metaphor" of Palestine, beyond merely "utopia" or "topos" in past struggles (365), can function more than ever as a universal epistemic figure.

"Holy Land" Palestine is central to Western religious belief and the colonizer's claims system. Palestine has been the object and model of colonial projects—the Crusades, conquest of the Americas (as conquest of Canaan, the new promised land), South African apartheid, and Zionist ideology of "return" to "the land of ancestors." Israel's creation was facilitated by Western and Jewish assumptions about narratives that, though shown to be fictional, legendary, or copied myths, still entangle people as justifications or profitable investments. Most historians and archaeologists today (including some Israelis) no longer practice "biblical archaeology" or give any credence to stories like Exodus, conquest of Canaan, or Kingdom of David. Conversely, Palestinians as Muslims and Christians follow a shared religious tradition and so, in unfortunate self-colonization, accept as sacred the stories that cause their dispossession.

Yet Palestine is more than exile, dispossession, and yearning: it promises the prospect of uncovering particular workings of power, of expanded human consciousness, a new mental landscape. By relying on new knowledge and translating discoveries to heal a damaged legacy, the West might recognize how its politics has been shaped by self-interested preconception, Jews recover positive inclusive traditions, and Palestinians heal themselves of self-destructive (post)colonial ailments. To free habits of the mind can be challenging, however, though liberating.

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Reply:

I am grateful to Basem L. Ra'ad for his pertinent comments on "Cross-Colonial Poetics: *Souffles-Anfas* and the Figure of Palestine," which give me the opportunity to clarify what I am now calling "transcolonial identification" with Palestine: transnational forms of solidarity that are based on an understanding of Palestine as the product of a long and unfinished colonial history. In the longer project from which my article is excerpted, I analyze the work of Moroccan, Algerian, and Tunisian writers and intellectuals who have mobilized Palestine in order to critique French and Zionist/Israeli colonial discourses, often drawing unexpected parallels between them—despite the important historical differences emphasized by Ra'ad. For Abdellatif Laâbi, a cofounder and co–editor in chief of the Moroccan journals *Souffles* and *Anfas* (1966–71) as well as the first translator of Palestinian poetry in the Maghreb, Palestine epitomized the colonial experience of deculturation, by which indigenous languages and cultural forms were supplanted by those of the colonizer. Because France practiced the art of assimilation (a euphemism for deculturation) more extensively than Great Britain and applied it more forcefully in the Maghreb, and especially Algeria, than in its Levantine protectorates (Syria and Lebanon), Maghrebi poets were particularly well positioned to understand and translate what, following Ghassan Kanafani and Frantz Fanon, Laâbi dubbed Palestinian combat poetry (*La poésie palestinienne de combat* [Atlantes, 1970; print]). To take another example, the Algerian writer Kateb Yacine and his popular theater troupe staged plays that compared Algerian migrant workers to Palestinian colonial subjects to shore up the parallels between, on the one hand, French colonial assimilationist policies ("Algeria is France," as the famous phrase had it) and discourses of postcolonial hospitality (in which France played the role of "host" to its former colonial subjects—see Mireille Rosello's *Postcolonial Hospitality* [Stanford UP, 2001; print]) and, on the other, Zionist discourses of separation opposing Jews and Arabs. Kateb's play *Mohamed prends ta valise* (1971; "Mohamed, Take Your Suitcase") reveals that the French myth of assimilation elides the differential processes

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aimed at segmenting the indigenous population into, among other categories, Arabs, Jews, and Berbers—divide-and-rule policies that were implemented in the eastern Mediterranean with the devastating effects that we know (Seuil, 1999; print; 205–370). As Ra'ad points out, the Tunisian theorist of colonialism Albert Memmi, who in his early work evoked the colonial "pyramid of petty tyrants" dividing Muslims, Jews, and Europeans (*The Colonizer and the Colonized* [Beacon, 1967; print; 17]), later espoused Zionism as a liberationist ideal on a par with anticolonial nationalism. In my analysis of his writings, however, I show that even in his most pro-Israeli writings, he inadvertently draws parallels between "Arab Jews" and Palestinians—albeit to advocate for the assimilation of "Arabs" in Israel. While Memmi cannot be said to establish transcolonial *identification* with Palestine, transcolonial comparison is at work even in his pro-Zionist writings.

Ra'ad is right to stress some of the differences between the European colonial "civilizing mission" (which, I would add, varied greatly between the French and British contexts and within both empires) and the cultural and historical claims of political Zionism. It is true, of course, that indigenous populations in the Maghreb were not forcibly removed, as they were in historical Palestine (Ilan Pappé characterizes the eviction of some 800,000 Palestinians as a clear case of ethnic cleansing, in *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* [Oneworld, 2006; print])—though striking parallels remain between French colonization of the Maghreb, especially its prized settler colony Algeria, and the Zionist takeover of Palestine. Though my focus remains *representations* of Palestine (why have Maghrebi writers identified with Palestine, and to what effects?), it does seem worth interrogating some of the overlapping claims of colonialism and political Zionism, as scholars such as Ella Shohat, Joseph Massad, Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, and Ra'ad himself have done. Such a comparative move makes clear not only the colonial genealogy of the current predicament of Palestine—whose fate was clinched in British and French negotiations with the nascent Zionism movement early in the last century—but also the continued colonial character of Israeli control over Palestinian lives and the very possibility of Palestinian political existence. As Edward Said tirelessly reminded us, political Zionism was also a liberation project whose stated aim was to provide refuge for a persecuted minority. But as Said, Massad, Shohat, and others have shown, the discourse of political Zionism emerged at the heyday of European colonialism, borrowing the mantle of the civilizing mission and many of the methods of colonial rule for its own purposes. To linger on the example of the *Nakba*, or "catastrophe," as the mass dispossession of 1948 is known in Arabic, Shohat has argued that it presents startling similarities to the eviction of Native American peoples from their lands by foreign settlers, as does the renaming of towns evoked by Ra'ad. Similarly, the ubiquitous tropes of "making the desert bloom" and civilizing violent, fanatic, and overly fertile "natives" are common fare in European colonial and Zionist discourse. As Raz-Krakotzkin has argued, Israel's representations of its "Arab" (i.e., Palestinian) citizens bear strong resemblances to xenophobic discourse in Europe, which is largely inherited from colonial racial discourse, and the distinction between Israeli citizens (including "Arabs") and nationals (who must be Jewish) is hauntingly reminiscent of the citizen-subject divide in the colonies, and particularly in Algeria, which was considered an integral part of France. What Ra'ad calls the "Hebraizing [of] Palestine" finds a striking parallel in various processes of *francisation* in the Maghreb, including attempts to recuperate a Greco-Roman (hence French, by way of Latin) North African past; the perpetuation of the "Kabyle myth," according to which the indigenous peoples of the Maghreb were originally European; and the relegation of Arabic to the status of a foreign language in Algeria.

As the ongoing upheavals across the southern Mediterranean show, Palestine remains a topos and utopia in the region (see Samar Yazbek's harrowing memoir of the Syrian revolution, *A Woman in the Crossfire* [Haus, 2012;

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print]) but also worldwide (e.g., the growing BDS [boycott, divestment, and sanctions] movement). In an increasingly precarious situation where Palestinian life and political existence are every day more threatened, the stakes of transcolonial identification are higher than ever.

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Misquoting Benjamin

To the Editor:

Probably Walter Benjamin has no one to blame but himself, but quotations from his books show up in the strangest places with much stranger meanings. His fault or not, it is surely significant whether we are being just to those fine phrases. The possibility of injustice arises whenever we attach an idea to someone else's name and thereby borrow some authority for our own. It may be as significant as the way we attach evidence to an accused person before the law. In either case, quotation can veer off into a dangerous misuse. How we deal with books usually reveals the way we deal with people. Fracking a piece of language out of a book and burning it up as fuel to drive our own argument should not count as just representation, and yet it is standard practice. I wonder whether we might not want to change that practice. As Heine noted a long time ago, "Dort wo man Bücher verbrennt, verbrennt man auch am Ende Menschen" ("Where they burn books, they will one day burn people too").

Benjamin, of course, could play rather fast and loose with quotations himself, and he had his own ideas about re-creating texts to support his purposes. In his essay on Goethe's novel *Die Wahlverwandtschaften* (*Elective Affinities*), Benjamin wrote that the sun never appeared over the gloomily lit landscape in which the story unfolds ("Goethe's Elective Affinities"; *Selected Writings*; vol. 1 [Belknap–Harvard UP, 1996; print; 303]). Yet Goethe built his story around three dramatic appearances of the sun, and most of the novel's events occur under normal conditions, including bright skies on spring days. Benjamin's essay "The Storyteller" cites the close of a short story by Johann Peter Hebel, "Unverhofftes Wiedersehen" ("Unexpected Reunion"), to support his contention about the place of death in storytelling. The protagonist, an old woman, "is called away by death," as Benjamin puts it (*Selected Writings*; vol. 3 [Belknap–Harvard UP, 2002; print; 152]). But Hebel's text does not end with death. The actual close provides a quite different meaning. The story ends as the speaker, having made a remark about commitments and obligations in life, turns away from her betrothed's graveside and returns to the realm of the living (*Sämtliche Schriften*; vol. 2 [Müller, 1990; print; 284]).

Benjamin marks the significance of death as the point from which even the humblest life acquires the vivid enclosure that permits it to be retold, and from which a moral may be drawn. That is the basis on which he offers his conception of the "authority of death" that accrues to the storyteller, that most modest of speakers, the figure in whom the righteous man encounters himself.

How different, then, the pomp and excess of a national event dressed up for maximum effect by the political heirs to the most powerful leader in the western hemisphere, the funeral of a man who had led a nation through a horrific war. We pause, rapt, and take a sharp breath reading Walt Whitman's noble poem "When Lilacs Last in the Door-Yard Bloom'd," and we could just leave it at that; yet Simon Gikandi has not left it at that when he invokes Benjamin's name in his editor's column "From Penn Station to Trenton: The Language Train" (128.4 [2013]: 865–71). The righteous man's perspective might alert us to the fate of the vast authority that President Lincoln had wielded in his life. It might make us pause again, give us time to hatch the suspicion that putting his coffin on display during its long journey through the country he had led transfigured his mortal remains into a motif in

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