

## Trauma: Social Realities and Cultural Texts

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Although psychologists have frequently observed “that civilians in the Middle East have been subjected to frequent episodes of violence, intra/inter-group conflicts and natural disasters” (Neria et al.), hinting at high rates of trauma and PTSD among the populations of the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), there has been until recently a lack of locally embedded research on trauma and the politics of suffering in this region. While generalizations about the extent of traumatization are regularly expressed by scientists as well as the media, e.g. in regard to Syrian refugees since 2012, Iraqi children after the US-led invasion in 2003, the current violent war in Yemen, the Lebanese civil war, and the Palestinian Nakba—all of them man-made disasters—claiming individual, collective, or national trauma as a political identity that demands justice, recognition of suffering, and rights of retribution has not yet acquired legal authority. Still, the politics of suffering from violence and war—how we articulate our suffering, to whom, and why—seems to be a matter of intense discussion and debate in the MENA, often taking a comparative approach: “who suffers the most, the Syrians, the Yemenis, or Palestinians living under occupation?” Embedded within these comparisons is a competition over the political recognition of victimhood

against violent states, settler colonialism, and foreign wars, and a critique of a hierarchy of suffering, at the center of which trauma is seen as a political position and a claim for justice. As violence, regime oppression, war, and displacement are on the rise in the region, one can detect a growing locally-informed literature and art production on trauma, the most visible coming from Egypt, Syria, and Iraq. The work produced by Egyptian feminists in *Nazraa for Feminist Studies* and the *Nadeem Center for Rehabilitation of Victims of Violence*, recording experiences of violence against women and victims of torture, has relocated trauma into the center of Egyptian politics as a wound that denounces state and masculine violence. In Syria, media outlets like *Syria Untold* and *al-Jumhuriyya* have opened a platform for much-needed personal writings, reflections and intellectualization over how we experience unfathomable and repetitive violence, trauma, and memory, and living in post-violence exile (see Hassan “Clashing”; “Testimony”; Souleimane; Salamah; Khalifa; Mansoor). Likewise, the rise of Syrian documentary movies recording, witnessing, and narrating the experienced violence is also a collective exercise in interpretation and making political meaning of unfathomable events. Finally, Iraqi authors like Hasan

Balasin, Shakir Nuri, and Ahmad Sa’idawi engage in deep reflections on the intricate and at times absurd relationships between literary representation, bio-politics, and trauma.

It is crucial to think about the reasons why contemporary MENA writers and artists continue to address with overwhelming intensity issues related to trauma and suffering while academic trauma research remains scarce.<sup>1</sup> Their writings and cultural production prove to us every day that remembering and suffering are crucial positions against state violence and patriarchy that seek to erase and hide the traces of violence they committed. Despite the growing work, one may argue that (national) communities, highly affected by extreme forms of political violence like in Gaza or Syria could not yet effectively succeed in invoking trauma as a concept displaying political capital—although a few exceptions can be noted (e.g. Iraqi reparations to Kuwait after 1991). In the age of “humanitarian reason” (Fassin “Humanitarian”), claims over the past and present have, of course, political implications, and the construction of a cultural or historical trauma can influence public opinion and politics. This might be one reason why anthropologist Rosemarie Sayigh rightly criticizes the fact that while

a number of historical events served as paradigmatic models for historical traumas and atrocities, others are still silenced or forgotten and do not allow for a change of perspective nor a change “on the ground”. So for instance, loss of land, displacement, and other forms of dispossession are considered to be less “traumatic” than a number of other practices of injustice and political violence such as massacres. One reason for this form of disavowal can be explained by the fact that in some cases of historic injustice, no immediate and apparent threat of death emanated from these acts when they occurred. Holding in mind that these acts have often unfolded a deadly dynamic that can only be fully grasped when seen in its long-term consequences allows for a more comprehensive historical understanding that demands a different notion of temporality. With this in mind, it becomes clear that a concept like the “multi-directional memory” approach<sup>2</sup> by Michael Rothberg, although productive and insightful to a large extent, remains epistemologically limited, because it does not take enough into account the inherent power relations at work in each specific context, for “such interconnections are often, if not always, asymmetrical ones” (Cesari and Rigney 10).<sup>3</sup>

On another level, the high rates of external and internal conflicts in the MENA drive experts and journalists to assume the existence of a high level of traumatization among the populations. This has led to a mobilization of humanitarian aid for psychiatric and psychological treatments in the region. Yet, it has been difficult to translate this shared observation into a politics of social or global justice. If it is difficult for victimized communities to reclaim rights of reparation and compensation, it is usually impossible for the marginalized 'other'. Thus for instance, the violence and racism directed towards migrant workers by the Kafala system in the Gulf States or towards Sudanese asylum seekers in the MENA region is less likely to be considered a trauma. Their suffering, the violence they face on a daily level, remain invisible and outside of recognition.

Finally, the difficulties with which social groups make use (or not) of trauma for national reconciliation and justice stem from the fact that the causes for traumatization can frequently be found in state apparatuses themselves, with torture being used on a massive scale by state authorities as the clearest example.

### Trauma Politics

Hence, trauma studies related to the MENA region is not only an emerging field in the humanities and social sciences, but also a political and social field of manifold struggles over power and dominant regimes of truth. As already indicated above, this is largely due to the fact that under the umbrella term *trauma*, quite diverse realities are subsumed and, at times, almost epistemologically mixed up: On a first level of distinction, the same word trauma means psychological trauma of an individual, and the collective, social, historical, or cultural trauma of a group, class, community, milieu or nation. Additionally, trans- or intergenerational trauma can be situated at the interface between individual and collective forms of traumatization. All three forms contain different dynamics and cannot be dealt with by simple analogies. A further multiplicity to the meaning of trauma is created in everyday discursive language and in the media, when trauma is referred to as both the traumatic event and its symptoms, thereby mixing subjective and objective aspects of a traumatic situation, its cause, and its effect. On a different level, both victim and perpetrator can claim to be traumatized, of course from different causes and with different effects. The inherent danger here is one of de-contextualiza-

tion: since trauma is closely related to the status of the victim, it can be very attractive for perpetrators to claim to be traumatized in order to gain public empathy. This is what Fassin and Rechtsman might have alluded to in their groundbreaking *L'Empire du Traumatisme* when discussing the differing ways of claiming trauma in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.<sup>4</sup> It gets even more complex when trauma as a discursive concept is rejected as a form of suffering because it is linked to global aid economies and humanitarian understanding of victimhood as apolitical and passive. This potentially results in weakening the ethics of resistance to settler colonialism as in the case of Palestinian *ṣumūd* (Meari; on *ṣumūd* as cultural resistance see Rohrbach in this volume).<sup>5</sup> While claims of trauma have undeniably been emancipatory and helpful to a large extent in creating more social justice and allowing victims to reclaim rights and compensation in many contexts (e.g. women rights, child abuse, genocide), trauma can easily be adopted for political ends and interests that have a reactionary intention, like the argument put forward by a political official in the Arab Gulf that Syrian refugees should not be granted asylum or resident status in the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council because those people are traumatized and therefore threatening.<sup>6</sup>

Reflecting critically on the use of the trauma model is key to preventing a problematic usage of stereotypes, both in scientific and societal discourse. One recent example is the expert report “Stellungnahme: Traumatisierte Flüchtlinge – Schnelle Hilfe ist nötig” published in February 2018 of the *Leopoldina National Academy of Sciences* in Germany, which warns of the dangers of not immediately treating asylum seekers and refugees, claiming that large proportions of them would certainly be traumatized. The problematic aspect of their argumentation is the link they create between forced migration, trauma, and the propensity to violence (“appetitive aggression”), even stating that acculturative stress reinforces violent behavior (19). As in the case of the image of the traumatized veteran soldiers in the USA, PTSD and trauma can become a social stigma that indexes you as a dangerous and out-of-control violent man. This interdisciplinary study lacks regional expertise, and trauma here is not contextualized. It fosters a de-politicization that presents refugees as a homogenous group, all of them apparently sharing the same destiny and features. However important it is to provide psycho-social services for marginalized groups in society, it is highly problematic to serve recurring prejudices that might easily be instru-

mentalized by right-wing groups and politicians.<sup>7</sup> An open debate between scholars and practitioners on trauma in Germany (as well as in other countries) with different background and expertise is needed to avoid biased and unfounded assertions.

A further dimension of trauma politics particularly relevant to the MENA region has to do less with the violence experienced than with its aftermath and with the post-violence reconstruction of subject, place, and society. Multiple cases from the MENA—like the reconstruction plans in Syria that are underway, the reconstruction of Lebanon after the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and after the July War (2006), as well as the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip after continuous military interventions by Israel—clearly highlight the infrastructures and materialities of suffering in the region. The postwar reconstruction of Beirut after the Lebanese Civil War served to project its heritage into the neo-liberal future, erasing all physical traces of violence and raising questions about the possibility to recall, speak of, and remember the war. Likewise, the almost unimaginable rapid reconstruction of villages and neighborhoods in South Lebanon and the Suburbs of Beirut after the July War, and Hezbollah’s statement “we will make Dahiyeh<sup>8</sup> more beautiful than it was,” is

another form of urban erasure of the war’s traces that works towards strengthening the collective, while articulations of suffering from violence and its aftermath become less and less tolerated in the community (Moghnieh). What lies under these “beautiful” cities however, are layers and layers of things, emotions, and experiences left untold, unsaid, except maybe in private. In direct contrast to the fast and almost magical reconstruction of Lebanon, the reconstruction of the Gaza strip after Israeli wars and attacks is a story of debris and rubble (Barakat and Masri), especially after the Israeli war in 2014. The removal of rubble from the war was so slow that it took years to be accomplished, hindering the reconstruction process. The settler colonial violence committed in Gaza becomes thus physically sensed and experienced daily as one lives in and with the debris of war. All these cases show that war reconstruction politics make some of the infrastructures of suffering, where the latter materializes in the landscape itself. State and non-state war reconstruction projects are evidently political in the way they seek to erase and hide violence, thereby framing the discourse on suffering in societies.

A final aspect essential to understanding dominant regimes of truth like trauma is to

push ideas about the intricate relationship between bio-politics and trauma narratives further. One case in point is a widely circulated article by the Huffington Post about the curious case of a US military dog that “returned traumatized” from Iraq, inducing sympathy among (western) readers for a dog without sparing a word about the plight and suffering of the Iraqi population exposed to an illegal war intervention and occupation policies (Milich “Narrating”). This makes Judith Butler’s distinction between “grievable” and “ungrievable” lives all the more relevant. Fassin and Rechtman have formulated it well, when they explained that “trauma can be read in various ways, depending on the political purposes it serves” (209), while Radstone and Schwarz observed that “memory is active, forging its pasts to serve present interests.” (3)

The question that arises then with regard to the MENA region is how we can safeguard the emancipatory character of trauma (manifesting itself for instance in Judith Herman’s or Basma Abdelaziz’s empowering understanding of trauma work) while recording locally informed articulations of suffering in a meaningful, situational, and ethical way. Is it possible to deal with trauma in a manner that provides human beings with tools for recov-

ery and healing without disempowering them? In recent years, there has been much effort in international humanities and cultural studies to modify the trauma model by substituting the individualistic, event-based belatedness as well as the dictum of the un-narratability of a traumatic experience (Lyotard; Assmann; Caruth; van der Kolk; Laub; Das et al.) with an approach that pays attention to continuous and complex forms of traumatization and unforgotten experiences, adopting an eco-systemic and re-contextualizing, and thus more holistic view on traumatic situations and their processual nature.

### **The Postcolonial Turn in Trauma Studies**

While trauma has been increasingly accepted as the universal form of suffering on a global scale, a more systematic critique of trauma as a Eurocentric concept is of very recent date. As Irene Visser argues in her article “Decolonizing Trauma Theory: Retrospect and Prospects,” the call to decolonize trauma studies and theory can be located in the attempt to investigate trauma from a postcolonial studies approach, as a special issue of *Studies in the Novel* has suggested in 2008.

Although the influential anti-colonial intellectual, psychiatrist, and political activist Frantz Fanon (see Craps and Buelens;

Milich “Translating”) has framed different aspects of the colonial situation as traumatizing, the history of colonialism, imperialism, and slavery has not until recently impacted the creation of more widely acknowledged models of trauma, such as for instance with South African psychologists’ notion of Continuous Traumatic Stress (see Matthies-Boon in this volume).<sup>9</sup> But what would have happened if trauma had been modeled on the basis of Fanon’s conceptualization, as an effect of colonialism in the late 1950s and 60s? Very likely, it would not have turned into a globally acknowledged term of psychological and psychiatric diagnosis, due to western scientific hegemony. This illustrates well that while man-made trauma is intrinsically bound to victimhood, injustice and violence, the material and legal recognition of traumatization is always largely dependent on those in powerful political and societal positions. Fanon’s reports of his therapeutic encounters with both French soldiers and Algerians in the context of the war of liberation in his chapter “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” can still inspire notions of humanistic psychological work without effacing the necessary distinction between victim and perpetrator. More than that, his work is illuminating when reading outstanding works of world literature, like Mahmud

Darwish's poems on the dialectic between the occupier and the occupied, or Assia Djebar's writings on (post-)colonial Algeria and France.

So what seems to be crucial today is not only to develop and formulate concepts of suffering that are locally embedded and allow for empowerment and recuperation instead of silencing and dispossession, but also to search beyond the known paths. This demands a better understanding of how concepts like trauma and its diverse translations into languages like Arabic and Persian travel to new sites and contexts, and how they are integrated in regional systems of social practice, meaning production and cultural signs. These endeavors have to be accompanied by a constant process of critical reflection on the researcher's responsibility and complicity (Rothberg "Decolonizing", 232), how we as scholars, too—despite the limited reach of scientific knowledge production—are contributing to the dissemination of new ways of perceiving social reality, selfhood, and the past.

### Introducing the Issue

This special issue aims to contribute to a deeper and critical understanding of trauma in the societies, cultures, and histories of the Middle East and North Africa.

The collection of essays brings together perspectives from the social sciences, humanities, and literary studies, not least by exploring the narrativization of suffering, its performative and its non-verbal expression both in social reality and cultural production. In presenting explorations of literary texts, theatre, social realities, and theoretical reflection, we hope to contribute to a more comprehensive, nuanced, and inclusive view on trauma and memory production both as a cultural and social materiality and as a political formation. To date, psychological research on trauma in the MENA has mostly been limited to quantitatively measuring the level of PTSD among certain affected groups. What has not yet been undertaken is a comprehensive investigation and exploration of different forms and features of traumatic experience and memory inspired by a critical perspective. This issue of META is meant to mark a beginning in this regard, possibly rather raising questions than giving definite answers, and also highlighting the areas, regions, and places that seem to be marginalized within this academic research on trauma. The diverse array of different approaches, topics, and disciplines expresses our concern to include and map the diversity and multiplicity of current trauma studies research related to the MENA. There are a

number of themes, concerns, and motives that link the essays of this special issue closely together: firstly, the desire to search for locally embedded conceptualizations and formulations of trauma beyond hegemonic models like PTSD, thereby giving voice to individuals who are usually not heard, but only talked about, and redirecting the view to marginalized and forgotten histories of trauma (Brykalski and Reyes; Nikro; Behrouzan; Matthies-Boon; Barakat and Philippot; Parr; Tijani); secondly, the political implications of discourses on trauma, but also how certain political regimes use(d) violence and traumatization as a tool to produce human devastation and submissive subjects, and how oppositional groups counter these devastating politics by creating their cultural trauma (Jebari; Tijani; Elmougy; Nader); third, the question of generation, surfacing in different forms in at least two of the special issue's essays (Behrouzan; El Guabli); and, last but not least, processes of the production of collective traumas and the cultural and discursive dynamics at work (Elmougy; Matthies-Boon; Lang).

The META articles invite a rethinking of trauma from the field, calling for adopting more complex and in-tuned forms of suffering that might fit better with people's

lived experiences and interpretations of life worlds in the context of violence and humanitarianism. Saadi Nikro's essay highlights the importance of attending to the methodology behind researching trauma as a crucial part of the work of de-colonizing and de-constructing it. He invites us to adopt a materialist phenomenology as a relational methodology "in which subjects, concepts, research agendas, and knowledge come to cohere" (36). By drawing on several encounters while conducting research in Lebanon, Nikro explores the relation between methodology and trauma as embedded and embodied life worlds. The second META article by Brykalski and Reyes explores the adoption of the concept of "Human Devastation Syndrome" (HDS) or *mutalāzima al-damār al-insānī* by Syrian doctors and practitioners to describe Syrian children's mental health. HDS has become a circulating term aimed to capture Syrian youth's experiences with violence beyond the trauma model. Based on anthropological and global health perspectives, this article follows two Syrian youths' process of making meaning of their experiences to uncover the interpretive value of locally-based concepts like HDS.

How do women survive and continue to live after experiences of violence; how do

they endure under harsh conditions of displacement? Barakat and Philippot present a study that analyzes the stories of five Syrian women displaced into Lebanon beyond the traditional and psychological model of women refugees as passive victims of patriarchy, sexual abuse, and other traumatizing experiences of violence. Based on Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis, the authors highlight how these women deal with their past and present situations amidst changing gender roles during displacement. What becomes relevant here is not the experience of trauma itself, but the process of surviving, living, and regaining agency after trauma. This, the authors argue, is linked to their ability to create meaning from the traumatic past and link it to their present situations. Being attentive to literary conceptualizations of trauma that resist the dominant Eurocentric trauma model and traumatic belatedness, Nora Parr's essay stresses the "everyday" forms of traumatization, of being confronted or living in constant violence. In her readings of Ibrahim Nasrallah's *Taḥta shams al-ḍuḥā* (Under the Midmorning Sun) and Iman Humaydan's *Bā' mithl Bayt... mithl Bayrūt* (B like house... like Beirut), she focuses on two features of literary trauma narrative, open-endings and repetition, closing with the plea to grasp the nature of un-exceptional, uneventful

trauma "with new structures of telling that can hold silence as part of the story, in all its ugly ineloquence." (123) Defying conventional assumptions about trauma literature as a working through past atrocities, trauma in these two novels has turned into the organizing pattern of the present.

Vivienne Matthies-Boon's article carries a similar engagement and concern to reconceptualize trauma as Brykalski and Reyes, Barakat and Philippot, and Parr as she introduces the phenomenological concept of Continuous Trauma Stress (CTS) within the context of Egypt. As this article shows, CTS is not a diagnostic term but a political conceptualization of trauma itself that accounts for structural violence and repression that are usually left unrecognized as valid forms of suffering. Based on life-story testimonies from forty young activists from Cairo, this article argues that concepts like CTS have the possibility to capture the trauma embedded in living in everyday deep violence and a repressive political order. Analyzing literary practices that create or recreate cultural traumas as a reaction to state violence, Sahar Elmougy's article "Towards a New Master Narrative of Trauma" takes a social constructivist approach by applying Jeffrey Alexander's notion of "cultural trauma" on recent poetic production. In close read-

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ings of US-American poet Terrance Hayes's "American Sonnet for my Past and Future Assassin" and Egyptian poet Mostafa Ibrahim's "I Have Seen Today," the detailed comparison between the two poems and their respective context illustrates how the use of specific discursive strategies, culturally embedded metaphors, and historic references contributes to the construction of a collectively shared sense of traumatic belonging. Read together with Matthies-Boon's analysis of recent expressions and manifestations of violent repression and articulations of trauma as immediate or slightly belated reaction, the two essays can show us much about the highly complex entanglements of psychological, social, material, and discursive traumatic situations/experiences and their effects and afterlife.

A different trajectory is taken by Tijani who highlights the work of the prolific yet neglected Kuwaiti-Iraqi novelist 'Ismā'īl Fahd 'Ismā'īl by claiming a close correlation between literary narrative and the author's biographical experiences. Caused by his imprisonment under the rule of Abd al-Karim Qasim, 'Ismā'īl suffered a traumatic wound that haunted most of his novels, putting him on a "revenge mission" against devastating authoritarian practices. Tijani draws on

Cathy Caruth's psychoanalytically inspired trauma concept, frequently used in scholarly studies on trauma fiction. His approach highlights the dimension of healing/recovery through writing. Anne Rohrbach's essay "(Re)Enacting Stories of Trauma: Playback Theatre as a Tool of Cultural Resistance in Palestine" looks beyond verbal output and literary production, illuminating the importance of performative communal practices of dealing with traumatic situations and their aftermath. Investigating the use of Playback Theatre in the Palestinian context as a therapeutic platform and tool of cultural resistance, she carves out the empowering potential of enacting and narrating painful events in a community setting, integrating all senses and fostering both agency and critical consciousness.

Orkideh Behrouzan's essay focuses on (inter-)generational trauma narratives and memory politics in Iran in the aftermath of the Iran-Iraq war. It looks at the processes of remembering, witnessing, and archiving the war among the members of the post-war generation in ways that challenge the dominant political discourse on the war, providing an alternative understanding of mental health beyond the clinical diagnostic model. Behrouzan's use of "toroma" as rupture instead of trauma opens up

ways to capture intergenerational and intersubjective experiences and recollections of historical conditions and wars. Sharing a similar focus on questions of intergenerational dynamics, Brahim El Guabli's essay "Theorizing Intergenerational Trauma in Tazmamart Testimonial Literature and Docu-testimonies" looks at how families affected by the state's repressive actions during the *Years of Lead* struggle with the impossibilities of dealing with disappearance, imprisonment, and absence of family members. Discussing a wide range of Moroccan cultural production, particularly testimonial literature and video documentations, the detailed analysis of the "pre-discursive period," during which traumatizing events could not be verbally addressed in the realm of the family, succeeds in elucidating the concealed forms and dynamics of transmitting traumatic situations with their felt emotions and affects to the next generation(s). Closely in dialogue with these works on traumatizing effects in recent Moroccan history, Idris Jebari looks at the process of transitional justice as manifested in the work of collective memory in Morocco and Algeria. The article examines historical and cultural productions that work on collective memory despite or beyond the dominant discourse of "therapeutic history" that hides



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and erases certain forms of violence. By drawing a comparative approach between these cultural works on memory and the state's own therapeutic narrative for healing the national communities, Jebari highlights the limitations of both countries' processes of transitional justice. Coming from a psychological and clinical psychiatric background, the Egyptian writer, human rights' activist, and artist Basma Abdelaziz is portrayed in the Close-Up section by Sam Nader (pseudonym). In addition to biographical information which highlights her courage in addressing and investigating existing structures of torture in Egypt and beyond, Nader discusses the literary as well as scholarly works of Abdelaziz, including a short online interview on her work with torture victims.

Last but not least, the Thesis/Anti-Thesis articles both address the critiques of trauma in the humanities today, as a concept that de-politicizes and de-contextualizes human suffering while silencing marginal and subversive ways of experiencing and living with violence in the MENA region. Lang's essay focuses on these concerns while highlighting the social constructions of trauma as a concept that caters to individual and psychological forms of suffering, while the social struc-

ture is ignored. This, Lang argues, becomes untenable when the collective or the group is traumatized. Matthies-Boon's anti-thesis essay comes not to necessarily contrast Lang's thesis but to stretch his critique further by proposing a phenomenological approach to trauma as rooted in the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory. Much like Lang, Matthies-Boon argues against dismissing the concept of trauma altogether. She invites us to reinterpret this form of suffering in specific localities and contexts, thereby bringing back its roots to political and power dynamics. This "radicalization of trauma studies" (22) should start with a critical reflection on the Western knowledge production process itself and the biases that frame it. This also includes incorporating modes of violence like repression and structural violence into the definition of trauma itself. Behrouzan's concept of rupture is also relevant here as Matthies-Boon takes on a political and phenomenological understanding of trauma as "the breaking of our meaningful engagement with the world." (23)

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Over the last five years, trauma as a research focus in cultural studies related to the MENA is on the rise. Before, there had been some pioneering projects, e.g. the Edinburgh-based *Research Network on Memory and Social Trauma in the Middle East* (2008-2010), initiated by Kamran Rastegar, a special issue of *Alif - Journal of Comparative Poetics*, dedicated to the topic of "Trauma and Memory", as well as Saadi Nikro's monograph *The Fragmenting Force of Memory: Self, Literary Style, and Civil War in Lebanon*. In Lebanon, trauma had become a central theme in literature, film, and art after the civil war. The Lebanese cultural production on war and violence has also created interesting debates around trauma and memory. A much earlier attempt of making use of (psychoanalytical) trauma theory was George Tarabechi's critical analysis of intellectual discourse on *turāth* (cultural heritage) and *aṣāla* (cultural authenticity) after the *Naksa* in 1967 in his book *Al-Muthaqqafūna al-'arab wa-turāth*, framed as a traumatic reaction to the shock of the collapse

of Nasserist and other nationalist ideologies.

<sup>2</sup> Arguing against competitive approaches to history, Rothberg's approach draws attention to the productive power of careful analogical thinking, highlighting the potential of seeing and acknowledging related histories "to create new forms of solidarity and new visions of justice" (13). Drawing critically on earlier thoughts about the entangled histories of the Holocaust and colonial genocides (e.g. Arendt and Césaire), "multi-directional memory considers a series of interventions through which social actors bring multiple traumatic pasts into a heterogeneous and changing post-World War II present." (Rothberg, *Multidirectional Memory* 12)

<sup>3</sup> For an earlier, equally "relationalist" approach, see Ella Shohat's collection of older and more recent essays on Frantz Fanon as well as the "multi-directional" histories of Sephardic Jews, Palestinian Arabs, Catholic Spanish, and Native Americans (Shohat).

<sup>4</sup> For a similar approach, see José Brunner 2014.

<sup>5</sup> In the Palestinian context specifically, (al-qudra 'alā aṣ-) *ṣumūd* can be translated as resilience (besides *murūna* or *ṣalāba dākhiliya*), thereby highlighting the positive, empowering aspects of a *traumatic* situation.

<sup>6</sup> See a video by a Kuwaiti official on Facebook, whose content was disseminated by different agencies and with different ends: <https://www.facebook.com/RevNews/videos/kuwait-and-other-gcc-countries-are-too-valueable-to-accept-any/559499680870265>. See also an Amnesty International report, dating from December 2016: <https://www.amnesty.org.au/syrias-refugee-crisis-in-numbers>.

<sup>7</sup> For a more nuanced way to put forward a similar claim, see Munz and Melcop.

<sup>8</sup> Southern suburbs of Beirut.

<sup>9</sup> See also the demand made by editors and authors of *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, who, according to Visser (251), emphasize "the importance of a continued postcolonial critique of historical and political processes as the original sites of trauma for postcolonial communities (...)"

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