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The Holocaust: Rethinking Paradigms in Research and Representation

The Perils of Connective Memory: The Holocaust, Israel, and Palestine

In this paper, I will explore the potential perils of using the Holocaust as a paradigmatic focal point within global culture and education, exploring specifically the implications of such representations within the politically and historically charged arena of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Recent years have seen Holocaust studies move towards increasingly indirect and interdisciplinary forms of analysis, growing to incorporate traumatic events outside of the Holocaust itself, and moving beyond the necessity of familial, geographical, or ethno-religious links. Perhaps the most well known example of such thinking is Michael Rothberg's *Multidirectional Memory*. Yet whilst Rothberg's theory functions positively in specific circumstances, the unique historical continuum that runs between the Holocaust and contemporary Israel creates complications, transforming what may otherwise be a productive connection into one that calls for moral duties that oppose one another at every turn. To give a streamlined example, Rothberg's claim that the 'demand to disobey unjust laws [is] one of the most significant imperatives of post-Holocaust consciousness' calls simultaneously for the continued *illegal* construction of settlements, in the name of Israeli self-defence, as well as for the *illegal* attacks on such settlements, in the name of Palestinian resistance.¹

Informed by academic works by Rothberg, Edward Said, and Gilbert Achcar, this paper will explore the complicated relationship between the Holocaust and its invocation in modern day Israel and Palestine. Thereafter, through analysing both Israeli and Palestinian works of literature, film, and art, I will outline the shortcomings of Holocaust-focused connective memory studies when applied to this particular terrain, demonstrating the ways in which such approaches ultimately obscure the specificities of both events, and in doing so tend to complicate, rather than elucidate.

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¹ Michael Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization*, 1st Edition (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2009), p. 333.