

# Holocaust Humor, Satire, and Parody on Israeli Television

Liat Steir-Livny

## ABSTRACT

The politicization of the Holocaust has been reflected in Israeli culture from the late 1940s in cinema, literature, theater, and poetry; in the last several decades, it has also been depicted on Israeli television. Most of the representations of the Holocaust in the first decades of Israel's existence were dramatic. But from the 1990s onward, Israelis also began to address the subject through satire. The case studies in this article focus on the satirical skits performed on episodes of *The Chamber Quintet* (*Hahamishia Hakamerit*; Matar Productions, Channel 2-Tela'ad, Channel 1, 1993–1997) and *Wonderful Country* (*Eretz Nehederet*; Keshet Productions, Channel 2-Keshet, 2003–2014). Diverging from arguments that these humorous skits addressing the Holocaust disrespect the Holocaust and its survivors, this article maintains that they instead articulate the powerful position the Holocaust holds as a constituting event in the consciousness and identity of younger generations in Israel.

In the Israeli collective memory, the trauma of the Holocaust is not focused solely on events that occurred in the past. The sensitive relationships between Israel and the Arab nations, the decades-long Jewish-Palestinian conflict, the threat of annihilation, the continuing terrorist attacks and intifadas—all these have created an atmosphere of constant vigilance and ongoing anxiety. The Arab-Israeli conflict's length and violent nature also contribute to its wide-ranging and profound infiltration into Israel's sociocultural fabric.<sup>1</sup> Since the state's earliest days, in

addition to this fundamental condition of anxiety, the Holocaust's politicization in Israel has intensified even more the place of the trauma in the everyday personal and collective psyche, by rendering the Holocaust a continuing event that affects the present and future. Since Israel's founding, the Holocaust has been connected with the Jewish-Arab conflict,<sup>2</sup> creating cultural-media representations that draw parallels between Arabs and Nazis, between Israel's wars and the possibility of a "second Holocaust." Researchers contend that Holocaust memory was and remains a crucial factor in perceptions of the reality of the conflict. It intensifies anxiety levels among Jewish Israelis and their sense of victimhood. The politicization of the Holocaust has caused the trauma of the Holocaust to be integrated with the Israeli present-day reality and replicated within it through the protracted Jewish-Arab conflict. This in turn has engendered a collective awareness of fear, insecurity, and constant anxiety stemming from the sense of existential danger.<sup>3</sup>

The politicization of the Holocaust has been reflected in Israeli culture from the late 1940s in cinema, literature, theater, and poetry; in the last several decades, it has also been depicted on Israeli television.<sup>4</sup> Most of the representations in the first decades of Israel's existence were dramatic. But from the 1990s onward, Israeli artists also began to address the subject through satire. The case studies in this article focus on the satirical skits performed on episodes of *The Chamber Quintet* (*Hahamishia Hakamerit*; Matar Productions, Channel 2-Tela'ad, Channel 1, 1993–1997) and *Wonderful Country* (*Eretz Nehederet*; Keshet Productions, Channel 2-Keshet, 2003–2014). Comedic approaches to the Holocaust have appeared on other Israeli TV satires, but *The Chamber Quintet* and *Wonderful Country* are the main programs to deal with the politicization of the Holocaust. Analyses of Israeli TV satires about the Holocaust have appeared in only a couple of studies.<sup>5</sup> This article will analyze the textual and subtextual narratives of the skits from the politicization perspective, while reviewing them in the larger context of the politicization of the Holocaust in Israeli culture.

Diverging from arguments that these humorous skits addressing the Holocaust disrespect the Holocaust and its survivors,<sup>6</sup> this article maintains that they instead articulate the powerful position the Holocaust holds as a constituting event in the consciousness and identity of younger generations in Israel. It is seared into their souls, and its memory forms an integral part of their identity. Their profound emotional connection to the Holocaust indeed drives them to create these humorous skits, which do not diminish the Holocaust but rather critique the politicization of Holocaust memory in Israel. This essay reveals how artists

who are members of the second and third generations of Holocaust survivors<sup>7</sup> use humor in connection to the Holocaust as a rhetorical strategy—to reveal a new intellectual, ideological, and aesthetic point of view of the cataclysm’s collective memory, one that is distanced from traditional discourses of the Holocaust in Israeli culture.

### **Politicization of the Holocaust in Israeli Culture**

In Israeli culture the complex story of the Arab-Jewish conflict that accompanied Zionist settlement in Israel as early as the late nineteenth century was, after the Holocaust, often phrased simplistically. From the late 1940s until the late 1970s, the ways in which the Holocaust became integral to the Arab-Israeli conflict in formal political discourse (interviews with politicians, media-covered meetings, and so on) were strongly reflected in Israeli cultural representations. In both types of discourse, a distinct parallel between Arabs and Nazis was discernible in the Zionist narrative. Wars against Arab nations were termed wars to prevent a “second Holocaust” that could strike Israel at any moment. This was communicated not only in internal, domestic discourse but also in interviews Israeli politicians gave throughout the world and through the Israeli film industry’s efforts to bring Zionism’s tidings to the international audience. The quest to demonize Arabs and forge links between past and present helped unite the ranks in Israel, and it sought to create sympathy for Zionism in the Western world: If in the past the Allied forces had fought the Nazis, today it became their duty to subjugate the Arabs.<sup>8</sup> The Holocaust became a *parapraxis* (a slip of the tongue), as Thomas Elsaesser defines it: a “present absentee” with a concealed presence in the contemporary arena.<sup>9</sup> Over the past two decades, politicians and public figures in Israel have continued recycling the Arab = Nazis equation. In addition, in public debates over the stated aspiration of former Iranian president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad to destroy Israel, public officials frequently associate Iran with Nazi Germany.

However, from the earliest days of the state<sup>10</sup> and particularly after the Six-Day War (June 1967), left-wingers began to suggest a counter-discourse—initially in moderation but since the 1980s with growing intensity. This discourse posits the Holocaust’s implications for the Arab-Israeli dispute and creates an inverse memory.<sup>11</sup> As the right wing continues to recycle the Arabs = Nazis equation, the left wing turns that equation upside down. The new equation lies at the heart of

cultural discourse. In art, cinema, and literature, the narrative not only abandons victimization but uses the Holocaust to create an antithetical equivalency, in which Israelis in general—and particularly Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) soldiers—are equated with Nazis. Thus the memory of the Holocaust was and remains a crucial factor in perceiving the reality of the conflict, yet Israeli culture has changed the perceptions of victimization that were initially commonplace.

This changing attitude can be attributed both to international influence<sup>12</sup> and local events, chiefly the evolving status of Israel's left wing. The 1970s were a period of crisis for the Labor movement (the moderate left, which ruled from pre-statehood): the Yom Kippur War (1973) and the commission of inquiry that followed it, and the discovery of the illegal Swiss bank account held by Leah Rabin, the wife of then-prime minister Yitzhak Rabin, were all emblematic of the fall of the moderate left. The rise to power of the right-wing movement, the Likud (1977), marked the first time the left was ejected from political power hubs. Nurith Gertz maintains that, as right-wing attitudes spread throughout the Israeli public and new militant groups sprang up from the nationalist religious right, the left lost its ability to influence the political establishment. Instead it rose to dominance in the country's intellectual life, art, literature, and academia.<sup>13</sup> The Lebanon War that began in June 1982, the beginning of the first intifada in 1987, and the second intifada of 2000 further entrenched this critical tendency.

And indeed, from the 1970s onward, the equation of Arabs with Nazis became solely part of right-wing propaganda, while left-wing politicians, journalists, and artists shunned it. Many leftists claim that Holocaust memory was and is politically manipulated to present Israel as an eternal victim, and that it is used to justify violent anti-Arab policies.<sup>14</sup> In Israel's cultural discourse, where the left chiefly predominates, one finds two discrete perspectives that link the Holocaust with the Arab-Israeli conflict: The first demarcates the similarities between the Holocaust and the *Nakba* (the Arab disaster of 1948). It seeks to annul the "Jewishness" of the Holocaust in Israel's collective memory and to raise consciousness of the Palestinian Arab tragedy of 1948. The second perspective takes the notion that Arabs are perpetuating the Nazis' endeavors and inverts it to create a new comparison: that Israelis' attitudes toward Arab citizens of Israel and the Palestinians in the Occupied Territories prove the Israelis are the new Nazis. Most of the cultural productions created by left-wing artists over the past three decades use the linkage between the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab conflict to create a clear demarcation of Jewish brutality and Palestinian

victimhood. Many texts project a worldview where Zionism's representatives are the new Nazis, while the Arabs have become victims of a fascist, trampling ideology. The majority of these works depict Zionism in its present-day, post-1967 incarnation, with a focus on the moral failings that are an attendant part of the occupation and which, these artists believe, are reminiscent of the Nazis' deeds. Some of these artists look to the past to present the Palestinians as dual victims of Zionism—both during the *Nakba* and in the present-day, in the Occupied Territories and inside Israel.<sup>15</sup>

Television satire—much of it written by members of the political left wing—reflects these changes in the politicization of the Holocaust, but it also differs from the leftist narratives presented especially in cinema and in literature. These TV satires do not contend with comparisons between the Holocaust and the *Nakba*. The satirical pieces that address the Holocaust mainly protest its politicization by the Israeli right wing and the way it exploits the Holocaust to promote fear. Further, they insinuate that, in their attitudes toward Arabs, some members of the right wing behave in a racist manner reminiscent of the Nazis.

### **The Subtextual Politicization: “Acting Out” the Holocaust in Israel**

Studies have shown that Holocaust memory has become integrated into Western culture, impacting political, sociological, and national discourses.<sup>16</sup> But a humoristic representation of the Holocaust was seen as taboo in the West and particularly in Israel for several decades after the Holocaust. Between the 1940s and the 1980s, very few films produced in the West dared touch on the subject in a humorous way. Debate in Israel was minimal and remained on the margins, from the time of statehood in 1948 until the 1990s. The prevalent position held that one could not treat the Holocaust in a humorous way without disparaging its status or minimizing the magnitude of its victims' trauma and suffering.

An extensive debate over humorous representations of the Holocaust first began in the 1980s, when Art Spiegelman, in his graphic novel *Maus: A Survivor's Tale* (1986), rendered his Polish-born father's story of survival during World War II in a world of Nazi cats pitted against Jewish mice.<sup>17</sup> From then on, humoristic representations of the Holocaust were discussed increasingly and more freely in the West.<sup>18</sup> In the last three decades, a growing number of comedians and humor writers have dared to broach the subject in standup performances, TV sitcoms, films, YouTube clips, theater works, graphic novels, and other media.<sup>19</sup>

A less visible process, echoing the one taking hold in Western depictions, took place in Israel, but in a more cautious and hesitant way.<sup>20</sup> Today the debate over the subject in Israel is addressed in films, YouTube skits in Hebrew, fringe theater performances, literary depictions, journalism pieces, and television programming. Satirical skits that contend with the Holocaust have entered Israeli prime time, but such satire has yet to take hold in the Jewish-Israeli collective memory, and these depictions still ignite debate over the seamliness of humoristic approaches toward the Holocaust.<sup>21</sup>

*Hahamishia Hakamerit* was the first Israeli TV program to break the taboo, daring to treat the Holocaust satirically. The program's sixty-nine episodes were broadcast throughout the 1990s on Channels 1 and 2 and the cable stations over the course of five seasons. The show became a touchstone for Israeli culture, and its subject matter can be seen as signifiers of the changes and new trajectories of the Israeli collective memory regarding various issues—including that of Holocaust memory.

According to the show's writers, the problematic way in which present-day Israeli society experiences the traumas of the past is clearly discernible in the skit "Ghetto," which focuses on the efforts of a young guy from Tel Aviv (Rami Heuberger) to find his way to a party. Although the skit's title refers to present-day Tel Aviv, it already provides an echo of a Holocaust setting. When the Heuberger asks Shai Avivi's character for directions to the party, Avivi's responses reveal that all the street names are either redolent of death, commemorating the names of heroes who sacrificed their lives for the state ("Hanged Men Street," "Eli Cohen Street"), or are in some way tied into the Holocaust: "Take Warsaw Ghetto Street, then a U-turn onto Concentration Camp Avenue, then park in Dachau Square," directs Avivi. "Is it nearby?" Heuberger asks. "Dachau? Dachau is right here, just around the corner," answers Avivi.

The skit presents the Israeli sphere as post-traumatic. It reflects how collective memory agents relive the trauma of the Holocaust through street names, and this part of the urban planning reflects the problematic situation of Holocaust remembrance in Israel: the past and the present combine.

The skit can be analyzed through Sigmund Freud and his disciples' debate over individual and collective trauma and post-trauma. Freud considered melancholy and mourning as two contradictory forms of coping with trauma: an individual in a melancholic state identifies with the lost object, obscuring the differences between the individual and the object and thereby damaging the ego. In mourning,

in contrast, the mourner undergoes a healthy process of internalization; he or she can deal with the past by creating distance from it. Mourning brings with it the possibility of starting a new life, and any disturbance of that process can become harmful. One of the central concepts in trauma is “repetition compulsion”—returning to the trauma while blurring the boundaries between past and present and reexperiencing the original event. The repetition causes suffering and works against the desire of the sufferer; it is thus an uncontrolled compulsion to repeat.<sup>22</sup>

Freud’s disciples broadened the debate over trauma and its immediate and subsequent symptoms. Post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) is an extremely common mental disturbance among people who have experienced traumatic incidents. Its sufferers continue to experience the traumatic events for years afterward; a key characteristic of the syndrome is the sufferer’s inability to sever him- or herself from the events of the past.<sup>23</sup> Clinical research has addressed Holocaust survivors as people who suffer PTSD, and there have been many disputes over whether these survivors have transferred traumatic symptoms to their children (second-generation Holocaust survivors) and from them to their grandchildren (third-generation Holocaust survivors).

Dominick LaCapra claims that the danger inherent in the disintegration of distinctions between different times and the merging of the traumatic past with the present is relevant not only for those who experienced the trauma in the flesh but also for groups that are linked with those traumas. Both groups and societies can become trapped in a situation that commingles past and present and reconstructs the trauma, or certain aspects of it, in different manners. Such post-traumatic symptoms can affect the group’s behavior in societal and political spheres. Following Freud, LaCapra distinguishes between two forms of collective memory of the Holocaust. The first is “acting out”: the past is not construed as a distant memory and internalized, but is reborn and experienced as if integral to present-day social and cultural life rather than as remote events that are long past. The second form is “working-through”: clear boundaries are maintained between past and present, and there is awareness of the differences between “then” and “now.” There is less identification with the assimilation of the traumatic period. While there is also a return to the past in “working-through,” it is accompanied by conscious control of the past, a critical distance from it, and a gaze at it from a perspective. “Working-through” is used as a sort of brake against post-traumatic repetition compulsion.<sup>24</sup>

Amos Goldberg contends, in the footsteps of LaCapra, that the way Holocaust

memory was shaped in Israel provides evidence for Israeli society as post-traumatic and existing in a condition of acting out. He believes that the post-traumatic symptoms in Israel—chiefly reflected in the unending conflict with the Palestinians—attest to the collective trauma that has not been worked through appropriately. If Israelis are unable to work through it properly, he posits, their society is condemned to political repetition compulsion that has deadly results.<sup>25</sup>

The aforementioned skit does not engage directly with the politicization of the Holocaust but focuses on its aftermath: the trauma of the Holocaust is integrated within the Israeli present day. The subtext of the skit reflects research findings that the Israeli media, educational and cultural fields, and public discourse in Israel frame the Holocaust as a current, ongoing local trauma rather than as an event that ended decades ago in another place.<sup>26</sup> The result is a constant victimhood that renders Jews in Israel unable to understand the Arab side of the conflict.

Another subtextual assertion of the skit is that, in order to achieve normalization and move from “acting out” to “working-through,” Israelis must cease the politicization of the Holocaust. This notion appeared in the newspaper *Ha'aretz* in 1989, several years before this skit was broadcast. The article's author, the historian Yehudah Elkana, himself a Holocaust survivor, insisted that it is a process Israel must go through. If this is how Israelis remember, Elkana argued, then it is better to forget. Elkana's article, of course, caused turmoil in Israel.<sup>27</sup> Satire tries to repair a society by using humor. It highlights the absurd in an existing situation and attempts to influence people to change their attitudes. With its humorous approach, satire conveys its message more easily than didactic propaganda, which might incite resistance.<sup>28</sup> The satirical approach of *Hahamishia Hakamerit* allowed the show to express harsh notions about the Holocaust without being attacked in Israeli public opinion, as in Elkana's case.

Examining how groups confront their collective traumas, Ron Eyerman claims that “cultural trauma” is a historic event in the consciousness of every member of the collective. This memory undergoes constant reinterpretation. Different generations have different perspectives on the event because of both emotional and temporal distance and altered circumstances and needs; but all generations interpret the event as a primal part of their identity.<sup>29</sup> Jeffrey Alexander claims that any event—as horrendous as it may be—will turn into a trauma for the collective only if members of the elite define and construct it as such. He explains that collective trauma is constructed by “memory agents”—members of the hegemony who feel this event will affect the collective memory and identity in the present

and in the future. These “memory agents” construct the trauma as “collective” through a long cultural process of narration and signification.<sup>30</sup>

In the *Habamishbia Hakamerit* skit, Avivi concludes his directions with a quick phrase that makes it clear how the agents of memory have introduced trauma into the mundane and transformed traumatic memories of horror, fear, and victimization into integral parts of the present.

Another satirical program that consistently criticizes the shaping of Holocaust memory in Israel is *Eretz Nehederet*. A skit broadcast on the show in 2004 was based on the perception of Israeli victimization stemming from the Holocaust and the constant anxiety the media perpetuates in viewers, which provides legitimacy for violent acts. A travel agent (Tal Friedman) suggests that a couple (Orna Banai and Dov Navon) worried about flying to frightening places consider a “terminal destination”—a former concentration camp. When they arrive there, the woman remarks that she feels really safe because of the watchtowers and electrified fence.

The skit sparked numerous complaints to the Israeli Second Television and Radio Authority and to Yad Vashem. Keshet, the show’s production company, responded that there had been no intention to ridicule the Holocaust or use its memory as entertainment; its spokesperson pointed out that *Eretz Nehederet* is a humorous and satirical program whose skits are intended not solely to provoke laughter but also to warn—even to shock: “The skit is an allegory for the state of fear that Israelis live in after the recent terror attack in Sinai and warnings regarding overseas travel, which add to the sense of siege caused by suicide bombings in Israel.”<sup>31</sup>

Although this skit also does not address directly the politicization of the Holocaust, its themes refer precisely to researchers’ claims that the political use of the Holocaust and comparisons drawn between Arabs and Nazis generate a sense of unending victimization, a siege mentality, and an ever-present fear and paranoia.<sup>32</sup> The skit criticizes Israel’s “industry of fear,”<sup>33</sup> which feeds off recurrent warnings about the likelihood of terrorist attacks. Criticism is directed not only to the threats but toward their reflection in the media, assisted by images from the world of the Holocaust, to create a sense that today, too, as in the past, “the whole world is against us.” It fights the “acting out” of the Holocaust in Israel, acknowledging that, if Jewish Israelis maintain the victims’ point of view, they will not endorse any peace process.

### **Subtextual Politicization: The Holocaust as a Way for the Right Wing to Leverage Political Achievements**

In recent decades satirists in Israel have observed how the Holocaust has become a way to leverage political achievements. The scriptwriters of *Hahamishia Hakamerit* aimed to show how the Holocaust had become a tool for politicians and public figures to create an impression and chalk up achievements.

In the skit “This Terrible Place,” the Israeli prime minister and his entourage are shown touring Poland with a crew of security guards and photographers; they use the site of a mass murder as a photo opportunity. The prime minister demands to be photographed next to a specific tree “in this terrible place.” He is not really sad or touched once he realizes the camera isn’t working. He is all smiles, cracking jokes, entirely detached from the significance of the site. When the photographers start filming, he puts on a serious face. All he can do is repeat the mantra: “In this terrible place, in this horrible place, Jews were slaughtered.” In broken English he mumbles a series of clichés along the lines of, “Look at this tree. This holy tree was watered by blood.” His movements are ludicrous: he pushes his wife aside, tries to find a place in the center frame, above the heads of the still photographers crowding around him. As he is swept away by the metaphor of a tree symbolizing the Jewish people, its roots emblematic of the roots of the Jews whose ancestors were killed next to that tree, a security guard takes a few steps away and discovers that they have the wrong tree. The actual tree is a few yards away. The prime minister’s embarrassed advisors ask the delegation and photographers to move to the correct tree and start again. The politician’s wife smiles her awful smile. When they arrive at the right tree, the politician resumes the exact same speech, cliché-ridden and detached; with the very same pathos, he repeats his speech about what happened “in this terrible place.” The skit shows the cynical and hegemonic manipulation of the Holocaust by politicians who are emotionally detached from the subject; for them, it’s just another political tool, nothing else.

The skit does not address a particular prime minister. It doesn’t name names or use impressions to implicate a certain individual; instead, the pathetic prime minister in the skit is a synecdoche for all right-wing politicians who have no real feeling about the trauma and use it only as a political tool. Ami Meir, producer of *Hahamishia Hakamerit*, maintains that skits citing the Holocaust are intended to show how it has been enlisted for political and emotionally manipulative needs—to justify actions in the present. “With all the pain, I don’t think it would be disastrous if we detach part of the sacred halo from the Holocaust,

and who knows, maybe we'll learn a little more about ourselves and behave more sanely."<sup>34</sup> While pulling back the curtain of hypocrisy from the memory of the Holocaust in Israel, the satirists attempt to shift Israeli society from "acting out" to "working-through," to move the memory of the Holocaust to a "healthier" way of dealing with the trauma. They feel compelled to confront the politicization of the Holocaust, which treats the event as an ongoing trauma in the Israeli present. The satirists seek to create a mental barrier demarcating past from present, and they do so through humor.

Freud saw humor as a pivotal defense mechanism. He believed that when people use humor in situations that provoke their fear and anxiety, they gain a new perspective on the situation that helps them avoid experiencing negative emotions.<sup>35</sup> With the help of humor, people can thus deal with difficult situations and avoid or reduce their emotional suffering and grief.<sup>36</sup> Later studies would address humor as a defense mechanism that helps individuals alleviate stress, cope with negative feelings and tough situations, mitigate suffering, dissipate feelings of anxiety—at least for a certain time—and grant them some sense of power and control in situations of helplessness. Humor can help those coping with unpleasant memories and aid trauma victims in reducing their tension and anxiety. It also helps people to maintain emotional distance from the trauma, creating a "comfort zone" for the traumatized person.<sup>37</sup> As a defense mechanism, humor has two aspects: black humor and self-disparagement.<sup>38</sup> Black humor deals with anxiety-producing subjects; attesting to this are its alternative terms—horror humor, sick humor, gallows humor, and grim humor. The therapeutic importance of black humor and self-disparagement for traumatized individuals has been frequently studied, and in a wide range of contexts (among victims of abuse, crime, disasters, and more), particularly in the context of Jewish humor. Black humor has been presented as an effective tool for an oppressed minority to withstand attacks by their oppressors; in the Jewish context, it constitutes the defense mechanism of an entire people.<sup>39</sup>

"This Terrible Place" is an example of black humor as a defense mechanism. The satirists don't ridicule the Holocaust or condemn it; on the contrary, they express how the Holocaust memory is an integral part of their identity. It is tattooed in their souls, and the anxiety it triggers pushes them to use humor—not because they've detached themselves from the memory but because they cannot detach themselves from this trauma.<sup>40</sup> The skit is their way to protest against the coopting of the trauma by the right wing and the sense of victimization it perpetuates.

A renowned skit by *Hahamishia Hakamerit*, “Fledermaus at the Olympics,” takes a similar perspective on the Holocaust as a political tool. The setting is Stuttgart, Germany, during the Olympic Games. Two Jewish Israeli wheeler-dealers (Shai Avivi and Menashe Noi) have managed to enter the area alongside the running track, and in broken English spiked with Hebrew and Yiddish, they demand that the starter, who is poised with his starting pistol, give the Israeli runner an advantage over the other athletes to reduce the “historic injustice” and “to reduce the humiliation.” The athlete, Zion Cohen (Dov Navon), is the antithesis of the Zionist model of “muscular Judaism”: short and scrawny, he has “legs like ice-cream sticks.” Since the Israeli runner seems incapable of competing with the gentiles through physical strength, the wheeler-dealers summon up a familiar Jewish tactic—debating—which is here accompanied by the quintessentially Israeli quality of *chutzpah*. The latter is expressed as the two men burst onto the running track to demand benefits for the Israeli runner—not as a favor but because of the rights accruing to the Israeli as a result of the historic injustice of the Holocaust. The two Israeli dealmakers are operating in the tradition of the Jewish *schnorrer* (beggar), combining their wheedling with Israeli aggressiveness that soon devolves into curses and threats yet ultimately manages to convince the starter to do their bidding.

The skit emphasizes the Israeli manipulation of Holocaust memory to gain advantage. It is significant for its critique of exploiting Jewish suffering to achieve gains in the international sphere.<sup>41</sup> Uzi Weil, a screenwriter for *Hahamishia Hakamerit*, asserts that such manipulations of the Holocaust have intensified and swollen into unpleasant and disproportional dimensions: “Someone says ‘Holocaust’ and everyone shuts up.” He believes the Holocaust has become a mechanism for forcing people’s consciousness to stand at attention whenever the word is spoken; he links this phenomenon to that of the “Holocaust industry,” which encompasses the de rigueur school trips to Poland, the selling of right-wing politics in the guise of sensitivity to the Holocaust, and so on. Weil says that using humor to highlight the Holocaust’s commercialization is a way to counter hypocrisy, and to close the gap between people’s fine words and their genuine emotions.<sup>42</sup> Moreover, the satirical approach toward the Holocaust in *Hahamishia Hakamerit* skits is a defense mechanism against memory agents who insist on reliving the Holocaust in the present. Confronting the pathos-ridden, political exploitation of the Holocaust, the satirists of the “Fledermaus at the Olympics” skit hold up a mirror to emphasize, through humor, how ridiculous and wrong

it is. They strive to explain how extreme and destructive it is for the Holocaust to be injected into everyday life and transformed into an integral facet of Israeli identity. The subtext of these skits is that Holocaust memory engenders collective awareness of fear, insecurity, and constant anxiety stemming from the sense of existential danger.<sup>43</sup> In this environment—one that acts out the Holocaust—Jewish Israelis will continue to consider themselves as victims and thereby never engage in fruitful political dialogue with the Arabs.

### **Iran as the Victim, Zionists as the Oppressors**

As mentioned earlier, in recent decades Israeli cinema and literature—the strongholds of the left wing in Israel—have reflected the stance that Israelis are the new oppressors. TV satires have contended with this notion with their own humorous perspectives.

In the past few years, Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu stressed the parallels between the nuclear threats of Iran's former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and Hitler's goal of exterminating the Jewish people. Netanyahu promoted the impression that Iran would be responsible for a second Holocaust. During the 2012 Purim holiday, for example, Netanyahu held a series of meetings with President Barack Obama in the United States to discuss, among other things, the nuclear threat from Iran and whether Iran should be preemptively attacked. Netanyahu found it appropriate to bring Obama a gift: a Megilat Esther (scroll of the biblical Book of Esther), which relates how the ancient Persians had set out to exterminate the Jews and how their plans were ultimately foiled. In his speech to Obama, he also produced a historical document, dating from World War II, in which American Jewish representatives requested that the American government bomb Auschwitz; Netanyahu hinted that this time the Jews would not wait for the US's refusal of such requests but would handle matters themselves.

Left-wing Israelis often speak out against these sorts of analogies from Netanyahu and ridicule his attempts to conjure up atavistic fears. In an episode screened on Purim in 2012, the *Eretz Nehederet* team took the opposite approach to portraying political links between the past and the Holocaust, ancient Persia and modern-day Iran. One skit depicted employees at a nuclear reactor in Iran in the midst of marking "Remembrance Day for Shushan and Heroism." (Shushan was the capital city of ancient Persia.) In this skit the ceremonial hallmarks of Israel's Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day (*Yom ha'Zikaron la'Shoa vela'Gvura*)

are reproduced and turned upside down: In Israel's first decades, survivors were sometimes criticized for having gone like "sheep to the slaughter" during the Holocaust. But here the master of ceremonies speaks of the downtrodden Persians who, under the rule of Ahasuerus (the ancient Persian ruler), went like "sheep to the slaughter." The phrase, "and these are the names of the fallen," which is intoned during observances of Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day in Israel, is used in the skit in tribute to Haman's murdered sons. The two-minute siren that is sounded throughout Israel on Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day is here replaced by a shaken rattle (a *gragger*, or noisemaker, which is used during readings of the Book of Esther on Purim).

As is the case during the Israeli Holocaust memorial ceremonies, soulful vocalists sing with pathos in this imaginary Iran. On the Holocaust memorial day in Israel, the TV schedule is altered to broadcast programs dealing only with the Holocaust and its memory, and sad songs are played throughout the day on Israeli radio. In the skit we learn that the TV program schedule in Iran has also been changed, and the radio plays songs of "good old Iran" while the "Zionists" who stuck to their usual schedules that day are slandered as "Purim-deniers" (a satirical play on the term "Holocaust deniers"). The skit also depicts a well-known phenomenon in Israel, when people find it difficult to stifle their laughter during the two-minute siren; here, an Iranian reactor employee cannot keep himself from laughing during the ceremony. The hilarious role-switching in the skit reminds viewers that Israel incessantly accuses Iran of harboring murderous tendencies and uses the Holocaust to display itself as an eternal victim, while thriving on a tradition of violence and sanctifying and perpetuating violence in the name of the Holocaust. By deconstructing the behavioral patterns of the Holocaust remembrance day, the writers showed the ease with which memory can be manipulated.

This skit also criticizes the way the Holocaust remembrance day has become a political tool—another part of the politicization of the Holocaust by the right wing, which has turned it into a series of repetitive sentences and practices aimed at emphasizing the Jewish and especially Zionist lessons of the Holocaust. Memorial ceremonies are important "memory sites" in the process of constructing a national identity; through them, the main socio-political-ideological perceptions of a group are endorsed.<sup>44</sup> The ceremonies, with their repetitive narrative, are used to structure the society's worldview and convince people of that worldview's correctness. They structure the national memory of events, people, and processes

with the aim of uniting the group around collective narratives. To that end, they propose a subjective interpretation of history, emphasizing some themes and sidelining others, to accord with the society's ideology and the guiding models with which it seeks to shape and define itself.<sup>45</sup>

From the late 1940s on, Israel's official collective memory of the Holocaust was imbued with pathos and agony. Official ceremonies marking Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day are held in Israel every year on the Hebrew date of 23 Nissan. They take place on the evening before the remembrance day and on the following morning. The Holocaust and Heroism Remembrance Day Law was passed in 1959, at a time when Israel's leadership, headed by the powerful prime minister David Ben-Gurion, sought to shape a collective memory that would unite the new Israelis under homogenous Zionist myths.<sup>46</sup> When perceptions of the Holocaust in Israel changed, especially from the late 1970s onward,<sup>47</sup> and the Zionist myths began to crack, the central perceptions of the ceremonies changed as well.<sup>48</sup> Yet alongside these changes, some parts of the "old" narrative still continued to appear. The official ceremonies, held in various institutions and locations throughout Israel, have a similar narrative structure. They begin with the lighting of six memorial candles, commemorating the six million dead, and the lowering of the national flag to half-mast, to symbolize the country's mourning. The *Yizkor* memorial prayer is recited during the first part of the ceremony, followed by spoken texts and passages of melancholy poetry or music. Generally the texts are taken from survivors' testimonies or documents written by Jews during the Holocaust, relating the impossible struggle against the Nazi machine. Other texts often highlight the importance of the Jewish state as embodying the antithesis of the past. Toward the end, the *El Malei Rahamim* prayer (for the souls of the dead) is recited, and some also say *Kaddish* (the mourners' prayer). The ceremony always ends with the singing of *Hatikvah*, Israel's national anthem.

By transferring these ceremonial conventions to Iran, the *Eretz Nehederet* satirists unveil the way the Holocaust has become a "master paradigm," as Tobias Ebbrecht terms it: a series of well-known, repetitive Holocaust narratives and visuals that have appeared so often in Western popular culture that they have almost become clichés.<sup>49</sup> These familiar historic images from the Holocaust and its immediate aftermath are continuously dissociated from their original historical background and sources. They migrate into popular culture as emblematic signs to convey contemporary themes. By revealing the Holocaust as a "master

paradigm,” the satirists hope to expose Holocaust memory as a political tool and as such dismantle its power.

### The Right Wing as Nazis

In recent decades right-wing circles have broadened the purview of groups that can be compared to Nazis: those expressing left-wing positions or who are ready to concede the Occupied Territories to one extent or another are not only “collaborating with the Arabs” but with the Nazis too; indeed, they thus become Nazis as well. A photograph of Yitzhak Rabin doctored so that he appeared to wear a Gestapo uniform was brandished at a right-wing demonstration in Jerusalem’s Zion Square in 1995. The doctored photo became a major symbol of right-wing resistance to the Oslo Accords, and it ultimately played an integral part in the demonization process that ended with Rabin’s assassination in November 1995. When Jewish settlements in the Gush Katif bloc were evacuated in August 2005, IDF soldiers and the government that sent them (a right-wing government, headed by Ariel Sharon) were called Nazis. Holocaust survivors living in Gush Katif were dispatched to the media to relate how the evacuation reminded them of their expulsion during World War II. The settlers called the evacuation “the expulsion,” wore orange stars (reminiscent of the Nazi-era yellow star), and frequently compared the disengagement to the expulsion of European Jews from their homes. After the disengagement, they declared their intent to found their own Yad Vashem to commemorate their tragedy.

Left-wing artists responded to this turmoil through humoristic skits that reflected precisely the opposite comparison: that of the right-wing politicians as the Nazis. Knesset member Avigdor Lieberman, who had made intransigent statements about exchanging territory with the Palestinian Authority and transferring Arab citizens of Israel to the PA in return—and who had compared members of Yesh Gvul (a human rights, anti-occupation movement) to kapos in the Nazi extermination camps—became the focus of a controversial *Eretz Nehederet* episode in December 2006. Each time his character appeared in the skit, he was greeted with “Heil Lieberman!” and a right-arm salute.<sup>50</sup> In March 2010, Knesset member Yaakov Katz circulated a memorandum calling for asylum seekers who had “infiltrated” into Israel through Egypt to be grouped together in a “distant city” that they would build themselves through “workfare.”<sup>51</sup> Paying homage to the opening sequence of *Inglourious Basterds* (Quentin Tarantino, USA, 2009),

an *Eretz Nehederet* skit (March 2010) addressed the theme of the right wing's persecution of refugees and illegal migrant workers. It showed Katz, depicted by the actor Tal Friedman, as the Nazi officer Col. Hans Landa, who in the film hunted down Jews in occupied France; here Katz is shown going from house to house to discover asylum seekers and foreign workers. Several of Friedman's lines also repeated memorable quotations from the movie. These skits thus criticized the political use of the Holocaust by claiming that the historically victimized had become the present-day perpetrators.

These skits reveal that the new satiric memory of the left wing brings with it contradictory positions. Popular television satire has conducted a dialogue with the change processes that Israeli society has undergone in recent decades, revealing the new equation in which right-wing politicians are compared to Nazis. On the one hand these skits express the attempts of second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors to move from "acting out" of the Holocaust to "working-through." On the other hand they attest that Holocaust memory is still alive and acting out within the young generation. This generation has not yet managed to free itself from the traumatic past and create a sharp delineation between "then" and "now."

The skits described here sought to debate with Holocaust memory in Israel; to change, and protest against, politicians' and public figures' exploitation of the Holocaust for their own ends; to make clear that the Jewish-Zionist conclusions about the Holocaust can also become nationalistic and violent. But these skits also entailed an inherent paradox: left-wing artists criticize the right wing in Israel for using the Holocaust for political reasons, but then do the same when they want to emphasize the brutality and racism of the right wing, immediately returning to the established Holocaust comparisons and associations.

### **A Polysemic Reading of Humoristic Holocaust Political Skits**

Television is a dominant arena in the battle over Holocaust memory that has been waged between different groups in Israel over recent decades.<sup>52</sup> Israel, among other countries, has transitioned in the past two decades from a "melting-pot" policy and ideology to a multicultural awareness. This change raises a range of questions about the identity, rights, and representation of different groups and sectors.<sup>53</sup> Television, alongside other forms of mass media, is a major player in the field of culture, having an important role in the politics of recognition and in shaping the identity of individuals and groups. Yet if we accept the Bourdieuan

picture in which actors in the cultural field struggle for recognition, legitimacy, dominance, and prestige, and where possessors of prestige will strive to boost and preserve their legitimacy and dominance, we can assume that, since television is owned and managed by power groups in society, it will try to bulwark its hegemony and immobilize the margins.<sup>54</sup> Indeed, we see such a tendency in the Israeli context, where television (and particularly the three main channels—1, 10, and 22) attempts to conserve, even in this multicultural era, a sort of tribal campfire that helps shore up the sense of national pride and endorses Jewish and Zionist values. This is particularly noticeable in televised broadcasts at times of crisis and during Jewish and national holidays.<sup>55</sup>

Bearing all that in mind, and despite the power-driven hegemonic discourse, others believe that television also provides opportunities for change. John Fiske maintains that it would be a mistake to assume that television is an agent for preserving the status quo, and that it is not involved in social or cultural changes. Popular television narratives are not flat or one-dimensional, and in most cases are open and polysemic, with multiple interpretations. Fiske holds that one can construe television ceremonies through three pivotal readings: the dominant-hegemonic reading, which fully adopts the dominant ideology's codes; an oppositionary reading, which undermines the hegemonic codes and positions alternatives to those codes from the perspective of minorities and weakened groups; and a polysemic reading, typified by a combination of hegemonic and subversive positions. Since commercial television aims to attract broad and different groups, it must create texts that enable various subcultures to elicit varied meanings from them. Popular television texts are therefore open and possess multiple meanings,<sup>56</sup> and different readers can imbue the same text with a range of meanings.<sup>57</sup> Contemporary cultures examine themselves through their art, maintain Horace Newcomb and Paul Hirsch,<sup>58</sup> who address television as a "cultural forum"—a spectrum along which controversial, diverse issues and points of view can be openly discussed almost without punishment. It presents a multiplicity of meanings rather than a monolithic point of view: it is a realm where we let our monsters come out and play, and Holocaust humor is the biggest monster.

Television's status as a guardian of the hegemony on one hand and as a presenter of certain subversive content on the other becomes more complex where humorous skits are concerned, due to humor's polysemic nature and the multiple meanings it anyway possesses.<sup>59</sup> With the help of humor, the hegemony can preserve the narrative it seeks to promote, yet it has the subversive potential

to present positions contradicting the hegemonic ones, and to deconstruct those positions.<sup>60</sup> On the one hand, humorous skits are generally perceived as a tool for representing superficial, reproduced stereotypes.<sup>61</sup> Repeating the predictable traits of the protagonists of sitcoms perpetuates gendered, ethnic, and class-based social representations, and strengthens hegemonic groups' control over minority groups.<sup>62</sup> Yet on the other hand, the comic dimension may leave room for criticism by creating a carnivalesque situation, which enables a temporary release from inflexible hierarchies;<sup>63</sup> by building antithetical frameworks of context between the possible and the unfeasible;<sup>64</sup> by generating conflict between different meanings;<sup>65</sup> or by exaggerating and vulgarizing stereotypes to the point where they are diminished or shattered.<sup>66</sup> Sitcoms are able to offer a subversive look.

An analysis of the skits dealing with the politicization of the Holocaust in Israel reveals that—contrary to hegemonic perceptions that the satirical approach to the Holocaust is degrading—they do not deride or scorn the Holocaust; in fact they do not engage at all with the Holocaust itself but rather with the question of Holocaust memory and its perpetuation in Israel. They criticize the way in which Holocaust memory was shaped and took root in Israel; as such, the texts do not constitute cheapening mechanisms but are nurtured by pain and criticism. They do not express a scornful retreat from the subject but in fact prove the great extent to which the Holocaust is a living part of the identity of second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors.

The skits display how the second and third generations of Holocaust survivors, raised in the shadow of Holocaust memories, use television to undermine the hegemonic politicization of the Holocaust, and thus they can be perceived as oppositionary texts. Many producers and writers of satirical programs see themselves as undermining the hegemonic Holocaust memory, which has transformed the Holocaust into a political and nationalistic tool. However, at the same time these skits use the Holocaust as a tool for disseminating the creators' political beliefs. Thus they both undermine the canonic politicization of the Holocaust and the conclusions deriving from it, as understood by the right wing, but also ratify the Holocaust's transformation into a political tool by using the trauma to protest against right-wing nationalism.

The satirists aim to take issue with the process by which the Holocaust in Israel has become a series of images that gain political-personal-social capital, but in the same breath they do not posit an antithesis and are also trapped in the sector of images which they criticize. Thus the satirical debate both ridicules the way in

which the Holocaust is used in Israel by the hegemony and creates a critical gaze that allows one to criticize that phenomenon, but also serves as another facet of that politicization, which turns the Holocaust into a political and social form of attack that, in fact, does not subvert the hegemonic codes but becomes part of it.

In my opinion, the skits are defense mechanisms created by second- and third-generation Holocaust survivors to change the “acting out” of Holocaust memory in Israel and its politicization of the Holocaust. Their satire seeks to unveil the right wing’s political use of the memory of the Holocaust and its attempt to nationalize the genocide to generate constant fear and anxiety. The skits use black humor to create a mental wall between Jewish Israelis and the Holocaust, to detach them a bit from the trauma in the hope that it will enable them to “work through” the Holocaust. Only from this perspective will the post-traumatic Israeli society not be condemned to political repetition compulsion, which has deadly results. But their success in transforming Israeli society from “acting out” to “working-through” is problematic. Left-wing satirists have not succeeded in freeing themselves from using the same terminology and are locked, as well, in a politicization of the Holocaust.

#### ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Liat Steir-Livny is a senior lecturer in the Department of Culture at Sapir Academic College, Israel. She serves as a tutor and course coordinator for the MA program in cultural studies and in the Department of Literature, Language and the Arts, and as the academic coordinator of the MA program in cultural studies, at the Open University, Israel. liatsteirlivny@gmail.com

#### Notes

1. Dalia Ofer, “We Israelis Remember, but How? The Memory of the Holocaust and the Israeli Experience,” *Israel Studies* 18.2 (2013): 70–85.
2. The term “Jewish-Arab conflict” refers to the conflict between Israel and the Arab nations and between Jewish Israelis and Palestinians.
3. Daniel Bar-Tal, *Libhyot im hasichsuch* [Hebrew] (*Living with the Conflict* [Haifa: Carmel, 2007]).
4. Liat Steir-Livny, “The Link between the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab Conflict

- in Israeli Culture, 1950's–1970's," in *Reconstructing Jewish Identity in Pre- and Post-Holocaust Literature and Culture*, ed. Lucyna Aleksandrowicz-Pedich and Malgorzata Pakier (Frankfurt: Peter Lang GmbH– Internationaler Verlag der Wissenschaften, 2012), 157–168; Liat Steir-Livny, *Har hazikaron yizkor bimkomi* [Hebrew] (*Let the Memorial Hill Remember* [Tel Aviv: Resling, 2014]).
5. Limor Shifman, *Haars, Hafreha ve-haima hapolaniya* [Hebrew] (*Social Conflicts and Humor on Israeli Television 1968–2000* [Jerusalem: J. L. Magnes Press/Hebrew University, 2008]); Eyal Zandberg, "Critical Laughter: Humor, Popular Culture and Israeli Holocaust Commemoration," *Media, Culture & Society* 28.4 (2006): 561–579.
  6. See, for example, Liat Steir-Livny, "Lizhok al haShoah ze bari" [Hebrew] ("Holocaust Humor in Israel"), *Maamul*, July 29, 2013, <http://maamul.sapir.ac.il/2013/07/29/%D7%9C%D7%A6%D7%97%D7%95%D7%A7-%D7%A2%D7%9C-%D7%94%D7%A9%D7%95%D7%90%D7%94-%D7%96%D7%94-%D7%91%D7%A8%D7%99%D7%90>, accessed August 5, 2014.
  7. In this essay I draw on extended definitions of the second- and third-generations that consider these terms to be not only biological but sociocultural. I analyze texts written and directed by creators who belong to those generational cohorts, from the perspective that, in Israel, the collective memory of the Holocaust is imprinted extremely deep in the identities and souls of people who are not necessarily the biological offspring of Holocaust survivors. See Zehava Solomon and Julia Chaitin, eds., *Yaldut bezel haShoah* [Hebrew] (*Childhood in the Shadow of the Holocaust* [Tel Aviv: Hakibbutz Hameuhad, 2007]); Iris Milner, *Kirey avar* [Hebrew] (*A Torn Past* [Tel Aviv: Chaim Weizmann Institute for the Study of Zionism and Israel, Tel Aviv University/Am Oved, 2004]); Dina Porat, *Kafe haboker be-reiach haashan* [Hebrew] (*A Smoke-Scented Coffee* [Jerusalem: Yad Vashem/Am Oved, 2011]); Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*; Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.
  8. Hanna Yablonka, *Abim zarim* [Hebrew] (*Survivors of the Holocaust: Israel After the War* [Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 1994]); Hanna Yablonka, *Medinat Israel neged Adolf Eichmann* [Hebrew] (*The State of Israel vs. Adolf Eichmann* [Tel Aviv: Yediot Aharonot, 2001]); Anita Shapira, *Yebudim yeshanim, yebudim hadashim* [Hebrew] (*New Jews, Old Jews* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997]).
  9. Idit Zertal, *Hauma veba-mavet* [Hebrew] (*The Nation and Death* [Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1993]); Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*; Hanna Yablonka, *Harbek mehamesila: Ha-mizrabim ve-haShoah* [Hebrew] (*Off the Beaten Track: The Mizrabim and the Holocaust* [Tel Aviv: Miskal-Yedioth Aharonot Books, 2008]); Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.

10. When examining cultural representations of the integration of the Holocaust and the Israeli-Arab conflict in the early decades of the Israeli state, one can see that until the 1970s the cultural narrative indeed emphasized victimization and represented the Arabs as successors to the Nazis. But alongside this narrative one can find in those early decades prominent artists who try to create awareness of both traumas—the Holocaust and the *Nakba*—and even raise very disturbing questions regarding the morality of the behavior of the IDF in 1948. See, for example, the works of S. Yizhar (*Khirbet khizeb*, 1949), Avot Yeshurun's poem *Pessach al kochim* (Passover on Caves, 1952), and Hanoach Levin's plays *You, Me and the Next War* (1968), *Ketchup* (1969), and *Queen of Bathtub* (1970). See Steir-Livny, "The Link."
11. For a broader discussion, see Steir-Livny, "The Link"; Ofer, "We Israelis Remember."
12. The contention that Israelis, past and present, are Nazis, also appears in Arab propaganda, and is by now a well-known view in the Western world. See Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.
13. Nurith Gertz, *Nizoley Shoa zarim ve-aherim* [Hebrew] (*Holocaust Survivors, Aliens and Others in Israeli Cinema and Literature* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved/The Open University, 2004]):
14. For example: Boaz Evron, *Atuna veUtz* [Hebrew] (*Athens and Oz* [Binyamina: Nahar Press, 2010]); Zertal, *The Nation and Death*; Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*.
15. For examples, see Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.
16. The influence of the Holocaust and the ongoing changes in Holocaust memory in the United States are the subjects of recent books that have roiled American public opinion. See, for example, Peter Novick, *The Holocaust in American Life* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1999); Norman Finkelstein, *The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* (London: Verso, 2000); Alvin H. Rosenfeld, *The End of the Holocaust* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2011).
17. It is the only graphic novel ever to win a Pulitzer Prize. See Andreas Huyssen, "Of Mice and Mimesis: Reading Spiegelman with Adorno," in *Visual Culture and the Holocaust*, ed. Barbie Zelizer (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 28–44.
18. Louis Kaplan, "'It Will Get a Terrific Laugh': On the Problematic Pleasures and Politics of Holocaust Humor," in *Hop on Pop: The Politics and Pleasures of Popular Culture*, ed. Henry Jenkins et al. (Durham: Duke University Press Books, 2003), 343–356; John Morreall, "Humor in the Holocaust: Its Critical, Cohesive, and Coping Functions," *Holocaust TRC*, November 22, 2011, <http://www.holocaust-trc.org/humor-in-the-holocaust/>, accessed September 20, 2014.
19. For a broader discussion of humoristic representations of the Holocaust in the West,

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20. For a broader discussion regarding Israel as a distinct space of Holocaust remembrance, see Solomon and Chaitin, *Yaldut*; Ofer, "We Israelis Remember"; Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*; Oren Meyers, Motti Neiger, and Eyal Zandberg, *Communicating Awe: Media Memory and Holocaust Commemoration* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan Memory Studies, 2014).
  21. For a broader discussion of the link between humor and the Holocaust, especially in Israel, see Zandberg, "Critical Laughter"; Ofer, "We Israelis Remember"; Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.
  22. Sigmund Freud, *Meever la-oneg ve-masot aberot* [Hebrew] (*Beyond the Pleasure and Other Works* [Tel Aviv: Dvir, 1978]); Sigmund Freud, *Hatipul ha-psychoanaliti* [Hebrew] (*Psychoanalysis Treatment* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 2002]).
  23. Judith Louis Herman, *Trauma ve hacblama* [Hebrew] (*Trauma and Healing* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1994]).
  24. Dominick LaCapra, *Writing History, Writing Trauma* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).
  25. Amos Goldberg, "Introduction," in LaCapra, *Writing History*.
  26. Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*; Meyers, Neiger, and Zandberg, *Communicating Awe*.
  27. Yehudah Elkana, "The Need to Forget," *Ha'aretz*, March 2, 1988, [www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/1.1841380](http://www.haaretz.co.il/opinions/1.1841380), accessed November 28, 2014.
  28. Avner Ziv, *Humor ve-ishiut* [Hebrew] (*Humor and Personality* [Tel Aviv: Resling, 1996]); Henri Bergson, *Hazhok* [Hebrew] (*The Laughter* [Jerusalem: Reuven Mass, 1999]).
  29. Ron Eyerman, *Cultural Trauma: Slavery and the Formation of African-American Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002).

30. Jeffrey C. Alexander, "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Jeffrey C. Alexander et al. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009), 1–30; Jeffrey C. Alexander, "On the Social Construction of Moral Universals: The 'Holocaust' from War Crime to Trauma Drama," in *Cultural Trauma and Collective Identity*, ed. Alexander, 196–263.
31. Roy Heller, "Eretz nehederet pagu berigshot nizolei ha-Shoa" [Hebrew] ("Eretz Nehederet Hurt Holocaust Survivors"), *Ynet*, November 10, 2004, <http://www.ynet.co.il/articles/0,7340,L-3002314,00.html>, accessed October 21, 2014.
32. For research on the politicization of the Holocaust by the right wing, see, for example: Zertal, *The Nation and Death*; Ada Yorman, "Victimization as a Central Principle in the Israeli Discourse, 1908–1948," *Reeb* (2005): 11–38; Baruch Kimmerling, "The Continuation of the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict by 'Academic' Means: Reflections on the Problematiques of Publishing Books and Reviewing Them," *Contemporary Sociology* 35.5 (September 2006): 447–449; Evron, *Athens*.
33. Zertal, *The Nation and Death*; Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*.
34. Sahara Blau, "Misheu amar Shoa?" [Hebrew] ("Somebody Said Holocaust?"), *Ha'aretz*, April 22, 2004, <http://www.haaretz.co.il/news/health/1.961589>, accessed September 7, 2014.
35. Freud, *Beyond Pleasure*; Freud, *Psychoanalysis*.
36. Sigmund Freud, *Jokes and Their Relation to the Unconscious* (The Standard Edition), ed. James Strachey (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1990).
37. Uri Klein, "Tarantino: Kach kirkafti et ha-historia" [Hebrew] ("Tarantino: I Scalped History"), *City Mouse*, September 13, 2009, [http://www.mouse.co.il/CM.articles\\_item,1019,209,40146,.aspx](http://www.mouse.co.il/CM.articles_item,1019,209,40146,.aspx), accessed September 20, 2014; Jacqueline Garrick, "The Humor of Trauma Survivors," *Journal of Aggression, Maltreatment & Trauma* 12.1–2 (2006): 169–182.
38. On the importance of self-disparaging humor and black humor, see Ziv, *Humor*; Itamar Levin, *Mibaad la-dmaot* [Hebrew] (*Through the Tears: Jewish Humor under the Nazi Regime* [Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2004]); Haya Ostrover, *Lelo humor hainu mitabdim* [Hebrew] (*If Not for Humor, We Would Have Committed Suicide* [Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2009]); Alan L. Berger and Naomi Berger, *Second Generation Voices: Reflections by Children of Holocaust Survivors and Perpetrators* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2011).
39. Laurence J. Epstein, *The Haunted Smile: The Story of Jewish Comedians in America* (New York: Public Affairs, 2002); Joseph Boskin and Joseph Dorinson, "Ethnic Humor: Subversion and Survival," *American Quarterly*, Special Issue: American

- Humor, 37.1 (1985): 81–97; Christie Davies, “Exploring the Thesis of the Self-Deprecating Jewish Sense of Humor,” *Humor* 4.2 (January 1991): 189–209; Paul Lewis, “Three Jews and a Blindfold: The Politics of Gallows Humor,” in *Semites and Stereotypes*, ed. Avner Ziv and Anat Zajdman (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993), 47–57; Leonard G. Greenspoon, ed., *Jews and Humor* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 2011); Hillel Halkin, “Why Jews Laugh at Themselves,” *Commentary* 4 (January 2006); Sanford Pinsker, “Lenny Bruce: Shpritzing the Goyim/Shocking the Jews,” in *Jewish Wry: Essays on Jewish Humor*, ed. Sarah Blacher Cohen (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 89–104; Ziv, *Humor*; Vincent Brook, *Something Ain’t Kosher Here: The Rise of the “Jewish” Sitcom* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2003); Garrick, “The Humor.”
40. On the new memory of the Holocaust in popular culture in Israel as a defense mechanism, see Steir-Livny, *Let the Memorial Hill*.
  41. Shifman, *Social Conflicts*.
  42. *Ibid.*
  43. Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*; Meyers, Neiger, and Zandberg, *Communicating Awe*.
  44. Pier Nora, “Bein zicaron ve-historia” [Hebrew] (“Between Memory and History”), *Zmanim* 43 (1993): 5–13; Maoz Azaryahu, *Tiksei medina* [Hebrew] (*State Rituals* [Beer Sheva: Bialik Institute, 1995]); David Ohana and Robert Wistrich, eds., *Mitus ve-zikaron* [Hebrew] (*Myth and Remembrance* [Jerusalem: Van Leer, 1996]).
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  46. Azaryahu, *State Rituals*; Roni Shtaubert, *Halekab la-dor* [Hebrew] (*The Lesson to the Generation* [Jerusalem: Yad Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, 2000]); Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “Mamlachtiut, Shoa ve-tkasim hatraniim” [Hebrew] (“Holocaust and Subversive Messages”) *Alpayim* 21 (2000): 81–106; Oz Almog, *Hazabar* [Hebrew] (*The Sabra* [Tel Aviv: Am Oved, 1997]); Charles Liebman and Eliezer Don-Yehiya, “The Dilemma of Reconciling Traditional Culture with Contemporary Political Needs: The Civil Religion in Israel,” *Comparative Politics* 16 (1983): 53–66; Yael Zerubavel, *Recovered Roots: Collective Memory and the Making of Israeli National Tradition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
  47. Many historians have written about changing perceptions of the Holocaust over the years. For example, see Bar-Tal, *Living with the Conflict*; Daniel Gutwein, “The

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