

**The Left and (New)
Antisemitism:
The Palestinian
Question and the
Politics of
Ressentiment**

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Abstract: Zionist disappointment with the pro-Palestinian Left has resulted in a vicious counter-narrative about the Left's core antisemitism. The cause for social justice, which informs much of the Left's sympathies for Palestinians, is (mis)read as evidence of an emerging "new antisemitism." This article critically analyzes the "Zionist blackmail" that ensues from this ideological script of betrayal and alleged hatred for Jewish people. Zionist narratives about the Left's antisemitism work to paint Israel as the victim of an illegitimate delegitimation campaign. The Left is guilty by association. To be moved by the Palestinian question—a political question that speaks to and touches the Left's commitment to universal freedom—triggers *ressentiment* and the unwarranted charge of antisemitism.

Keywords: The Palestinian question, new antisemitism, politics, the Left, *ressentiment*, identity politics, Zionism, Jean Améry

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To say that the Left's solidarity with Palestinians provokes discomfort among liberal Zionists would be an understatement. There is a mixture of anger and sadness, even a feeling of betrayal, since many liberal Zionists saw common cause with the Left throughout the years. Things irrecoverably soured when it came to Israel, particularly in response to the Left's support for the Palestinian cause and increasing numbers of activists and academics backing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement against Israel, launched in 2005. Zionist disappointment with the pro-Palestinian Left has, in turn, fueled a vicious counter-narrative about the Left's core antisemitism. The cause for social justice, which informs much of the Left's sympathies for Palestinians, is (mis)read as evidence of an emerging "new antisemitism." In what follows, I want to critically analyze the "Zionist blackmail"¹ that ensues from this ideological script of betrayal and alleged hatred for Jewish people. Zionist narratives about the Left's antisemitism work to paint Israel as the victim of an illegitimate delegitimation campaign. The Left is guilty by association. To be moved by the Palestinian question—a question that speaks to and touches the Left's commitment to universal freedom—triggers the charge of antisemitism. At this point, a common objection is introduced: *Isn't this account painting Zionism with a wide brush? Aren't there different forms of Zionism? What about liberal Zionists? Aren't they more hospitable to the pursuit of social justice and less prone to incendiary rhetoric about Palestinians?*

To this line of inquiry, we must answer categorically in the negative. First, let's clarify what is objectionable and not objectionable about

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¹ Ali 2005, p. 43.

Zionism. What makes Zionism a racist ideology is not its attachment to the historic land of Palestine, nor is it its message of Jewish emancipation. Zionism was, and continues to be, a national liberation movement for many European Jews fleeing antisemitism, especially after World War II. What is problematic about Zionism is its chauvinistic premise that one's attachment must be based on exclusivity, on the eradication and/or subjugation of the Indigenous population. While some early Zionists like Martin Buber favored cultural Zionism and urged co-operation and co-existence with Palestinians, cultural Zionists clearly lost the struggle over the meaning of Zionism after the birth of Israel in 1948. With the 1967 Six-Day War, political Zionism secured hegemonic authority and control over what it means to be Jewish, all but naturalizing the phantasmatic identification of Jewishness with the state of Israel. Many Jews who disidentify with the Israeli state are in fact subjected to a specific form of hatred, to what some have described as "Zionist antisemitism."² Indeed, Buber now would most likely be viewed by political Zionists as a post-Zionist or even anti-Zionist, a race traitor. In more recent years, Judith Butler, who has voiced support for the Palestinian cause and critique of the nation-state of Israel, has been repeatedly accused of being a self-hating Jew for her audacity to question Zionism and to imagine Jewishness *otherwise*, as hospitable to its Palestinian neighbor.³ Today's liberal Zionists are clearly not changing the horizon and trajectory of Zionism. To the contrary, in their rhetoric and policy support, they have become indistinguishable from political or religious Zionists. Liberal Zionists may publicly criticize the Gaza wars and the violent ethno-nationalism of their fellow settlers, but they fail to question their Jewish privilege, their naturalized claim over the land and its resources. Palestinians are tolerated, and Palestinian citizens of Israel even supported, as long as they don't infringe on Jewish privilege.⁴ Notice for example how Gabriel Brahm glosses Zionism, packaged for the reader as innocuously as possible: "Zionism (the idea of a Jewish and democratic state)."⁵ This parenthesis does a lot of intellectual (= ideological) labor! The gloss obfuscates, among other things, the pressing issue of the Palestinian right of return for Palestinians and the unequal status of Palestinian citizens of Israel. Can one really call oneself a democratic state if one defines Israel as the nation-state of the Jewish people?

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2 See Massad 2013; Žižek 2013, p. 6.

3 See Landes and Weinthal 2012. Natan Sharansky and Gil Troy would label Butler an "un-Jew," an example of academics for whom "the public and communal staging of their anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist beliefs appears to be the badge of a superior form of Judaism, stripped of its unsavory and unethical 'ethnocentric' and 'colonialist' baggage" (Sharansky and Troy 2021. Decolonizing Israel is an anathematic proposition for most Zionists.

4 Žižek 2002, p. 170.

5 Brahm 2011, p. 499.

On the Occupation, Zionists, for the most part, speak in unison: *Please, don't ask us to decolonize Israel*. Either you stand with Israel (endorse its supremacist logic, its Jewish privilege) or you're antisemitic (you want the elimination of Israel—that is, Jews). In such a framework, solidarity with Palestinians puts many leftists squarely in the camp of those who hate Jews or, at the very least, are insensitive to their existential concerns.

The Left's Anti-Zionism

The Left has changed is a common Zionist refrain. We can witness one of its earliest articulations in Holocaust survivor Jean Améry's writings of the late sixties and seventies. Though the Left's antisemitism breaks with the racist biologism of the Third Reich, we're told that it is not any less damaging to Jews. According to Améry and his acolytes, anti-Zionism—calling out Israel as a racist state—gives antisemitism a more acceptable face to the West. "Antisemitism in the guise of anti-Zionism," Améry writes, "has come to be seen as virtuous."⁶ As Alvin H. Rosenfeld argues, it hides the Left's "animosity to Jews."⁷ Finding a new home in the advocates for anti-colonialism and social justice, this antisemitism is now spreading in colleges and universities (particularly via BDS) like wildfire. For liberal Zionists, today's calls to boycott Israel conjure up not South Africa, but Nazi Germany:

The aim of these anti-Israel activities at their most extreme is to demonize and delegitimize the Jewish state in ways that recall the marginalization and dehumanization of Jews in Nazi Germany.⁸

BDS strikes profoundly emotional chords that can't be denied. Maybe that's because a boycott recalls the "Don't buy from Jews" dictum the Nazis issued as a prelude to confiscating Jewish assets and cutting our world population by more than a third, thus necessitating the building of a modern nation-state as a refuge from mass extinction.⁹

Connecting the Palestinians/the Left to the Nazis draws attention away from the inconvenient parallels between Israel and South Africa, recentering the focus on Jews as victims while at the same demonizing Israel's critics, the purported Nazification of leftist critique.

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6 Améry 2022f, p. 66.

7 Rosenfeld 2022, p. xii.

8 Rosenfeld 2022, p. xiv.

9 Grenell 2022.

The Zionist counter-attack runs: *don't be fooled by the Left's progressive pedigree*. Its anti-Zionism recycles and repeats the same hatred for Jews: "anti-Zionism is nothing other than an updated version of the age-old and evidently ineradicable, utterly irrational hatred that has been directed against the Jews since time immemorial."¹⁰ For Améry, the fallen Left has quickly forgotten about the plight of Jews, and the fact that they trump the colonized in their suffering. "The Jew is still worse off than Frantz Fanon's colonized individual," asserts Améry.¹¹ This intervention dehistoricizes the position of Israeli Jews. It magically brackets the privilege of their Israeliness—the Israeli Jew is as precarious as the *Muselmann* of Auschwitz. Améry's Oppression Olympics fail to explain how exactly the condition of Israeli Jews is worse than that of the colonized Palestinians. To make matters worse, Améry then adds: "It [the Left] is as oblivious to this fact as it is to the anti-imperialist liberation struggle fought by the Jews against the British in Mandate Palestine."¹² Collapsing the Jew and the colonized, Améry invents the anti-colonial Zionist. On his reading, the Left willfully misrepresents and misinterprets the anti-colonial scene, neglecting Zionism's struggle against the British Empire. Recasting the terrorist attacks of the Haganah (the dominant Zionist paramilitary organization) as anti-imperialist, however, grossly distorts the historical reality of the colonial situation. Zionism as an ideology is a child of European colonialism and imperialism; moreover, without the backing of Western powers, Israel's creation would not have materialized when it did. The struggle among colonizers for territorial power should not be confused with or mistaken for an anti-colonial struggle.¹³

Améry also goes on to mock the Left for treating Jews as "bogeymen," aligning Israel's critics with a long antisemitic tradition: "After all, the Jews have always had to play the bogeyman, the global foe. Little wonder, then, that they are once again being stigmatized as oppressors."¹⁴ There is nothing that Israel can do to provoke a reassessment of Zionism's ways. He offers a realist defense of Israel:

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10 Améry 2022c, p. 52.

11 Améry 2022e, p. 38. Elsewhere, Améry depicts Jews as the exemplars of suffering: "the Jews... are the most tormented and tragic people on earth" (Améry 2022d, p. 44).

12 Améry, "Virtuous Antisemitism" 38.

13 As Joseph Massad avers, "launching terrorist attacks against the British forces, the Jewish colonists were adamant that Britain had betrayed them. In the period between 1944 and 1948 Jewish terrorism and the British response to it led to the killing of 44 Jewish terrorists and 170 British soldiers and civilians, a ratio of 4 to 1 in favour of the terrorists. Unlike other anti-colonial struggles where the casualty figures would be astronomically in favour of the colonisers, Zionism would begin to call its terrorist war against Britain a 'war of independence,' casting itself as anti-colonial movement" (Massad 2012).

14 Améry 2022d, p. 44.

“For me, Israel is not an auspicious promise, not a biblically legitimized territorial claim, no Holy Land. It is simply the place where survivors have gathered, a state in which every inhabitant still, and for a long time to come, must fear for his life. My solidarity with Israel is a means of staying loyal to those of my comrades who perished.”¹⁵ For Améry, Israel is the promise of a better future for Jews, where their being will not be determined and devalued by the gaze of antisemites: “The state of Israel is a commonwealth that has taught the Jews not to allow their self-perception to be impressed on them by the antisemites.”¹⁶ The pro-Palestinian Left is an irritant, insisting on the plight of the Indigenous population.¹⁷ It insists that the Zionist supreme good cannot come at the expense of Palestinians. Améry’s apology of Zionism blocks any genuine attempt to hold Israel accountable. Charges against Israel’s criminality are deflected and thrown back at the Left as expressions of antisemitism. Only Israel can prevent another Jewish catastrophe. Its *raison d’être* is to avoid another Auschwitz, an “über-Auschwitz,” as Améry puts it.¹⁸ The Left’s anti-Zionism paves the way for an “über-Auschwitz”—this is the Zionist blackmail.

Since Améry’s essays the situation has only gotten more dire, and the gap between the Left and Zionists has widened. And today’s apologists of Zionism are essentially repeating Améry’s basic insights.¹⁹ But they are facing a larger public’s dissatisfaction with mainstream media’s account of the Occupation. Their authority is starting to be questioned. Are Palestinians really to blame for all the failures to reach peace? Why isn’t the Palestinian question getting deserved consideration? Consequently, there is a growing fear that Israel will

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15 Améry 2022b, p. 85.

16 Améry 2022c, p. 53.

17 Améry’s distinction between life and territory—“Israel is fighting for the life of each of her inhabitants. The Arabs, by contrast, are fighting for their territorial rights” (Améry 2022d, p. 44)—partakes of the crudest form of Orientalism. The Indigenous population are de-Palestinized, absorbed in the generic category of Arabs.

18 Améry 2022a, p. 49.

19 It is telling that three of the most vehement critics of the Left’s anti-Zionism in the U.S. have blurbed the 2021 edited volume of Améry’s writings, *Essays on Antisemitism, Anti-Zionism, and the Left*. Cary Nelson, Bruno Chaouat, and Gabriel Brahm depict the Left (cultural Marxism, French thought, theory with a social justice agenda, etc.) as harmful both to Jews and thinking in general, something that the humanities need to exorcise from its quarters. For example, Brahm denounces BDS’s destructive impact on higher education. What is bad for Jews (the U.S. reception of French theory as continuing “Europe’s war against Jews by other means”) is bad for education: “While so selective a boycott in theory would appear facially anti-Semitic, the wholesale dereliction of the humanities it symptomatizes reflects a much broader anti-intellectual agenda—one threatening the very legitimacy of higher education in general” (Brahm 2021, pp. 167, 165).

I would also add that public intellectuals in France, many of them former leftists, also serve as inspiration for U.S. based academics for their baseless charges of antisemitism against the pro-Palestinian Left. Pascal Bruckner, for example, blames the Palestinian question for relegitimizing the hatred of the Jews, whereas Bernard Henri-Lévi and Alain Finkielkraut identify the new face of antisemitism with the anti-racist rhetoric of the Left. See Bruckner 2010; Finkielkraut 2004; Henri-Lévi 2008.

be “cancelled” by a misguided “wokeism,” irresponsibly spurred by the Left.²⁰ For liberal Zionists, it is as if the Left is going out of its way to estrange Jews. It wants to cancel what many Jews hold dear: (the idea/promise of) Israel. The pro-Palestinian Left is said to care only for the lives of Palestinians, cavalierly downplaying the targeted killing of Jews. In response, writes Alexis Grenell, antisemitism is “no fucking joke.”²¹ Putting this cheap appeal to pathos aside, the Left is accused of a double standard, of purporting to care about racism while irresponsibly neglecting antisemitism, failing to adequately attend to the lives of Jews.²² The liberal Zionist asks, Why is the Left turning its back on antisemitism (no longer ranking it a priority in its struggles for social justice)? Or worse, Why is it contributing to antisemitism (since support for BDS transforms Israeli Jews into enemies/evil actors)?

The invention of the category of “new antisemitism” aims to give voice to alienated Jews; it is arguably the Zionist response to the Left’s narrow “taxonomy of oppression,” which “doesn’t leave much room for the experience or perspective of Jews.”²³ We can describe “new antisemitism” as a kind of rhetorical counter-insurgency, a linguistic action taken against the activities of Palestinians and their leftist supporters. The designation reinstates the figure of the Jew as the timeless Victim as it invents a more elusive and formidable foe: the pro-Palestinian Left. This reactionary response to the Left bears the mark of Nietzschean *ressentiment*. Those leading the charge of new antisemitism—and they vary from public intellectuals and politicians to pundits and academics—are Nietzsche’s latest “priests.” In the hope of taking back the moral advantage, they are weaponizing *ressentiment*, healing the pride of their constituents by way of scapegoating: Palestinians and their leftist supporters, who are implicitly accused of stealing their moral authority and the enjoyment that comes in holding this position.

But what has changed? What are the activities that are provoking Zionist consternation? The Palestinian people are starting to narrativize their suffering, speaking of Israeli Jews as colonial settlers, cruel occupiers, and dispossessors of land and resources.²⁴ The Left is actively amplifying their message and is seen, consequently, as usurping Zionist authority, contesting Israel’s self-anointed role as judge of Middle Eastern politics in general and of the Jewish and Palestinian questions

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20 Brahm 2021.

21 Grenell 2022.

22 “When we point out the double standard on the left that routinely downplays the violence and racism against us, or stand up against our own discrimination, we’re selectively carved out of the prerogative afforded to every other minority group to serve as the authority on our own” (Grenell 2022).

23 Grenell 2022

24 Said 1984.

in particular. Zionist *ressentiment* thus stems not from some leftist insensitivity to the real threat of antisemitism, but from the perceived degradation of the former's authority, from the Left/Palestinians' "theft of authority." I am adopting and adapting Žižek's notion of "the theft of enjoyment,"²⁵ which reflects the ideological belief that some unwanted intruders—such as foreigners or racialized Others—are robbing me of my enjoyment, sabotaging my rightful pursuit of happiness. These demonized Others become the objects of Zionist *ressentiment*. If the Others didn't exist, Zionists would live a harmonious life free of alienation and disappointment. They could express their support of Israel in public or social media without the fear of being labeled a racist, and thus cancelled.²⁶

To sum up: If the Left didn't critique Israel and the Palestinians simply disappeared (self-transferred or de-Palestinized), then Jews, according to Zionists, could fully enjoy their nation-state and sympathies from the West (and not just from its political leaders). Zionists are loath to admit that Israel's antagonisms are immanent to their social and economic system, and stem in no small part from coloniality and Ashkenazi supremacy.²⁷ Instead, Zionist *ressentiment* blames—and there is an undeniable *jouissance* in hating the "new antisemites," in the sanctimonious act of blaming—the Left and Palestinians for the deterioration of their moral and hermeneutic stock. It yearns for a time when liberal Zionists were not on the defense, trying to arrest or curtail the corrosive influence of the BDS movement, which is also, and more alarmingly, corrupting younger Jews, making them less amenable to Zionist dreams and lessons.²⁸ They resent having to convince their own of the "virtues" of Israel. As Dave Zirin observes:

a young generation of American Jews . . . are standing in solidarity with Palestinians like no time since the dispossession of Palestinian land that preceded the founding of the state of Israel in 1948. Appalled by occupation, oppression, and apartheid, they see solidarity with the Palestinian people as not only a moral imperative but also central to a broader fight against anti-Semitism and all

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25 Žižek 1993.

26 The rhetoric of "new antisemitism" helps to ideologically reset the problem. It is no longer about making "bigoted opinions," but the imaginary reality that Zionists have been "*wrongly* stigmatized" (Malik 2021, p. 47, emphasis added). Bigotry conveniently transmutes into intellectual courage, the willingness to uphold "unorthodox thoughts," thoughts, in this case, at odds with the Left's pro-Palestinian doxa (Weiss 2018).

27 Israel's Ashkenazi or European-born Jews embody the full privileges of Whiteness in Israel, creating a hierarchical logic, positing Sephardi or Mizrahi Jews (Arab Jews, that is, Jews of Middle Eastern or North African origin) as inferior, and Ethiopian Jews at the bottom of the racial scale.

28 Weiss 2022.

forms of oppression.²⁹

The Zionist pitch about Israel's greatness—as made for example through its pink-washing, the touting of its pro-LGBT state policies—is finding a more skeptical audience. Zionist *ressentiment* is imbued with a sense of nostalgia, nostalgia for a nationalist time when diasporic Jews displayed compulsory solidarity with Israeli Jews and fully identified with Israel (this narrative, obviously, construes a distorted vision of the past, covering over the dissenting voices of many diasporic Jews over Israel and its Occupation). This *ressentiment* is thus bitter and hateful of change and of its agents—those responsible for troubling Zionism's dominant narrative.

At the same time, the matter of *ressentiment* is more complicated. Not all expressions of *ressentiment* are equally reactionary, irremediably tied to the “rhetoric and politics of blame” decried by Edward Said.³⁰ *Ressentiment's* attachment to victimhood is not inevitable. In fact, I want to make the case for a life-affirming *ressentiment* that breaks with the contours of victimhood and the lure of identity (as well as identity politics). The politics of *ressentiment* here can be formulated along two axes. One, *ressentiment*—exemplified by liberal Zionists—feeds a logic of identity; it is a fetishized affection, functioning as a badge of honor, proof of one's self-righteousness. In this instance, the subject of *ressentiment* always claims the moral higher ground, standing against a horde of woke liberals (cultural leftists) who have turned their back on Jews and the only democracy in the Middle East. This *ressentiment* embodies a hermeneutics of suspicion; it considers the Left's singling out of Israel as emblematic of what is wrong with the Left and “wokeism” (political correctness 2.0). The other *ressentiment* reflects the perspective of the “wretched of the earth.” It is the affect of the colonized, the racialized, the less than nothing whose lives have been rendered disposable in an array of ways.

To be sure, *ressentiment* has a checkered history. In *States of Injury*, Wendy Brown meticulously documents *ressentiment's* hold on many progressive movements; indeed, she describes “the late modern liberal subject” as “quite literally seeth[ing] with *ressentiment*.”³¹ The lure of *ressentiment*, taking refuge in the feeling of powerlessness, indulging in its festering energies, “parad[es] as radical critique.”³² “The moralizing vengeance of the powerless”³³ cannot be an end in itself. *Ressentiment* is compromised; it both articulates and conforms to “the dominant political

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29 Zirin 2022.

30 Said 1994, p. 18.

31 Brown 1995, p. 69.

32 Brown 1995, p. xi.

33 Brown 1995, p.66.

expression of the age: identity politics.”³⁴ Groups after recognition and inclusion often follow the path of rights, which, as Brown argues, works to legitimize the system. Legal protection, in the form of rights, ironically weakens political freedom; rights are “among the cruelest social objects of desire.”³⁵ Brown’s answer: democratic activism requires a decisive shift from a depoliticized, personal “I am” to a politicized collective “I want this for us.”³⁶ Politics as such depends on actualizing this shift, which necessitates loosening the hold of *ressentiment* and abandoning the corrosive path of revenge/hatred (the corrosive imperative of “making the perpetrator hurt as the sufferer does”³⁷). While I agree with much of Brown’s assessment, I do not believe that *ressentiment*’s destiny is identity politics, the cult of victimhood. *Ressentiment* holds the potential to either incapacitate or empower the subject. It is capable of generating either an “I am” or “I want this for us.”

If Zionists suffer from a kind of *ressentiment*-envy—in wanting to regain the status of unjustly wronged subject (thereby making Jewish identity the object of Western sympathies and *unconditional* support, and resenting the democratization of an identity politics grounded in victim status)—the *ressentiment* that I want to pursue here follows a universalist political project. Asserting that you’ve been historically wronged—and still continue to be—doesn’t in and of itself compel you to fetishize your victimhood. The challenge is to give primacy to *ressentiment* as an ethico-political response to woundedness without converting the “bad” affect into the basis of a reified identity: the ahistorical victim. The Left’s solidarity with the Palestinian cause—not unlike the Black-Palestinian solidarity, powerfully renewed and reinvigorated with the advent of Black Lives Matter (BLM)—is giving body to this alternative *ressentiment*, enjoining the wretched of the earth to universalize their grievances. This form of *ressentiment* politicizes the affective register. Palestinian anger is never merely their own; it is an anger that hungers for contact and communication. The wretched’s *ressentiment* opens to dislocation and dialecticization. It takes the form of a collective response to the injustices of the world.

Against Zionist Fragility

According to Zionist logic, no relationality ought to be afforded to Palestinians. Any gesture of solidarity provokes suspicion, anger, and rhetorical retaliation—none more devastating, of course, than the

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34 Brown 1995, p. 74.

35 Brown 1995, p. 128.

36 Brown 1995, p. 75.

37 Brown 1995, p. 27.

charge of antisemitism.³⁸ Forging solidarity with the Palestinian cause is tantamount to supporting the annihilation of Jews. Why? To identify with the Palestinians is on this view to identify with bloodthirsty terrorists, with antisemites who are, we're constantly told, hellbent on the destruction of Israel (= the Jews). Raising the Palestinian question is thus seen as a provocation. The word "Palestine" is triggering. It makes *some* feel uncomfortable. Affect then substitutes for argumentation. Bad affect turns into proof of antisemitism.³⁹ This is why worries about cancelling Israel are ironic. Zionists, bent on exposing the antisemitism of leftists, are the exponents of cancel culture. In their weaponization of antisemitism, they are already announcing the worst features of cancel culture: bullying their detractors, demanding self-censure on threat of being denounced as antisemitic—evidence be damned.

As anyone who teaches about Palestine knows, the implications are potentially disastrous. In an academic setting, the description and discussion of Israel as a settler-colonial state or an apartheid regime is said not to be inclusive, or welcoming to Jewish students. It violates what Rana Jaleel dubs "neutral civility."⁴⁰ This is Orwellian newspeak, ideology at its purest.⁴¹ Concessions to Zionist fragility (= suppressions of Palestinian voices) masquerade here as inclusive pedagogy—a sanitized vision of academia where commonly held beliefs and opinions ought to be upheld rather than contested. First, Jewish students are not a monolith. The belief that a critique of Israel is potentially upsetting for Jewish students is itself antisemitic to the extent that it assumes that *all* Jews must identify with Israel (and thus would be upset by the content discussed, by the evidence put forward not only by Palestinians and their leftist supporters, but also by human rights groups⁴²). A 2021

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38 The prohibition against solidarity with Palestinians is of course not limited to the academic Left. Take for example, the backlash against *Harry Potter* star Emma Watson, who simply shared an image on her Instagram displaying the text "Solidarity is a verb" at a pro-Palestine event. The accusations of antisemitism were immediate on social media. See Khomami 2022; Žižek 2022a.

39 One is tempted to call this transmutation of affect into evidence the "Zionist doctrine" after Dick Cheney's "one percent doctrine," which states that "If there's a one percent chance that Pakistani scientists [or any other foreign agents] are helping al Qaeda build or develop a nuclear weapon we have to treat it as a certainty in terms of our response. . . . It's not about our analysis or finding a preponderance of evidence. . . it's about our response" (Suskind 2006, p. 62). If there is a possibility that a leftist critique of Israel harms Jews (the immanent fear of Judeocide), then Zionists must denounce it as antisemitic: it's about their response. There is no time for evidence. Zionists' Israel is in a state of permanent emergency. *Israel must be defended*. There is a further parallel to be extended. The Zionist doctrine and the one percent doctrine both claim to be safeguarding the well-being of Israel and the U.S., respectively, but in practice have been self-destructive—or "autoimmune" responses, to put it in Derridean parlance—and have done irremediable damage to the global image of both nations. See Derrida 2004.

40 Jaleel 2016, p. 25.

41 See Yancy 2016.

42 Human rights groups have documented the results of what happens when you treat a group of

poll by the Jewish Electoral Institute gives the lie to the Zionist script (which aims, among other things, to flatten the plurality of Jewish beliefs on the Palestinian question): it reveals that 25% of U.S. Jews consider Israel an “apartheid state,” 34% draw a parallel between its racism and that of the U.S., and 22% believe that it is committing genocide against Palestinians.⁴³ Second, the worry that a critique of Israel might abstractly contribute to the proliferation of antisemitism (negative news about Israel creates an environment of hostility toward all Jews) simultaneously ignores and blames the victims of the Occupation (shouldn’t the outrage *also* be aimed at the Israeli government and its subjugation of Palestinians?). Third, the Jewish right to comfort—not to be discriminated against—cannot in any way be predicated on the discomfort, discrimination, and silencing of Palestinians (and vice versa). And if it is, the right to comfort takes the form of an oppressive tool, a privilege of the powerful.

Zionist fragility is also visible in the struggle over naming. Many Zionists resent the Left’s interference, reproaching non-Jews for deciding what counts as antisemitism and what doesn’t, for determining what ought to offend Jews and what oughtn’t. Žižek comments on the title of a recent dialogue on antisemitism and the BDS movement in *Der Spiegel*, which was: “Wer Antisemit ist, bestimmt der Jude und nicht der potenzielle Antisemit [*Who is an antisemite is determined by the Jew and not by the potential antisemite*].” At first glance, Žižek notes the reasonableness of the stance: “the victim should decide their victim status.” Jews should define the contours of their offender (the antisemite, in this case). Upon further reflection, however, Žižek introduces two perspicacious points:

First shouldn’t the same hold for Palestinians in the West Bank, who should determine who is stealing their land and depriving them of their fundamental rights? Second, who is “the Jew” who determines who is anti-Semitic? What about the numerous Jews who support... BDS or who, at least, have doubts about the State of Israel politics in the West Bank? Is it not the implication of the quoted stance that Jews who oppose the Israeli state are in some deeper sense not Jews?⁴⁴

The first point exposes the limits of victimhood when victimhood is no longer exclusively claimed by Zionists, that is, when the category of the victim is properly democratized. The Native defines the contours

people as fundamentally inferior, racialized as uncivilized, whose lives basically do not matter. It constitutes apartheid, an entrenchment of racial segregation. On Israeli apartheid, see the reports by Amnesty International 2022; Human Rights Watch 2021; B’Tselem 2021.

43 “Jewish Electoral Institute: National Jewish Survey” 2021.

44 Žižek 2021.

of the occupier, the settler, the agent of Palestinian dispossession. Palestinians also resent those who tell us this is not an apartheid regime, that our occupation is temporary until a Palestinian Gandhi or Mandela emerges from our ranks. But, unlike Zionist *ressentiment*, Palestinian *ressentiment* is not deployed to fix and elevate Indigenous identity. It is *open to all*: Palestinian rights are human rights. The Zionist framework is devoid of any universalist aspirations. Indeed, the act of universalizing the conditions for what counts as offense is itself deemed antisemitic, a hidden expression of “Holocaust envy” infecting the Left and Third-World politics. Gabriel Brahm purports that “the new antisemite desires the delegitimization of a nation seen as founded on (illicit) ‘enjoyment’ of the Holocaust.”⁴⁵ For Brahm, the antisemitic Left—or what he calls the “postmodern antisemite”⁴⁶—desires what Israel unjustly possesses and enjoys: the currency of its suffering. For Brahm, that “everyone, in principle, [is] equally a victim or potential victim of human rights abuse”⁴⁷ clears the space for antisemitism, the provincialization of the Holocaust (or Holocaust relativization), a catastrophe among others. Jews are accused of “hoard[ing] stockpiles of suffering, thus leaving insufficient funds of pity in circulation for others—who are also miserable but haven’t got access to the libidinal backing needed to capitalize their suffering and mass-market it to the world—because the Jews have taken more than their share.”⁴⁸ Human rights discourse plays the role of rectifying the excesses of Holocaust attention; in its defense of the wretched of the world, it enacts the antisemitic desire of simultaneously claiming X the next Jew (the object of unconditional empathy) and of displacing Jews, putting them back in their place (the object of withdrawn empathy).

Brahm’s paranoid reading, which pathologizes anti-Zionists and post-Zionists at will, and imagines multiple leftist plots against Jews (holocausts replacing the Holocaust; the fear of a proliferation of “metaphorical Jews”⁴⁹), is obscenely self-serving, and willfully distracts from the Left’s actual critique: no one can claim monopoly over victimhood. There are no “presumptive victims.”⁵⁰ This *ressentiment*-

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45 Brahm 2011, p. 491.

46 Brahm 2011, p. 491.

47 Brahm 2011, p. 492.

48 Brahm 2011, p. 493.

49 Brahm and others lament “the practice of analogizing the Holocaust,” which “promiscuously has become widespread—with not only Palestinians suffering from ‘genocide’ (while increasing in population), but also Native Americans, African Americans, gays and lesbians, AIDS victims, and fetuses—all suffering from their own holocausts” (Brahm 2011, p. 502). Analogies are never claims of pure identification. To remove a term from any form of relationality—Jewish suffering permits no analogy—is to ontologize it and libidinally invest it with exceptional meaning—the stuff of fetishization.

50 Butler 2006, p. 103.

infused understanding of victimhood abstracts the victim from the dynamic field of power (the messiness of history), neglecting the category's significant shifts over time and space. This mystification of the victim has the damaging effect of foreclosing politics as such.⁵¹ Rather than taking up the Left's counter-claim, Brahm dreams of antisemitic motivations, opting to fantasize about the postmodern antisemite fantasizing about Jewish enjoyment of their suffering. The Left doesn't envy the authority of Jewish victims. What it flatly rejects however is the Zionist ideology of victimhood that shields Israel, that makes the Jewish victim incapable of becoming a victimizer of Palestinians—in a way that provokes a reevaluation of the interpretive scene.⁵² This is precisely the Zionist picture of the victim that hundreds of Holocaust survivors and descendants of survivors sought to correct and remove from the Zionist playbook. As a response to Israel's barbaric *Operation Protective Edge*, the 2014 Gaza war⁵³, they ran an ad in the *New York Times*,

As Jewish survivors and descendants of survivors and victims of the Nazi genocide we unequivocally condemn the massacre of Palestinians in Gaza and the ongoing occupation and colonization of historic Palestine. We further condemn the United States for providing Israel with the funding to carry out the attack, and Western states more generally for using their diplomatic muscle to protect Israel from condemnation. Genocide begins with the silence of the world.

We are alarmed by the extreme, racist dehumanization of Palestinians in Israeli society, which has reached a fever-pitch. In Israel, politicians and pundits in *The Times of Israel* and *The Jerusalem Post* have called openly for genocide of Palestinians and right-wing Israelis are adopting Neo-Nazi insignia. [...]

We must raise our collective voices and use our collective power to bring about an end to all forms of racism, including the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people. We call for an immediate end to the siege against and blockade of Gaza. We call for the full economic, cultural and academic boycott of Israel. "Never again" must mean **NEVER AGAIN FOR ANYONE!**⁵⁴

51 "No political ethics can start with the assumption that Jews monopolize the position of victim" (Butler 2006, p. 103).

52 The Israeli government can persecute the abuses of a police officer or an IDF soldier (the classic "bad apple" excuse), though it rarely does, without troubling the settler-colonial situation.

53 According to Israeli human rights group B'Tselem: "1391, or 63%, of the 2,202 Palestinians killed by Israeli security forces in Operation 'Protective Edge' did not take part in the hostilities. Of these, 526—a quarter of all Palestinians killed in the operation—were children under eighteen years of age" (B'Tselem 2016).

54 Kassel 2014.

This is a devastating rebuke of Brahm's singularization of the Holocaust. His zero-sum approach to the struggle against antisemitism—Jews or the wretched of the world?—is rendered mute. Supporting Jews must never entail the neglect of Palestinians. "Never Again" is a universalist message or it is no message at all.

What Brahm and others do put on display, however, is anxiety over their diminishing authority, and the seething *ressentiment* (for the Left and its multiple causes) that it ignites. They see that the Zionist narrative is faltering, being questioned from within and without, and that Israel's ethical legitimacy and global image is at stake.⁵⁵ Juxtapose Israel's claim that it possesses the "most moral army in the world" with the recent killing of highly respected Al Jazeera reporter Shireen Abu Akleh by Israeli gunfire during an IDF special operation in the West Bank city of Jenin on May 11, 2022. The tragic episode disclosed the utter disposability of Palestinian lives. Initially top Israelis officials blamed her death on accidental fire by Palestinian armed men, then issued a statement calling for an investigation of Abu Akleh's death, and finally reconsidered the inquiry, tabling it, since "such an investigation, which would necessitate questioning as potential criminal suspects soldiers for their actions during a military operation, would provoke opposition and controversy within the IDF and in Israeli society in general."⁵⁶ Is the demand for accountability antisemitic? Is operating with systemic impunity a Zionist right worth defending? It is more difficult to make the argument that the outrage over Israel's killing is evidence of rampant antisemitism (the typical response to bad Israeli press—cancel the victim and the messenger), that it is being singled out, since "democratic" states typically do not murder journalists. Needless to say, Western powers are embarrassed by the (settler-colonial) situation.

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55 In *How to Fight Anti-Semitism*, Bari Weiss exemplifies this Zionist *ressentiment*, the defensive posture of the public intellectual who spent her career promoting Israel as "an exponent of liberal democracy in the Middle East" (Weiss 2019, p. 75). With Israel's policies coming under greater scrutiny, and her relevance as a Middle East pundit diminishing, Weiss turns to antisemitism to galvanize liberals, and rescue them from leftist wokeism, recasting Jews as the global underdog fighting "a kind of three-headed dragon" (Weiss 2019, p. 17): radical Islam, the pro-Palestinian Left, and neo-Nazis. In making her argument, Weiss swiftly dismisses Zionism's character as a settler-colonial project, arguing for the Jews' metaphysical Indigeneity, for their return to the biblical land. Jews here are not the victimizers as they are made out to be by radical Islam and the Left. No, they are history's seemingly timeless victims: "two thousand years of history have shown definitively that the Jewish people require a safe haven and an army" (Weiss 2019, p. 75). What Weiss of course leaves out from her distorted and distorting account is, among other things, the fact that early Zionist leaders saw themselves as colonialists. Weiss repeatedly belittles the idea that "Zionism is not the return of a native people but a colonial replacement," describing this as "a lie" that "has become pervasive" (Weiss 2019, p. 128). But witness Vladimir Jabotinsky, speaking in 1923 from the position of a conquering settler: "Every native population in the world resists colonists as long as it has the slightest hope of being able to rid itself of the danger of being colonised. That is what the Arabs in Palestine are doing, and what they will persist in doing as long as there remains a solitary spark of hope that they will be able to prevent the transformation of 'Palestine' into the 'Land of Israel'" (Jabotinsky 1923). Is it really antisemitic to say that Israeli governments have basically continued the ruthless policies of one of Zionism's main political architects?

56 Harel 2022.

Palestinians in the West Bank are exercising the right to name their victimizers. They are effectively naming who is stealing their land and killing their journalists. Viewed in this light, the charge of Holocaust envy rings hollow. The weaponization of the Holocaust/antisemitism loses some of its ideological efficacy.⁵⁷ It must be seen as desperate attempt to restore Zionist authority by simultaneously silencing Palestinian voices and restoring the exceptionality of antisemitism: “Never again” must mean **NEVER AGAIN FOR JEWS!** Antisemitism in a settler-colonial situation can obviously still exist, and can be legitimately denounced, but the accusation cannot be wielded willy-nilly by the occupying force without additional justification. The claims, *You’re antisemitic for (violently or not) resisting your extinction|for writing about Palestinian rights and the injustices of the Occupation* reek of bad faith and will no longer do.

Žižek’s second point challenges Zionism’s core belief, that it speaks for all Jews. It discloses the fact of an alternative way of being Jewish. These renegade Jews stand with Palestinians in their struggle for liberation. This is in many ways a repeat of the first point, especially when it is reformulated as a Zionist objection: A non-Jew is telling Jews what version of being Jewish is desirable and what isn’t. In *Is Theory Good for Jews?* Bruno Chaouat, following Gabriel Brahm, names this practice “Jew-splitting.” The Left is accused of continuing here a long antisemitic tradition of distinguishing the “good Jew” from the “bad Jew,” “the Jew in the spirit” from “the Jew of the flesh” (Paul’s distinction⁵⁸), the uncanny/cosmopolitan Jew from the rooted Zionist Jew (the Left’s distinction). Jew-splitting is not an accusation limited to non-Jews; Judith Butler, for instance, is singled out for Jew-splitting, for distinguishing the “ethical Jew” from the “ethnic Jew,” disparaging the latter for identifying with the state of Israel.⁵⁹ There is an obvious irony here. Chaouat condemns the Left’s divisions while generating his own Jew-splitting: the “good Jew” who commits to Zionism as a

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57 Brahm expresses concern over the obsession with the Jewish Holocaust: “the Shoah is certainly the one man-made disaster in history that people argue about in a unique way, debating endlessly whether or not and how it was or wasn’t unique. This obsessive investment itself makes it unique, therefore, in one very important way at least: the Holocaust is uniquely discussed for its uniqueness and/or lack thereof” (Brahm 2011, p. 494). Brahm carelessly mixes discussions about the Holocaust. There is no distinction between Holocaust deniers and leftist individuals who question the instrumentalization of the Holocaust for political ends, shielding Israel from critique—rationalizing the brutality of the Occupation in the name of saving Jews from future catastrophes. For Brahm, they are both cases of antisemitism. The cases however are nothing alike. Holocaust deniers are clearly antisemitic in denying the fact of Jewish devastation. Individuals who object to the ways memories of the Holocaust are used to cancel dissenting voices are by no means antisemitic. If anything, they are the one doing justice to “the sacred memory of the Holocaust” since, as Žižek points out, it is “being mobilized to legitimize the corrupted politics of today: the apartheid practiced against Palestinians. And it’s those who do it who are the true desecrators of the Holocaust” (Žižek 2019).

58 Chaouat 2016, p. xxii.

59 Chaouat 2016, p. 214.

historical necessity to prevent an “über-Auschwitz,” and the “bad Jew” who romanticizes Jewish non-identity, distorts the righteous history of Zionism, and puts other Jews in danger. Any attempt to exit the Zionist orbit—to pursue alternative modes of relationality, a care for the non-Jew (the Palestinian, par excellence), foreclosed by Zionism, such as the one embodied in notion of “cohabitation,”⁶⁰ which Butler adopts and adapts from Hannah Arendt—is read malevolently as antisemitic, “undermining the core of Jewish identity.”⁶¹ To challenge Zionism via a reinvention of Jewishness is to recklessly challenge the very sovereignty of the nation-state of Israel; it is to misunderstand Israel’s relation to the Holocaust.⁶² Rebellious against Zionism is to compromise what stands between Jews and an “über-Auschwitz.” *Butler is not good for Jews.*

Toward a Politics of *Ressentiment*

Divisions are unavoidable. Politics is about choosing a division, not as an end in itself, but as a way to articulate society’s fundamental antagonisms. The taxonomy of “new antisemitism” contributes to an ideological division; it is the fruit of *ressentiment* as nostalgia, which works to occlude rather elucidate the problems facing Israel. It is never the Occupation, the illegal settlements, the apartheid regime, the settler-colonial mentality that are in need of attention. Claims that Zionism is “racist” or “genocidal” are brushed off, evidence of the other side’s unabashed antisemitism.⁶³ There is no need to reckon with Jewish

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60 Butler 2012, pp. 151–80.

61 Chaouat 2016, p. 214. Chaouat’s understanding of “the core of Jewish identity” is puzzling. Is Zionism constitutive of being Jewish? Is Zionism an inextricable part of the Jewish people’s identity? Who exactly decides on the coreness of Jewish Identity? Zionists simply claim the authority, mechanically defining Jews as bound to the state of Israel. But why should Zionists have the final word on Jewishness and Jewish identity?

62 “One cannot understand the phenomenon of Israel without being fully cognizant of the Jewish catastrophe” (Améry 2022d, p. 42).

63 For Butler, Chaouat confidently notes, “no one can be a Zionist, or defend the Jewish state, and, at the same time, think, speak, or act ethically” (Chaouat 2016, p. 217). It depends: Is your Zionism exclusivist? Is it only the Zionist who can claim a special bond with the land, upholding the settler’s genocidal slogan, *a land without a people for a people without a land*? And what kind of Jewish state are you exactly defending? Is it one forged on a racial hierarchy and a well-documented apartheid logic? I’m skeptical that Zionism can shake its chauvinistic attitudes, and suspend its racialized vision of Palestinians. On the question of defending the Jewish state while still being ethical, we might turn to the figure of the *refuseniks* as a counter-example. These are Israeli soldiers who decline to complete their compulsory military service in the Occupied Territories. Refusing to serve as instruments of domination, the *refuseniks* break with the dominant Zionist ideology; they display no blind allegiance to the nation-state, but there is, in their actions, hope for a more just Israel. Consider the testimony of *refusenik* Haggai Mata: “Today, militarization and racism among the Jewish population have reached a fascist level. The repression of critical thinking, the total acceptance of the occupation’s crimes, the idolization of the army and the gradual acceptance of the principle of ‘ethnic cleansing’—all these constitute only part of our society’s collapse. To this list one should add the systematic mistreatment of the Palestinian citizens of Israel, the hateful violence addressed at peace demonstrators, and the

privilege because there is nothing wrong with it. Israel is the nation-state of the Jewish People, after all. For Zionists, Israel's actual problems find their sources in the old-fashioned antisemitism of generic Arabs and the new antisemitism of the pro-Palestinian Left. Blaming the Left sustains the collective fantasy that only Zionism can protect Jews. Zionists resent the fact that they have to repeat to the (Western) world that to be for Palestinians is to be against Israel (= the Jews) and thus antisemitic. They resent that they have to court politicians to pass anti-BDS legislation; they resent the pushback from the pro-Palestinian Left. They resent the fact that they are starting to lose in the court of public opinion.

To combat the Zionist narrative, the Left might be tempted to simply avoid the traps of *ressentiment*, and deem it reactive, all-too-prone to fetishization, a bad affect without emancipatory value. I think that this would be mistake. There is another, more productive side to *ressentiment*. The generative force lies in its negativity, in its impulse not to conform to public doxa. Here we might evoke another Améry, the earlier Améry who penned a powerful essay on the virtues of *ressentiment* in *At the Mind's Limits: Contemplations by a Survivor on Auschwitz and Its Realities*.

Writing at a time when Germany was too willing to accelerate the healing process and collectively work through the trauma of the Jewish Holocaust, Améry stubbornly resisted social pressure to *forgive and forget* in the name of communal cohesion, an initiative to place the horrors of the past firmly behind, enabling “what happened to remain what it was.”⁶⁴ He creatively reappropriated Nietzsche's account of *ressentiment*, arguing for its existential necessity and productivity. He parted from Nietzsche's account in a significant way, rejecting the thinker's apology of forgetfulness, where “forgetting” is elevated as “a strength, a form of *robust* health.”⁶⁵ For Nietzsche, the slave moralist, who is denied the art of forgetting, “relives the sad passions of the past at the cost of losing the future.”⁶⁶ Améry never entertains active forgetting as an ideal nor option. As a man of *ressentiment*, he does not forget but revolts “against reality,” insisting on the memories of the deeds of his “fellows,” “who flogged [him] with a horsewhip.”⁶⁷ The impetus to turn the page smacks of intellectual laziness. A post-Nazi Germany is all-too-convenient. Germany and its people want the rewards of working through but without undergoing a racial reckoning.

heartless attitude towards the abnormal and the weak” (Kidron 2004, p. 76). To be sure, the *refuseniks* are fighting an uphill battle, as their refusal to serve transforms them into social pariah, or traitors in the eyes of many Zionists (despite the fact that some *refuseniks* still hold on to a notion of Zionism).

64 Améry 1980, p. 71.

65 Nietzsche 1996, II, 1.

66 van Tuinen 2018, p. 1.

67 Améry 1980, p. 69.

At its basic level, Améryean *ressentiment* is akin to the figure of the “feminist killjoy”; it is the subject who, as Sara Ahmed puts it, refuses the “promise of happiness” to the extent that “inequality is preserved through the appeal of happiness. It is as if the response to power and violence is or should be to simply adjust or modify how we feel.”⁶⁸ The subject who bears *ressentiment* does not give up on her “moral truth”⁶⁹ and conform to the appeal of happiness, but actively turns down society’s interpellative gaze, its ideological vision of the common good and programmatic call for closure and repair. Améry’s refusal to sanction reconciliation and “easy healing” echoes Gayatri Spivak’s ethico-political injunction to keep open the “wounds” of coloniality.⁷⁰ By refusing to suture the wounds of trauma, the subject of *ressentiment* holds that no genuine healing will ever take place under the existing socio-political horizon. The wound thus serves as both a remainder and reminder of Germany’s inhuman past and incessant violence. The wound affectively records the concerns of the silenced and neglected—those not represented in the official script.

And yet, there is an obvious limit to holding on to the wound. There is always the danger of ontologizing woundedness, making it constitutive of the identity of the oppressed. Améry’s “infected wound” stages what we might call the double-bind of a politics of *ressentiment*. On the one hand, there is the call to refuse false appeals to healing (which only aggravates the injury); on the other, foregrounding the wound opens it up to fetishization. The latter is the feared lure of Nietzschean *ressentiment*: the subject takes refuge in it, enjoying its pernicious energies. Ahmed cautions against transmuting woundedness into an identity:

One of the reasons that it is problematic is precisely because of its fetishism: the transformation of the wound into an identity cuts the wound off from a history of “getting hurt” or injured. It turns the wound into something that simply “is” rather than has happened in time and space. The fetishisation of the wound as a sign of identity is crucial to “testimonial culture,” in which narratives of pain and injury have proliferated.⁷¹

The alignment of *ressentiment* with *being* rather than *doing* is not unproblematic; it sets up *ressentiment* for mystification and manipulation.

This is where a politics of *ressentiment* helps; it does so precisely by weakening the lure of “wounded attachment,” disrupting the impulse

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68 Ahmed 2017, p. 60.

69 “Only I possessed, and still possess, the moral truth of the blows that even today roar in my skull” (Améry 1980, p. 70).

70 Spivak 2013, p. 54.

71 Ahmed 2004, p. 32.

to fetishize and ontologize one's suffering. Nietzschean *ressentiment* undergoes dislocation, its negative energy dialecticized. *Ressentiment* is repeated but with a crucial difference. As Žižek puts it, dislocation involves invention, an act of *poiesis*: "Dislocation... means that elements are thoroughly re-contextualized, integrated into a new symbolic and social space which confers on them a new meaning unrelated to the original meaning—one can in no way 'deduce' this new meaning from the original one."⁷² Simply put, this other *ressentiment/ressentiment* of the Other pushes against the tendency to reify the identity of the subject, the same tendency that Améry succumbs to in proffering aggressive support for the state of Israel. In his case, the negativity of *ressentiment* gave way to the positivity of nationalist identity:

The only connection between me and most Jews the world over is a sense of solidarity with the state of Israel, a commitment that has long since ceased to be a duty of which I need to remind myself. Not that I would want to live there. The country is too hot, too loud, in every respect too alien. Nor do I approve of everything that is done there. I abhor the theocratic tendencies, the religiously inflected nationalism. I have only visited the country once for a short period of time and may never return. Yet even though I do not speak their language and could never adopt their way of life, I am inextricably connected to the people who inhabit this unholy spot and who have been abandoned by the rest of the world. For me, Israel is not an auspicious promise, not a biblically legitimized territorial claim, no Holy Land. It is simply the place where survivors have gathered, a state in which every inhabitant still, and for a long time to come, must fear for his life. My solidarity with Israel is a means of staying loyal to those of my comrades who perished.⁷³

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Améry's libidinal attachment to Israel (compulsory solidarity) triumphs over *ressentiment's* collective appeal—Wendy Brown's "I want this for us." Identitarianism displaces *ressentiment*. The latter's eruptive energies are hermeneutically subdued and made to contribute to Israel's ideological project of the "timeless Victim" and the Palestinians, by extension, are mystified as the victimizers, as one antisemitic people among many others. Turning to a personalized, de-dialecticized form of *ressentiment*, Améry not only failed to find common cause with the Palestinians, he also took out his anger on the Left, foreclosing the legitimacy of a pro-Palestinian Left. Laying the intellectual/ideological ground for the charge of "new antisemitism," Améry's *ressentiment* fed

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⁷² Žižek 2022b, p. 2.

⁷³ Améry 2022b, p. 85.

a Zionist ideology that has turned the tragedy of colonial erasure into a rallying cry for Israeli sovereignty. It helped inaugurate a discourse that shamelessly blames the victims of settler colonialism for refusing to disappear, and BDS and the Left for not forgiving and forgetting the injustices of the (ongoing) Nakba, the Arabic word for “catastrophe,” referring to the forced expulsion of some 800,000 Palestinians between 1948 and 1949.⁷⁴

In sharp contrast, Palestinian *ressentiment* remains faithful to Améry’s original formulation. It is there “in order that the crime become a moral reality for the criminal [the settler], in order that he be swept into the truth of his atrocity.”⁷⁵ In today’s political constellation, there is no suturing “the wounds of the Nakba.”⁷⁶ Palestinian *ressentiment* signals to the occupiers, and Western powers, that the Natives have no interest in forgiving and forgetting the settlers for their colonial theft of land and resources. The bad affect indexes a refusal on the part of Palestinians to naturalize and normalize the crime of Indigenous genocide, to treat it as a mere historical fact, contained as an episode of Israel’s tumultuous past (not unlike that of other Western/settler nations). There is no healing, no peace with an Israeli regime that insists on its Jewish privilege (separate and unequal), that imagines a solution to the Palestinian question absent of decolonization, that envisages a Zionism with human face, without its racist excesses, that wants change-without-change, that champions a humane Occupation, and so on.

Palestinian *ressentiment* shifts from a personal, depoliticized expression of frustration (in need of management and diffusion—more talks about a defunct “two-state solution,” slowing Israel’s illegal settlements on Palestinian land, etc.) to a collective *No!* that resists the rewards of identity politics (which dictates that you fight exclusively for your, or your people’s, material interests), but finds common cause with global racial struggles, such as those of BLM and other Indigenous groups. Again, to take up the Palestinian question/cause is to adopt the position of the “feminist killjoy.” The one who resentfully refuses to play nice, to uphold the idiocy of neutrality, to cover material that is not “controversial,” steering away from Palestine/Israel, so as not to disrupt society’s, or the university’s, affective economy. The Pro-Palestinian killjoy does not manage her anger nor self-censor, but welcomes trouble and actively sabotages the happiness of those in power; she delights in her maladjustment, shunning the politics of respectability, which only preserves (the reproduction of) inequality and state violence, and serves to further silence society’s marginalized and excluded. This generative

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74 See Pappé 2006.

75 Améry 1980, p. 70.

76 Qabaha and Hamamra 2021, p. 30.

ressentiment both alarms the (pro-Zionist) liberal gatekeepers of the status quo—whence the taxonomy of “new antisemitism,” a desperate attempt to police or cancel critique—and promises to energize the pro-Palestinian Left in its ongoing struggles for universal justice and emancipation.

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