might not agree that the "assumption of [the Bible's] uniqueness prevents a richer appreciation" of something else, and many of them would contend that such appreciation should not be diminished if we were to discover that the Ugaritic "sources on hard clay" were themselves "redacted derivatives" (99). Archaeologists might wonder why Ra'ad fails to mention the 1993 find at Tel Dan of an Aramaic inscription from the ninth century BCE even if it did not change his view on "David's historicity" (103). Some of us may disagree with Ra'ad's application of "two alternative modes of being and of relating to others" (93), and if "[l]egendary narratives are made history" (97), this may happen to Canaanite narratives as well; but the article helps us to make a judgment on such issues, and it certainly has the virtue of acquainting a wider audience with material that has often been overlooked by scholars.

Something that tries to redress the balance of what has been presented one-sidedly deserves to be heard. Certain readers may think that there ought to be no political statements in a *PMLA* article, whereas others may feel that the journal should make more room for anything that enhances its human content. I deplore the lamentable "present condition" of Ra'ad's "silent helpers" (105). I also grieve for the catastrophe that befell the Palestinian people in 1948 and caused the loss of Ra'ad's family land and home in West Jerusalem, mentioned in the *PMLA* Forum of the October number (116 [2001]: 1447). While it is the Nazi Holocaust that indirectly victimized the Palestinians, as a citizen of Israel—indeed, as a citizen of the world—I must share responsibility for the suffering, past and present, of "the people in villages and towns in Palestine" (105).

But others have also suffered and suffer still. My wife, who lived through the horrors of a concentration camp, and I, who escaped Hitler's Germany in 1939, though we were both refused entry into Palestine, immigrated—or rather returned—after the establishment of the Jewish state, to our "national home." This is the term internationally recognized since 1917, though disputed by the Palestinians, who, together with the invading armies of several Arab countries, violently opposed the 1947 United Nations resolution for the partitioning of Palestine and are thus not entirely blameless for the calamity that then overtook them. It is because we too "retain deep historical roots" (94) that my wife and I were drawn to the "Jewish community in Palestine" (100), of which throughout the years of exile there had always been a remnant. As survivors of Nazism who have lived here most of our lives, we would like to register our votes that we see "Israel as [. . .] evidence of 'Jewish self-confidence' that 'discredited' Nazism" and not as "'a bastion of imperialism [. . .]'" (96). While we welcome any "'soul-searching dialogue'" that is more than just "nominal" (105) and that would lead us "to accept rather than deny the other" (100), we are meanwhile grateful for the steps our various governments have taken to protect us against those who threaten to blow us to bits and likewise against those who aim at ultimately expelling us because we were not born here. Of course, I do not suggest that Ra'ad, who writes with compassion and from whose article I have learned much, would sympathize with either of these groups, but I cannot help feeling that he too might have shown greater awareness of the dangers of *all* "exclusionary histories" (92).

*Wolf Z. Hirst*
University of Haifa

*Reply:*

Since my essay emphasizes elisions and selectivities in the Western paradigm, I question why the two responses in the Forum have tried to politicize my discussion. Perhaps they are concerned about my including the biblical model as one operative component in Western civilization and in projects of colonization. Another letter, by Balachandra Rajan, says that the special issue on Globalizing Literary Studies fails to dispel "anxieties" about selective historiography (116 [2001]: 1444–45). Has this respondent read my essay? Wolf Z. Hirst's response shows more careful reading and recognizes many of my points. A possibility of dialogue opens here, though I must answer fallacies in his arguments.

Because Greek and Roman civilizations and the Bible are such strong anchors in the West, their commentaries and interpretations, weighing down library shelves all over the world, have often been exaggerated and bent to the service of the paradigm. I therefore do not emphasize what is already highly valued. Rather, my essay includes what has been, as Hirst says, "overlooked"—often willfully so, I would add. Acknowledging roots and borrowings

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should not mean devaluing anything or anyone. (Does valuing women more, for example, mean the devaluation of men or of humanity?)

Biblical interpretations have been particularly misguided by assumptions of historicity—assumptions discredited by recent discoveries. Just as nineteenth-century theologians fought the influx of science, many today continue to invest in these assumptions and the present systems and so search for anything on which to hang belief. (In the paucity of concrete evidence, mention of a name, *dwd*, in an inscription at Tel el-Qadi / Tel Dan, whose authenticity scholars doubt, is declared proof that King David existed and is used to build other claims.)

Ugarit's significance does not reside particularly in its literary products but more in what insights its pantheon and its texts bring to more familiar religious beliefs and texts. Ugarit is one of the sources that unravel hidden appropriations of culture and heritage. Since I devoted only a small section to Ugarit, I refer readers to a later publication (Mark S. Smith's *The Origins of Biblical Monotheism* [Oxford UP, 2001]; also see Michael Massing's "As Rabbis Face Facts, Bible Tales Are Wilting," *New York Times* 9 Mar. 2002). Findings like those about Ugarit allow us to question the value of books and of theological systems based on inaccurate premises about the uniqueness of monotheistic beliefs—not to mention all the constructions and delusions accumulated in people's minds over centuries.

When a whole state is based on literal biblical claims and these claims are challenged by what is unearthed, intractable human prerogatives start to find justificatory strategies. In Israel this process is much more recent than, say, in the Americas or in Australia. To keep constructed historical claims alive, ever-new logic attempts to link present Jews to Jews two thousand years ago, to "Israelites," to Hebrews, and to make other exclusive connections. Scholarship generates new serviceable theories, while public idealization of old mythic narratives deflects discussion and prompts a disquieting silencing of dissenting voices.

To avoid moral responsibility for the refugees Israel created in 1948 and the properties it robbed, Zionists argue that Palestinians left on their own, or that they attacked and lost, or that "Arab" countries told them to leave, or that they never accept compromise, et cetera, and so are to blame for their dispossession. (The promise in 1917 by Balfour, a fundamentalist who represented British colonialism, is said to have given Zionism international recognition; simultaneously, the narrative says Israel fought a "War of Independence" against Britain.) Constant repetition makes plausible the contradictory parallel inventions of both an "empty land" for Israel's occupation and a "free abandonment" by Palestinians of homes, land, all their possessions, and life in rural and urban centers for the squalor of refugee camps. A number of Israel's own historians and other scholars (e.g., Meron Benvenisti, Benny Morris, Ilan Pappe, Avi Shlaim, Yael Zerubavel) have disproved such narratives and excuses, some of them confirming evidence of systematic expulsions, wholesale expropriation, psychological warfare, and massacres. Such excuses are like saying that the natives in America and Africa were "not [. . .] blameless" for being slaughtered by colonizers and were responsible for the breaking of treaties. Today Zionist colonizing ideology has poisoned the minds of simple people on both sides. Historical versions and images are infinitely malleable, though apparently credible to people who receive mythic comfort from the inventions. Exalted narratives overlay iniquitous origins, stunt questioning, and incubate resentment by others.

Norman G. Finkelstein shows how the Zionist establishment has benefited more from narratives inflating financial Holocaust claims than have Holocaust survivors who actually suffered. A "franchise" has become "an outright extortion racket" (*The Holocaust Industry: Reflections on the Exploitation of Jewish Suffering* [Verso, 2001] 77, 89). By making the Jewish Holocaust "unique" (43)—rather than one of many human tragedies that others have shared, during World War II and before and after—the Holocaust industry trivializes other suffering and does not serve Jewish morality well.

While I reciprocate Hirst's expressions of sympathy, I believe something more concrete should be done about the restitution of Palestinian rights. A test of morality in this case is how Jews approach responsibility for the Palestinian tragedy, instead of only narrating a responsibility of the colonized to provide safety to the colonizer. The Holocaust industry punishes any Jew who expresses criticism of Israel or sympathy for Palestinian rights, as happened to the Holocaust theologian John Roth, who was forced to resign from a Holocaust museum. The

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Holocaust should not be used to prevent criticism of Israeli practices.

It is encouraging that 290 prominent South Africans of Jewish background (including the minister of water affairs and forestry, Ronnie Kasrils, and the writer Nadine Gordimer) recently signed a declaration of conscience to protest these practices and to call for justice. However, Israel and the United States still focus on symptoms and effects, not origins and causes. Today Israel borrows the language of terrorism from Washington in an ever-expanding public relations blitz that covers designs to depopulate remaining Palestinian land and legitimate its aggression with narratives of tanks for peace. While occupation, colonization, and control continue, any resistance to occupation or struggle for liberation, without exception, is made to look illegitimate. Self-addressed morals and sentiments cannot possibly lead to a real peace. Nor is cultural rapprochement possible where unjust narratives of inequity weave webs that constrain new directions and the ability to rethink human interconnectedness and the rights and emotions of all.

*Basem L. Ra'ad*
Al-Quds University

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