religious Jew's destiny and destination was the land of his ancestors. To be sure, assimilated western Jews in the nineteenth century, quite apart from shedding much of their religious identity, also increasingly abandoned that deeply seated notion of transition and internalized the local national and patriotic discourse. In turn, they not infrequently encountered much resistance to such assimilation, especially, and ironically, following their emancipation and as a direct result of their attempt to integrate fully into their societies. Yet in the small towns of eastern Europe, not least in Galicia, where large numbers of Jews resided, Jewish tradition remained strong and a sense of temporariness, however long-term, persisted: the transitory state of the Jews was, in a sense, what constituted their very identity, since their ultimate resting point, closely associated with redemption, much delayed though it was, had always to remain the Land of Israel.<sup>14</sup>

It was in the years before, during, and after World War I that the rise of ethnonationalism among the neighboring populations left no room for the Jews. Simultaneously—yet also in response to these sentiments—the rise of Zionism made for a corresponding Jewish ethnonationalism, according to which this newly discovered nation had to put an end to its centuries-long sojourn in the diaspora and complete its long-delayed journey to its own homeland. The lands in which the Jews had resided were now reconfigured as nothing more than a temporary haven, a stopping place, on the way to the promised land.<sup>15</sup>

What happened in the years leading from the aftermath of World War I to the Holocaust is known. In Galicia, where Ukrainians—whom the Poles still preferred to call Ruthenians so as to distinguish them from their numerous brethren in Soviet Ukraine—were the majority,

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the government of the newly established Second Polish Republic increased its colonizing activities and refused to implement the local autonomy it had promised at the Paris Peace Conference. This resulted in growing Ukrainian resistance, which was in turn brutally suppressed by the Polish police and military, leading to even greater rage and resentment. Yet the Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists, established in 1929, vowed to create not only a Pole-free but also a Jew-free Ukraine, and the Polish government, for its part, especially after the death of Marshal Józef Piłsudski in 1935, became increasingly antisemitic, with growing sections of the political establishment calling for the removal of the Jews from the country altogether or at least for curtailing their civic rights. In other words, as far as the need to remove the Jews from their respective future nation-states was concerned, Polish and Ukrainian nationalists were in complete agreement. The partition of Poland between Nazi Germany and the Soviet Union seemed to put an end to these ethnic squabbles. The Soviets, who took over eastern Poland, quickly implemented their own population policies, deporting large numbers of Polish elites and politically active or wealthy Jews and then, just before the German attack, arresting and subsequently executing thousands of Ukrainian political activists.<sup>16</sup>

This set the background for German genocide in the region. The Germans had little interest in the struggle between Poles and Ukrainians but used Ukrainian resentment against Jews, whom they portrayed as Bolshevik collaborators, to transform local militias into auxiliary police forces and massacre almost the entire Jewish population of Galicia despite the extraordinarily thin German presence on the ground. In the region of Buczacz alone, between 20 and 30 German Security Police personnel deported to the Bełżec extermination camp or shot in situ approximately 60,000 Jews, mostly between the fall of 1942 and the summer of 1943. The roundups were amply supported by armed Ukrainian police forces. Once the Jews were largely gone, the Ukrainian nationalists turned against their Polish neighbors and unleashed a massive ethnic-cleansing operation. By the time the Soviets returned to the region, tens of thousands of Poles had been slaughtered. For their part, the Soviets turned against the Ukrainian nationalists, killing large numbers of fighters and deporting tens of thousands of nationalist activists and their families to Gulags or labor camps in central Asia. By the late 1940s, the region was under control, populated almost exclusively by a subdued Ukrainian population. Nowadays, most of the inhabitants of western Ukraine have few memories and little knowledge of, or interest in, the region's multiethnic

past and the savage policies of genocide and ethnic cleansing that put an end to four centuries of coexistence.<sup>17</sup>

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### III. Jews and Others in Israel-Palestine

The project of Zionism was to bring Jews to their own land. Its main engine was the argument that Jews do not belong in the diaspora. This view was shared by Zionists and antisemites but was also built into much-earlier Jewish self-perceptions and the perception of Jews by their neighbors. The mechanism that transformed the age-old relationship between Jews and gentiles was emancipation and assimilation. Emancipation meant that Jews could “leave the ghetto” and mix into their surrounding societies with equal legal rights. Assimilation meant that Jews would follow up (or precede) emancipation by adapting to and emulating their neighbors, shedding their external and internal manifestations of otherness. But the process did not work as many of the maskilim of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries had hoped. The Jews wanted to keep a modicum of their Jewish identity, and Christian society suspected that behind the façade of “German” clothes lurked the old *Ostjude*, the traditional eastern Jew, with caftan and beard. Even when Jews spoke and wrote “Christian” languages with the greatest fluency, gentile critics detected echoes of the Jewish “jargon”; specialists in the art of identifying Jewish traits insisted that what they referred to as *Mauscheln*—the alleged Jewish manner of speaking that denoted simultaneously Jewish deceit, scheming, and wheeling and dealing—betrayed even the most assimilated and respectable Jewish members of their societies. As Franz Kafka’s ape remarked in his speech to the academy, the assimilated often remained neither here nor there; they could not return to the ghetto (or jungle), yet neither could they avoid being admired or derided for how well they emulated real humans, even to the extent that one was threatened by the inability to discern their innate difference.<sup>18</sup>

Vanishing was an issue: for antisemites, it meant that while the Jewish essence polluted Christian societies, its carriers might go undetected. For the Jews, with some exceptions, vanishing meant giving up on the entire millennia-long story of Jewish existence. How to preserve the commitment to Jewish continuity became part and parcel of the Jewish Question. There were those who believed that Jews should retain their particularity among the nations; others believed they should establish their own separate community. But would a renewed tie to the soil deprive the Jews of precisely that quality that set



them apart from other nations? That was the conundrum of Zionism: “normalizing” Jewish existence might undo the uniqueness of the Jews, while assimilating into “the nations” might make them disappear altogether. Would the Jews be a light unto the nations or, as in God’s covenant with Abraham, renew a commitment to blood and soil? What, after all, was the chosen people chosen to do?<sup>19</sup>

Jewish immigration to Palestine was propelled by the growing anti-Jewish violence in Europe. The more violence there was, the larger the numbers that crossed the sea. To be sure, most went elsewhere, especially to the United States, which offered a safe haven as a land of immigrants that had never embraced the European idea of the nation-state, save for lengthy periods of nativism, xenophobia, and racism, which emerged in full force and locked the gates of the *Goldene Medina* (the Golden State, as Jews referred to the United States) just as escaping Europe became a matter of life and death. But those who went to Palestine were engaged in an entirely different undertaking. Even before the mass violence and displacements of 1917–19 in Ukraine, the Zionists settling in Palestine were pushed out of their homes and insisted on coming home at the same time. By the 1920s, and even more so the 1930s, ever-larger numbers of Jews were arriving in Palestine both because they were compelled to do so by a combination of anti-Jewish legislation and economic impoverishment and because they had fewer and fewer alternative destinations.<sup>20</sup>

As they streamed into the land by the tens of thousands, these immigrants, who combined to varying degrees the status of expellees, refugees, and Zionist ‘*olim* (“ascenders,” as Zionism and the state of Israel have always referred to Jews immigrating to Palestine/Israel), put increasing demographic pressure on the native Arab population. Not all the Jews who arrived in Palestine at that time were devout Zionists, and many of them would have preferred to remain where they had come from or to go elsewhere. But those options had been closed off, and arguably many of those arriving, especially from eastern Europe, had already felt themselves strangers in their homeland before they left and felt they were traveling to their homeland before they set eyes on it. These Zionists, then, would be in their own land for the first time. And yet, just as in the lands they had left, they were not alone, indeed not even the majority, but were surrounded by a population that responded with increasing resentment and rage to their encroachments on land and resources. In a sense, the move from regions such as Galicia to Palestine changed nothing. The Jews were still a minority and their neighbors still did not want them, certainly not in such numbers and with such profound economic impact.<sup>21</sup>

But the Jewish immigrants did not see things this way. For them, everything had changed. Their centuries-long journey had come to an end, and now they were finally home. That this home was populated by another group was an issue that could either be ignored or be contended with later. But whichever way one looked at the land's indigenous population, for most of these immigrants the presence of Arab neighbors had no impact on their fundamental self-understanding that, in complete contrast to the nature of their relationship to the diaspora, they were in their own land by historical and moral right, the same right claimed by their Christian neighbors for the lands in Europe out of which they had been pushed.<sup>22</sup>

It was, however, the crucial moment between the end of the Holocaust and the aftermath of the 1948 war that fully determined the relationship of the Zionists to the land, even as it simultaneously transformed them from a population of displaced remnants into one of brutal displacement. This moment is, to my mind, at the heart of all that has happened since and sheds much light on all that had happened before, going back to the first dribbles of immigration in the 1880s. The Jews had come to Erets Yisrael as one alternative to growing hardship in the East European and Ukrainian-Russian diaspora and as a response to exclusionary ethnonationalism throughout Europe; but in the wake of the Holocaust, the hundreds of thousands of displaced persons, deprived of their former homes, families, and culture, with no place to return to and no clear idea of where to go, constituted the very essence of what displacement meant. They had been shown time and again that they did not belong in the lands where they had dwelled; indeed, most of their family members had by then been turned into ashes or buried in mass graves throughout the lands in which they had lived for centuries. Nor were they wanted where they were now, in transition camps intended to facilitate their travel from one place to another but certainly not to allow them to stay where they were. For years they had been pushed and shoved, uprooted and hunted, humiliated and robbed of both their property and their dignity; and yet they still had no place to go.<sup>23</sup>

It would not be correct to say that this utter displacement of Jews from everything they had belonged to made them wish to do the same to others; but by all accounts, it rendered many of them indifferent and callous and at times vengeful toward the Arab population they encountered in Palestine. That vague notion that they had been, in a certain sense, a transitory, alien population, orientals passing through Europe's forests on their way elsewhere, had been translated into a harsh, brutal reality. They did not belong and they were not wanted.



Jews returning to small towns in eastern Europe, if only in the hopes of finding other surviving relatives, were told in no uncertain terms that they would do better to leave if their lives were dearer to them than their property. Following the July 1946 pogrom in Kielce, those who had not previously gotten the message packed their bags and continued on their journey. But that single pogrom, which stands for all the other acts of violence against surviving Jews throughout eastern Europe, soon had an equivalent, one that we rarely think about in the same context. Less than two years later, in April 1948, Jewish militias perpetrated a massacre in the village of Deir Yassin, which stands for numerous other cases of violence and intimidation by the military that set off a mass flight of Palestinians, who similarly got the message that they were no longer wanted in an emerging Israeli state newly flexing its muscles.<sup>24</sup>

It is this relationship between displacement and belonging that needs to be explored more thoroughly when thinking about the decade of 1939–49. This is not an exercise in facile comparison, which can work in favor of either one side or the other. It is an attempt to understand the complex links to place and the tragedy and legitimizing power of displacement. The Jews who came to Palestine had been, as they saw it, displaced twice. One displacement had caused the diaspora; the second displacement uprooted them from the diaspora and brought them home. The encounter with the local Palestinian population had some similarities with their experiences in Europe. But in the minds of the immigrants, the relations were largely reversed. The land, after all, was theirs, and the people living on it could not possibly be anything more than a transitory population that had come from elsewhere and could just as easily continue on its journey to another site. Or, as some fancied, taking a page from Polish nationalist fantasies about Ruthenians, these were in fact the remnants of the original Jewish population who had not gone to the diaspora and over time converted to Islam or Christianity and began speaking Arabic.<sup>25</sup>

This is not to say that even before World War I, and up to the 1948 war, there were no voices that warned against setting one group against another or perceived the attachment of the Arab population to the land or noticed the growth of local nationalism and seething resentment against the Jews, as was repeatedly manifested in the anti-Jewish riots of 1921 and 1929 and in the 1936 Arab uprising against British rule. But by and large, the discourse within the Yishuv was not about the injustice of displacing the local population but instead squarely focused on the historical justice of returning to one's own land. Simultaneously, the sense of justice denied to the Jews only grew

during the 1930s, as those seeking to flee Europe were increasingly denied shelter throughout the world, and British policies, responding to the Arab uprising, sought to limit immigration to Palestine. And once the news began filtering in about the mass murder of European Jewry, the sense of injustice toward the Jews overshadowed any remaining sympathy for the local Arab population and the pressure its leadership put on the British to curtail Jewish immigration. Mufti Haj Amin al-Husseini's flirtation with Adolf Hitler certainly also played into this sentiment.<sup>26</sup>

One might add two other historical moments that are often left out of this discussion yet contributed to a sense of both imminent danger and national catastrophe. First, the successes of Erwin Rommel's Panzer Corps in Africa temporarily brought the potential of Nazi-led extermination of the Zionist enterprise in Palestine home to the population, exposing the vulnerability of those who had seen themselves as having overcome the condition of the diaspora. Indeed, as we now know, Nazi Germany was preparing a special task force to carry out genocide in Palestine; it was only thanks to the British Eighth Army's victory in El Alamein in November 1942 that this plan had been reluctantly shelved. Second, we should recall that thousands of young men from the Yishuv volunteered to serve in the Jewish Brigade of the British Army and were the first representatives of Jewish Palestine to encounter the survivors of the Holocaust in all their misery. These young men from Palestine often sought revenge for crimes committed by the Germans that they had not and could not have prevented and whose perpetrators were out of their reach. They also wanted to prove to themselves and to others that they would "no longer go like sheep to the slaughter." They returned to Palestine just months before the 1948 war broke out.<sup>27</sup>

The violence of 1948 has often been portrayed, as is the case with many other national wars and, to an even larger extent, ethnic conflicts, from two polar perspectives; it is almost as if the two sides are describing two completely different events. For Jewish Israelis this was a bitter war of independence (or liberation); for the Palestinians it was the Nakba, the catastrophe, referring to the mass expulsion of the Arab population and the destruction of its villages. But these events are linked not only because the fighting encouraged and facilitated the realization of the Zionist dream of creating a Jewish majority in Palestine but also because population displacement—violent expulsion—was part of the collective Jewish memory of anti-Jewish violence. To be sure, there was already talk within the Yishuv leadership about population transfer in the 1930s, and the "model" of



the Greek-Turkish exchange was positively invoked. But something much deeper was at work once the fighting began in November 1947, as Jewish losses mounted and a sense of impending doom seized an anxious population, allowing the demons of Jewish history and the trauma of the Holocaust to take over.<sup>28</sup>

A few, such as the writer Yizhar Smilansky, were troubled by the sight of Hebrew soldiers (as they were called at the time, in order to suggest the link between Zionism's "new Jews" and biblical Hebrew warriors) expelling Arabs, invoking echoes of German expulsions of Jews, although such ruminations apparently never rose in his mind—and certainly not in his public utterances—to the level of criticizing the violent creation of the state as a whole. The poet Avot Yeshurun wrote more explicitly about the links between the violence against the Jews and that perpetrated by them, but his poetic language remained inaccessible to most readers.<sup>29</sup> By and large, this nexus played not an inhibiting but an enabling role (as it does to this day): the powerful psychological-ideological engine behind the Jewish expulsion of the Palestinians was the perceived justification granted the displaced to displace others, the right of the uprooted to uproot, the ruthless urge of the forgotten and abandoned to create for themselves a space under the sun, at any price. The brutality and heavy bloodshed of the fighting made it all the easier, so to speak, as is often the case. It had become—as even many of the young men and women who had supported a binational state until then now asserted—a war of existence. It was also to a certain extent a war of revenge for acts committed by others, elsewhere, at other times; displaced vengeance, we might say, but one with long-term consequences and an inevitable boomerang effect.<sup>30</sup>

For as the cunning of history would have it, once the displaced had displaced others, they became pawns of the fate they had imposed on themselves, recreating another version of that inescapable trap from which they had hoped to liberate themselves. Now that the land was theirs, and they were the majority, their previously indisputable right to it increasingly came into question. For what of the people they had evicted? What gave them permission to drive out an entire people and then act as if it had never existed? The Palestinians refused to accept the logic of eviction, refused to assimilate into other Arab nations, refused to forget their homes and their lands. And the Jews, who had come back to their land and called it their home, discovered that here too the land would never be fully and entirely theirs, so long as millions of people, those who had been pushed out and all their progeny, remained refugees from a land that had once been their own.

This condition leads to doubts and dilemmas. That displaced population sitting in your midst, across your borders, never giving up, never forgiving, becomes part of your own condition, your own state of being and mind. Displacement is at the soul of the very thing itself—Jewish displacement, Arab displacement, they gnaw at each other restlessly, for ultimately, it seems, no one came home, no one is at home, every inch of soil is disputed, conquered, occupied, settled, and covered up; and as people are moved from here to there, as communities surround themselves with walls and fences and barbed wire, or enclose their neighbors within walls and fences and barbed wire, home is nowhere to be found, and uncertainty, doubt, and fear are ubiquitous. That decade of 1939–49 will not loosen its grip on Jews and Palestinians alike, the two tragedies rubbing against each other, never allowing either one to settle down, to live in peace. The land is patient. It has seen people come and go, the conquerors and the vanquished, the settlers and the raiders, the builders and the destroyers. But the people are seething, constrained and uncomfortable in their spaces, violent and fearful. They are not at home. Perhaps the only way to put an end to displacement is no longer to push out but to bring in, not to demarcate but to dismantle the barriers, to recognize that this land can be a home only when it is finally all its peoples' homeland.

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## Notes

- 1 Omer Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide: The Life and Death of a Town Called Buczacz* (New York, 2018).
- 2 The major study on this issue is Benny Morris, *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem, 1947–1949* (New York, 1987). The revised Hebrew edition of the book, *Leydata shel be'ayat ha-pelitim ha-palestinim, 1949–1947*, trans. Arnon Magen (Tel Aviv, 1991), had a major impact on Israeli debates on the issue, since it carefully documented the flight and expulsion of up to 750,000 Palestinians from what became the state of Israel and thereby made it no longer tenable to accept earlier Israeli arguments that the Arab population had fled of its own accord. Morris does not use the term *ethnic cleansing* and denies that there was an a priori plan or that direct orders were issued for wholesale expulsion. But he clearly states the following (cited and translated from the Hebrew edition, because it is what Israeli readers were exposed to): “Until June 1948 the flight of the Arabs was caused, directly or indirectly, primarily by Jewish attacks. A small (but hardly negligible) part of



the flight was thanks to direct expulsion orders by the Jews after they conquered this or that Arab settlement, and to psychological warfare ('whisper propaganda') conducted by them, at times by spreading false rumors, in order to scare the Arabs and make them leave.... Most of the expulsions occurred in areas considered strategically essential and according to the directives of Plan D, which strove to ensure that transportation routes were cleared of nearby Arab settlements and to cleanse border territories. The Haganah and the Irgun also routinely assembled and expelled the residents who remained in captured villages (mostly the elderly, widows, and handicapped)" (384). Plan D, Morris writes, "gave regimental and battalion commanders of the Haganah a free hand to empty strategically essential areas of their populations, and allowed them to expel actual or potential hostile villagers." Although there was no decision or plan "to expel the Arabs" from the Jewish state, "it was agreed by all those concerned that in this life-or-death struggle it would be militarily better if the fewest possible Arabs were left in the Jewish state" (386). Similarly, between July 1948 and early 1949, when an additional 300,000 Palestinians became refugees, despite the lack of specific orders for expulsion, "there was a growing tendency among the units of the IDF to expel Arabs from captured territories," partly because of "the feeling, encouraged by the previous flight of Arabs from Jewish territories, that soon there would be the real prospect that Israel could be entirely cleansed of Arabs." To this was added the sense that "in the second part of 1948 Arab resistance to flight was much greater than in the months before July. 'Spontaneous' flight had diminished: the villagers tended to stay, and those who left did so mostly because they were expelled or under the pressure of threats." Morris also notes that "Ben Gurion of course wanted as few Arabs as possible to remain in the state of Israel, and spoke in that spirit to his colleagues and assistants in meetings held in August, September, and October," but "he preferred that his generals 'understand' his wish" rather than issuing explicit orders. Hence "the offensives in July and October were accompanied by far more expulsions than the attacks in the first half of the war, as was also the case regarding acts of cruelty toward the Arab civilian population," although this varied by region (390–91). After the fighting ended, "the IDF was given the authority to expel Arab settlements near Israel's long borders.... One goal of this cleansing operation was to prevent the refugees from infiltrating back to their homes" (394). Morris has subsequently criticized Ilan Pappé quite vehemently, especially Pappé's study *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* (Oxford, 2006). See, e.g., Benny Morris, "The Liar as Hero," *New Republic*, March 16, 2011, 1–11, 17, <https://newrepublic.com/article/85344/ilan-pappe-sloppy-dishonest-historian>, as well as Mordechai Bar-On, "Cleansing History of Its Content: Some Critical Comments on Ilan Pappé's *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine*," *Journal*

of *Israeli History* 27, no. 2 (2008): 269–75. But it should be noted that the debate is not over whether Palestinians were expelled but whether there was a prior plan (rather than a sentiment or “wish”) to do so and whether explicit orders were issued or mere verbal “understandings” were intimated. Some scholars have gone as far as calling these policies genocide, which I have rejected. To my mind, as Morris amply documents, both the intent and the consequence of these actions amounted to a near-total ethnic cleansing of the Palestinian population. See Martin Shaw and Omer Bartov, “The Question of Genocide in Palestine, 1948: An Exchange between Martin Shaw and Omer Bartov,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 12, no. 3–4 (2010): 243–59. For a good definition of *ethnic cleansing* as the violent removal of a group from its land rather than the targeting of a group for extinction, with important examples, see Norman Naimark, *Fires of Hatred: Ethnic Cleansing in Twentieth-Century Europe* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001).

- 3 See, e.g., Idith Zertal, *From Catastrophe to Power: Holocaust Survivors and the Emergence of Israel* (Berkeley, 1998); Tom Segev, *The Seventh Million: The Israelis and the Holocaust*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York, 1993); Dina Porat, *The Blue and the Yellow Stars of David: The Zionist Leadership in Palestine and the Holocaust, 1939–1945* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990); Hanoch Bartov, *Shesh kenafayim le-had* (Tel Aviv, 2014 [1st ed., Merkhavia, 1954]); Gabi Daniel [Benjamin Harshav], “Peter ha-gadol,” in *Shirei Gabi Daniel* (Tel Aviv, 1990), 94–100; and idem, “Peter ha-gadol: Perush Rashi,” *Moznaim* (Feb.–Mar. 1987): 26–27.
- 4 See, e.g., Shira Robinson, *Citizen Strangers: Palestinians and the Birth of Israel’s Liberal Settler State* (Stanford, 2013), and Raef Zreik, “Notes on the Value of Theory: Readings in the Law of Return—A Polemic,” *Law and Ethics of Human Rights* 2, no. 1, art. 13 (2008): 1–44.
- 5 For the text of the Israeli Declaration of Independence, see the Knesset website, <http://main.knesset.gov.il/About/Occasion/Pages/IndDeclaration.aspx>.
- 6 For the text of the Palestinian Declaration of Independence, see <https://fnep.org/resource/palestinian-declaration-of-independence/>.
- 7 See, e.g., Moshe Zuckermann, *Shoah ba-heder ha-atum: Ha-shoah ba-’itonut ha-yisreelit bi-tekuvat milhemet ha-mifrats* (Tel Aviv, 1993); Bashir Bashir and Amos Goldberg, eds., *Ha-shoah ve-ha-Nakba: Zikaron, zehut leumit ve-shutafut yehudit-aravit* (Jerusalem, 2015); and idem, eds., *The Holocaust and the Nakba: A New Grammar of Trauma and History* (New York, 2018).
- 8 See, e.g., Andrei S. Markovits and Frank E. Sysyn, eds., *Nationbuilding and the Politics of Nationalism: Essays on Austrian Galicia* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982); John-Paul Himka, *Galician Villages and the Ukrainian National Movement in the Nineteenth Century* (New York, 1988); idem, *Religion and Nationality in Western Ukraine: The Greek Catholic Church and the Ruthenian National Movement in Galicia, 1867–1900* (Montreal, 1999); Paul Robert Magocsi, *The Roots of Ukrainian Nationalism: Galicia*

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as *Ukraine's Piedmont* (Toronto, 2002); and Kai Struve, *Bauern und Nation in Galizien: Über Zugehörigkeit und soziale Emanzipation im 19. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen, 2005).

- 9 Joshua Shanes, *Diaspora Nationalism and Jewish Identity in Habsburg Galicia* (New York, 2012), 1–5, argues persuasively that “[d]espite having been fully emancipated since 1867, most Jews in Galicia remained for years largely unpoliticized, unfamiliar—like many residents of East Central Europe—with notions of ‘assimilation’ or ‘nationality.’” But “[b]y 1914, Galician Jews had grown considerably more aware of their political power and how to wield it, and most agreed that the Jews in fact constituted one of the nationalities of the Habsburg Empire that deserved national rights.” Shanes further notes: “Zionism was a part of the rising nationalist movements in Europe and not simply a reaction to them. As nationalist assumptions increasingly shaped the terms of political discourse in Galicia, increasing numbers of Jews there absorbed these ideas. . . . More and more Jews imagined themselves members of a Jewish national community,” even though other “notions of Jewish identity . . . persisted throughout this period,” and nationalists “struggled to convert uncommitted souls to their camp.” This process, he stresses, “mirrored similar developments among the Jews’ Galician neighbors,” to the extent that “Jewish, Polish, and Ukrainian nationalism developed . . . in constant conversation and cross-fertilization with each other.” Hence “Jewish national identities . . . did not represent the inevitable discovery of an existential truth, as Zionist historians have typically suggested . . . but were both modern and constructed.” Just as important, Shanes argues that whereas other scholars have spoken of Galicia as “Ukraine’s Piedmont” and the birthplace of modern Polish nationalism, the province “served a similar function in the history of Jewish nationalism,” a phenomenon that “Jewish historians have tended to overlook,” including much Zionist historiography. Specifically on the slow growth of Zionism before World War I and its much more rapid expansion in the interwar period in one Galician town, see O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 25, 82–87, 96–101.
- 10 Peter J. Potichnyj and Howard Aster, eds., *Ukrainian-Jewish Relations in Historical Perspective* (Edmonton, 1988); Albert Lichtblau, “Jewries in Galicia and Bukovina, in Lemberg and Czernowitz: Two Divergent Examples of Jewish Communities in the Far East of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy,” in *Jewries at the Frontier*, ed. Sander L. Gilman and Milton Shain (Urbana, Ill., 1999), 29–66; O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 6–36. See also Shlomo Sand, *The Invention of the Jewish People*, trans. Yael Lotan (London, 2009). On the Ukrainian national writer Ivan Franko, see Yaroslav Hrytsak, “A Strange Case of Antisemitism: Ivan Franko and the Jewish Issue,” in *Shatterzone of Empires: Coexistence and Violence in the German, Habsburg, Russian, and Ottoman Borderlands*, ed. Omer Bartov and Eric D. Weitz (Bloomington, Ind., 2013), 232–35.

- 11 Adam Zamoyski, *The Polish Way: A Thousand-Year History of the Poles and Their Culture* (New York, 1988); Daniel Stone, *The Polish-Lithuanian State, 1386–1795* (Seattle, 2001). On the historiography of 1648, see Joel Raba, *Between Remembrance and Denial: The Fate of the Jews in the Wars of the Polish Commonwealth during the Mid-Seventeenth Century as Shown in Contemporary Writings and Historical Research* (New York, 1995); and see the immensely popular novel by Henryk Sienkiewicz, *With Fire and Sword*, trans. W. S. Kuniczak (New York, 1991) (first published as *Ogniem i mieczem* in 1884).
- 12 See O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 33–36, and literature cited therein. See also Timothy Snyder, *Sketches from a Secret War: A Polish Artist's Mission to Liberate Soviet Ukraine* (New Haven, Conn., 2005), and Larry Wolff, *The Idea of Galicia: History and Fantasy in Habsburg Political Culture* (Stanford, 2010).
- 13 See O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 22–29, and literature cited therein. For the bigger picture, see Bernard D. Weinryb, *The Jews of Poland: A Social and Economic History of the Jewish Community in Poland from 1100 to 1800* (Philadelphia, 1973); Gershon D. Hundert, *Jews in Poland-Lithuania in the Eighteenth Century: A Genealogy of Modernity* (Berkeley, 2005); and Murray J. Rosman, *The Lord's Jews: Magnate-Jewish Relations in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth during the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge, Mass., 1990).
- 14 On the Jewish myth of the creation of Buczacz, see S. Y. Agnon, *A City in Its Fullness*, ed. Alan Mintz and Jeffrey Saks (New Milford, Conn., 2016), 31–37, originally published in S. Y. Agnon, *Tr u-meloah* (Tel Aviv, 1973), 9–13. On Agnon's earlier published version of this tale, in 1916, see S. Y. Agnon, "Polin," *Polin* 12 (1999): ix–x. See also Omer Bartov, "From Building a City to Demolishing Homes: Origins and Their Outcomes," *Tikkun* 33, no. 4 (2018): 62–66.
- 15 On the many faces of early Zionism, see Dimitry Shumsky: "Brith Shalom's Uniqueness Reconsidered: Hans Kohn and Autonomist Zionism," *Jewish History* 25 (2011): 339–53; idem, "Leon Pinsker and 'Autoemancipation!': A Reevaluation," *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 18, no. 1 (2011): 33–62; and idem, "'This Ship Is Zion!': Travel, Tourism, and Cultural Zionism in Theodor Herzl's *Altneuland*," *Jewish Quarterly Review* 104, no. 3 (2014): 471–93. See also Arie Dubnov, "'True Art Makes for the Integration of the Race': Israel Zangwill and the Varieties of the Jewish Normalization Discourse in fin de siècle Britain," in *New Directions in Anglo-Jewish History*, ed. Geoffrey Alderman (Boston, 2010), 101–34, and idem, "Can Parallels Meet? Hannah Arendt and Isaiah Berlin on the Jewish Post-Emancipatory Quest for Political Freedom," *Leo Baeck Institute Year Book* 62 (2017): 27–51.
- 16 O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 82–157, and literature cited therein. See also, e.g., Emanuel Melzer, *No Way Out: The Politics of Polish Jewry, 1935–1939* (Cincinnati, 1997); Joshua M. Karlip, *The Tragedy of a Generation: The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism in Eastern Europe*

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- 17 O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 158–302, and literature cited therein. See also Omer Bartov, *Erased: Vanishing Traces of Jewish Galicia in Present-Day Ukraine* (Princeton, 2007); Kai Struve, "Tremors in the Shatterzone of Empires: Eastern Galicia in Summer 1941," in Bartov and Weitz, *Shatterzone of Empires*, 449–84; Dieter Pohl, "Anti-Jewish Pogroms in Western Ukraine," in *Shared History—Divided Memory*, ed. Elazar Barkan et al. (Leipzig, 2007), 305–13; Thomas Sandkühler, "Endlösung" in Galizien: Der Judenmord in Ostpolen und die Rettungsinitiativen von Berthold Beitz, 1941–1944 (Bonn, 1996); Grzegorz Motyka, "Der Krieg im östlichen Galizien," *Karta* 30 (2000): 36–37; Mikołaj Terles, *Ethnic Cleansing of Poles in Volhynia and Eastern Galicia, 1942–1946* (Toronto, 1993); and Kateryna Stadnik, "Ukrainian-Polish Population Transfers, 1944–46: Moving in Opposite Directions," in *Warlands: Population Resettlement and State Reconstruction in the Soviet–East European Borderlands, 1945–50*, ed. Peter Gatrell and Nick Baron (Basingstoke, 2009), 165–87.
- 18 Uriel Tal, *Christians and Jews in Germany: Religion, Politics, and Ideology in the Second Reich, 1870–1914* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1975); Sander L. Gilman, *Difference and Pathology: Stereotypes of Sexuality, Race, and Madness* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1985), 175–90; Paul Reitter, *The Anti-Journalist: Karl Kraus and Jewish Self-Fashioning in Fin-de-Siècle Europe* (Chicago, 2008), 107–36; Jacob Katz, *Out of the Ghetto: The Social Background of Jewish Emancipation, 1770–1870* (Cambridge, Mass., 1973); Franz Kafka, "A Report for an Academy," in *The Metamorphosis, In the Penal Colony, and Other Stories*, trans. Joachim Neugroschel (New York, 2000), 173–83.
- 19 See n. 10, above. See also Gil Rubin, "From Federalism to Binationalism: Hannah Arendt's Shifting Zionism," *Contemporary European History* 24, no. 3 (2015): 393–414; Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, "Jewish Peoplehood, 'Jewish Politics,' and Political Responsibility: Arendt on Zionism and Partitions," *College Literature* 38, no. 1 (2011): 57–74; Eyal Chowers, "Time in Zionism: The Life and Afterlife of a Temporal Revolution," *Political Theory* 26, no. 5 (1998): 652–85; Evyatar Friesel, "Zionism and Jewish Nationalism: An Inquiry into an Ideological Relationship," *Journal of Israeli History* 25, no. 2 (2006): 285–312; and Yfaat Weiss,

- “Central European Ethnonationalism and Zionist Binationalism,” *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 11, no. 1 (2004): 93–117.
- 20 Henry Abramson, *A Prayer for the Government: Ukrainians and Jews in Revolutionary Times, 1917–1920* (Cambridge, Mass., 1999); Richard Breitman and Alan M. Kraut, *American Refugee Policy and European Jewry* (Bloomington, Ind., 1987); Mark Tolts, “Population and Migration: Migration since World War I,” *YIVO Encyclopedia of Jews in Eastern Europe*, Oct. 12, 2010, [http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Population\\_and\\_Migration/Migration\\_since\\_World\\_War\\_I](http://www.yivoencyclopedia.org/article.aspx/Population_and_Migration/Migration_since_World_War_I). See also Ben Railton, “DACA, the 1924 Immigration Act and American Exclusion,” *Huffpost*, Sept. 7, 2017, [https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/daca-the-1924-immigration-act-and-american-exclusion\\_us\\_59b1650ee4b0bef3378cde32](https://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/daca-the-1924-immigration-act-and-american-exclusion_us_59b1650ee4b0bef3378cde32).
- 21 Tom Segev, *One Palestine, Complete: Jews and Arabs under the British Mandate*, trans. Haim Watzman (New York, 2001). For more on the transition from coexistence to conflict, see Michelle U. Campos, *Ottoman Brothers: Muslims, Christians, and Jews in Early Twentieth-Century Palestine* (Stanford, 2011); Jonathan Marc Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors: Religion, Race, and the Early Zionist-Arab Encounter* (Princeton, 2014); Ronnen Ben-Arie and Marcelo Svirsky, *From Shared Life to Co-Resistance in Historic Palestine* (London, 2017); Abigail Jacobson, *Oriental Neighbors: Middle Eastern Jews and Arabs in Mandatory Palestine* (Waltham, Mass., 2016); and Liora R. Halperin, *Babel in Zion: Jews, Nationalism, and Language Diversity in Palestine, 1920–1948* (New Haven, Conn., 2015).
- 22 See, e.g., letters cited in Anita Shapira, “Jerusalem in 1948: A Contemporary Perspective,” *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 17, no. 3 (2011): 78–123. For an argument that coexistence ended much earlier, see Hillel Cohen, *Year Zero of the Arab-Israeli Conflict: 1929*, trans. Haim Watzman (Waltham, Mass., 2015).
- 23 Gerald Daniel Cohen, *In War’s Wake: Europe’s Displaced Persons in the Postwar Order* (New York, 2012); Atina Grossmann, *Jews, Germans, and Allies: Close Encounters in Occupied Germany* (Princeton, 2007); Zeev W. Mankowitz, *Life between Memory and Hope: The Survivors of the Holocaust in Occupied Germany* (New York, 2002); Judith Tydor Baumel-Schwartz, *Kibbutz Buchenwald: Survivors and Pioneers* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1997).
- 24 On Holocaust revenge fantasies and their translation into action in 1948, see, e.g., Hanoach Bartov, *The Brigade*, trans. David S. Segal (Philadelphia, 1967); Amos Goldberg, “Three Forms of Post-Genocidal Violence in Beni Wircberg’s Memoir,” in *Talking about Evil: Psychoanalytical, Social, and Cultural Perspectives*, ed. Rina Lazar (London, 2017), 50–67; and Yoram Kaniuk, *Tashah* (Tel Aviv, 2010). On Kielce, see Jan T. Gross, *Fear: Anti-Semitism in Poland after Auschwitz: An Essay in Historical Interpretation* (New York, 2006). On Deir Yassin, see, e.g., Daniel A. McGowan and Marc H. Ellis, eds., *Remembering Deir Yassin: The Future of Israel and Palestine* (New York, 1998); Nur-eldeen Masalha, “On Recent

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- [48] Hebrew and Israeli Sources for the Palestinian Exodus, 1947–49,” *Journal of Palestine Studies* 18, no. 1 (1988): 121–37; Benny Morris, “The Historiography of Deir Yassin,” *Journal of Israeli History* 24, no. 1 (2005): 79–107; and Uri Milstein, *The Birth of a Palestinian Nation: The Myth of the Deir Yassin Massacre* (Jerusalem, 2012).
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- 25 On David Ben-Gurion and Yitzhak Ben-Zvi’s theories of Palestinians as ancient Jews, see Gribetz, *Defining Neighbors*, 123–26. On Polish rhetoric about Ruthenians, see O. Bartov, *Anatomy of a Genocide*, 26–27, 116–23.
- 26 In addition to H. Cohen, *Year Zero*, see Anita Shapira, *Land and Power: The Zionist Resort to Force, 1881–1948*, trans. William Templar (New York, 1992), and Ted Swedenburg, *Memories of Revolt: The 1936–1939 Rebellion and the Palestinian National Past* (Minneapolis, 1995). On the Holocaust and the Yishuv, see Porat, *Blue and the Yellow Stars*, and Dalia Ofer, *Escaping the Holocaust: Illegal Immigration to the Land of Israel, 1939–1944* (New York, 1990). On the reception of survivors in Israel, see Hanna Yablonka, *Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel after the War*, trans. Ora Cummings (New York, 1999). On the Nazi flirtation with the Arab world, see Jeffrey Herf, *Nazi Propaganda for the Arab World* (New Haven, Conn., 2009).
- 27 Klaus-Michael Mallmann and Martin Cüppers, *Nazi Palestine: The Plans for the Extermination of the Jews in Palestine*, trans. Krista Smith (New York, 2010). There are no comprehensive histories of the Jewish Brigade, but see Morris Beckman, *The Jewish Brigade: An Army with Two Masters, 1944–1945* (Staplehurst, Engl., 1998), and Howard Blum, *The Brigade: An Epic Story of Vengeance, Salvation and World War II* (New York, 2001).
- 28 See, e.g., David Tal, “The Forgotten War: Jewish-Palestinian Strife in Mandatory Palestine, December 1947–May 1948,” *Israel Affairs* 6, no. 3–4 (2000): 3–21; Mohammed S. Dajani Daoudi and Zeina M. Barakat, “Israelis and Palestinians: Contested Narratives,” *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 53–69; and Adel Manna’, “The Palestinian Nakba and Its Continuous Repercussions,” *Israel Studies* 18, no. 2 (2013): 86–99. On the pre-1948 Zionist idea of transfer, see, e.g., Benny Morris, *Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited* (New York, 2003), 39–64. See also Jeremy R. Hammond, “Benny Morris’s Untenable Denial of the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine,” *Foreign Policy Journal*, Nov. 14, 2016, <https://www.foreignpolicyjournal.com/2016/11/14/benny-morriss-untenable-denial-of-the-ethnic-cleansing-of-palestine/>.
- 29 I am referring here especially to S. Yizhar’s novella *Khirbet Khizeh*, published in 1949, and Avot Yeshurun’s poem “Pesah ‘al kukhim” (Passover on Caves), published in 1952. For a series of essays on 1948 in Israeli writing, see Amir Eshel, Hannan Hever, and Vered Karti Shemtov, eds., “History and Responsibility: Hebrew Literature Facing 1948,” special issue, *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 18, no. 3 (2012).
- 30 There are many telling examples of this psychological mechanism. See, e.g., Omer Bartov, “Kitsch and Sadism in Ka-Tzetnik’s Other

Planet: Israeli Youth Imagine the Holocaust,” *Jewish Social Studies* n.s. 3, no. 2 (1997): 42–76, and Dori Laub, “An Event without a Witness: Truth, Testimony and Survival,” in Shoshana Felman and Dori Laub, *Testimony: Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History* (New York, 1992), 75–92, esp. 88–92. Perhaps the most powerful and disturbing is Beni Vitzberg, *From Death to Battle: Auschwitz Survivor and Palmach Fighter*, trans. Merav Pagis and Dan Gillon (Jerusalem, 2017), originally published in Hebrew as *Mi-gei ha-harigah le-sha’ar ha-gai* in 1967, shortly before Vitzberg’s suicide by shooting himself in the head. A few quotations from the author’s experiences training in the elite Palmah unit and during the war of 1948 are illustrative: “I carried my gun as if it were an integral part of my body. . . . These guns were a lot like the German guns that the Nazis had used on our march of death, and from which a Nazi shot a bullet into my father’s head. . . . As happy as I was to no longer be in that blood-soaked land, a vague desire stirred within me to go back there in my combat gear with a gun in my hands. At the same time, just holding the weapon imbued me with a feeling of pride and a sense of revenge” (248–49). “I found my group assembled around a large, black machine gun. . . . In the past, weapons like this huge machine gun had been directed at my fellow camp inmates and me. . . . When it was my turn to sit behind the heavy piece of equipment, I saw in my mind’s eye the images of Germans I had encountered and at whom I would have liked to aim this black weapon, and with great enthusiasm, pull the trigger. . . . I saw the enemy against whom we were now ranged as one that was attempting to finish the job that the previous enemy had left uncompleted” (254). “We put on our steel helmets. . . . I was intrigued to see how I looked with it on. In my mind I had always associated steel helmets with German soldiers” (260). “During that period, I . . . was promoted to sergeant—the rank of the SS monster Kadok from Auschwitz. I longed to meet him now; I so wanted him to experience the treatment he would get from a sergeant in the Jewish army” (293). “The wind carried the sounds of shouting in Arabic. Unbelievably, these shouts were instantly followed by clear orders in German: ‘Feuer’ (Fire), ‘Halt’ (Stop) and other military commands. . . . I pushed the machine gun operator aside, took over control of the Austrian-made Schwarzlose, and pulled the trigger. Feverishly grinding my teeth, I fired, round after round, in the direction from which the order in German had reached me. . . . The bullets I shot one after the other were, as far as I was concerned, bullets from hell, while in my mind’s eye I could see blurred scenes of an SS sentry during the death march, of a rifle aimed at my father’s temple as he lay on the road. . . . In front of us were the corpses of around 200 tall, strong-looking Sudanese. . . . I ran toward the pile of corpses, and searched. . . . I spotted a fair-skinned face. I approached the figure and grabbed his hand. The Nazi commander’s watery-blue eyes were open wide. . . . I rolled up the

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bloodstained shirtsleeves. Under the armpit I discovered what I was looking for—two tattooed letters: SS. I pulled out my pistol, cocked and aimed it between the watery-blue eyes, and fired. ‘That is for my parents,’ I growled and returned to my unit” (300–301). “We 10 boys had emerged together from the forest of death near Wels, Austria. Six of us remained alive. But we were no longer orphaned victims. We had become six fighters. We fought and would fight again whenever necessary. We would fight so that Jewish children, wherever they were, should never become orphans as we had; neither by Nazi hands, nor by the hands of any other antisemites or some other group of people who might want to follow in their footsteps” (320). In his suicide note to his ten-year-old daughter he wrote: “When you grow up you will read this book about the sad events in the life of your father, who made sure and will continue to ensure, together with the rest of Israel’s soldiers, that children like you will never have to experience what I went through” (335).

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