THE APPEAL OF ISRAEL:
WHITENESS, ANTI-SEMITISM, AND THE ROOTS OF
DIASPORA ZIONISM IN CANADA

by

Corey Balsam

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies in Education
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Corey Balsam 2011
The Appeal of Israel: Whiteness, Anti-Semitism, and the Roots of Diaspora Zionism in Canada

Master of Arts 2011
Corey Balsam

Graduate Department of Sociology and Equity Studies
Ontario Institute for Studies in Education
University of Toronto

Abstract

This thesis explores the appeal of Israel and Zionism for Ashkenazi Jews in Canada. The origins of Diaspora Zionism are examined using a genealogical methodology and analyzed through a bricolage of theoretical lenses including post-structuralism, psychoanalysis, and critical race theory. The active maintenance of Zionist hegemony in Canada is also explored through a discourse analysis of several Jewish-Zionist educational programs. The discursive practices of the Jewish National Fund and Taglit Birthright Israel are analyzed in light of some of the factors that have historically attracted Jews to Israel and Zionism. The desire to inhabit an alternative Jewish subject position in line with normative European ideals of whiteness is identified as a significant component of this attraction. It is nevertheless suggested that the appeal of Israel and Zionism is by no means immutable and that Jewish opposition to Zionism is likely to only increase in the coming years.
Acknowledgements

This thesis was not just written over the duration of my master’s degree. It is a product of several years of thinking and conversing with friends, family, and colleagues who have both inspired and challenged me to develop the ideas presented here. I want to thank a few of my close friends – Lia Tarachansky, Ben Saifer, and Diana Ralph – without whom I may have never had the courage or tenacity to follow this academic and life path; my two brothers, Adam and Joel, to whom this thesis is dedicated, for accompanying me on this explorative journey and for always sharing their thoughts and perspectives; my mom, Leslee, and my partner, Jenna, for being so incredibly supportive and for always helping me work through my ideas; my dad, Dave, for challenging me to strengthen my arguments; and my grandmother, Cecelia, who has never quite accepted my views, but has always tried, and always supported me. A special thanks goes to my supervisor, Sheryl Nestel, for giving so much of her time and energy to this project, and for providing me with so much knowledge, feedback, and books (!). It was truly an honour and a privilege. Last but not least I want to acknowledge all of the helpful feedback I have received from Jessica Pinto, my brother Joel Balsam, and David Mandelzys, as well as from professors Sherene Razack, Monica Heller, and Abigail Bakan. Thanks so much to all of you!
For my brothers: Adam and Joel
# Table of Contents

**Introduction: My Journey to the Dark Side** ................................................................. 1  
Research Focus and Field of Study ................................................................................. 9  
Piecing Together a Framework ..................................................................................... 12  
Methodology ................................................................................................................. 19  
Chapter Organization ..................................................................................................... 23  

**Part One**  

**Chapter One: Diaspora Zionism** .............................................................................. 26  
Defining Diaspora ........................................................................................................... 28  
Nationalism: The French, the Germans and the Jews ..................................................... 31  
Zionism in the Canadian Jewish Diaspora .................................................................... 46  
Diaspora Zionism ........................................................................................................... 57  

**Chapter Two: New Jews and Old Jews: Past and Present** .................................... 65  
Freud and the Jewish Male Body .................................................................................... 68  
Redemption through Regeneration .............................................................................. 75  
The Impact of the Holocaust on Support for Zionism .................................................. 80  
New Jews and Old Jews in the Age of Israel .................................................................. 87  
The Thing of the Nation ................................................................................................. 91  

**Chapter Three: The Quest for Whiteness** ............................................................. 95  
Beyond Skin Colour ..................................................................................................... 97  
Jewish Bodies, White Masks ......................................................................................... 101  
The Whiteness Test ....................................................................................................... 107  
Israel, Relationality, and the Arab Threat ...................................................................... 113  
“I'm not white, I'm Jewish” ........................................................................................... 121  

**Part Two**  

**Chapter Four: Engineering Consent** .................................................................... 129  
The Jewish National Fund ............................................................................................ 132  
Taglit Birthright Israel ................................................................................................... 142  

**Conclusion: Rupture** ............................................................................................... 156  

**Bibliography** ............................................................................................................ 166
INTRODUCTION

My Journey to the Dark Side

I remember the goose-bumps I used to get whenever I heard that simplistic yet powerful Hebrew chorus: *Am Yisrael chai!* “The People Israel—the Jewish People—live!” This past year during his *Rosh Hashanah* (Jewish New Year) sermon, the rabbi at my parents' synagogue explained that *Am Yisrael* actually has various interpretations. It can connote the Jewish people, meaning everyone defined as Jewish; it can refer to the ancient people of Israel who lived 2000 years ago in the land of Canaan; and it can mean all good people, whatever their religion, so long as they abide by basic precepts of human decency. I appreciated the rabbi's universalistic interjection. Jewish approaches to religion and life in general have historically oscillated between particularism and universalism, but it has seemed that the former has been outweighing the latter in recent years.

Indeed, it is the particular, the Jewish people, which is the reference in *Am Yisrael Chai*. It is an intonation that emphatically evokes the need to hold on to and have pride in Jewish identity; especially in the face of the enemy. Believed to have originated in the 1930s amongst Jews in defiance of the Nazi rise to power, the chorus was later revived during the 1960s by “Reb” Shlomo Carlebach for use in the student struggle to liberate Soviet Jewry. Today it is most commonly sung at Zionist rallies in support of the state of Israel. But the

---


essence of the message remains the same: we are Jews and we are proud.

The first time that I remember singing Am Yisrael Chai was on my first visit to the state of Israel when I was 19. I can vividly recollect the intense rush of excitement and emotion that I felt. There was something about chanting this song with my peers that made me feel different, empowered, strong. I loved it.

Like many of my Jewish peers in Canada, my grandfather, Zaida as we called him in Yiddish, is a survivor of the Nazi Holocaust. He is the only survivor in his immediate family and one of the few from his small Polish village to have made it out alive. He was strong, I suppose, and healthy, but above all he was lucky. Anyone who has heard accounts of Holocaust survivors can attest to the sheer luck one needed to have to make it out of so many close encounters with death. I first heard my grandfather’s story when I was 16. He was not the type to have talked about his experiences to anyone. But when my younger brother asked him to tell us about our family and about his life, he agreed. I had heard many stories of survivors by then, but none so incredible, and none so traumatic, at least to me personally.

My family had been receiving magazines in the mail from the Simon Wiesenthal Center around the time that I visited my Zaida in Montreal with my brother. The magazines detailed the threats Jews continued to face around the world from anti-Semitism. I had not previously been aware of this vulnerability. I was tormented periodically for being the “Jewish kid,” seen as intrinsically weaker and cheaper than others as a consequence of my Jewishness, but I had not felt myself in any real danger. As far as I knew there was no one out to get me, so why worry? Thinking back to the magazines and looking at the materials of the Wiesenthal Center today, there is no questioning the sensationalist, propagandistic approach
of the organization. But at the time I was as politically aware as most other 16 year olds in the suburbs. The magazines were, in my mind, proof that Jews remained a vulnerable group in society as they had been in the Europe of my Zaida's adolescence.

It was not until September 11, 2001 that I really became conscious of politics and of the media. Like virtually everyone else at the time, I spent an entire week in front of the television, watching Wolf Blitzer on CNN rehash the collapse of the Twin Towers over and over again, postulating as to who the culprits were. All signs pointed to “the Arabs”; Islamic terrorists who hated the West and reviled Jews. Apparently they were not such an isolated group. Many Arabs felt this way. I had many Arab friends growing up including a few Palestinians, so what I heard troubled me. I was uncomfortable believing that my friends and their families had some deep rooted hatred for me but I was not prepared to dismiss the idea either.

So began my interest in the Middle East. I was not an avid reader at the time. I much preferred skateboarding and hanging out with my friends. This topic, however, really compelled me. The first book that I bought was a collection of works by and about Islamic fundamentalists. It was one of those books produced in the aftermath of 9/11 to teach the masses about their new enemy—a top seller at the bookstore. Within the pages of the book were various pieces concerning Palestinian terrorism against Jews. One piece that especially affected me described the 1929 Hebron Massacre of Jews by a group of Palestinians who went on a murderous rampage following the circulation of rumours that Jews had been killing Palestinians elsewhere.3 The sheer brutality of the massacre as it was described and

---

the language used to talk about Jews by the contemporary fundamentalists featured in the book sent shock-waves through my teenage psyche.

Angered at what my grandfather was forced to endure and enraged at the apparent ceaselessness of anti-Jewish oppression and hatred, my reaction was to transform how I saw my Jewishness, hitherto uninteresting and more or less mundane, into a Jewishness of pride, strength, and desire. I remember wanting to get a tattoo on my arm in the same place and in the same font as that of a Nazi concentration camp inmate, except instead of numbers it would read חײם, my Hebrew name meaning “life.” It was as if to say to the Nazis, “you tried to get rid of us, but we're still here, living and proud.”

My attempt at re-envisioning my Jewish persona again took me back to the bookstore. This time I picked up a book called *Tough Jews: Fathers, Sons, and Gangster Dreams* by Rich Cohen, a chronicle of the lives of Jewish gangsters like Meyer Lansky and Bugsy Siegel, who, like Italian mobsters, seemed to be the very embodiment of coolness. As it turned out, Bugsy Siegel and I had the same birthday, and, I liked to think, similar features. But beyond loading me with some interesting pieces of historical trivia to challenge stereotypes of Jewish weakness, and, I must say, a good costume for Halloween, there was little that Jewish gangsters from the 1930s could do to help bolster my Jewish image.

Enter Israel. My childhood attendance at a mainstream Jewish afternoon school meant that Israel had always been a part of my Jewish identity. I planted trees every year with the Jewish National Fund, learned Israeli songs and dances with my fifth grade teacher, and spent time learning Hebrew from the Israeli teachers in the school. But my interest in Israel

---

and Wang, 1993), 319.

was not really sparked until after 9/11 when I was about 17 or so. It was at this point that I came to see Israel in a different light. No longer simply a land of religious and historical significance, Israel became a place where being Jewish meant being strong, cool and proud—exactly the Jewish identity that I sought for myself.

By the end of high school I could not wait to see Israel for myself. Taglit Birthright Israel was just the opportunity I was looking for: a free 10-day trip to Israel for Jews my age to see the “homeland.” In preparation for my trip I thought it would be a good idea to learn a bit more about the place that had so captivated my attention. I had heard that there were problems there, that there was a conflict between Israelis and Palestinians, and even that Palestinians were treated unjustly by the Israeli government and military, but the extent of my understanding was minimal.

I returned to the bookstore, this time to find a book on the history of the conflict. There was a multitude of books that seemed to express and defend one side or the other. So instead of choosing one of those, I tried to find one that looked as neutral as possible. My pick was the newly-updated version of journalist David Shipler's Arab and Jew: Wounded Spirits in a Promised Land, a beautifully-written journalistic-style book packed with personal and historical details pertaining to the conflict and the region. Looking through the pages of Shipler's book now, I realize that he really only scratched the surface with respect to Israel's troubling history; but at the time, it was enough to have opened my eyes to the severity of injustice perpetrated by the state of Israel against the Palestinians.

I continued reading the book throughout my Birthright trip during the few rare

moments of downtime that we were afforded between sightseeing, partying and feasting. "Shocked by what I had been reading, I informed others on the trip about my discoveries, but most of them did not seem to want to know. They were having too much fun! I distinctly remember one guy even saying, “I know, but stop talking about it. Those things make us seem like the bad guys. We are surrounded by enemies, what else are we supposed to do?”"

What he said disturbed me. How could we wilfully ignore our involvement in the oppression of another people? A similar sentiment of self-censorship came from the tour director, who, in one of the few short discussions with him, told us something to the effect of: “It is enough with these left wing Jews in America and Canada criticizing Israel. If they want to criticize Israel, they should move to Israel. Otherwise, we have to stand together and defend Israel.”

Taken aback as I was by these remarks, I still could not help but be sucked in by the intense nationalistic spirit of the trip and the seductive sense of pride and strength that it inspired. We must have spontaneously chanted Am Yisrael Chai fifteen times in ten days, each time with more enthusiasm.

I returned from my trip confused. On the one hand, I loved Israel and how it made me feel. On the other hand, I could not support Israel unconditionally or remain silent about what I strongly felt were criticisms that desperately needed to be voiced, especially by Jews. It was not long thereafter that I came to the conclusion that my support for Zionism and Israel, at least in its current form, could not be reconciled with my general values and beliefs in universal human rights and justice. How could I rationalize why I, someone who has virtually no familial history in Israel, can move to Israel and attain automatic citizenship, while my Palestinian friends are refused entry to even visit the land where their grandparents and great
grandparents were born. How could I defend Israel’s right to exist as a Jewish-majority state when maintaining that majority continues to require the disenfranchisement and displacement of non-Jews? How could I honour the memory of my family who died in the Holocaust and at the same time support the exile, killing and ghettoization of another people? I simply could not stand by idly as the state of Israel continued to perpetuate its policies of occupation, colonialism, and apartheid.6

Joining the Palestine solidarity movement meant that in the eyes of the mainstream Jewish community, I had crossed the line. I had crossed over to the dark side, lodged alongside Palestinian suicide bombers, anti-Semites, and other supposedly self-hating Jews, as Jews who openly criticize Israel are often labelled. Although quite difficult to begin with,7 I felt comfort in the idea that by standing for justice I was joining a long list of Jewish academics and activists who have opposed the political Zionist agenda of creating and maintaining a state that privileges Jews at the incredible cost of Palestinian displacement, death and repression.8 This list spans many generations, from Hannah Arendt, one of the great philosophers of the mid-twentieth century, who, though a (cultural) Zionist, objected strongly to the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, to Judith Butler, among today’s

---


7 For more on the challenges many Jewish activists involved in Palestine solidarity face, see Sheryl Nestel and Emma Jo Aiken, “Mapping Jewish Dissent: Jewish Anti-Occupation Activism in Toronto,” Canadian Jewish Outlook, May 2004.

great philosophers and a recent endorser of the Palestinian call for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies by international law. It also includes such immensely influential public intellectuals as Noam Chomsky, who has for decades been committed to exposing the connections between US imperialism and Israel, and lifetime activists like Marek Adelman, an anti-Zionist leader of the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising and one of the few Jews that refused to leave his native Poland following the Nazi Holocaust.

I share with these great academics and activists a position that is both inside and outside what is often considered “the Jewish community.” I am an insider to the extent that I am a Jew and therefore a “member of the tribe,” but I am an outsider because the political views which I espouse do not conform to what is popularly viewed within most contemporary Jewish circles as acceptable discourse. This insider/outsider perspective puts me in an interesting position as a researcher because, while my focus is not personal, I can never truly remove myself from the subject of my research. The factors that drew me to Zionism and eventually away from it are after all not unique, but are on the contrary quite common as this study will suggest. It is for this reason that I began with a personal reflection describing the evolution of my relationship with Israel. It is moreover because of my close but now distanced connection with Zionist discourse that I am able to delve so deeply into the subject matter at hand.

---

9 In reality, there are many Jewish communities. What is constructed as the Jewish community in Canada is usually confined to those who are represented by the main Jewish organizations in the country; most prominently, the Canadian Jewish Congress, and the United Israel Appeal Federations of Canada. Jewish communities and organizations that have adopted, or that tolerate, staunch opposition to Israel’s practices vis-à-vie the Palestinians, are excluded from representation and funding by these bodies. See, for instance, “Alliance for Concerned Jewish Canadians Slams Canadian Jewish Congress Exclusion” (press release), Canpalnet, June 3, 2007, http://www.canpalnet.ca/mambo/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=226&Itemid=41; Francis Kraft, “Winchevsky Meeting with CJC, Federation in Limbo,” Canadian Jewish News, March 9, 2011, http://www.cjnews.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=20966&Itemid=86.
Research Focus and Field of Study

In her short book, *The Question of Zion*, literary critic Jacqueline Rose embarks on the academic pursuit of trying to grasp and explain “what it is about Zionism that commands such passionate and seemingly intractable allegiance.”¹⁰ This thesis follows a similar line of inquiry. My focus nevertheless differs substantially from Rose's, whose work looks primarily at Israelis and at early Zionist thinkers such as Theodore Herzl, Chaim Weizmann, and Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky. While I attend significantly to these thinkers and to Israelis, the primary aim of my work is to develop a better understanding of Zionism as it has come to be manifested in the contemporary North American Jewish Diaspora, most specifically in Canada. It also differs from Rose’s work in that I pay much more attention to the significance of Jewish whiteness and its relationship to Zionism, as well as to some of the various discursive practices that work to maintain Zionist hegemony in the North American Jewish context.

I consider this thesis a continuation of the work I have been doing informally for some time. Ever since my interest in Israel was ignited in the years leading up to my Birthright trip, I have been attempting to understand and subsequently convey the factors which motivate the various stakeholders emotionally invested in the politics of Palestine/Israel to adopt the positions that they do. There is always a story, a series of historical and contemporary factors, that can explain these motivations and the identities associated with them. My intention is not to rationalize or legitimize but rather to illustrate the complexities of identity and subject formation. As women’s studies scholar Dina Georgis

suggests, “political responses that do not account for the emotional force of identity in political conflict are naively optimistic” because they fail to address what it is that has led to the conflict in the first place.

This thesis explores the Jewish-Zionist side(s) of the equation. From the context in which it arose, through the minds of its early proponents, and into the lives of so many Jews today, it traces the appeal of Israel and Zionism, particularly though not exclusively for males of Ashkenazi descent. It therefore presents a close examination both of the history of Zionism in Europe and of its later manifestations in Israel, the United States, and in Canada. What I refer to as Diaspora Zionism is explicitly in reference to the general form of Zionism that has demonstrably become hegemonic in the North American Jewish Diaspora over the past few decades. This type of Zionism notably differs from classical Zionism in that the central Zionist requirement for every Jew to make aliyah, Hebrew for the “ascent” to Israel, has all but been abandoned. Diaspora Zionism is defined simply as non-Israeli Jewish support for the maintenance of the state of Israel as a Jewish state, by which is meant a state that privileges Jews and/or secures a Jewish demographic advantage.

Common sense understandings of Diaspora Zionism attribute the allegiance it holds to three primary factors: the desire to safe-guard a homeland for Jews; Israel’s cultural and

---


12 Importantly, a Jewish state is in this sense distinct from a state governed by halakha, or Jewish law. Although many on the religious right, including the current Israeli Justice Minister Ya’akov Ne’eman, have argued for the further application of halakha to state practice, Israel remains primarily a Jewish state with respect to ethnicity rather than religion. Current halakhic authority over issues such as marriage and burial have led some, including Israeli journalist Gideon Levy, to argue that Israel is at least a “semi-theocracy.” See Gideon Levy, “Let’s Face the Facts, Israel is a Semi-Theocracy,” Haaretz, December 10, 2009, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/gideon-levy-let-s-face-the-facts-israel-is-a-semi-theocracy-1.2438.
religious significance; and the general tendency for people to support those in their own in-
group, in this case Jews around the world. While I do not in any way wish to discount the
significance of these factors, the message that I hope to convey in this thesis is that Diaspora
Zionism is a much more complex phenomenon than is commonly understood. In order to
accomplish this I have sought to place Diaspora Zionism in its historical context and examine
it in a way that differs from more commonplace approaches.

This work serves as a contribution to the field of Jewish cultural studies, also known
as the “new Jewish studies.” Utilizing sociological, psychoanalytic and cultural studies
literature on critical theory, difference, gender, and race, the emergent field of Jewish cultural
studies offers new and challenging ways to think about the study of Jewish identity within a
postmodern, critical multicultural framework. Such a critical approach, according to Daniel
and Jonathan Boyarin, involves understanding history and identity in a manner that accounts
for the “powerful ways that they inform each other,” while simultaneously taking into
consideration that “in exploring and articulating our various identities we are simultaneously
remaking history.” Ella Habiba Shohat, Jacqueline Rose, Todd Samuel Presner, Laurence
Jay Silberstein, Karen Brodkin, and Jonathan and Daniel Boyarin are just a few of the
exemplary scholars that have pursued research in this field. Yet while these scholars continue
to produce groundbreaking work, the fact that this field of study remains relatively marginal,
means that there are many topics left to be explored. This is especially the case in reference

---

13 Jonathan Boyarin and Daniel Boyarin, eds., Jews and Other Differences: The New Jewish Cultural Studies
(Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1997).
14 Scott Heller, “The New Jewish Studies: Defying Tradition and Easy Categorization.” The Chronicle of
15 Boyarin and Boyarin, 1997, xii.
to the Canadian context, where very little, aside from a few notable master's theses and doctoral dissertations, has been done in this area.\(^\text{16}\) This work will therefore be filling a number of large gaps in the literature.

Due to the scarcity of critical Canadian sources, I have had to draw heavily on the US literature, most of which excludes the Canadian context. This relatively extensive body of scholarship has provided me with a degree of insight that I would not have been able to attain if I had decided to rely solely on Canadian sources. The US context is after all in many ways similar to the Canadian context, largely as a product of the tremendous influence American Jewry has had on Canadian Jewry. Nevertheless, the latter cannot be equated with the former. As such, I draw both from my own analysis and from what exists of the Canadian Jewish studies literature to inform how some of the ideas and revelations of the US-focused scholarship apply north of the border. I also draw from scholarship that focuses on the United Kingdom, Australia, and Israel.

**Piecing Together a Framework**

Following in the interdisciplinary tradition of Jewish cultural studies, and of cultural studies in general, I decided against the adoption of a single theoretical framework. Instead, I take advantage of a wide array of critical theories and theorists to form what is known as a bricolage—“a pieced-together set of representations that is

fitted to the specifics of a complex situation.”17 Included within this theoretical
tapestry are insights attributed to Sigmund Freud, Franz Fanon, Slavoj Žižek, Antonio
Gramsci, Michel Foucault, Sara Ahmed, and Richard Dyer, among others. More
specifically, I use Foucault to think about how the discourses that legitimate Zionism
are constructed and circulated; Gramsci to provide a basis for understanding how the
dominance of Diaspora Zionism is maintained; Freud, Žižek, and Fanon to
conceptualize what it is that makes these discourses so attractive to Jewish subjects;
and critical race scholars Sara Ahmed and Richard Dyer to comprehend how we can
make sense of Diaspora Zionism in racial terms.

I am aware that such a multifarious array of theoretical lenses may surprise some
readers, for instance with regard to my inclusion of both Foucault and Freud. I am, however,
willing to postulate, as others including renowned anthropologist Ann Laura Stoler have, that
saying “yes” to Foucault does not necessarily mean saying “no” to Freud.18 “If Foucault has
led us to the power of discourse,” writes Stoler, “it is Freud that has, albeit indirectly, turned
us toward the power of fantasy, to imagine terror, to perceived assaults on the European self
that made up the anxious and ambivalent world in which European colonials lived.”19
Foucault has furthermore given us a basis upon which to understand the construction of
discourse, while Freud has helped us to understand why particular discourses may resonate
over others.

---

17 Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, “Introduction: The Discipline and Practice of Qualitative
Research,” in The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research, 3rd ed, eds. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S.
18 Ann Laura Stoler, Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault's History of Sexuality and the Colonial
19 Ibid., 169.
This cross-referencing of ideas is indeed the trademark of the postmodern frame, which underpins much of the Jewish cultural studies literature. As a critique of modernity, with its obsession over fixity, rationality, and the boundedness of classificatory categories, the postmodern frame is open to research that crosses disciplinary frontiers and that takes various perspectives into account. The same goes for notions of ethnicity, nationality, sexuality, class, gender, race, ability, and any other category of difference. In contrast to modernity's “uneasiness with ambiguities and ambivalences which disturb and destabilize neat boundaries and borders,” the postmodern frame embraces heterogeneity and challenges notions that anything can truly be fixed. The postmodern frame is in this regard closely connected with a post-structuralist understanding of language and meaning.

Post-structuralism is an analytical theory which suggests that all meaning is socially constructed and that everything is open to a plurality of interpretations, contingent upon various forms of power. The central apparatus by which this meaning is construed is language. It is within language that everything is “defined and contested” and “where our sense of ourselves, our subjectivity, is constructed.” This implies that there is no truth outside of language; which notably is not to say that there are certain things that happen that are incontestable, such as life and death. The point is that we only understand these phenomena through language, which ultimately gives them meaning.

Structuralist sociolinguist and philosopher Ferdinand de Saussure was the first to

---

make this argument by way of his theory of the sign. Saussure argued that all meaning is constitutive of signifier (the sound or written image) and signified (the meaning), which together construct our realities. Post-structuralist theory adopts this idea, but parts from Saussure on one crucial point. Whereas Saussure saw meaning as fixed, post-structuralists maintain that we must account for the plurality and historical specificity of meaning. As Ali Rattansi explains, “signifiers are always located in a discursive context and the temporary fixing of meaning in a specific reading of a signifier depends on this discursive context.”

Here, post-structuralist theory is based on ideas developed by Foucault.

For Foucault, discourses should be conceived not solely as bodies of ideas and knowledge, but also as “working attitudes, modes of address, terms of reference, and courses of action suffused into social practice” within which objects and subjects are systematically formed. In Foucault's words,

> We shall call discourse a group of statements in so far as they belong to the same discursive formation [...] made up of a limited number of statements for which a group of conditions of existence can be defined. Discourse in this sense is not an ideal, timeless form [...] it is, from beginning to end, historical—a fragment of history [...] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality.

According to critical theorist Derek Hook, discourses in the Foucauldian sense can furthermore be thought of as “the conceptual terrain in which knowledge is formed and produced” that in practice makes it “virtually impossible to think outside of them.”

---

22 Ibid., 24.
greater the perception that statements within a particular discourse are embedded within notions of what is “true” and reasonable, the stronger they ultimately will be.26 Crucially, Foucault insists that discourses, being neither fixed nor stable, are constantly changing, their dominance largely dependent on the historical moment, on the flow of ideas, power relations and discursive practices “embodied in technical processes, [...] institutions, [...] patterns of general behaviour, [...] forms of transmission and diffusion and [...] pedagogical forms which, at once, impose and maintain them.”27

As noted, this line of analysis has significant implications for subject-formation. Seen in this way, subjects are not free-thinking individuals, but are, rather, the products of power and discourse. They are in other words “constituted through discourses that subject individuals to discursively available positions,”28 or subject positions, which position subjects in relation to each other. Characteristic of these subject positions—be they racial, gendered, national, etc—is that they are constantly perceived as being under threat from internal and external others, from those who do not fit within the normative boundaries defined by modernist discourse. This leads on the one hand to racism, sexism, and xenophobic nationalism, and on the other hand to desires amongst marginalized subjects to occupy more dominant subject positions.

The revelations of critical race theory are important for such discussions. As philosopher and critical race theorist David Theo Goldberg explains, “We have come, if only

---

26 Ibid., 524.
silently, to conceive of social subjects foremost in racial terms.”29 Although often considered today to be inconsequential and a matter of the past, of pre-modernity, Goldberg argues that race is omnipresent: “Race is irrelevant but all is race.”30 Within this view of the world informed by race lies a particularly produced racial ideal: whiteness. As I will explain in depth in Chapter Three, whiteness is a manner of being in the world that is aspired to. It is a means of advancing in society and overcoming the denigration of (non-white) racial difference. Tied up in this ideal are equally dominant (and bound) conceptions of gender, sexuality and so on, which function to repress all those deemed different or abnormal—that is, unless they are able to successfully conform.

The dominance that whiteness holds as a subject position can likewise be characterized as hegemonic. According to Italian philosopher Antonio Gramsci, the concept of hegemony pertains to a particular way of knowing that secures popular support through a combination of coercion and consent. As cultural theorist Stuart Hall points out, “hegemony is not exercised in the economic and administrative fields alone. It “encompasses the critical domains of culture, moral, ethical and intellectual leadership” as well.31 These diffuse forms of discursive power are fundamental to the maintenance of consent for any hegemonic regime or ideology.

To Gramsci, ideology is “a conception of the world, any philosophy, which becomes a cultural movement, a 'religion,' a 'faith,' that has produced a form of practical activity or will

30 Ibid., 6.
in which a philosophy is contained as an implicit theoretical ‘premise.’” A further characteristic of ideology according to Gramsci is that it is constantly faced with the problem of “preserving the ideological unity of the entire social bloc which that ideology serves to cement and unify.” The ultimate goal of this effort is the achievement of ideological dominance, which in Gramsci's conception is characterized by the entering of that ideology into the realm of common sense. Similar in many ways to Foucault's understanding of dominant discourses, common sense “represents itself as the ‘traditional wisdom or truth of the ages,’ but in fact, it is deeply a product of history, ‘part of the historical process.’” The maintenance of a particular ideology within the realm of common sense thus requires a diverse range of institutional supports. The school, the family, the church, and the media are just some of the institutions upon which ideologies depend. For as Hall explains with reference to Gramsci, “popular beliefs, the culture of a people [...] are not arenas of struggle which can be left to look after themselves.” As I demonstrate in Chapter Four, they need to be actively maintained and reinforced.

Some ideologies nevertheless require more maintenance and reinforced than others. A key determinant is the extent to which a particular ideology interacts with other dominant ideologies and discourses, forming what are known as ideological complexes, ensembles or discursive formations. Compatibility with hegemonic notions of whiteness, for instance, or with a dominant conception of justice, would work to the benefit of that ideology. Moreover,

33 Hall, “Gramsci’s Relevance”, 431.
34 Ibid., 432.
35 Ibid., 434.
the more it triggers the fears and desires of its targeted social bloc, the more hegemonic it is likely to become.

It is in this regard that I bring in psychoanalysis; not, I must point out, because I adhere to conventional psychoanalytic notions of an inherent truth of the subject, but because I recognize the relevance of individual unacknowledged, unconscious fears and desires in determining the appeal of particular identities or subject positions. That these emotions are discursively mediated and constructed is beside the point, since their effect in connecting fears and desires with particular ideologies is one and the same. For insight into what these particular affects might be, I look to Freud, I look to Žižek, and I look to Fanon, each of whom provide invaluable revelations for the study herein.

Methodology

In *The Concern for Truth*, Foucault outlines what he considers to be the proper work of an intellectual:

> The work of an intellectual is not to shape others’ political will; it is, through the analysis that s/he carries out in her own field, to question over and over again what is postulated as self-evident, to disturb people's mental habits, the way they do and think things, to dissipate what is familiar and accepted, to reexamine (sic) rules and institutions on the basis of this reproblematisation.36

It is with this endeavour in mind that I undertake what Foucault, following German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, has called a genealogy. International relations scholar

---

Steven Elbe outlines four fundamental aspects of the genealogical method. A genealogy is firstly a *historical* analysis, albeit one that is primarily concerned with the here and now. As opposed to more conventional historical analyses, genealogies are interested in the past only insomuch as it can “illuminate our understanding of the present.” A genealogy is secondly a *critical* approach in that it seeks to uncover how contemporary phenomena have emerged historically in order to open possibilities for critical reflection in and on the present. Thirdly, a genealogy can be characterized as *episodical* because of its focus on the “crucial and contingent historical shifts” that have enabled particular phenomena to emerge, rather than on recounting a complete history of those phenomena. Lastly, Elbe points out that a genealogy is an example of what Nietzsche termed *effective* history, an approach that “seeks to distance itself as far as possible from many of the metaphysical assumptions that accompany more traditional histories, such as the correspondence theory of truth, the notion of a transcendental subject, the tendency to view the present as the progressive unfolding of the past, and the possibility of attaining a supra-historical perspective.” Genealogy can moreover be considered a technique of destabilization, its fundamental purpose to denaturalize knowledge, to show that like everything else what is considered by many to be true and self-evident actually has a historical basis that is embedded in, rather than distinct from, power relations.

My intention following these general methodological guidelines is to conduct a genealogy of Diaspora Zionism; to complicate it in the interest of challenging those simplistic explanatory links between Jews and Zionism that so dominate present-day

---

discourse. Foucault does not apply any labels to the forms of genealogy he discusses in his work but writes of various inquisitive endeavours in which a genealogical method can appropriately be employed. Political scientist John S. Ransom follows Foucault’s prompts and helpfully breaks down the genealogical method into a number of applicable forms. These include historical genealogy, political genealogy, and comparative genealogy. It is without a doubt the political approach that I have undertaken here. The main distinction between this approach and the others is that political genealogy attempts to move beyond disturbing the present by inciting “the creation of new power-knowledge circuits that can compete with and supplant old ones.” It is in this sense an oppositional tactic that “seeks to do battle with and supersede the dominant perspectives of the day.” Its fundamental purpose: “to produce critical effects in the present” by revealing the historical artefacts of struggle and meaning-making which have heretofore been marginalized in the realm of popular knowledge and belief. I make note of this simply to clarify what should by now be quite obvious: that I have not produced this work for its own sake. On the contrary, I have written this thesis to both better my own understanding and to share with others my findings, such that we can all be better equipped at challenging the hegemony of Zionism today.

I thus make no qualms about being subjective, as I recognize that objectivity, often known as neutrality, is an impossible aspiration. Particularly when dealing with such an acrimonious topic, any claims to the contrary are not only dishonest but are often extremely

---

39 Ibid., 96.
40 Ibid., 79.
damaging. As American political scientist and staunch Jewish critic of Israel Sara Roy writes,

> The disinterested pursuit of knowledge—that is, objectivity—in writing about the Palestinian-Israeli conflict aims, among other things, to create balance or equity where none in fact exists. Consequently, not only does the process of inquiry become severed from the local realities it is called upon to examine, it has the effect of displacing sustained attention to those realities and their damaging impact, blinding us to what is taking place before our eyes. Instead, the “need” to be objective results in ideological warfare and political gamesmanship where the stronger party, Israel, predominates.\footnote{Sara Roy, “Humanism, Scholarship and Politics: Writing on the Palestinian-Israeli Conflict,” \textit{Journal of Palestine Studies} 36, no. 2 (Winter 2007): 57.}

Instead of neutrality, Roy suggests that a scholar’s commitment should be to accuracy, “to be as close to knowledge as possible rather than to truth with a capital ‘T’.”\footnote{Ibid., 58.} Such an approach notably does not eliminate individual judgement and imagination, but embraces them as essential components of the what that a scholar is tasked with.\footnote{Ibid., 55.} Though Roy makes no prescriptions about methodological approaches that are in line with such a project, the precepts behind genealogy—namely that truth is contested and that knowledge is informed by power—make it an excellent basis upon which to conduct this research.

Discourse analysis is another methodology that fits well within Roy’s recommended approach to knowledge and research, and is one that I likewise employ in this thesis. My intention following this research method is to complement my genealogy by analyzing specific examples of Zionist discursive practice. Similar to genealogy, discourse analysis is a critical qualitative approach that seeks to uncover what lies beneath particular discourses and phenomena. Discourse analysis is also a methodology that has been greatly informed by the work of Foucault. The central difference is that discourse analysis is focused on the specifics

---

\footnote{Ibid., 58.}
\footnote{Ibid., 55.}
of discursive practice, while the former is concerned primarily with the sporadic evolution of those discourses over time. As social psychologists Scott Yates and Dave Hiles suggest, whereas “genealogy focuses on the historicity and contingent emergence of objects of knowledge and systems of practices, discourse analysis can provide a specific focus on the consequences of power for people who are its subjects.”\textsuperscript{44} Discourse analysis moreover offers a basis upon which to examine the less outright obvious effects of discourse on subject formation. It does so by examining texts with an eye to their social and political implications, including their role in “inculcating and sustaining or changing ideologies.”\textsuperscript{45} Importantly, such analysis is not necessarily reserved to written or spoken text, but is open to other “texts” which are, for instance, embodied in images and discursive practices.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Chapter Outline}

I have divided this thesis into two parts. The first part—Chapters One, Two, and Three—is a genealogical analysis of Diaspora Zionism in Canada. The intent of this section is to trace the history of Diaspora Zionism and to develop a better understanding of Diaspora Zionism’s logic through the various critical lenses that I have chosen.

Part One sets off with an attempt to understand the logic of Diaspora Zionism in relation to two of its primary constituent features: diaspora and nationalism. As I argue, although diaspora is often conceived in postmodern and postcolonial circles as being


\textsuperscript{46} Hook, 530.
antithetical to nationalism, the two concepts often function contemporaneously, as the case of Jewish Diaspora Zionism exemplifies so well. Chapter One therefore begins with a background on diaspora and nationalism, henceforth transitioning into the development of Zionism in Europe and North America. This chapter furthermore seeks to map out the institutional backing Israel receives in the Canadian Jewish community, along with some of the fundamental interests that Diaspora Zionism acts to fulfil.

In Chapter Two I continue my genealogical analysis with an examination of anti-Semitic discourse and its historic role in channelling Jews toward Zionism. My intention here is to shed light on some of the affective, psychoanalytic explanations for Jewish adherence to Zionism from the time of its founding until today. It is also in this chapter that I introduce the new Jew; a figure that I argue continues to play a strong role in attracting Jews to Zionism.

In Chapter Three I insert whiteness into the equation. Drawing on the work of various scholars including Sara Ahmed, Franz Fanon, Richard Dyer, and Daniel Boyarin, this chapter elucidates what I argue to be the close relationship between Jewish-Zionism and whiteness. As I demonstrate, Zionism has been inseparable from Jewish attempts to whiten their image in the eyes of anti-Semites, who have considered Jews to be less-than-white and even black.

Part Two then proceeds with an examination of how consent for the hegemony of Zionism is actively maintained in present day Canada. In recognition of the Gramscian assertion that “the winning of popular consent is a very complex process” which “must be researched carefully on a case-by-case basis,”47 I conduct a discourse analysis of some of the

---

various campaigns and activities engaged in by two of the most dominant Jewish-Zionist educational organizations: the Jewish National Fund and Taglit Birthright Israel. By using a discourse analytic methodology I attempt to unearth the active functions and social consequences of these campaigns by describing and analyzing the discursive practices upon which these organizations and campaigns rely. I have done this by examining multiple websites and other publicly available materials, by taking into account similar analyses conducted by other critical scholars, as well as by drawing on my own experiences, most specifically with Taglit Birthright Israel. Crucially, given the historical element of these case studies, I do not see this chapter as distinct from my genealogical approach, but rather as an extension of it.

As the subsequent pages will furthermore demonstrate, the appeal of Israel—reinforced by fundraising and pedagogical appeals for Israel—has and continues to be quite powerful for Diaspora Jews. Adherence to Zionism provides Jews with a sense of home, of belonging, of safety, of normalcy, and as I shall argue, of whiteness. I nevertheless remain unconvinced that majority Jewish support for Israel in both Canada and the US can be maintained indefinitely. The appeal is strong, but it is certainly not immutable.
CHAPTER ONE

Diaspora Zionism

Introduction

I had not given too much thought to the idea of diaspora before beginning graduate school, but from what I recall, it never occurred to me that it could be something other than a negative expression. I valued growing up in the multicultural environs of my childhood and appreciated the everyday cultural exchanges which made me who I was, but I did not associate these things with diaspora. Diaspora to me was explicitly associated with the Jewish Diaspora—to which I understood myself to belong—the result of exile, pogroms, the Inquisition, the Holocaust. It might have been ignorance or ethnocentrism, but Jews were the only group I heard being referred to in this way. In any case, the connotation was not a positive one. Diaspora connoted vulnerability, marginality, suffering. I, for one, did not feel threatened growing up in my middle-class suburb of Ottawa, but I definitely felt like a minority. I was no less Canadian than the rest of my Canadian friends: third-generation, born to Canadian born parents, with two Canadian-born grandparents. Yet that did not seem to matter. I was Jewish, so my belonging was always in question; especially in my own self-perceptions.
As I have come to realize, diaspora is in fact quite broadly defined, and is even celebrated for various reasons; namely, its fluidity, its heterogeneity, and its ability to allow for physical and emotional distance from national encampments. It is moreover a phenomenon seen to offer somewhat of a countervailing force to the homogenizing powers of nationalism. Yet as this chapter will demonstrate, diaspora is by no means immune to the allure of nationalism. On the contrary, I argue that nationalism is a logical reaction to the feelings of non-belonging and homelessness that so often characterize diasporic life.

The intent of this chapter is to demonstrate how diaspora and nationalism can interact, with respect, in particular, to the Canadian Jewish Diaspora and the Zionist movement. This chapter also acts as the starting point for my genealogical analysis of Diaspora Zionism. I begin by examining what we can understand the term diaspora to confer. After explaining some of the various meanings of diaspora and how they historical apply to the Jewish Diaspora, I move to the historical development of nationalism in Europe. This will be followed by an examination of the formation and expansion of Jewish nationalism as it came to be manifested in the Zionist movement and all of its various conceptions. I then try to bring the two supposedly divergent concepts together in a discussion of how diaspora and Zionism have been able to function contemporaneously in the Canadian Jewish Diaspora. Finally, I discuss the relevance of the term Diaspora Zionism for describing Diaspora support for the maintenance of a Jewish state in Palestine/Israel.

Defining Diaspora

At its most basic level, diaspora refers to dispersal. Any group that resides away from its place of origin, or perceived homeland, may as such be considered diasporic. Some groups may have become diasporic due to voluntary immigration, others due to exile, slavery, or environmental disaster; but what they all share is the characteristic of being de-territorialized and/or transnational to some degree, spanning nation-states, continents and oceans through social, political and economic networks.

Notions of diaspora at one time referred almost exclusively to the Jewish Diaspora, invoking notions of forced displacement and exile. Today the term is commonly applied to various groups who live away from their ancestral homelands. Political Scientist William Safran's definition of diaspora is among the more commonly cited. Safran writes that diaspora groups are “expatriate minority communities” (1) which are dispersed from an original centre to a minimum of two peripheral places; (2) which maintain a “memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland”; (3) which “believe they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host country”; (4) which perceive their ancestral homeland as a place to return to “when the time is right”; (5) which are committed to the maintenance or eventual restoration of their homeland; and finally (6) which have a collective consciousness that is “importantly defined” by their relationship with the homeland.49

A notable criticism of Safran's definition comes from historian and cultural theorist James Clifford. Clifford argues that despite being defined to some degree by a common

origin, diaspora groups need not necessarily be defined primarily though a “real or symbolic homeland” or by a will to return. Clifford emphasizes the significance of lateral connections, which in many cases may take precedence over a common centre. “Decentered, lateral connections” writes Clifford, “may be as important as those formed around a teleology of origin/return.” Moreover, “a shared, ongoing history of displacement, suffering, adaptation, or resistance may be as important as the projection of a specific origin.”

Diaspora is furthermore perceived as a type of consciousness. One of the more prominent scholars to write about diaspora in this regard is postcolonial cultural theorist Paul Gilroy. Gilroy’s emphasis is on a certain duality. Drawing on W.E.B Du Bois' notion of a “double consciousness” it is about being both here and there, for instance being both British and Black of African descent. This duality therein stimulates connections between those who share common or similar “routes” and “roots.” It is a way to “stay and be different, to be something else complexly related to Africa and the Americas, to shared histories of enslavement, racism, subordination, cultural survival, hybridization, resistance, and political rebellion.” It is thus constituted both negatively by experiences of hardship and exclusion, and positively by connecting with a particular ancestral heritage and culture.

Another positive aspect of diaspora is its ability to open up new possibilities for cultural production, the formation of cultural hybrids and the development of new and unique creolized identities that take shape as a result of the movement of people and information across the globe. Clifford notes that diasporic cultures often seek hybridized cultural

---

52 Clifford, 308.
practices as a means of maintaining community, “selectively preserving and recovering traditions, 'customizing' and 'versioning' them in novel, hybrid, and often antagonistic situations.” Yet the transformation of cultures across varying geographies is also a phenomenon that occurs less consciously, a product of various peoples living together and drawing from different cultural sources and experiences.

The Jewish Diaspora remains an interesting, albeit complex, example of diaspora today. It involves a trans-territorial relationship between global Jewish communities, the territories in which they reside, and a homeland, be that a mythological Zion, the state of Israel or a territory of origin in Europe, North Africa, or elsewhere. It involves a type of consciousness (often castigated throughout history as a “dual loyalty”), which facilitates for Jews a sort of dual consciousness. And it has involved the production of unique hybrid cultures around the world, from Yiddish-Ashkenazi cultures, to Ladino or Judeo-Arabic Sephardic cultures, Amharic-Ethiopian cultures, Judeo-Persian cultures, and all their more recent incarnations in the Americas, Western Europe, Australia, and the state of Israel.

As I have noted, all diasporic peoples can be characterized by having some sort of connection with a (perceived) place of common origin in addition to the places in which they live. Yet a homeland need not be conceived of in terms of a nation-state or place which they can, do, or wish to return. As diaspora studies scholar Rima Berns-McGown explains, a homeland may have various different significances depending on the diasporic group and individual in question. It may

---

53 Clifford, 317.
54 For more on global Jewish diversity see, for instance, Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz, The Colors of Jews: Racial Politics and Radical Diasporism (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University, 2007).
be a place that they can only return to primarily in memory, whose path they can trace, whose houses and stores can be entered in their minds, but which has changed over time and in whose reality they would be lost were they to make the journey. And it might equally be only a place their parents or grandparents have described, or something they have read about in books or seen in movies. It might be a place that no longer exists, or that would be unrecognizable were they to find it. [And] it might be a place that exists primarily in stories – a mythic homeland.”

There are thus a wide range of roles which the homeland can play in defining the diasporic experience. Diasporic peoples that centre around a nation-state to which they can and do return differ both conceptually and experientially from those that cannot return, or that maintain a connection with a homeland that is more mythic or imaginative in nature. We might consider this to be the difference between the expatriate on the one hand, and the exile and refugee on the other. The crucial distinction is that the former are perceived to be grounded, rooted in a particular territory that they may call home, while the latter remain homeless. I say may because there is a chance that those who were once refugees or in exile manage to succeed at founding a new home in the form of a nation-state. These émigrés, as Edward Said calls them, are those who have been able to transform their situations of exile into those of dominance and privilege. Examples of these groups include the colonial settlers of the Americas and Australia, and, more recently, the Jews in Palestine.

Nationalism: The French, the Germans and the Jews

Contrary to common belief, the concept of the nation, and by relation of nationalism,
is actually a relatively recent phenomenon. Most scholarly accounts tend to pinpoint the French Revolution (1789-93) as the most significant turning point. Prior to this event, nations might have existed in the etymological sense—that is, groups of people linked by territory, language, ethnicity, culture and so on. Such groupings are what have been referred to as “proto-nations.” But the nation as it is currently imagined is a phenomenon rooted, most centrally, in this time period. The French Revolution in particular is an event that would change history to an extent that could never have been conceived of at the time.

The central tenets of the French Revolution—liberté, égalité, fraternité—provided the basis by which this change would occur. In displacing the monarchy from power, the agents of the revolution sought to create a political entity in which all members were equal and free and around which a diversity of peoples could be united. Among the primary tools chosen to accomplish these aims was language. The idea was that a common language could have the effect of levelling the playing field among the diversity of classes, proto-nations, and language groups formerly ruled by the French monarchy by providing everyone with access to education, health services and so on in a single language. So long as they spoke French, everyone, including Jews, were purported to have equal access—or so was the idea—and therefore the ability to succeed.

---


60 It was in this context that European Jews experienced their first encounter with legal emancipation.
Subsequent to the French Revolution, other groups began to make similar claims to sovereignty based on notions of intrinsic difference embedded in language. Nations thereby came to be established in the sense of what Benedict Anderson has famously called “imagined communities.” Far from being homogeneous, nations were almost always extremely heterogeneous in their ethno-linguistic composition. Contra nationalist mythology regarding the “primordial foundations of national culture and the matrices of the national mind,” national languages are most often at least semi-constructed as a way to unify a diverse population and create the means necessary for doing capitalism.

Under linguistic and cultural domination by the French under Napoleon Bonaparte, German nationalists sought to rescue what they perceived as the German nation by establishing an independent German nation-state. German nationalism was about resistance to foreign linguistic domination. What characterized it further was the idea that all German peoples were joined by what German philosopher Johann Gotlieb Fichte called “invisible bonds.” According to Fichte, all those who spoke a common language are unique and bound by a shared essence. This provided the grounds for establishing the modern German nation and for maintaining the purity of the newly conceived German people.

Though constructed of a heterogeneous population to begin with, nations began to maintain a relationship of dominance and exclusion in relation to certain linguistic, racial and ethnic groups not considered natural members of the imagined nation, despite the discourses of universalism they so often espoused. In Germany, a Fichtian reliance on racial and

---

62 Hobsbawm, 54.
63 See Joseph, 126.
linguistic purity became the rationale for excluding Jews, Roma, and others who were perceived to exist outside the confines of the German essence. Jews were also seen as a threat due to popular Jewish support for conflicting ideologies of universalism and communism, ideologies that were gaining momentum during the same time period.64

Back in France, despite the high promises of equality amongst the French people brought forth by the Revolution, the sense that Jews were somehow extrinsic to the national parameters surfaced with the Dreyfus Affair in 1864.65 Dreyfus, a decorated French military captain of Alsatian Jewish heritage, was accused of being a German spy and was falsely charged with treason. Dreyfus’ conviction sparked outrage in both France and Germany, leading to the proliferation of widespread anti-Semitism in the press. For the Jews of Western Europe, the rising negative sentiment was seen as a crushing blow to their aspirations to be treated as equal citizens in their nascent national communities.

The 1880s also saw the rise of nationalism in Russian and Eastern Europe. In the drive for unification and for characteristics upon which they would be defined as nations, Jews were largely left out of the equation in these regions as well. While it had been an underlying current for some time, widespread animosity toward Jews in Russia came to a climax with the assassination of Tsar Alexander II, which many blamed on the Jews. Also significant were the poor economic conditions of the time, for which Jews could easily be blamed.66

---

Throughout the previous centuries of pre-nationalist, pre-capitalist societies, Jews in Europe assumed the character of a “people-class” that engaged primarily in trade and later in usury. The predominance of Jews in these trades was not by chance, but rather was the result of limitations placed on Jews in the societies in which they lived. As Canadian political scientist Abigail Bakan explains, “trade was so despised in these societies that it was considered acceptable only to those who were 'foreigners,' and therefore 'below' the dominant kinship group.” By relation Jews were frequently forbidden to own land or participate in agriculture and were therefore often forced into these denigrated practices. Ironically, it was through these economic activities that the conditions were ultimately created for Jews to maintain their cultural distinctiveness as a group. But when it came to economic crises, Jews, as moneylenders and traders, were natural targets.

Massive violent riots known as pogroms swept across Russia from 1881 through 1884, and again between 1903 and 1906. Hundreds were killed in these pogroms and thousands forced to flee west in search of less hostile surroundings. Jews were likewise persecuted in the Austro-Hungarian Empire at this time, resulting in mass migrations to Western Europe, to the United States as well as to more nearby urban centres like Vienna. As the Jewish migrants would come to realize, anti-Semitism had taken hold there as well, especially following the arrival of poor Jewish refugees from Russia and Eastern Europe who were less acculturated to the dominant cultures. As it seemed during this time of rising

---

68 Bakan explains that if they were not involved in trade or usury, Jews were generally assimilated into the dominant cultures.
69 Shlomo Sand, The Invention of the Jewish People (New York: Verso, 2009), 53.
nationalisms, no matter where they went and no matter how much they tried to integrate into their respective European national communities, they would be seen as different, and treated accordingly.

It was in this context that a number of Jews began to take seriously the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine. Prior to this point, the vast majority of Jews that decided to emigrate from Europe to Palestine did so for religious reasons. Kabbalistic Jews, for instance, settled in the Palestinian city of Safed over the course of the previous few centuries.

According to widespread Jewish religious belief, exile from Eretz Yisrael, Hebrew for the “Land of Israel,” was a consequence of Jewish sin. Jews, in this respect, are only able to “return” as a result of the “universal effect of good deeds,” which will bring redemption and ultimately the coming of the Messiah. This meant that while Eretz Yisrael played a considerable role in Jewish life for religious reasons, it did not form much of a centre for the Jewish diasporic experience. Rather, the Jewish Diaspora contained multiple centres, from Al-Andalus to Prague to Baghdad, in addition to a common mythic homeland of Eretz Yisrael. These multiple centres are what Clifford refers to as the “lateral axes of diaspora”; a characteristic of the Jewish Diaspora that allowed for a more or less ambivalent relationship with Eretz Yisrael for much of Jewish history.

The primary proponents of the idea of Jewish settlement in Palestine through the 19th century were in fact Christian colonialists, who sought to settle Jews in Ottoman Palestine in the interest of Christianity and the expansion of the British Empire. The first known attempt

---

71 Clifford, 306.
to encourage Jewish settlement in Palestine was in 1809 with the establishment of the London Society for Promoting Christianity among Jews. In addition to proselytization, members of this new organization took it upon themselves to encourage Jewish immigration to Palestine, which they saw as consistent with Christian theology.\(^{72}\) In later decades, the British Empire itself began encouraging and facilitating Jewish settlement in Palestine. The rationale was simple: establishing a Jewish presence loyal to the Empire would give Britain a foothold in the resource-rich near east, while at the same time ridding Europe of its “Jewish problem.” To accomplish these goals, the British Empire charged Lieutenant Colonel George Gawler (1795-1869) with the task of promoting the idea amongst Jews. Under the leadership of Gawler and other British officials, the Association for Promoting Jewish Settlement (later known as the Palestine Fund) was established in 1852. It is important to note that at this point, Jews were largely averse to the idea.

Notable exceptions among Jews were Moses Hess (1812-1875) and Leon Pinsker (1821-1891). Writing in 1862 and 1882 respectively, Hess and Pinsker both argued that Jews would forever be strangers amongst the European nations and that the only way to free the Jews from the “illness” of anti-Semitism was by establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine. This idea of solving the Jewish problem by way of national rebirth and settlement in Palestine came to be known as “Zionism,” in reference to one of the Biblical names for Jerusalem. The term was coined by Viennese writer Nathan Birnbaum (1864-1937) in 1885.

Just over a decade later, the First Zionist Congress took place in Basle, Switzerland in 1897. The conference was convened by a Hungarian-born Viennese journalist by the name of

Theodore Herzl (1860-1904). Following the congress, Herzl wrote the following in his diary:

Were I to sum up the Basle Congress in a word-- which I shall guard against pronouncing publicly -- it would be this: At Basle I founded the Jewish State. If I said this out loud today, I would be answered by universal laughter. Perhaps in five years, and certainly in fifty, everyone will know it.73

Herzl went on to be considered the primary founder of the Zionist movement and of the ideology known as Zionism. The aim of Zionism was to bring Jews back into the course of history—or in other words into modernity—through a process of national regeneration. To the early Zionists, the nation was perceived like an antidote to the precariousness of diasporic existence on the European continent and across Russian Eurasia. The hope was that a state would bring to an end the centuries of oppression experienced by Jews in diaspora, allowing them to attain a degree of normalcy as a nation among nations. For this to happen, Jews needed to immigrate *en masse* to the state of Israel, a process known as *kibbutz galuyot,* Hebrew for the “ingathering of Diasporas.” Once in their national homeland, the hope was that Jews would depart from their diasporic cultures and adopt a unified Hebrew culture. As journalist Arthur Neslen writes, becoming “a nation like other nations” in the Zionist frame necessarily involved the “dissolution of traditional Jewish identities in a nationalist cauldron.”74 This meant that the ingathering of exile was also about *shlitat ha'galut,* or the “negation of exile,” in the sense that anything deemed diasporic had to be renounced in all but its most marginal articulations. The imaginary new state in Herzl’s vision would be cut out of the same stone as the emergent nationalisms being developed across Europe. It would

be based on the idea of a common essence among its members; it would have a dominant and
unifying language, Modern Hebrew,\textsuperscript{75} perceived as the true Jewish mother tongue; and of
course, it would have a heroic national story.

In his recent book, \textit{The Invention of the Jewish People}, Israeli historian Shlomo Sand
writes that the modern conception of Jewish history is largely constructed of myth. Sand
explains that in the process of nation-building, all nations construct a history based on a
particular narrative, which emphasizes certain episodes, drops some, and fabricates others.
These histories are almost always painted with a degree of triumph and heroism, and they
always suggest a connection with a particular ancestry. “To promote a homogeneous
collective in modern times,” Sand explains, “it was necessary to provide, among other things,
a long narrative suggesting a connection in time and space between the fathers and
‘forefathers’ of all the members of the present community.”\textsuperscript{76}

Sand traces the “invention” of the Jewish people to a number of key figures; most
Times to the Present}, released in eleven volumes from 1853 through 1870 was the first book
to offer a comprehensive interpretation of the history of Jews as a people. To uncover this
history, Graetz turned mainly to the Old Testament. Prior to Graetz, Sand argues that the
Jewish communities of Europe never considered the Old Testament to be a reliable
document, in which could be read accurate accounts of history.\textsuperscript{77} The Old Testament served

\textsuperscript{75} Modern Hebrew was developed by Eliezer Ben-Yehuda (1858-1922). An ardent Jewish nationalist, Ben-
Yehuda is known as the main catalyst behind the establishment of Hebrew as an everyday spoken language and
as the national language of the Jews.
\textsuperscript{76} Sand, 15.
\textsuperscript{77} Ibid., 74.
as a subject of constant interpretation and re-interpretation through the Mishnah and the Talmud, the two Jewish texts in most regular use. Following Graetz, however, and in the context of European nation-building, it was as if these interpretive filters became an inconvenience. For the primarily non-religious Jewish proto-nationalists, “Judaism would no longer be a rich and diverse religious civilization that managed to survive despite all difficulties and temptations in the shadow of giants.”78 From then on, it “became an ancient people or race that was uprooted from its homeland in Canaan and arrived in its youth at the gates of Berlin.” Neglected in Graetz’s reading, according to Sand, is the lack of evidence that a mass exile from ancient Israel ever occurred and the well-documented evidence that the majority of Jews had not even descended from ancient Israel but rather converted. Graetz’s “nationalization of the Bible” nevertheless took hold in Jewish circles and was eventually adopted and perfected by the founders of Zionist historiography.79

Though the discourse of a Jewish “tribe” or “people” was constructed, its constructedness did not inhibit its appeal. Israeli psychoanalyst Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi explains that Zionism was just one of various reactions to Jewish emancipation, the decline of the old Jewish community system, and the increasing secularization of European Jews.80 In this respect Zionism can be seen as somewhat of a response to the widespread sense of “homelessness” and confusion surrounding identity resultant from these dramatic historical changes.81 What Zionism did was fill the identity void by reconstructing a lost sense of Jewish community. As Sand suggests, “the welcoming bosom of the Bible, despite (or

78 Ibid., 73.
79 Ibid., 107.
80 Ibid., 6.
81 Ibid., 7.
perhaps because of) its miraculous and legendary character, could provide a long, almost an eternal, sense of belonging—something that the fast-moving, freighted present, could not give them."\(^{82}\)

It also provided Jews with a sense that they would be saved, or redeemed, an idea with significant pull even among the most marginally affiliated Jews. Jewish messianism, the belief the Jews will be redeemed by an individual Messiah or by the Messianic era itself, had long been a popular undercurrent of Jewish life. With the rise of the Zionist movement the prospects of being saved and of “returning” came within reach, if only in the teleology of the likes of Heinrich Graetz. With the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, it became attainable: nationalism effectively became the “new messianism - the aura of the sacred, with all its glory and tribulations, passed to the state.”\(^{83}\) Many ultra-orthodox Jewish groups nonetheless saw and continue to see Zionism as a rebellion against God, since, in their conception, the establishment of a Jewish state is in violation of the three sacred oaths in the Talmud: “not to ascend the wall (Israel must not burst into the land as one); not to force the end (to be left in the hands of heaven); not to rebel against the nations (there must be no countering the will of the world).”\(^{84}\) But since Zionism was largely a secular movement, these oaths were of little significance; for Zionism came with the promise of salvation regardless of belief.

The mainly secular base of the Zionist movement in its early years was willing to accept a national homeland just about anywhere. Options that were floated include territories in Uganda, Siberia, and Argentina. Palestine only become the agreed upon preference of the

\(^{82}\) Ibid., 127-8.
\(^{83}\) Rose, Question, 8.
\(^{84}\) Ibid., 32.
Zionist movement following the Balfour Declaration of 1917. Written by Lord Arthur Balfour of Britain and addressed to the elite British Jew Baron Walter Rothchild, the Declaration stated the following:

His Majesty’s Government view (sic) with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object, it being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other country.85

This Declaration gave the green light for Zionists to consolidate their push for the establishment of a national home in Palestine. The exact form that this national home would take, however, was still up for debate.

Over the course of its formative years leading to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948, there developed various divisions within the Zionist movement, which in most cases led to the establishment of separate organizations and institutions. These divisions can largely be separated into three basic categories: political Zionism, religious Zionism, and cultural Zionism.

The central thrust behind political Zionism was the establishment of a secular nation-state for the Jews, with Palestine as the preferred option. The first and originally most prominent form of political Zionism was the type articulated by Herzl, known variously as general, liberal, and Herzlian Zionism. This subsection of the political Zionist category was defined mainly by its close ties with the European liberal middle class, or bourgeoisie, and its orientation toward capitalism and European imperialism. Zionists of this persuasion hoped to

create a state based on private ownership and property by appealing to European powers like Britain and Germany in addition to the Ottoman Empire.

Labour Zionism developed as a sub-group of the political Zionist camp a few years following the first Zionist Congress in 1897. Labour Zionists desired to establish an agricultural society in Palestine based on a socialist approach. They believed that a Jewish state must be created through the efforts of the working class, particularly through the development of agricultural communes known as kibbutzim and moshavim. Influenced strongly by Russian socialism and by German romantic nationalism, labour Zionists argued that connecting with and working the land was the key to the transformation of the Diaspora Jew into a strong new Jewish subject, embodied in the romanticized idea of the rural halutz, or “pioneer.” Labour Zionism became the dominant Zionist ideology in the 1930s and remained so into the nascent years of Israeli statehood.86

A third form of political Zionism that developed was revisionist Zionism. Under the leadership of Vladimir (Ze'ev) Jabotinsky (1880-1940), the revisionist movement took a much more right-wing, even fascist, approach to the achievement of Zionist goals. As is often characteristic of right wing movements, the revisionists were quite clear about their aims. They were maximalists, calling for “the gradual transformation of Palestine (including Transjordan) into a self-governing commonwealth under the auspices of an established Jewish Majority” and they were upfront about their militarism, demanding a “systemic colonization régime to be charged with the positive task of creating the conditions necessary

---

for a Jewish mass colonization."\(^{87}\) Arab opposition was inevitable and acknowledged.\(^{88}\) To deal with this opposition Jabotinsky sought the formation of a powerful Jewish fortress-state that would guard against external enemies and that would hold back the native population. In his words: “Zionist colonization must either stop, or else proceed regardless of the native population. Which means that it can proceed and develop only under the protection of a power that is independent of the native population—behind an iron wall, which the native population cannot breach.”\(^{89}\)

National religious Zionism is related in many ways to the political Zionist movements, but is distinguished by its emphasis on Jewish law, or *halakha*. The Mizrahi movement, the first national religious Zionist group, was founded in 1902. Supporters of Mizrahi argued that the Torah should be at the centre of the Zionist project, instead of simply being used as a superficial means to legitimate desires for a national homeland.\(^{90}\) In the beginning of the 20\(^{th}\) century, there were very few orthodox supporters of Zionism, and virtually none within ultra-orthodox circles. This would change most notably as a product of the writings of Rabbi Abraham Isaac Kook (1865-1935). Rav Kook, as he is commonly known, famously postulated that the Zionist movement, though led by secularists, was in actuality part of a divine scheme to relocate Jews around the world to Eretz Yisrael in

---

\(^{87}\) Union of Zionists-Revisionists, “Basic Principles of Revisionism,” 3, 6, quoted in Laqueur, page 351.

\(^{88}\) Laqueur, 347.


preparation for the Messianic Age. It was thereby the duty of all Jews to take their place in the Promised Land and to occupy it in place of its erstwhile Palestinians Muslim and Christian inhabitants.

Cultural Zionism is the most dissimilar to other variants of Zionism that developed in the first half of the twentieth century. Led by Asher Ginsberg, who went by the Hebrew pen name Ahad Ha'am, meaning “One of the People,” Cultural Zionism advocated a completely different vision of national revival—one that would notably not require the establishment of a Jewish state. Cultural Zionists instead called for the building of Eretz Yisrael as a cultural and educational centre of the Jewish Diaspora. Ahah Ha'am's position was also more or less shared by Martin Buber and Hannah Arendt, two of the most prominent members of the Brit Shalom movement. Founded in 1925, Brit Shalom advocated for peaceful co-existence between Jews and Arabs and for the establishment of a bi-national state in which all would have equal rights. Brit Shalom also followed the lead of Ahah Ha'am by rejecting calls for kibbutz galuyot.

Cultural Zionism remained a marginal movement through subsequent years, eventually losing out to the political Zionists with the establishment of Israel in 1948. The state was initially led by Labour Zionists under the Mapai Party but it has since moved to the right. The most popular parties today are associated with Herzlian and Revisionist Zionism, represented by the two largest political parties in the Israeli Knesset: Kadima and Likud. National Religious Zionism has also grown in popularity, marked most notably by the

---

91 For a detailed history and analysis of national religious Zionism see Rabkin.
92 See Rose, Question, 89-94.
93 In 1965, Mapai merged with two other parties, Ahдут HaAvoda and Rafi, to form the Israeli Labor Party.
growing strength of the nationalist religious settler movement, which has adopted as its mandate the mission to claim all of *Eretz Yisrael*, including the occupied West Bank exclusively for Jews. As for cultural Zionism, while certainly an ideology that is still held by a number of Left scholars and intellectuals, including Noam Chomsky,94 most would now consider it to be equivalent to an anti-Zionist stance. Certain aspects of Cultural Zionism nevertheless remain strong within Zionist circles, namely its positioning of Israel as the cultural and educative centre of the diaspora and its rejection of kibbutz galuyot.

**Zionism in the Canadian Jewish Diaspora**

Canadian Zionism can be traced as far back as Canadian confederation in 1867 when a number of Christian Zionists began advocating for the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine. The most prominent Christian Zionist in Canada in this period was Henry Wentworth Monk (1827-1896). Monk was a mystic, Messianist and respected businessman who lobbied vigorously in Canada and England for the British to establish a dominion in Palestine for the resettlement of European Jews.95 The impetus for this growing movement, led by Monk, lay both in the Christian Zionist idea that Jewish settlement in Palestine would pave the way for the second coming of Jesus and in the idea that such settlement would be beneficial for the British empire, as it would help its expansion and strategic positioning in the near East.

Jewish-Canadian Zionism gained popularity, particularly among elite segments of

---


Canadian Jewry as Herzl's Zionist movement was still in its initial years. The most prominent of the early Jewish-Zionists was Clarence de Sola (1858-1920), under whose leadership was established the Federation of Canadian Zionist Societies in 1899. De Sola was an ardent Zionist and British loyalist, his goal to establish a Jewish state in Palestine for the sake of Jews but also for the sake of imperial expansion. This combination of goals meant that Jews were not accused of dual loyalty, as had been the case elsewhere and in the past. On the contrary, adherence to Zionism was perceived to be completely consistent with behaving as a good and loyal British subject. As historian Gerald Tulchinsky explains, “Loyalty to Zionism, to the British Empire, and to Canada was an attractive ‘package deal’ for Canadian Jews, with no apparent drawbacks.” De Sola expresses this view in a letter to a supporter in 1899. He writes:

The idea that the reestablishment of the Jewish state would throw suspicion upon the loyalty of Jews residing in other lands [is] too absurd to call for serious reply. To our minds, the Zionist movement aims at securing a home for Jews living in countries where they are suffering oppression. Those, who like ourselves, enjoy the same privileges as the other citizens of the countries we live in declare most emphatically our loyalty to the countries we live in notwithstanding that we are a nation.

Explicit governmental support in Canada for Zionism can be traced back as far as 1907 to a Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada convention in which 2 federal ministers told delegates that “Zionism had the support of the government.” This same sentiment was

---

96 The Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada changed its name to the Zionist Organization of Canada in 1925 and to the Zionist Federation of Canada in 1967.
98 Clarence de Sola (1899), quoted in Gerald Tulchinsky, Canada's Jews: A People's Journey (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 170.
99 A.B. Aylesworth, Dominion Minister of Justice, quoted in The Report of the Proceedings of the Convention of the Federation of Zionist Societies of Canada, 1907. See Michael Brown, “Zionism in the Pre-
echoed by various Prime Ministers, including William Lyon MacKenzie King (1874-1950) and Lester B. Pearson (1897-1972). Support from the Canadian government opened the door for Canadian Jews to support Zionism in greater numbers, since they did not have to worry about charges of dual loyalty, and might have even been rewarded for their Zionism. The Jewish establishment was, however, only “loosely associated” with Zionism during the first half of the 20th century.100 As in the US, many Canadian Jews, particularly workers in the garment industry, “rejected Zionism as unfeasible, in favor of class solidarity, or out of loyalty to a project of internationalist struggle for progressive social change.”101 Many also resented the negative view of the Diaspora espoused by many Zionists of the time.

Support for Zionism among Canadian Jews was nevertheless substantially stronger than south of the border, or for that matter, in much of Europe.102 Tulchinsky describes a number of factors that accounted for this. They include: “British chauvinism among Canada's Jews; the country's binational character and the absence of a countervailing pan-Canadian nationalism;103 the religious conservatism of Canadian Jews and their wide geographical dispersion; the organizational genius of Clarence de Sola himself, and the general

---


101 Ibid.

102 Engler, 17.

103 Michael Brown stresses the significance of a binational character with respect to the growth of Zionism in Canada. He explains that the dual nationalisms of Anglo and French Canada, both of which excluded Jews and other minority groups, encouraged Jews to organize on the basis of nationality, unlike American Jews, who organized primarily as a religious group. See Michael Brown, “Canadian Jews and Multiculturalism: Myths and Realities,” Jewish Political Studies Review 19, no. 3-4 (Fall 2007), http://jcpa.org/JCPA/Templates/ShowPage.asp?DRFT=5&DBID=1&LNGID=1&TMID=111&FID=625&PID=0&IID=1926&TTL=Canadian_Jews_and_Multiculturalism:_Myths_and_Realities.
“conservatism” of Canadian society.” Together these factors helped to make Canada a Zionist stronghold beginning at a relatively early stage in the movement.

Unlike Eastern European and Russian Zionist communities, the role of Canadian Jewish Zionists was not so much to mobilize their compatriots to emigrate to Palestine/Eretz Yisrael or even to emigrate themselves, though that was certainly a component of their work. Jewish Zionists in Canada, like their American counterparts, helped in other ways. In addition to encouraging aliyah, Zionist interest in the Canadian Jewish Diaspora was motivated by the dependency of the pre-state community, the Yishuv—and later the state of Israel—on political and economic support from Jews around the world. In turn, Jewish communities became eager to embrace the state of Israel and the Zionist cause as a means of revitalizing their communities. Rabbi Eugene Kohn comments on this relationship as it existed in the pre-state era in his 1948 article *The Zionist Interest in the Jewish Day School*. He writes:

As long as the Yishuv will need the political support and economic assistance of diaspora Jewry, it will be necessary to activate, in the diaspora as well as in Palestine, the will of the Jewish people to continue living as a people. And as long as the diaspora will be dependent on Palestine to save it from assimilation by giving a sense of reality and vitality to Judaism, so long will it be necessary to apply to Jewish life in the diaspora values and ideals that are the product of Jewish experience in Eretz Israel.  

In this quote we see an early example of Zionist support for the maintenance of a strong Israel-centred Diaspora, promoted through Jewish-Zionist education. This position was not, however, a unanimous one. The 1951 World Zionist Congress, the first since the founding of the state of Israel in 1948, saw the burgeoning debate erupt between Israel's first

---

104 Tulchinsky, *Canada’s Jews*, 183.
Prime Minister David Ben Gurion (1886-1973) and a number of prominent American Jews. Ben Gurion argued that Zionism necessitated that Jews take advantage of the newly enacted Israeli Law of Return,\(^{106}\) which provides Jews the ability to attain automatic citizenship if they so choose. In exile—derogatorily referred to as the *galut*—he and others believed that the conditions were not suitable for a meaningful and authentic Jewish life.\(^{107}\) Many American delegates protested what they saw as an insulting gesture, arguing that life in America was not as Ben Gurion depicted it.\(^{108}\) It was simply *golah*, a less denigrating term which usually translates as “diaspora.” Israel may have been a refuge for the persecuted Jews of Europe, but not for the Jews of America.

Compromise was eventually reached recognizing the fundamental importance of a strong American, and by relation Canadian, Diaspora. As American academic Alice A. Butler-Smith explains, “American Zionists and the Israeli leadership […] realized that the urgency of practical needs, both in Israel and in the local communities, and the survival of an admittedly undefined Zionist movement required the establishment of a practical working arrangement and mutually agreeable priorities.\(^{109}\) The Israeli leadership would lay off their demands for aliyah if American and Canadian Zionists would continue to serve the vital interests of the Zionist movement.

A primary way that North American Zionists managed to help the movement was

---

\(^{106}\) The Law of Return was passed in 1950 by the Israeli Knesset and remains in effect today. The Law of Return is contrasted with what is known as the Palestinian *right* of return, which refers to the legal right for Palestinian refugees to return to their lands and properties, as stipulated in United Nations General Assembly Resolution 194.


\(^{108}\) Ibid., 168.

\(^{109}\) Ibid., 170.
through fundraising efforts organized by the Israeli organization Keren Hayesod. Keren Hayesod, Hebrew for the “Foundation Fund,” was established at the 1920 World Zionist Conference in London as the official fundraising arm of the World Zionist Organization. The idea behind Keren Hayesod was to “harness and direct the solidarity and material resources of world Jewry” towards building and sustaining a Jewish homeland.110 Going back as far as 1939 in the US, a joint fundraising initiative was formed combining the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, a US-based international relief and aid organization, the National (Jewish) Refugee Service and Keren Hayesod, through its United Palestine Appeal (UPA) campaign. Together they formed the United Jewish Appeal (UJA).

A similar, albeit much broader merger, occurred in Canada in 1951 when an organization named the National Conference for Israel and Jewish Rehabilitation was formed, bringing together Jewish advocacy and social welfare organizations including B'nai B'rith Canada, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Council of Jewish Welfare Funds, along with the Zionist Organization of Canada. They would launch a Canadian version of the UJA. UJA Canada raised funds for a variety of local causes, but support for Israel and Zionism was always at the top of its agenda.111 Israel-related aspects of UJA fundraising were coordinated by Keren Hayesod, under its renamed United Israel Appeal (UIA) campaign.112 At around the same time, Keren Hayesod came under the umbrella of the newly reconstituted Jewish Agency for Israel (JAFI) as one of its founding constitutive

111 Freeman-Maloy.
112 The United Palestine Appeal changed its name to the United Israel Appeal in 1952.
organizations. JAFI is among the highest Zionist bodies in the world and serves as the official Israeli agency in charge of facilitating economic development and Jewish immigrant absorption in Israel. Keren Hayesod–United Israel Appeal serves as its primary fundraising organ.

JAFI was also given the mandate of supporting Jewish-Zionist education throughout the Jewish Diaspora. Zalman Shazar, former chairman of JAFI in Jerusalem from 1956-60 and President of the State of Israel from 1963-73 writes of the serious challenges that JAFI ostensibly faced in this regard:

> Zionism after the establishment of the State was confronted with a generation saturated with a culture remote from Israel and estranged from its own language and incapable of forging bonds with the culture of Israel, and it therefore resolved to essay the conquest of the spiritual waste in the diaspora... Only an act of sharing in a common tradition, language and culture, Zionist leaders concluded, would enable Jews of Israel and the diaspora to maintain common interests and a common destiny. Hence the urgent need for a more vigorous program of education.113

As Shazar's passage indicates, the notion of shlilat ha'galut remained a considerable motivation for the JAFI leadership despite broad-based acceptance of a continued diasporic existence in places like North America. By orienting Diaspora Jewry toward the new Hebrew culture and dissuading them from their diasporic ways, Jewish-Zionist education thus helped to bring the homogenizing forces of Zionist nationalism into the classroom and throughout Jewish communities abroad.

The primary means by which JAFI sought to insert Israel into Jewish communities in Canada and around the world was by deploying educational emissaries known as *shlichim*.

---

These JAFI-trained educators have since been sent on behalf of Israel and the Zionist movement to Jewish communities in virtually every town and city where there is a significant Jewish presence. The role of the shlichim is most often to work as short to medium-term contract teachers in Jewish day schools and afternoon schools, though some also work with Jewish-Zionist youth and student groups such as Hillel.

Come the spring of 1967, Zionism rose to a position of hegemony, achieving the support of the vast majority of Canadian Jews. There was no longer much of a distinction between Zionists, non-Zionists, and anti-Zionists—at least in the mainstream. The Jewish community, practically as a whole, stood behind Israel. Historian Harold Troper's recently published book, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s*, provides an in depth look at the significance of the 1967 Six Day War to Jewish identity in Canada. Troper's detailed account depicts a community rallied in fear at the possibility of Israel's destruction by neighbouring countries. Many even worried that another Holocaust was about to happen.\(^{114}\) Describing a popular sentiment at the time, Troper writes, “If a modern, democratic Israel might be laid waste as an uncaring world stood by, what reason was there to hope that Jews anywhere, even in the West, even in Canada could be secure? Now it might happen again to the very state which was widely seen as having risen, Pheonix-like, out of the ashes of the Holocaust.”\(^{115}\) Canadian Jews were not prepared to stand by and let that happen.

In the fervour of Jewish nationalist sentiment brought forth by the threat to Israel's

---

\(^{114}\) Harold Troper, *The Defining Decade: Identity, Politics, and the Canadian Jewish Community in the 1960s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 129.

\(^{115}\) Ibid., 127.
existence, Canadian Jews united behind Israel as never before. Massive fundraising appeals spread throughout the country. Besides money, Canadian Jews sent blood and other materials needed to help Israel cope with the war. Lobbying efforts on behalf of Israel were also augmented during this period. Prior to 1967, pro-Israel lobbying was largely the domain of explicitly Zionist organization such as the Zionist Organization of Canada, but in the days leading up to the Six Day War, the Canadian Jewish Congress, B’hai Brith Canada and other Jewish communal organizations joined in as well.116 Many young people even volunteered to go to Israel to help in the war effort.

Israel's massive victory only 132 hours after it all began sent shock-waves of excitement through Jewish communities around the world, and the Canadian Jewish community was of course no exception. The Jews were finally able to defend themselves against their enemies and could show the world that they were now a strong nation. Along with the Holocaust, Israel would become the new basis for a united Jewish identity. As Troper suggests, Israel became “the living symbol of the Jewish present and the hope for a secure Jewish future.” 117 In the US as well, support for Israel and Zionism “moved from one Jewish option in the Diaspora to the default position, from the periphery to the center.” 118 No longer considered a socialist country, and now seen as a key strategic player on the side of the US in the Cold War, American Jews were finally able to show overt support for Israel without their American loyalty being scrutinized.

116 Ibid., 172.
117 Ibid., 165.
Following the war, efforts were made to cement Zionism in North America even further. Numerous partnerships were established and programs created to foster support for Zionism amongst Jewish youth. A significant yet little known turning point came with an agreement signed in August 1971 between the Department of Education and Culture of the World Zionist Organization (WZO) and the American Association for Jewish Education (AASE). The agreement stated that “Jewish school authorities in the United States, both national and local, must give recognition to the importance of Israel in planning the curricula for students in the elementary and high school grades.” Furthermore, it outlined the various aspects of Israel that would be taught: “Israel as a political entity; the morality of Israel in Arab relations; the right of Israel to the land; the ideals of the Jewish people in the Land of Israel; the religious structure of the Jewish world and its reflections in the Land of Israel and the indivisibility of the Jewish people of Israel and the Diaspora.”

The AASE formally became the Jewish Education Service of North America (JESNA) in 1981. JESNA now works with over 150 Jewish community federations throughout Canada and the US.

Jewish communities in North America have also developed a much closer relationship with JAFI both directly and through Keren Hayesod. As stated on its website, JAFI is “committed to putting Israel into the lives of the Jewish world's young people and to bringing Israel into worldwide Jewish communities - working closely with our global partners to increase exponentially both the quality and the quantity of Israel-centred education.” This is accomplished through various “training and identity programs,” exchanges, trips to Israel,

---


and curricular resources provided to Jewish schools for children and youth of all ages.

The connection between Jewish communities in Canada and Keren Hayesod was upgraded in 1998 when United Israel Appeal Canada joined with the Council of Jewish Federations of Canada\textsuperscript{121} to form United Israel Appeal Federations Canada (UIAFC), a transnational fundraising and community planning body that oversees the operations of all of the local city-based Federations. These include Jewish social services, educational programs, and so on. According to its website, the fostering of a “Canadian Jewish and Canadian Zionist identity” is among the UIAFC’s top priorities.\textsuperscript{122} The year after it was established, the UIAFC joined the American Council of Jewish Federations in merging with the UIA and the UJA to form United Jewish Communities (UJC), which a decade later became the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA). Today, the JFNA is the umbrella body for 157 Jewish Federations found in most North American cities, and 400 Network communities in areas with smaller Jewish demographics. It is now the second largest philanthropic network in North America, second only to the United Way.

Organizations that claim to represent the interests of Jews in Canada have likewise been consolidated along similar lines. Just this year it was announced that the Canadian Jewish Congress (CJC), the foremost Jewish advocacy group in Canada since its founding in 1919, will be merged into a larger “super-agency” designed to put a “greater emphasis on Israel advocacy.”\textsuperscript{123} The CJC had already been under the umbrella of the Canadian Council

\textsuperscript{121} The Council of Jewish Federations was created as an umbrella body for Jewish Federations across North America in 1932. The Council of Jewish Federations of Canada acted as a sub-umbrella organization for the Canadian Federation system.


\textsuperscript{123} Sheldon Gordon, “Historic Canadian Jewish Congress to be Merged into New Communal Group,” Jewish
for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA), an organization formed in 2004 to “coordinate, streamline, and direct the strategic, targeted advocacy programming” undertaken by the CJC, the Canada-Israel Committee, the Quebec-Israel Committee, University Outreach Committee, and National Jewish Campus Life.\footnote{Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy, “About Us,” accessed March 21, 2001, http://cija.ca/en/about-us/. For a detailed history of CIJA’s development, see Freeman-Maloy.}

These mergers signify an institutional consolidation of a sort unprecedented in North American Jewish history. Though local organizations and federations are to a degree autonomous, the mergers have effectively translated into a homogenized approach to organized Jewish life in North America in which virtually the same goals and priorities are advanced throughout the continent. The mergers also demonstrate the close connection that Jewish community federations and other organizations now have with the Zionist movement and the state of Israel. This connection has now gone far beyond Keren Hayesod. Since the establishment of UJC in 1999, the North American Jewish community conglomerate has been given its own representation on JAFI's Board of Governors, alongside JNFA’s new subsidiary United Israel Appeal Inc.\footnote{United Israel Appeal Inc. is now run out of the United States and is responsible for fundraising in North American. Keren Hayesod's Jerusalem office remains in charge of fundraising activities in the rest of the world.} Half of the Board is made up of representatives of the World Zionist Organization, 30% from JNFA/UIA and 20% from Keren Hayesod. In short, the Jewish community structure of North America is today virtually indistinguishably from the Zionist movement.

Diaspora Zionism

The increased inclusion of Diaspora organizations on JAFI’s board corresponds with what many see as Israel’s growing need for Diaspora support. Sand argues that maintaining support in the Diaspora has overridden aliyah as a strategic priority of the Zionist movement:

In recent years the Jewish state has become less interested in large-scale immigration. The old nationalist discourse that revolved around the idea of aliyah has lost much of its appeal. To understand current Zionist politics, replace the word “aliyah” with “diaspora.” Today Israel's strength no longer depends on demographic increase, but rather on retaining the loyalty of overseas Jewish organizations and communities.\(^{126}\)

Australian sociologist Barbara Bloch also argues that Zionism and the state of Israel are largely dependent on the Jewish Diaspora today. Though “the fate of Israel and its relationship with the Palestinians does not rest with diaspora Jewry,” in Bloch's view, “the construction and realisation of the Zionist dream is still dependent in many complex ways on the discursive practices of Jews in the diaspora, and the latter's support is necessary for a continuation of Israel as the Jewish state.”\(^{127}\) Jewish organizations in the Diaspora have in turn accepted their roles as Zionist satellites around the world through fundraising but also though lobbying and Israel advocacy, activities that have become increasingly crucial to the Zionist movement over the past few decades of Israeli occupation, failed peace initiatives, and growing sympathy for the plight of the Palestinians.

Perpetuation of these efforts has meant ensuring that successive generations of Jews fill the shoes of their parents and grandparents—hence support for programs such as Taglit Birthright Israel. These programs work to ingrain in Jewish youth the centrality of Israel and

---

\(^{126}\) Sand, 309.
the importance of standing together as *am ahad*, “one people.” The hope is that this will translate into securing financial, moral, and discursive support for years to come. Crucially, whether this is conceived of as giving money directly to Israel, becoming an Israel advocate on campus, or simply contributing to the local Jewish community through UJA campaigns, it does not much matter. Considering the interconnectedness between the North American Jewish fundraising apparatus and the Zionist movement, support for Israel is ensured virtually regardless of the type of contribution that is made.

From the perspective of communal organizations in the Diaspora, these programs also have the added benefit of acting as somewhat of a weapon against assimilation. The belief is that the development of pride in Israel and Zionism correlates strongly with a positive Jewish identity, and thus with Jewish continuity. Numerous examples of such discourse can be found in the *Journal of Jewish Education*, which has released dozens of articles and a few special issues on the topic. In the journal's 1995 edition entitled *Zionist Education Revisited*, for instance, the editorial board writes that “as the problems of assimilation escalate, the notion of Zionist education seems to take on special significance in the Jewish community.”

The sense in this editorial and in the rest of the issue is that without Jewish-Zionist education (and indeed without Israel), the Jewish people will cease to exist. With this in mind, Jewish communities continue to invest millions of dollars in Jewish-Zionist education programs in Jewish schools, as well in more informal venues.

In a community in which tradition and religion has become much less of a core element in daily life, and in which poverty and anti-Semitism are no longer the problems they

---

once were, Israel fills a void by acting as a useful focal point of community solidarity. As Caryn Aviv and David Shneer suggest, “Jewish communal organizations worldwide have gradually made support for Israel a civic religion around which to build a modern secular Jewish identity.”

In doing so, they have helped to make support for Israel and its policies a fundamental component of Diaspora Jewish life.

There have been a number of attempts to name the phenomenon as it exists today. Stephen Cohen argues that this phenomenon of Diaspora support for Israel minus the once core Zionist emphasis on aliyah is best referred to as “Pro-Israelism.” Three primary elements constitute Pro-Israelism according to Cohen: a degree of orientation toward the tenants of classical Zionism (i.e. that Israel is the national homeland of the Jews and that it should be maintained as a Jewish state), a deep concern for Israel's safety and welfare, and support for the Israeli government's international policies.

Another term that is used is “New Zionism.” Israeli sociologist Ezra Kopelowitz contrasts this model with classical Zionism, according to which Jews must make aliyah and reject diaspora, on the one hand, as well as with the Jewish Peoplehood model, which does not centre Israel and sees Israel and diaspora as essentially equal, on the other. New Zionism synthesizes these two approaches toward a model that Kopelowitz suggests is mutually advantageous for both Israel and the Diaspora. Israel is supported as a Jewish state and accepted as the spiritual and cultural centre of the Jewish people, and Diaspora is

---


embraced through the language of Jewish peoplehood, minus the Diaspora-denigrating discourses of classical Zionism.\footnote{Ibid., 16.}

Kopelowitz's characterization of Zionism in its most dominant contemporary form is helpful, especially when thinking about Zionism in Israel, but I am not convinced that this is the best term to describe the phenomenon as it exists today. Labelling the relationship between Israel and the Diaspora today simply as New Zionism does not take into consideration that this form of Zionism has (a) been around for some time, so is not actually “new,” and (b) that Zionism in the Diaspora today is in reality a much more complex phenomenon than New Zionism suggests. Pro-Israelism is also problematic since it fails to identify that the phenomenon we are referring to is still Zionism.

My preference is for the term Diaspora Zionism.\footnote{The term Diaspora Zionism has notably also been used by Jewish studies scholar Shaul Magid. See Magid, 193-227.} Such a term of course contradicts many postmodern understandings of diaspora, considering the homogenizing nationalist character of Zionist discourse. Many have even argued that the idea of diaspora is in essence an anti-nationalist phenomenon. “Unlike the nation with its homogeneity and boundedness,” writes Sociologist S. Sayyid, “diaspora suggests heterogeneity and porousness” thus running counter to the idea of the nation. In the nation “the territory and the people are fused, whereas in a diaspora the two are dis-articulated.”\footnote{S. Sayyid, “The Homelessness of Muslimness: The Muslim Umma as a Diaspora.” Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-Knowledge 8, no. 2 (Fall 2010): 137.}

Gilroy also argues that diaspora runs counter to nationalism. In Gilroy's view, diaspora “disrupts the fundamental power of territory to determine identity by breaking the
simple sequence of explanatory links between place, location, and consciousness.”135 Diaspora furthermore challenges nationalism according to Gilroy “by valorizing sub-and supranational kinship and allowing for a more ambivalent relationship toward national encampments” not circumscribed to be expressed in any particular way, if at all.136

Yet Diaspora Zionism is at the same time consistent with postmodern conceptions of diaspora, in particular because Zionism in North America today is based on a duality of identity. It is about being here, but there, about being Canadian or American, but different. The main difference is that the Jewish Diaspora is now much more strongly centred on a single state to which Jews have the option of “returning,” as opposed to being only loosely connected with the idea of a mythical homeland.

Not only are Diaspora Zionists centred on Israel, but they depend on it for their own survival. As Magid suggests, “there is an underlying belief among many Diaspora thinkers (many of whom are important philanthropists) that the continued existence of Diaspora Jewry is inextricably tied to Israel's existence. That is, the Jewish Diaspora is not an independent edifice that can sustain itself without the Jewish state.”137 Magid furthermore suggests that Diaspora Zionists who perceive Israel as a home to which they can return are today best categorized according to Said's typological division as expatriates: “those who have a home but choose not to live there.”138 They are “voluntarily homeless,” in Magid's view, living in an alien country for reasons other than necessity. Their experience thus differs from other diasporic subjects whose ability to return is to varying degrees inhibited. “Expatriates may

---

135 Gilroy, 123.
136 Ibid., 125.
137 Magid, 201.
138 Ibid., 204.
share in the solitude and estrangement of exile, but they do not suffer under its rigid proscriptions.” With that said, it is important to acknowledge that being an expatriate does not necessarily eliminate the feelings of estrangement so characteristic of diaspora life. The desire to escape the precariousness of exile, whether by way of return or simply by attaching one's identity to the state of Israel, is still very much a factor in the expatriate experience. Nationalism helps to quell those feelings. As Said writes, by asserting a sense of “belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage,” nationalism “affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs,” and in doing so, “it fends off exile; fights to prevent its ravages.” Nationalism might thereby be seen as a corollary of diaspora as much as it is its adversary.

**Conclusion**

The purpose of this chapter has been to investigate the historical origins and nature of Diaspora Zionism in Canada. As was demonstrated, the relationship between the Jewish Diaspora and Zionism was for a long time quite adverse, particularly since Zionists sought to encourage all Jews to move to Israel, thereby negating the very existence of the Jewish Diaspora. But in time this sentiment has waned and the existence of a strong, healthy diaspora has been embraced.

From the perspective of the Diaspora, Zionism now serves as a grounder, as a means of coping with the precariousness of Diaspora life. Making aliyah is not necessary to feel these affects. By giving Jews the freedom to retreat to Israel if need be, and by providing

---

140 Ibid., 139.
them with a sense of a common identity and purpose, Diaspora Zionism acts as a cure for diaspora, without necessitating its complete negation, and in many ways enjoying some of its positive aspects.
CHAPTER TWO

New Jews and Old Jews: Past and Present

Introduction

Israeli Jews today are known for a certain abruptness, often taken for arrogance or even rudeness. One explanation for this that I have been given is that it is the result of living in perpetual danger. Because they are surrounded by enemies, because they face the daily threat of annihilation, they have no choice but to be this way. There is also the explanation that they are all trained to be tough soldiers, and certainly many Israelis suffer from trauma as a result of losing loved ones or of taking part in Israeli Defence Force operations in the Occupied Territories and Lebanon, though most would never admit to this affect. In addition to these explanations, there is another convincing reason why so many Israelis are the way they are.

The last time I visited Palestine/Israel, I spoke with a veteran Israeli peace activist in his sixties who revealed to me something that stuck with me, and probably influenced my desire to write this thesis. I had just got out of a taxi in Jerusalem practically out of breath. Over the course of the ten minute drive, we almost got in an accident three times. Each time the drivers exchanged a few offensive hand gestures and continued on their way. Thankfully, I arrived at my destination in one piece and sat down with the man who I had arranged to

---

141 The animated Israeli film Walz with Bashir literally illustrates this phenomenon. See *Walz with Bashir*, DVD, directed by Ari Folman, (Israel: Bridgit Folman Film Gang, Les Films d'Ici, Razor Film Produktion GmbH, 2008).
meet. After ordering a drink and introducing ourselves, he asked me sarcastically, “so how do you like Israel?” Of course, there were many things I could have started with, especially since I had only a few hours earlier crossed through the prison-like walls that separate Jerusalem from occupied Bethlehem, but the first thing that came to my mind was the attitudinal intensity of Israelis, exemplified by the drivers. I told him about my taxi ride. “What do you expect?” he responded, “that is the way they are raised here. It's been like that since the early years.” He went on: “from the very beginning, the Zionists taught their children not to be too nice, to be strong and assertive; in other words, to be the opposite of the Jew they were trying to get away from. This is passed down through generations. The roads are just one place you can see it.” This was the first time I heard the concept of the new Jew, the counter-identity personified by the native-born Sabra, articulated.\footnote{Sabra is the Hebrew name given to a type of cactus fruit typical to Palestine, which bears a tough, thorny skin and a sweet, juicy interior. It is often used as a metaphor to describe the simultaneously tough and sweet nature of the native-born Israeli.}

In the previous chapter, I began my genealogical analysis of Diaspora Zionism by examining the evolution of Zionism from its nascent beginnings in Europe to its present-day manifestations in the United States and Canada. I demonstrated that the dominant conception of Zionism has changed and that a certain Diaspora Zionism has come to dominate North American Jewish life. Whereas classical Zionism was driven by kibbutz galuyot, the ingathering of Diasporas, and with shlilat ha’golah, the negation of exile, contemporary Zionism is focused primarily on securing Diaspora support for the state of Israel as a Jewish state.

I continue my genealogical analysis of Diaspora Zionism by taking a parallel look at
the historical foundations of Zionism with a focus on some of the more affective and psychoanalytic explanations for its dominance. The new Jew plays a central role in this history as the figure that represents Jewish desires to obviate anti-Semitic stereotypes and be viewed as normal. As I argue, Jews have ostensibly been able to know themselves as such by demonstrating strong support for Zionism and the state of Israel once it was established. This connection has been so engrained in the Ashkenazi Jewish psyche that it is now commonly believed that if Israel ceases to exist as a Jewish state, the subject position of the new Jew will likewise be under threat. The ultimate fear is that Jews will revert to the ever-threatened and ostensibly meagre minority we once were. In Freudian terms, the end of a Jewish state is perceived as akin to castration and therefore something to be resisted at all costs. The history of Jewish males being considered both literally and figuratively castrated in Europe makes this thought all the more frightening for Jews today.

To shed light on this fear, I look to Sigmund Freud (1856-1939), whose work reveals the attraction of Zionism for male Jews in fin de siècle Europe. As I shall demonstrate, it was the impact of anti-Semitic discourse on Jews in Europe that made Zionism, replete with its promises of national redemption through the regeneration of the Jewish body, so attractive to Jews. On this subject I look to the idea of the muscle Jew, and later the new Jew, which for all intents and purposes was intended to replace the Diaspora Jew in geographical location, body, and demeanour. I then move to the Nazi Holocaust, which came to be enshrined as the historical event to have proved to most European Jews the need not only for a safe haven but also for the transformation of the Jew from his state of weakness into a strong national subject. Next I examine how perceptions of the new Jew in contradistinction with the old Jew
continue to make being Zionist such an attractive subject position for Jews both in Israel and elsewhere. I conclude with an analysis of how the metaphorical fear of castration continues to function to the benefit of Diaspora Zionism in present-day North America using Slavoj Žižek’s analysis of the nation as the Thing of enjoyment.

**Freud and the male Jewish body**

Freud’s writings convey a great deal about perceptions of Jews—both by others and by Jews themselves—in fin de siècle Vienna. As Beit-Hallahmi suggests, Freud's writings show “an attitude of deep ambivalence about being Jewish” in light of the negative opinions toward Jews held amongst much of the dominant European population. Far from an anomaly, Freud was rather representative of European Jews of his generation in terms of the complex desires which he expressed in his writings, and with respect to his formal resistance to Zionism, which as noted in the previous chapter counted among its supporters only a small minority of Jews at that time. Nevertheless, Freud’s writings are profoundly illuminating when it comes to understanding Zionism’s historic appeal.

In his book, *The Jew's Body*, American cultural and literary historian Sander Gilman provides an excellent point of departure on the subject of Jewish male difference and how it affected Jewish males such as Freud. Gilman separates his analysis into various chapters highlighting different aspects of how the Jew’s body was perceived according to anti-Semitic discourse. Chapter 1 on the Jewish voice is followed by chapters on the Jewish foot, the Jewish psyche, the Jewish genius, the Jewish reader, the Jewish nose, the Jewish essence and the Jewish disease, with each chapter revealing new details about perceptions of the Jew in

---

143 Beit-Hallahmi, 34.
fin de siècle Europe. It is important to note here that in all of these accounts the representations are gendered male, since as Gilman points out, it is the figure of the male Jew, “the body with the circumcised penis,” that is at the “very heart of Western Jew-hatred.”144 Ironically, however, Gilman reveals that the male Jew is understood as more of a female: “being a version of the female genitalia (with their amputated genitalia), the male Jew is read [...] as really nothing but a type of female.”145 This perceived effeminacy is perhaps best epitomized by the fact that a popular slang term for both clitoris and circumcised penis in fin de siècle Vienna was Jud, meaning “Jew.” It also helps to explain Freud's view that male Jews were more susceptible to hysteria. In Freud's view, hysteria was a disease that most commonly affected women, but since male Jews were perceived as essentially akin to females, they were also at risk.146

The idea that certain bodies were linked with certain mental and physical diseases was axiomatic during the late 19th century. According to popular logic, certain races were considered inherently inferior or degenerate if they deviated from the white European norm. These deviations were considered to be “pathological” or “pathogenic.” In this regard, hysteria was not only attributed to male Jews because of their supposed effeminacy. Hysteria was likewise perceived as a problem associated with congenital syphilis, a disease to which Jews were commonly linked. Like the prostitute, Jews were thought at the time to be a polluting force, a sexual threat to society as a result of their mutilated, abnormal genitalia.147

It was furthermore believed that syphilis could be read on the body. The supposed

145 Ibid., 127.
146 Ibid., 63.
147 Ibid., 124.
“blackness” of the Jew's skin and the crookedness of the Jew's nose were both seen as symptoms of disease.\textsuperscript{148} The notion that Jews were a mixed race with partial black-African blood also assisted in this construction; for not only were Africans diseased themselves, but the idea of racial impurity signified disease in its own right. Notably, it did not matter whether the Jew was poor or wealthy, light skinned of dark-skinned, stereotypically Jewish-looking or of Aryan stature. As Gilman explains, it was the Jew's immutable “essence” in the Fichtian sense, which always already imbued him with these degenerate characteristics.\textsuperscript{149}

Without excusing the impact and socially constructed nature of anti-Semitic discourse, a number of historical explanations can be offered to help explain how and why some of these discourses developed. One key factor was that the ancestors of many European Jews were of central-Asian Turkic descent.\textsuperscript{150} It was thus common for Jews to have a darker complexion than their fellow Europeans in places like Poland, Germany and France. Jews in Europe were also by and large forbidden to own land, which meant that they were rarely farmers, and so had little opportunity to develop strong, masculine, muscular bodies so idealized in the emergent discourses of European nationalism. Instead, they were often relegated to poor and overcrowded shtetls, which much like the urban ghettos of today, were viewed as spaces of un-cleanliness and degeneracy.

There are also ostensibly logical reasons why Jewish males were perceived as effeminate. As Daniel Boyarin reveals, the accusation that male Jews were effeminate did not simply emerge out of nowhere. It emerged rather as a consequence of cultural norms of

\textsuperscript{148} Ibid., 173, 179.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid., 5.
\textsuperscript{150} See Sand, 218-249.
Jewish masculinity which differed from those of the dominant societies. Going back as far as to the writing of the Babylonian Talmud,\textsuperscript{151} Boyarin explains that Jewish cultural tradition had held the ideal Jewish male to be that of the rabbi: “gentle, timid and studious.”\textsuperscript{152} This ideal was subsequently passed on from generation to generation along with the Talmud, shaping the dominant model of Jewish masculinity for successive generations, particularly in Europe. The fact that this model of masculinity differed considerably from other European cultural ideals, which often glorified manliness as strong and assertive, gave impetus for its preservation. It was among other things through this differential model of masculinity that Jews sought to maintain their difference in contradistinction to the dominant culture.\textsuperscript{153} With the “rise of heterosexuality”\textsuperscript{154} in modern Europe, however, and the “homosexual panic” that came with it, the traditionally revered norm of the effeminate Jewish male “sissy” quickly became a source of shame and anxiety. This was particularly the case among assimilated Jews, such as Freud, who sought to elide their perceived Jewish male effeminacy in the face of anti-Semitism.

Freud's case history of “Little Hans” is one of various examples in which Freud's anxieties are made evident. In it, Freud engages with his theory that males suffer from a “castration complex” stemming from an early age when young boys see naked girls in the nursery and perceive them to be castrated. A footnote in this text, attributed to his contemporary Otto Weininger, applies the castration complex directly to Jews. Weininger's

\textsuperscript{151} The Babylonian Talmud was compiled at approximately 500 C.E.
\textsuperscript{152} Daniel Boyarin, \textit{Unheroic conduct: The Rise of Heterosexuality and the Invention of the Jewish Man} (Berkeley: University of California, 1997) 2.
\textsuperscript{153} Ibid., 24.
theory was that since Jewish males were circumcised, they too were seen by other boys as castrated in a way, sparking their castration anxieties and leading, ultimately, to anti-Semitism: “for even in the nursery little boys hear that a Jew has something cut off his penis—a piece of his penis, they think—and this gives them a right to despise Jews.”¹⁵⁵

While he is not explicit about it in his text, Freud can be read to have agreed with Weininger on this matter.¹⁵⁶ But this was not blatant in his work. Instead of naming the Jewish male directly, Freud shifted the burden of castration onto women's bodies, representing them as similarly castrated. As Ann Pellegrini has pointed out, it was this very problem that Freud perceived in himself and in fellow Jewish males that led him to devote so much of his research to the subject of femininity.¹⁵⁷

Recalling a passage by Freud where he claims to have expressed repulsion at the image of himself in the mirror, Boyarin writes that “it is the sight of his Jewishness, a metonymy of his circumcised penis” that arouses this feeling, igniting his own castration anxieties.¹⁵⁸

Freud's anxieties are further revealed in other texts which clearly demonstrate his desire to escape the stigma of his Jewishness. Commenting on a dream he had following his attendance at Theodore Herzl's play Das Neue Ghetto, “The New Ghetto,” which he named “My Son the Myops,” Freud writes of the “concern about the future of one's children, to whom one cannot give a country of their own, concern about educating them in such a way

¹⁵⁶ See Boyarin, 232-235.
¹⁵⁸ Boyarin, 233.
that they can move freely across frontiers.” In Boyarin's interpretation, Freud's desire for Jewish children to be able to *move freely across frontiers* signifies his desire for future generations to escape the stigmatization of their Jewishness, “whether by conversion, or more likely, by assimilation.” Upon realizing that conversion was not an option, since it only confirmed anti-Semitic Jewish stereotypes of opportunism and weakness, Freud pursued the route of assimilation by joining other German-speaking Jews in their efforts to depict male Jews in a different, decidedly more masculine, Aryan light. This move is highlighted in his book, *Moses and Monotheism*, in which Freud provides what Dina Georgis refers to as an “affective counter-history” to popular understandings of the origins of Hebrew monotheism. A product of his context and of his internal psychic conflicts, *Moses and Monotheism* reveals Freud's desires to escape the stigma of his Jewishness. As Boyarin suggests, Freud sought to paint Judaism as a “religion of manliness, self-defense, and self control,” so as to “efface the 'effeminate' Jewish difference of Judaism and rewrite it as 'manly' Protestantism *avant le lettre*.”

Another one of Freud's dream analyzes, the “cap in the mud” story, illustrates a scenario that his father had relayed to him in which a Christian knocked his cap off into the mud and said “Jew! Get off the pavement.” To Freud's apparent disappointment his father

---


160 Boyarin, 233.

161 Boyarin, 233.

162 Boyarin, 246.

163 Georgis, 252.

164 Boyarin, 248.

simply did as he was told. This struck Freud as “unheroic conduct” on the part of his father, whom he had idealized as big and strong. He thus quickly contrasted the situation in his mind with another situation that fit his feelings better: “the scene in which Hannibal's father, Hamilcar Barca, made his boy swear before the household altar to take vengeance on the Romans. Ever since that time Hannibal had had a place in my phantasies (sic).”

Although Freud was not a Zionist, due mostly to his disapproval of the civilizing mission of colonialism and irritation with any connections between nationalism and religion, he quite clearly found the figure of the Zionist male to be a desirable one. This is evidenced, in Boyarin's text, by a letter to Sabrina Spielrien, Jung's patient and mistress who had recently received news that she was pregnant by her Jewish husband: “I am, as you know, cured of the last shred of my predilection for the Aryan cause,” wrote Freud, “and would like to take it that if the child turned out to be a boy he will develop into a stalwart Zionist, and if a girl, she will speak for herself.” Gendered male, Zionism was seen by Freud as somewhat of a cure to the effeminacy of Jewish males. In place of seeking complete assimilation by joining the “Aryan cause,” Freud saw being a “stalwart Zionist” as an alternative avenue for the metamorphosis of the Jewish male from his state of effeminacy into Hannibal.

In this sense, Freud expressed similar sentiments to those of his contemporaries in the Zionist movement. Though he stopped short of advocating for the Zionist cause, Freud's deep internal reflections help us to better comprehend why Zionism went on to excite such popular support, beginning most significantly with Theodore Herzl.

---

165 Beit Hallahmi, 35.
166 Sigmund Freud quoted in Boyarin, 271.
Redemption through Regeneration

As an assimilated member of the Viennese Jewish elite, Herzl and Freud had much in common. Similar to Freud, Herzl saw Jews, particularly the highly-stigmatized Ostjuden, underclass from Eastern Europe, in a similar light as the dominant society. Disturbed by their vulgarity and perhaps equally ashamed of their passivity, Herzl adopted the liberal Christian view that the only way to solve the Jewish problem was for Jews to give up their “primitive, Oriental” ways and become “civilized.” Herzl had initially called for mass conversion to Christianity, but changed his mind upon realizing that such a move could be accomplished in a less cowardly fashion through the pursuit of statehood. Herzl's plan was thus intended to act as a more “honorable conversion to Christianity.” And to accomplish it, no less than an all out colonial project was required.

Boyarin describes Herzlian Zionism as a sort of “colonial mimicry” in which Ashkenazi Jews attempted to model themselves after European colonial nations as a means of escaping persecution and the stigma of their Jewishness. Herzlian Zionism imagined itself as colonialism” writes D. Boyarin, “because such a representation was pivotal to the entire project of becoming white men.” And “what greater Christian duty could there be in the late nineteenth century than carrying on the civilizing mission, exporting manliness to the Eastern Jews and to darkest Palestinians.” It was with this logic in mind that the muscle

---

167 The term Ostjuden, which literally means “Eastern Jew,” was associated specifically at this time with poor Jews who migrated westward from Eastern Europe.
168 Boyarin, 279.
169 Ibid., 294.
171 Boyarin, 271-312.
172 Ibid., 302.
Jew was born.

The idea of the Muscle Jew was introduced by Max Nordau, a close colleague of Theodore Herzl in Vienna, at the second Zionist Congress in 1898. Nordau believed that a new Jewish body could begin to be fostered in the European context, though he agreed that to ultimately accomplish this aim, they would need to establish a state of their own outside the boundaries of Europe. As he later proclaimed, “we shall seek to do in Western Asia what the British did in India.”

Nordau likewise internalized anti-Semitic discourses of Jewish degeneracy, and was particularly affected by the anti-Semitic discourse that emerged from the Dreyfus Affair. Although he did not see Jews as unique in their degeneracy—a problem that he argued applied more broadly—Nordau focused his efforts on the regeneration of Jews, among whom he, perhaps reluctantly, counted himself. According to Nordau, the weakness and slight stature of Jews in Europe could be explained by their lost ability for physical fitness, “having lived for a thousand years deprived of exercise in the ghetto.”

Historical inaccuracies aside, Nordau believed that the Jewish male body, typified by his “small chest size,” “flat-footedness,” “ungainly gait,” hunched-over back, “susceptibility to certain diseases (diabetes, tuberculosis, alcoholism),” “dietary restrictions,” “inability or unwillingness to abandon the world of abstractions and speculations,” and “inherent cowardice,” desperately needed an overhaul. If successful, Jews would be able to reclaim their lost history of national

175 Presner, 187.
greatness and become “true moderns”—racially pure, healthy, and strong.¹⁷⁶ All they needed was discipline.

Nordau saw discipline as the key to the relearning of “lost physical ideals, moral principles, social behaviors, worthy customs, and a serious work ethic before immigrating to Palestine.”¹⁷⁷ This discipline that Nordau advocated for was the type that could be inculcated through physical education, and in particular, gymnastics. In Germany, though Jews were not always barred from the German youth movement and its associated gymnastics and hiking clubs, the prevalence of anti-Semitism precluded most Jews from getting involved.¹⁷⁸ Jewish gymnastics clubs thus began to be established in earnest with the goal of transforming the Jewish race in accordance with the normative ideal. Importantly, although the project of producing the muscle Jew was unsubtly masculinist in its nature, this did not mean that it was reserved for males. Women also contributed to muscular Judaism by establishing female gymnastics associations and sports clubs.¹⁷⁹

Nordau's ideas were nevertheless by no means isolated. As Todd Presner explains, “As a program of national, spiritual, and physical regeneration, Zionism can hardly be said to be unique or even original since virtually all of the regenerative movements across the political spectrum posited the birth of a 'new man' and the revitalization of the nation.”¹⁸⁰ Eugenics, population politics, colonization and nationalism were central discourses of the fin de siècle period, all of which influenced the ideas of Zionist thinkers.¹⁸¹ More specifically,
Presner identifies three international movements for corporeal regeneration that, he argues, Zionism drew upon and was in contact with: “the European-wide fitness, health, and hygiene movement throughout the nineteenth century and its relationship to the cultivation of nationality”; “the emergence of ‘muscular Christianity’ in England and the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century”; and, “the 'Lebensreform' [life reform] movement in Germany, of which the Körperkultur [body culture] movement was a key part.”\textsuperscript{182} Presner therefore implies that it is false to see muscular Judaism and the rise of the Zionist movement as simple reactions to anti-Semitism, or as an anomalous national awakening of sorts. As much as it was a reaction to anti-Semitism, the Zionist agenda of regeneration through nationality and physical fitness was constitutive of the discourse of the day.

Anti-Semitism was nevertheless a major factor. For a growing number of Jews in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century periods, the Zionist project for Jewish national regeneration offered a desirable alternative to a diasporic existence overwritten with shame. Israeli psychologist Jay Gonen writes of the project in positive terms:

> The Zionist reaction to the course of Jewish history was truly revolutionary. The changes that Zionism hoped to accomplish were radical and transcended concern over the physical welfare of the Jews. This is the mark of revolutionary movements. They do not attempt to implement a change of conditions, but aim to forge a new breed of men who think and feel differently from their forebears.\textsuperscript{183}

As explained in Chapter One, this meant that most anything associated with the Diaspora had to be eliminated, or negated. Due to their relation with the perceived degeneracy of the Jewish body, the Yiddish language and culture, known as \textit{Yiddishkeit}, as well as Orthodox

\textsuperscript{182} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{183} Jay Gonen, \textit{A Psychohistory of Zionism} (New York: Mason/Charter, 1975), 123.
Judaism, which encouraged Jews to be studious rabbi-types, were at the top of the list.
Zionism was in this respect unique among European nationalist movements in its wish to
“discard as inauthentic not merely the culture of their oppressors, but also that of the people
to be liberated, condemning Yiddish and Yiddish culture to the scrap-heap.”\textsuperscript{184} A 1905 quote
from revisionist Zionist leader Jabotinsky is suggestive here: “Because the Jid [Russian
derogatory term for Jew] is ugly, sickly, and lacks decorum, we shall endow the ideal image
of the Hebrew with masculine beauty, tall stature, mighty shoulders, vigorous movement,
radiance of colors and complexion.”\textsuperscript{185}

The majority of Ashkenazi Jews refused to accept such a negative, self-loathing
conception of Jewish life in Europe. Many instead sought to stay where they were and
embrace \textit{Yiddishkait} in a spirit of resistance. This was especially true of the General Jewish
Labour Union of Lithuania, Poland and Russia, known more commonly as the Bund.\textsuperscript{186}
Arguably the most popular organization among Jews in Europe in the years prior to World
War II, these revolutionary Marxists challenged the still marginal but growing Zionist
movement through the principle of \textit{Doikayt}, loosely translated as “hereness” or, as Melanie
Kaye-Kantrowitz explains it, “the right to be, and to fight for justice, wherever we are.”\textsuperscript{187}
Writing in 1937, Viktor Alter (1890-1943), one of the leaders of the Bund in Russia,
pronounced the following:

\begin{quote}
We Bundists cannot accept, even for a moment, the trappings of capitalist
society. [The Zionists], on the other hand, wish to remain within these
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{184} W.D. Rubenstein, W.D, “Zionism and the Jewish People, 1918-1960: From Minority to Hegemony,”
\textsuperscript{185} Ze’ev (Vladimir) Jabotinsky quoted in Beit-Hallahmi, 12.
\textsuperscript{186} \textit{Bund} is German for “federation” or “union.”
\textsuperscript{187} Kaye-Kantrowitz, 198.
trappings. Because they adapt themselves to the existing capitalist society, they cannot understand the urgency of our struggle in Poland. We wish to shatter the existing economic frameworks and show the Jewish masses how a new society can be built not by escape but by struggle. We link the essence of the Jewish masses' life to that of humankind.\textsuperscript{188}

Unfortunately for the Bundists, their noble stand would begin to lose traction with the rise to power of fascism in Germany, and ultimately, with the genocide that ensued not long thereafter.

The Impact of the Holocaust on Support for Zionism

Zionism made its most significant gains in popularity amongst European Jews in the wake of the atrocity known commonly in the post-war years at the “destruction” of the Jews. Prior to this point, a variety of other strategies of escaping European anti-Semitism, such as liberal democracy and Bundist revolutionary Marxism had been far more popularly favoured.\textsuperscript{189} Zionism's “remarkable unpopularity” among European Jews during the interwar years is examined by Australian scholar W.D. Rubenstein.\textsuperscript{190} As a means of determining the extent of Zionist support, Rubenstein looks to statistics on the numbers of “shekel-holding” Jews, meaning those who paid annual dues to local Zionist organizations. Though these statistics notably exclude Russian Jews, who under Stalin were not at liberty to declare their support for Zionism, as well as the Jews of the Islamic world, who were outside of the conceptual limits of Zionism at the time, the figures reveal the failure of the Zionist movement to win the support of more than a “minimal percentage” of world Jewry before the

\textsuperscript{189} Bakan, 29.
\textsuperscript{190} Rubenstein, 5.
Most European Jews perceived the Zionist project as degrading but also as Utopian: “Zionism appeared to have no programmes or policies to deal with the actual situation of oppression and poverty faced by so many European Jews, apart from migration (at some future date) to a desert.” The Bund on the other hand stood for confrontation against the forces of Jewish oppression. The creation of the state of Israel in 1948 in the wake of catastrophe, however, proved to most Jews the validity of Zionism as a solution to the problems of modern Jewry.

In many respects, the Holocaust fulfilled Zionist prophecy. As Israeli historian Tom Segev writes: “the founding fathers of the Zionist movement had not envisioned the furnaces of Treblinka, but their ideology assumed that, in the long run, Jews would not survive as Jews in the Diaspora; they would disappear sooner or later, in one way or another.” The mass murder of between five and six million Jews—in addition, of course, to Communists, Roma people, homosexuals, and persons with disabilities—in the Nazi Holocaust left about three million Jewish survivors in search of new homes elsewhere. Few were willing to stick around, and if they did, it was frequently the case that they were not welcome. In one personal example, shortly after being liberated from the camps, my grandfather returned to his home in Poland in search of his family, only to be chased away by his former neighbour with a rifle. Such cases were far from uncommon. This ongoing hostility meant that most Jews preferred to go the United States, Canada, or Australia, where they would be far away from their oppressors and sites of trauma. Others, whether by Zionist will or due to the fact

191 Ibid., 10.
192 Ibid., 22.
193 Segev, 97.
that there were few alternatives,\textsuperscript{194} immigrated to Palestine, then under British Mandate control.

The willingness among some survivors to go to Palestine was both a blessing and a curse for the Jewish Agency, which acted as a sort of pre-state government for Jews in Palestine. Though they knew that establishing a Jewish state in Palestine required bringing over as many Jews as possible, this did not mean that they were willing to accept just any Jew. Consistent with the muscle Jew prototype, the Jewish Agency preferred healthy young Zionists, ideally with agricultural training or at least a willingness to work on the land,” and selected accordingly.\textsuperscript{195} The Jewish Agency sought therefore to limit Jewish immigrants mainly to those that would be most useful in the building of the new nation.\textsuperscript{196}

Following the war, the Jewish Agency did not have much choice but to accept the masses of Jewish refugees that arrived on the Mediterranean shores. The survivors were largely welcomed as new Jewish immigrants that could contribute to the furthering of the Zionist mission of establishing a Jewish-majority state in Palestine. Yet many Zionists feared the implications that an unvetted mass of migrants would have on the body politic of the nation. Segev writes that many in the Zionist leadership feared that the survivors would “poison Zionism.”\textsuperscript{197} David Ben-Gurion, for his part, considered the survivors to be “scum,”\textsuperscript{198} while popular slang in the Yishuv referred to them as \textit{sabon}, or soap, in reference to supposed, albeit unsubstantiated, claims that the Nazis made soap from the dead bodies of

\textsuperscript{194} Many countries to which Jews desired to flee refused to accept Jewish refugees. On Canada's policies, see, Irving Abella and Howard Troper, \textit{None is Too Many: Canada and the Jews of Europe, 1933-1948} (Toronto: Lester and Orpen Dennys, 1983).

\textsuperscript{195} Segev, 42.

\textsuperscript{196} Ibid., 100.

\textsuperscript{197} Ibid., 120.

\textsuperscript{198} Ibid., 121.
Jews.\textsuperscript{199} To the Zionist leadership, the survivors represented the epitome of what the Zionist project was meant to correct. Israeli psychoanalyst Moshe Zuckerman writes of this phenomenon that

\begin{quote}
for to the degree that state Zionism, based on the ultimate manifestation of what must be negated, it could, in the end encounter the surviving victims of the catastrophe only as examples of living warnings against what must be negated. The survivors personified everything that the so-called “national renewal” sought to overcome, and they paradigmatically embodied and represented the “Diaspora Jews”, who were to be replaced by the “New Jews.”\textsuperscript{200}
\end{quote}

Survivors were not the only group that the Zionist leadership viewed with disdain. Sephardi Jews were also seen with varying degrees of antipathy. The arrival of Sephardic Jews from Africa and Asia shortly after the establishment of the state in 1948 took the Holocaust survivors out of the lime-light of the Zionist leadership to some extent, who found in the darker, “Oriental” Jews, an even greater threat. But the Holocaust would by no means disappear from popular discourse. Though discussion of the Holocaust was muted in the nascent years of the new state, the Holocaust came to occupy a central place in the emergent state discourse. The Holocaust suddenly became the source of the state's legitimacy, still under scrutiny from its Arab neighbours and from Jews who still opposed the Zionist project. Yet it was an event that needed to be forgotten, to a degree erased.

Israeli historian Idit Zertal explains this “dialectical process of appropriation and exclusion, remembering and forgetting” in her book \textit{Israeli’s Holocaust and the Politics of}

\textsuperscript{199} Ibid., 183.
Nationhood. She writes of Israeli Zionists in the early years of statehood that by deleting the shame of Jews, the disgrace of the Jewish Diaspora, they believed they were inaugurating a new era, and reinventing themselves into a new world. However, the drive to delete became also a drive to preserve and exploit the shame as a constant reproach and warning in order to bolster a society that was 'ingathering its exiles' and in the throes of consolidation.

To this day, Zertal notes that the Holocaust continues to be “summoned up for military and security issues and political dilemmas which Israeli society has refused to confront, resolve and pay the price for.” In Israel, she writes, “Auschwitz is not a past event but a threatening present and a constant option.”

The Holocaust took centre stage in the American Jewish community for different reasons. Following WWII, American Jews rejected the label of “victim community” in the interest of assimilation and new beginnings. The Holocaust therefore had to be marginalized. But as new ethnic identities were permitted to emerge in 1960s America, and as American Jews became, as a whole, much more comfortable in their setting as Jews, a profound change in discourse occurred. As Peter Novick aptly notes, the American Jewish community went from rejecting the label of victim community to embracing the notion of being a community with a “history of victimization.” These differences in self-identification were by no means semantic; the former signified weakness, the latter, a certain degree of social capital from being the subject of guilt and remorse.

The central component of the re-imagined community identity was the Holocaust.

---

202 Ibid., 60.
203 Ibid., 4.
The catastrophe that befell millions of Jews in Europe was a convenient and logical basis upon which to form a common identity. To these ends, the Holocaust was instrumentalized by Jewish communal organizations as a useful cornerstone for creating a strong sense of Jewish identity and by relation, of fighting assimilation.\textsuperscript{205} Compared with Judaism, Hebrew, or Yiddish, it was the Holocaust that had the most “consumer appeal,” and therefore the best chance of conglomerating Jews under a distinct category. Even the unifying force of Israel and Zionism could not contest with the Holocaust in Novick’s estimation. As he suggests, “mobilization on behalf of Israel may have provided some sense of purpose, but hardly an identity.”

According to Freud, the allure of a collective identity is that it provides a defence against trauma and loss.\textsuperscript{206} When recovering from historical trauma there is perhaps nothing more appealing than the sense of security that comes with the feeling that you are not alone, that you are part of a larger group that shares a similar plight, experience, and fate. Like nationalism, the common identities that this perceived membership creates are largely imagined, especially when one considers who is considered to belong and for what reasons. But the affective component should not be dismissed. As Georgis suggests, “the affective power of identity and group bonding, as a consequence of trauma,” especially when suffering and oppression date back so many generations, as with many Jews, is not so easily surmountable. Its power is such that it can enthral even the most peripherally affected to be drawn in, and in turn to find comfort and security in separating themselves from others. In this regard Israel becomes “the fantasy of security in community that seals itself from

\textsuperscript{205} Ibid., 185.
\textsuperscript{206} Georgis, 244.
suffering.”

It is, as Diaspora Zionists often suggest, their insurance policy in case their societies turn on them again.

The slogan “never again” is the glue that sticks the Holocaust with Israel. Originally popularized by the radical right-wing Zionist organization the Jewish Defence League, the slogan went on to become somewhat of a discursive pillar among Jewish communities in Israel, the US, and elsewhere, if not always proclaimed aloud, then by insinuation. The belief that a Holocaust could happen again meant that Jews would have to be ever diligent in the face of anti-Semitism and ready to leave at a moment’s notice for Israel. The direct link between the Holocaust, newer manifestations of anti-Semitism and the idea of Israel as safe haven has thereby acted as a key cornerstone of Diaspora Zionism. As the popular discursive equation has it, the potential for another Holocaust necessitates strength, and by relation, a Jewish state. Columnist Anshel Pfeffer comments on the implications of this equation in a recent article in the Israeli daily Haaretz: “It seems that in the national Israeli psyche, backed up by the education system and the IDF, the only worthwhile lesson of the Holocaust is that Israel should be strong and defend itself, and the only purpose of defending Israel is that there should not be another Holocaust.”

To be sure, this logic applies to the psyches of Jewish communities elsewhere as well.

The constant invocation of the Holocaust along with continued realities of anti-Semitism in many parts of the world has meant that many Jews continue to live in perpetual fear. In turn, they remain slave to their fantasies, actualized by the existence of the state of

---

207 Ibid., 255.
Israel. The end product of fear then becomes an intense sense of pride, and of a nationalism that appears to compensate for the perceived insecurities of being Jewish. As one young student of a Jewish high school in France remarks in a 2003 interview in Ha'aretz by Daniel Ben-Simon: “Because of anti-Semitism, I feel I will always remain a Jew in the eyes of others so I want them to know I am proud to be a Jew and proud of Israel.”209 Commenting on the interview, Rose writes of how fear so often generates identification with an alternative, almost mythologized setting: “It travels. And, in doing so, it becomes its own fortress.” In search of a way to prove herself and appear confident in her Jewishness, “she wants 'them' to know that she is 'proud of Israel.'”210 Even more than that, I would argue that she wants them to know her in a different light; not as a weak and neurotic Jew in the anti-Semitic European conception of the term, but as a proud, forward and strong new Jew, the type epitomized by the Israeli-born Sabra.

New Jews and Old Jews in the Age of Israel

With the establishment of Israel, the discourses espoused by Nordau of muscularity and masculinity were personified as the basis for the new Israeli identity.211 For the new Hebrew any sign of Jewish weakness came to be seen with uttermost disdain. Israelis were to be upright and strong no matter the circumstance. Rose explains that there is thus little wonder why Israelis have treated the Palestinians with such uncompromising violence and force. Since “any ethical sensitivity toward the indigenous people was viewed with abject

210 Rose, Last Resistance, 40.
211 Presner, xvii.
horror, a form of self-indicting passivity, historical repetition, the Jews once again enslaved
to fear,” the use of force toward Palestinians became like a “gift,” a way of redeeming the
diasporic “wretch” of his or her degeneracy and weakness.212 Israelis, in this way, could
come to know themselves in a new light: as dominator as opposed to dominated.

The satirical comic Israel Man and Diaspora Boy by artist Eli Valley is an
exaggerated illustration of the way in which Ashkenazi Diaspora and Israeli Jews were
depicted in Zionist discourse following the creation of Israel.213 Written in honour of Israel's
60th anniversary, Valley suggests that the superheroes featured in his comic continue to “fit
seamlessly into almost any Jewish educational setting today”; hence the literal stamp of
approval for Zionist educators everywhere featured in the top right corner of the comic's front
page. The characters of Israel Man and Diaspora Boy are meant to represent the difference
between the Zionist-adopted anti-Semitic image of the male Ashkenazi Jew in the Diaspora
and the new Israeli Jew, bereft of his degenerate qualities and white in every sense of the
word. Diaspora Boy is depicted as short, weak, nervous, diseased, ugly and self-hating in
contradistinction with Israel Man who is depicted as strong, tough, and confident with facial
features akin to the most idealized conception of European male whiteness.214

Yet like their Israeli counterparts, Diaspora Jews found that they could also come to

212 Rose, “Question.” 133.
http://www.jewcy.com/post/israel_man_and_diaspora_boy. For the full comic see Eli Valley. “Israel Man and
boy/.
214 There are several examples of characters akin to Israel Man that are used by Zionist organizations in their
efforts to attract support. Two notable examples include Israel advocacy organization Stand with Us’ Captain
Israel and the Jewish Federation of North America's Team Super Jews, which also has a Captain Israel. See
know themselves in a different light in and through Zionism and a close relationship with Israel. Granted, they were still considered *galuti*,\(^{215}\) and therefore to varying degrees degenerate, but by attaching themselves to Israel and the Zionist project, they could at least approximate the new, more attractive subject position associated with the new Israeli Jew. Paul Breines writes of this phenomenon in the United States: “In American as well as in Jewish American eyes images of Jewish wimps and nerds are being supplanted by those of the hardy, bronzed kibbutznik, the Israeli paratrooper, and the Mossad (Israeli intelligence) agent.”\(^{216}\) Breines is careful not to completely dismiss the continued presence and significance of weak and gentle Jewish imagery in American Jewish culture and identity however. The “tough Jew and weak and gentle ones are not opposites but *intimates*” he argues.\(^{217}\) According to Breines' formulation, the discourse of the tough Jew requires the weak/gentle Jew to make sense of itself and of its actions. He writes:

> Zionism is at once a decisive break with the traditions of Jewish weakness and gentleness and also not so decisive a break: it rejects meekness and gentleness in favor of the normalcy of toughness, while preserving the older tradition of the Jews as a special of chosen people, which depends on imagery of Jews as frail victims. Zionism needs its weak and gentle Jewish counterparts to give moral justification to Jewish participation in the world of bodies, specifically, of physical violence, including killing or even sadism.\(^{218}\)

Another of Breines' central assumptions is that all Jews have some sort of a “primal tough Jewish experience, which arises from anti-Semitic persecution and Jewish fears of it.”\(^{219}\) Though certainly an over-generalization, Breines' assumption helps us understand what

\(^{215}\) Galuti is the adjective form of galut, meaning “exilic” in an often derogatory way.


\(^{217}\) Ibid., x.

\(^{218}\) Ibid., 50.

\(^{219}\) Ibid., 26.
it is that draws many Diaspora Jews to Zionism. Breines cites Freud's cap in the mud story as a prime example of why so many Jews, himself included, are attracted by tough Jewish imagery. These images proliferate various aspects of Jewish culture in America (and elsewhere), in magazines, community centres, films, and most definitely in Jewish books. Breines' term for the particular sub-genre of books with Jewish characters by mostly Jewish novelists that emerged in the mid 1970s is the “Rambowitz novels.” Breines explains that the time of the Rambowitz novels' emergence is of crucial importance to understanding the role of weak and tough imagery in contemporary American Jewish identity. As he points out, they began to proliferate most noticeably following the 1973 war, in which Israel was almost defeated, instead, as one might expect, following the resounding Israeli victory in the Six Day War of 1967. This was because the war of 1973, known in Israel as the Yom Kippur War, “reasserted Jewish vulnerability,” making Jewish power that much more necessary and “ethically grounded.”

The figures that appear in the Rambowitz novels are by no means uniform, nor are they solely male. As with the muscle Jews in fin de siècle Europe, women can also take part in the tough Jewish fantasy: “In contrast to their predecessors, the new tough Jewish women have been to the health clubs and have traveled in the fast lane, emerging taller, more lithe, more seductive, and more interested in sex.” On a general level, they, like their male counterparts, are also frequently depicted as white. For tough Jews to have “maximum appeal in the Rambowitz novels” writes Breines, “blond hair and blue eyes are recommended

---

220 Ibid., 175.
221 Ibid., 209.
though not required.”222 Either way, they are always sexy, as “tough Jewish sexuality is central to the Jews' new political virtues and their self-realization as a people of pride and dignity.”223 And perhaps most importantly, they are always heroic in the face of “the Arabs,” the Nazis or whoever is depicted as threatening the Jews (or America) in the given context.

Breines parallels these novels with the revival of Yiddishkeit,224 which he sees as being rooted in the desire among Jews for more gentle images of Jews to balance the often brutal aggressiveness of the tough Jews. What all of this indicates is the desire among Jews to obviate their perceived difference and achieve normalcy, while at the same time preserving the sense that they are good, moral people, justified in their actions. It is therefore only between these dichotomous characteristics of aggressiveness and gentleness that many Jews can come to truly embrace their Jewishness—hence the use of Israel for the fostering of Jewish identity in Canada, a subject I will return to in further depth in Chapter Four. The apparent hope is that through Israel and the image of the new Jew, Diaspora Jews will identify positively with their Jewishness and pass it on to successive generations. The survival of Israel in its current form, as a Jewish-majority state, is thus seen as crucial to the very existence of the Jewish people in the twenty-first century.

The Thing of Enjoyment

Drawing on the work of French psychoanalyst Jaques Lacan on jouissance, French for “enjoyment,” Slavoj Žižek suggests that the fundamental element holding a national
community together “cannot be reduced to the point of symbolic identification.” The “bond linking together its members always implies a shared relationship toward a Thing,” which in Lacanian terms is the very incarnation of enjoyment. The Thing, in this context, is that which defines the ideal imaginary of the nation, be that its rolling hills, its beaches, its progressive values, its unique cultural traditions, or perhaps most significantly, those bodies that are considered incontrovertibly of the nation. As explained in the previous chapter, the nation has historically been envisioned as being reserved for those perceived to share a particular essence. Those who not share this essence, who do not belong, are thus perceived as threats to the nation.

Žižek suggests that the perpetual fear of losing the nation-Thing lies at the very core of contemporary racism, prejudice, xenophobia and nationalism. As he argues,

the relationship toward the Thing, structured by means of fantasies, is what is at stake when we speak of the menace to our ‘way of life’ presented by the Other: it is what is threatened when, for example, a white Englishman is panicked because of the growing presence of ‘aliens.’ What he wants to defend is not reducible to the so-called set of values that offer support to national identity. National identification is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing.226

This relationship is by necessity based on a certain degree of exclusivity; the undeserving other perceived as simply wanting to “steal our enjoyment,” our Thing. As a result, our nation-Thing is defended against encroachment by the other through racist and xenophobic attitudes and policies. This in turn strengthens national identification, and by relation nationalism.

---

225 Slavoj Žižek, Tarrying With the Negative (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), 201.
226 Ibid., 201.
227 Ibid., 203.
Furthermore characteristic of this phenomenon is a paradox that can be compared with a fundamental component of Freudian psychoanalysis: “The basic paradox is that our Thing is seen as something inaccessible to the other and at the same time threatened by him. According to Freud, the same paradox defines the experience of castration, which, within the subject's psychic economy, appears as something that “really cannot happen,” but we are nonetheless horrified by its prospect.” For Jewish Zionists, this theory applies in more ways than one.

Fear of Israel's “destruction,” whether by physical violence or by being outnumbered by the Palestinians, has motivated much of the racism and nationalistic fervour exhibited toward Palestinian Arabs (and Arabs in general) in both Israel and the Diaspora. This can be explained through Žižek's explanation of how the nation-Thing functions in the minds of the people associated with it. Israel is perceived as inaccessible to Palestinian Arabs considering that their presence negates the fantasy of the Jewish nation-Thing, yet it is perpetually, and in many ways realistically, threatened by them, on account of the high birthrate among Palestinian citizens of Israel. The loss of Israel as a Jewish state would mean the loss of the Thing to the other; a result which Zionists hope to prevent at all costs. Like castration, it is for many the ultimate fear.

For male Jews, fear of castration has a deeper meaning. Historic and contemporary anti-Semitism, precariousness in diaspora, and being constructed as literally castrated in Europe, give them a certain intimacy with this possibility. The fear is that losing Israel as a Jewish state would mean reverting to the weak, degenerate, effeminate Jew of the past; a reversion from salvation to oppression, strong new Jew to weak old Jew. Understandably, this
is not something that many Jews today—regardless of gender—are prepared to let happen.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has argued that in addition to providing somewhat of a cure for the precariousness of diaspora, a further appeal of Israel and Zionism is its ability to offer Jews an alternative way of knowing themselves in relation to the construct of the new Jew. This subject is dependent on keeping the Israeli nation-Thing for the benefit of Jews, if not solely than by majority, thereby denying equal access to it by the indigenous Palestinian Arab population. Historical memory of the Nazi Holocaust, experiences or stories of anti-Semitism, and classical Zionist depictions of the weak and degenerate old Jew work to perpetuate these feelings. Through Zionism, Jews are moreover given the opportunity to elide much of the stigma associated their Jewishness and be perceived as normal, strong, and, ostensibly, as white.
CHAPTER THREE

The Quest for Whiteness

Introduction

The 1930s and 40s in Ottawa was a difficult period for my mother’s parents and their families. As Jews, they were excluded from certain institutions reserved for whites. Teachers and other students at school often directed blatantly racist remarks at them, and many, including my grandfather, tell stories of having to fight their way to school past groups of anti-Semitic youngsters who targeted Jewish children in the area. During World War II, while my grandfather was off fighting with the Royal Air Force, the front door of his home in downtown Ottawa was painted with a giant red swastika by a group of local Nazi-supporters. His parents didn't bother reporting the incident to the police because they knew that such incidents targeting Jews were rarely, if ever, investigated. Instead, they preferred to simply re-paint the door, and to continue on, without drawing too much attention to themselves and their Jewish difference. Considered by many to belong to an inferior race, Jews in Canada were widely perceived as undesirable and, most certainly, as other.228

As the majority of Jews reached the middle-class, and as non-European immigrants began to arrive in North America in greater numbers in the 1960s, Jewish communities found themselves inhabiting a much friendlier environment. Many might even say that, along with their neighbours to the south, Canadian Jews became white folks.

228 See, for instance, Abella and Troper.
Be that as it may, questions remain as to the historical processes which led to Jews being considered white, to the conditions of this whiteness, and to the ways in which whiteness has been sought—consciously or otherwise—by Jews themselves. This chapter continues where the previous chapter left off by providing a closer examination of the relationship between the desire to inhabit the subject position of the new Jew and the allure of whiteness. It begins with an explanation of what is meant by whiteness in the theoretical sense—that is, in a manner that goes beyond skin colour. It then proceeds with an analysis of how, and for what reasons, whiteness is sought by those constructed as non-white. Jews are then inserted into the picture: first, by examining how Jews, much like colonial Africans in Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks*, have attempted to whiten themselves; second, by reviewing how Jews came to be perceived as white; and third, by looking at how Zionism figures into the equation. Though the relationship between Zionism and whiteness has notably been taken up by Daniel Boyarin in his analysis of Herzlian “colonial mimicry,” the brevity of this aspect of his analysis requires a deeper analysis—one that puts whiteness at the centre of inquiry. Lastly, I will examine the phenomenon of Jewish resistance to being categorized as white. I argue that this combination of desiring whiteness while simultaneously rejecting it contributes greatly to the appeal of Israel and Zionism for Diaspora Jews in Canada today.

**Beyond Skin Colour**

In her article, *A Phenomenology of Whiteness*, Sara Ahmed provides a convincing philosophical analysis of the meanings and implications of whiteness today. Whiteness,
writes Ahmed, is “an ongoing and unfinished history.” Like race in general, whiteness is a concept that is not static, meaning that it is liable to shift or change at any moment and in different contexts. Whiteness “orientates bodies in specific directions, affecting how they 'take up' space, and what they ‘can do’” in that space. It is in this sense a determinant of possibilities and challenges, of who can get “in,” who is noticed in certain spaces, who can speak at a given moment and for whom. If one is perceived as possessing it—or better, embodying it—whiteness has the ability to open doors that might otherwise be closed. If one is perceived as being outside the realm of whiteness, they are shut out, considered inferior by nature, even dangerous, becoming the focus of scrutiny and surveillance. Whiteness, moreover, is “the point from which the world unfolds”: the benchmark, the norm, and the ideal.

Ahmed reminds us to be cognizant that whiteness is by no means simply reducible to a particular combination of melanin levels and physical characteristics. If this were the case, many Arabs for instance would be considered white. Yet for the most part Arabs are not categorized as white. In order to pass as white, to “line up,” bodies that might otherwise be racialized as non-white others must “disappear within the 'sea of whiteness,' meaning that they must approximate the norms, habits, and aspirations of whiteness by “being like.” A Lebanese bank manager or adventure hiker who has adopted white norms of dress, culture, speech, and behaviour, for example, might thus be able to pass as white. But even then, such

---

230 Ibid., 154.
232 Ahmed, 159.
bodies are on unstable terrain, particular in the current atmosphere of Islamophobia. Because
whiteness is a construct, its parameters are constantly in flux, able to change at any given
time and from place to place.

What, then, are the qualifications—if they can be considered as such—for groups and
individuals to be considered white? Richard Dyer points to three main factors which
constitute the social construction of the white body. They are: Christianity, race, and
enterprise/imperialism. Christianity is crucial, according to Dyer, because of its emphasis
on the split between mind and body. In this formulation, it is the mind that is favoured, with
the body considered, at times, a source of evil. To be a good Christian, one must control
bodily temptations and approximate as best as possible the gender-normative models of
behaviour represented by the figures of Mary and Christ. Deviation from these ideals is
perceived as an indicator of degeneracy and blackness, adherence to them a sign of godliness
and whiteness.

Race is perhaps more obvious. Developed as a concept by Europeans to categorize
and explain differences of the human body, the concept of race has been used to classify
subsections of humanity based on “differences of character and worth.” In this
formulation, white Europeans were distinguished for their “character, energy, and high
mindedness,” intelligence, strength, and so on. Non-white races on the other hand were
distinguished for more negative traits, such as weakness and feeble-mindedness, as well as

---

234 Ibid., 17.
235 Ibid., 20.
236 Ibid., 23.
for abnormally extreme degrees of otherwise positive traits such as intelligence.237

In addition to Christianity and race, Dyer identifies enterprise and imperialism as additional components of white embodiment. “The ideal white man was one who knew how to use his head, who knew how to manage and control things and get things done” writes author and anti-racist activist Eldridge Cleaver in a passage cited by Dyer.238 The white body had/has within it a certain spirit of enterprise—associated with traits such as “energy, will, ambition, the ability to think and see things through” and so on—attributes perceived to be lacking in non-white bodies. The sense is that white bodies are in control of themselves—an idea strongly correlated with the Christian duality of mind and spirit—and thus are more justified in controlling others. Such is at least a portion of the rationale for imperialism.

Overlying these three elements of the white body are gender and sexuality. The white body is not gender-neutral, nor is it sexuality-neutral. In its ideal state, the white body is male and heterosexual; for it is in these incarnations that the privileges of whiteness are most fully enjoyed. The white female and white queer body, while still white in most respects, are seen to lack many of the characteristics, such as those associated with enterprise and rational thought that are necessary to fully embody whiteness. Class is also a determining factor since the white body is further idealized as economically privileged and as able to provide for itself. As Kate Davy notes, “it is at the intersection of class privilege that ‘whiteness’ is fully mobilized.”239 Those that do not live up to the economic ideals of whiteness therefore often have their credentials as whites qualified by the label “white trash,” or worse, practically

238 Dyer, 30-31.
revoked on account of poverty and/or homelessness.\textsuperscript{240}

In addition to these components, whiteness is also determined by a factor that is on the surface more geopolitical than corporeal in nature, but which in reality is heavily dependent on ideas of race. This factor is Westernness. Like whiteness, Westernness is a discursive construct that has the ability to determine who is in and who is out, who is one of us and who is other. Replete with characteristics of tolerance, progressiveness, and rationality, the Western subject is constructed as evolved and modern, in contrast to the Eastern subject who is constructed as backward and stuck in time, as pre-modern.\textsuperscript{241} In this temporality of being, the world is divided into civilized and uncivilized based most significantly on the concept of whiteness, only in new garb. As Ruth Frankenberg writes, “white and Western statuses are conferred on the same physical bodies,” the result of “closely tied historical processes.”\textsuperscript{242} Whiteness is however much more taboo to identify. It is thus disguised behind Westernness in much the same way as racist discourse is disguised behind what Mahmood Mamdani calls “Culture Talk,” the use of cultural references to explain politics in such frames as Samuel Huntington's famous “clash of civilizations.”\textsuperscript{243} Just because the culture of a particular group is blamed for their characteristics and actions as opposed to their biology does not make it any less racist. Likewise, just because certain characteristics are said to characterize Westernness does not mean that whiteness is removed from the equation. More than likely, whiteness is embedded in the formula to begin with.


\textsuperscript{243} Mahmood Mamdani, \textit{Good Muslim, Bad Muslim: America, the Cold War, and the Roots of Terror} (New York: Three Eaves Press, 2004), 17.
A final factor that is important to consider on the subject of whiteness is that it cannot stand alone. Since whiteness is relational, it requires the presence of non-white others to make sense of itself. As Dyer explains, “for all their transcending superiority,” whites remain “dependent on non-whites for their sense of self, just as they are materially in so many imperial and post imperial, physical and domestic labour circumstances.” Meanwhile, the opposite often rings true: non-whites can be just as dependent on the white other for their sense of self as well. The main difference is that from the perspective of non-whites, the white other that they depend on to understand themselves often doubles as the other that is aspired towards.

Jewish Bodies, White Masks

The ideas that shape our self-perceptions depend on how we expect others to see us. We position ourselves on scales from attractive to ugly, sane to insane, strong to weak. Where we fit on these continua is dependent on the way our societies project them and on the ways they register in our minds. “Without the presence of others, there can be no mental life” as Freud has suggested. Others help us know our place in the world, in relation, largely, to notions of race, gender, sex, class, and sexuality. By the same token it is others who provide the prototypes upon which we forge our identities and mould ourselves into who it is that we wish to be. “We only exist through the others who make up the storehouse of the mind: models in our first tentative steps toward identity.” It should thus not be surprising that the way we imagine and fashion ourselves can likewise be determined in large part by those

---

244 Dyer, 24.
245 Rose, Last Resistance, 62.
notions of superiority and inferiority that shape our world. “We devour the others we wish to be” because we are not comfortable with where we may lie (or come to lie) as constructed. We are formed—as subjects that is—in relation. We require the other. We need the other to make sense of our place in society but also to determine the directions we wish to follow, in our daily lives, in our careers, and in our aesthetic self-fashioning.

We might say that one of the paths most traveled is that which leads to whiteness. As noted above, whiteness represents more than simply skin colour. It is the reference point, the ideal. It is rational. It is beautiful. And in places like Europe and North America, it is invisible. Whiteness has the ability to move undetected in these places, to pass without being unduly scrutinized as biased or threatening, and to achieve success without being evaluated on the basis of denigrating racial characteristics. Embodying or, at the least, approximating whiteness is therefore often a qualification for getting in, quite literally at borders, at job interviews, in academia. More than that, it might be the difference between life and death. If, for instance, you are positioned on the other side of whiteness, your life somehow comes to matter less than if you are perceived to be on the white side of the divide. In this racialized application of morality, Africans, Arabs, Indigenous peoples are often excluded from dominant sympathy or protection.  

246 Their lives are easily dispensable and their deaths reduced to numbers—if that. If a white person is killed, on the other hand, the significance and consequences are much more likely to be met with a serious response on the part of police services, governments, the media, and by relation, popular opinion. Put simply, white bodies are constructed as more important, more worthy of living out their lives in the absence

246 For more on this phenomenon, often referred to as “race thinking,” see Sherene Razack, Casting Out: The Eviction of Muslims from Western Law and Politics (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 3-24.
of suffering than are their non-white counterparts.

We should not be surprised therefore that whiteness is so sought after. Since “whiteness carries such rewards and privileges, the sense of a border that might be crossed and a hierarchy that might be climbed has produced a dynamic that has enthralled people who have had any chance of participating in it.” This includes people who are light-skinned but not white, such as some Arabs and Eastern Europeans, but also those of darker complexion. Though the latter will never be white, they can approximate it and hope that they can escape some of the stigma associated with their race and culture. To desire whiteness is to desire overcoming difference as Kalpana Sheshadri Crooks has written—at least that difference which is stigmatized for its non-white racial characteristics. This is the appeal of whiteness.

Franz Fanon writes of the black desire to be white in his classic text *Black Skin, White Masks*. For Fanon, this desire is attributed to the sense of inferiority blacks are made to feel as a product of racism. He includes himself in his findings: “Out of the blackest part of my soul, though the zone of hachures, surges up this desire to be suddenly white.” To be white would mean that he would be free of the white gaze and of being over-determined by his dark skin. Fanon, of course, did not buy into the notion that aspiring to whiteness was at all desirable. The desire among black men and women to “gain admittance to the white world,” for instance by seeking out a white partner, was rather something that Fanon recognized as

---

problematic, albeit understandable due to what he identified as a deep-seated inferiority complex among colonial Africans. This complex is first developed, according to Fanon, as a result of the economic relationship between whites and blacks and the overall subordination of blacks in the realm of power relations. The sense of inferiority that this develops is then “internalized,” “epidermalized” such that it becomes ingrained in the psyche of the individual, inspiring him or her to do whatever he or she can to escape the stigmatized blackness.

Fanon spends a considerable amount of time in his book discussing how Jews relate to blacks in the sense of being the targets of racism/anti-Semitism by whites. There is a major difference between blacks and Jews, however, in Fanon's reading. For Fanon, whereas the black is always attacked on his or her biology, the Jew is white, and “apart from some debatable features, he can pass undetected.” Ella Shohat objects to Fanon on this, arguing that “he underestimates the extent to which Jews have been marked biologically.” She argues that this is first because not all European Jews can pass as Euro-Christians, and second, because of the complex anti-Semitic stereotypes of the abnormality of the Jew’s body. Jewishness and blackness in Shohat’s view are thus “both attacked in their biology only differently.”

In any case, although the ability to pass may be the experience of some Jews, it certainly has not meant that they have necessarily been immune to the type of inferiority complex experienced by blacks. We can return to Freud here. As Daniel Boyarin has

---

250 Ibid., 41
251 Ibid., xiv.
252 Ibid., 95.
revealed, Freud felt a deep sense of inferiority as a product of his marked Jewishness not unlike that identified by Franz Fanon among blacks. This sense of inferiority, embodied by notions of Jewish weakness, effeminacy, ugliness and so on, translated into desires to escape the stigma of his Jewish body and ultimately approximate whiteness. These sentiments were, as mentioned, by no means isolated to Freud, but were common amongst Jews of his time, even if, like Freud, they could sometimes pass as white. As Gilman argues, “the Jew's experience of his or her own body was so deeply impacted by anti-Semitic rhetoric that even when that body met the expectations for perfection in the community in which the Jew lived, the Jew experienced his or her body as flawed, diseased.” The Jew was a Jew regardless. The “desire for invisibility, the desire to become white,” writes Gilman, thus came to “lie at the center of the Jews' flight from his or her own body.”

In the first half of the twentieth century Jews in North America tried various methods to obviate their racialized Jewish difference in the public eye. In the American context increasing awareness of the “importance of whiteness to American national identity, as well as of their own problematic position in the country's racial schema, American Jews became preoccupied with the need to situate themselves socially as white and to find ways of defining Jewishness that did not interfere with their whiteness.” A popular method of accomplishing this was name-change. Oftentimes this simply meant that surnames were shortened, dropping Jewish-sounding endings like -vitch, -berg and so on. Other times it

---

254 Boyarin, 239.
meant a complete change in name.

Another method that Jews pursued was to actively distinguish themselves from blacks by refraining from doing business with them, and by participating in attempts to keep their neighbourhoods black-free.258 In later decades, this was accomplished more subtly by accompanying American and Canadian whites fleeing racialized urban centres for the suburbs. Yet another approach was to position themselves as white by engaging in cultural activities such as minstrel shows at Jewish social clubs.259 This was a practice engaged in by Canadian Jews as well.260

Jews also sought to obviate many of the traits that contributed to their racialization so that they could appear whiter. Much like in Europe, Goldstein writes that “of all anti-Jewish stereotypes, those concerning Jewish appearance were the ones Jews internalized the most.”261 As a result, many Jews sought to alter their appearance in order to stave off anti-Semitism and pursue whiteness. One popular way of doing this was rhinoplasty which had become substantially more affordable and increasingly popular among North American Jews, particularly women who internalized the dominant perception that the Jewish nose was a marker of Jewish ugliness.262 The justification was not unlike that of Jacques Joseph (1865-1934), who performed the first rhinoplasty in 1898. In justifying the procedure, Joseph called upon the psychological damage done by the shape of the Jewish nose. As Gilman notes, “he

258 Ibid., 69.
261 Golstein, 177.
262 Golstein, 178. The popularity of rhinoplasty among Jews was notably not a new phenomenon. Rhinoplasty had long been popular among Ashkenazi Jews since the turn of the century, but the monetary costs associated with it meant that they were out of reach for most Jews until well into the mid-twentieth century.
cured the sense of inferiority of his patients through changing the shape of their nose."263 It is
doubtful, however, that Joseph had the power to fully de-racialize Jews of that period.

The Whiteness Test

Ashkenazi Jews in the first half of the twentieth century in Europe would have
unequivocally failed what might be called a whiteness test. They were of course not
Christian, they were largely perceived to be a different race; they did not have control over a
nation-state and so did not control anyone let alone an empire, and they were often seen as
belonging to a pre-modern, uncivilized, Eastern culture. Jewish males were also perceived as
effeminate and queer for a variety of reasons including but not limited to Jewish cultural
norms of gentleness and passivity, and the vast majority of them were working class, which I
have noted has been an impediment to whiteness.

Virtually the same concepts of race, including whiteness and anti-Semitism, took hold
in the North American context. Although Jews were generally seen to be less than white, the
uncertainty over the Jewish race in America meant that they were at different times assigned
to one side or the other of the sharp black-white divide that has historically characterized US
race politics.264 During the 1870s, for instance, Jews were largely perceived as part of the
white family of races and welcomed as American citizens.265 Likewise, Canadian Jews before
1900 were for the most part accepted as members of the Canadian polity, despite notable
anti-Semitic elements. Historian Michael Brown notes that a number of Jewish elites even

264 Dyer, 57.
265 Goldstein, 12.
succeeded at joining the social clubs of the WASP elite. Canadian Jewish immigrants also found it comparatively easy to enter Canada compared with East Asians, Japanese and Chinese migrants. But already in the 1890s, and especially come the 1920s, the atmosphere in North America would begin to change, leading to a more ambivalent and often hostile approach toward Jews. Goldstein writes that in the US, acculturated Jews came to be associated with both the perceived potentials and evils of modernity. On the one hand, Jews were seen as the “embodiment of progressive business techniques,” a model of the “capitalist ethos” of America. \(^{267}\) On the other hand, these Jews came to be associated with all that was negative about modernity. As in Europe, Jews were perceived to embody many of the negative traits that characterized life in the modern urban setting: nervousness, weakness, disease, and obsession with financial gain. In Canada as well, and especially in Quebec, anti-Semites associated Jews with undesired processes of modernization, which many saw as threatening the moral fibre of white Christian society.\(^{268}\)

The mass arrival of largely poor Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe in the preceding decades contributed to the anxieties of white North Americans in similarly negative ways. Often darker, less assimilated to white North American norms of dress, speech and behaviour, and often unaware of white antipathy toward mingling and dealing

---


\(^{267}\) Goldstein, 37.

with African Americans, the new immigrants were perceived with disdain and treated accordingly. Jews soon found themselves excluded from various institutions and public facilities. In Ontario, for instance, Jews could not become teachers in public schools, buy houses or cottages in certain areas and were often banned from city swimming pools and city parks. It was even common to see signs that read “No Jews Wanted” or “No Jews or Dogs Allowed,” such as could be found in the Toronto Island parks. For certain, Jews in this period were not considered white.

Through the 1930s, Canadian anti-Semitism increased to new levels, even when compared with the US. Between 1933 and 1939, Canada accepted merely about one-fifth the numbers of Jewish refugees as other Western countries. In May 1939, when a ship arrived carrying over 900 Jewish refugees fleeing Nazi Germany, it was turned away on account of Prime Minister William Lyon MacKenzie King's infamous pronouncement that “none is too many.” More than 250 of these refugees eventually died at the hands of the Nazis. Part of the reason for this refusal lay in Canada's general immigration and naturalization legislation, which divided potential immigrants into preferred and non-preferred races. Jews, as was clear, belonged to the latter category.

It was not until the 1960s that overt and structural discrimination was for the most

---

269 This was particularly the case in the US, where the black population was much larger. Canada also had a black population, largely on account of the fact that slavery had been practices up until 1834, when it was banned across the British Empire.


271 Michael Keefer, Anti-Semitism Real and Imagined: Responses to the Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Antisemitism (Toronto: Canadian Charger, 2010), 150.

past eliminated in North America. With anti-Semitism relegated to the fringes of society, American anthropologist Karen Brodkin suggests that Jews finally became white in America.273 Brodkin's book, How Jews Became White Folks and What That Says about Race in America, is probably the most well known examination of Jewish whiteness in America. According to Brodkin's Marxist reading, Jews did not simply get ahead in the United States by “pulling themselves up by their bootstraps,” as popular mythology has assumed. Jews were able to get ahead in large part because they were permitted into the sought-after realm of whiteness. Among the most crucial historical factors that Brodkin identifies is that Jews were positioned on the white side of the dividing line between white and black during the era of the civil rights movement in America, resulting in the breakdown of many of the institutional barriers that they once faced. On the white-side of the divide, Jews were able to receive a number of substantial benefits that African-Americans and other non-white ethnic groups did not receive, such as the post-World War II GI Bill in addition to government-sponsored home loans. She writes: “the myth that Jews pulled themselves up by their bootstraps ignores the fact that it took federal programs to create the conditions whereby the abilities of Jews and other European immigrants could be recognized and rewarded rather than denigrated and denied.”274 These benefits bolstered the economic status of these immigrants significantly, eventually allowing them to reach the middle class and become white.

In another well-known piece on Jewish whiteness, Caren Kaplan adds that the

---

273 To my knowledge, there are no scholarly works on the historical trajectory of Canadian Jewish whiteness.
rhetoric of anti-Semitism became “less fashionable and less overt” after World War II, and that strong alliances developed between the United States and Israel—increasingly perceived as a Western nation—also helped Jews on the road to whiteness. Writing in 1999, Kaplan argues that, Ashkenazi Jews in the United States were incontrovertibly white in the legal and social context of the nineties.” In making this claim, Kaplan is careful not to overgeneralize. Writing of her experience in an anti-Semitic context in Maine, and pointing to the diversity of Jewish experience and background, Kaplan's more post-structuralist oriented piece makes the case for an approach to whiteness that recognizes difference within the much exalted and often overly-aggregated category. Whiteness is complicated, she argues; it is relational. The whiteness of Jews, and other historically non-white groups, is therefore not so simply determined. As Dyer further explains, there are “gradations of whiteness[...] Latins, the Irish and Jews, for instance, are rather less securely white than Anglos, Teutons and Nordics; indeed, if Jews are white at all, it is only Ashkenazi Jews, since the Holocaust, in a few places.” In other words, Ashkenazi Jews could easily lose their tenuous white status at any given moment and be relegated again to the realm of the racialized, non-white other, a demotion that can likewise be conceptualized in Žižekian psychoanalytic terms as a certain castration.

But there are also certain gradations of Jewish whiteness that neither Dyer nor Kaplan recognize. It is often assumed that Ashkenazi Jews are the only ones that fall under the

276 Ibid., 454.
277 Dyer, 12.
category of Jewish whiteness in North America. Ashkenazi Jews are considered “white Jews,” in contrast to Sephardi Jews, who are considered, “Jews of colour.” I find this terminology flawed for a number of reasons. First, many Ashkenazi Jews cannot pass as white. Conversely, though many Sephardi Jews are darker in complexion, with facial features characteristic of non-Europeans, many light-skinned Sephardi Jews are able to pass more effectively than some Ashkenazi Jews. Second, it does not take into account the many determinants of Jewish racialization. In this respect, it is those who best approximate the norms of whiteness that are best able to pass as white. Orthodox Ashkenazi Jews perceived as zealous or those with stereotypically Ashkenazi Jewish features are thus viewed as less white than their un-marked, assimilated, and secular co-religionists. Third, I argue that the simple attribute of being Jewish functions to whiten Sephardic and other non-white Jews to a degree, in comparison to being Arab-Muslim or even Arab-Christian.

To understand this phenomenon in greater depth, I cross-reference the components of whiteness discussed above with the factors explained by Brodkin and Kaplan. Perhaps the most obvious factor pertains to class. Jews are now among the most economically successful ethnic categories in North America. The decline in prominence of scientific race theories, particularly anti-Semitism, following World War II, is also quite straightforward. And certainly the success of many Jews in business adds credence to Jews being perceived as enterprising. But what of the other components outlined above? What of Christianity, imperialism, Westerness, and that overarching category of gender? I suggest that these elements are largely fulfilled by an additional factor: the common association between Jews and the state of Israel. Though Kaplan recognizes this link, she does so only in passing, thus
neglecting what I consider to be the profound significance of Zionism as it pertains to the whitening of Jews both in Palestine/Israel and around the world in the post-WWII era.

**Israel, Relationality, and the Arab Threat**

As should be clear from the previous chapter, the Zionist movement developed by Herzl, Nordau, Jabotinsky and others had as one of its primary goals the de-stigmatization, de-pathologization and de-racialization of Jews as a degenerate and non-white race. The goal, moreover, was to normalize and whiten the racialized Jew of Europe. The muscle Jew and later the new Jew was produced to be as white as possible in direct contradistinction with what the virtually anti-Semitic Zionists perceived as the degenerate blackness of the Diaspora Jew.\(^{278}\) The more Jews could erase or else hide their stereotypical Jewish difference the better.

Herzl, as we know, initially advocated for Jews to convert en masse to Christianity, only later opting to accomplish his aims through the alternate route of nation/state-building. The pursuit of Zionism, which called for the secularization of Jewish customs and the establishment of a state, was after all much like conversion to Christianity. This was because Christianity was not only seen as a religion, but as a normative culture or way of being that could be mimicked or approximated. Modeled after the Christian nations, Herzl figured that through Zionism, the Jews could turn into a people “English in tastes, in opinions, in morals and intellect.”\(^{279}\) Through transplantation to Palestine, the Jews would become just like any other Euro-Christian nation. That they would be situated in the Orient, outside the perceived borders of Europe, was inconsequential in his view; for the Jewish state would serve as an

\(^{278}\) Shohat, *Taboo Memories*, 217.

\(^{279}\) Boyarin, 305.
“outpost of civilization against barbarism.” In the end, following the establishment of Israel, his hope was that Jews would “actually turn white in blood and color as well.”

Herzl and the other early Zionists identified many of the various components of whiteness and aspired toward them. Zionism would act as a de facto, albeit incomplete, conversion to Christianity. It would address (male) gender and sexuality through the production of the muscle Jew. It would address race by removing the degenerate qualities of the Diaspora Jew and re-modeling the new Jew in a manner consistent with European norms of whiteness. It would position Jews as somewhat of a western outpost against the barbarism of the Orient. And it would most certainly address enterprise and imperialism by engaging in a settler-colonial project characterized by the subordination and dispossesssion of the generally darker, hitherto non-white, Palestinian natives.

The imperial component of this equation is in fact identified by Fanon. As an oppressed and hated group, the Jews had much in common with the Blacks, and vice versa, according to Fanon as I have noted. But in the second half of the twentieth century, Jews increasingly came to be perceived as white, making those commonalities less and less apparent. Fanon “locates the whitening of the Jew within a negative dialectic vis-à-vis the colonial Arab” and in doing so sheds light on the relational, spatial, and temporal characteristics of whiteness. Prior to the Holocaust, European Jews represented the Orient within a sea of European whiteness. Following the Holocaust, Jews represented whiteness.


281 Boyarin, 305.

282 Shohat, *Taboo Memories*, 263.
within a sea of Oriental blackness. As Said has pointed out, the picture was of “a handful of European Jews hewing a civilization of sweetness and light out of the black Islamic sea.”

The secret behind this shift was the concurrence between Zionist discourse and the much older discourses of Orientalism, which painted Jews as well as Arab Muslims and Christians with a similar brush. In classic Orientalist fashion, Zionist discourse idealized the Palestinian Arabs for their authenticity and exoticness, while simultaneously depicting them as inferior, backwards, and in many respects, degenerate. Palestinian Middle East scholar Joseph Massad provides a fascinating explanation of this phenomenon in his book *The Persistence of the Palestine Question: Essays on Zionism and the Palestinians.* In Massad's reading, the anti-Semitism adopted by the Zionists meant more than an acceptance of denigrating popular stereotypes toward Jews. It also meant that in order to truly become like the white European anti-Semites who the Zionists so desired to become, the Jews required Jews of their own to denigrate and subjugate. Here we have one of the central paradoxes of Zionism: “While it sought to metamorphose Jews into Europeans, it set in motion a historical process by which it was to metamorphose Palestinian Arabs into Jews in a displaced geography of anti-Semitism.” Moreover, “in transforming the Jew into the anti-Semite,” Massad writes that “it became necessary to transform the Palestinian Arab into the disappearing European Jew.” The result was the forced displacement of three-quarters of a million Palestinians between 1947 and 1949 and the establishment of a Jewish supremacist

---

286 Ibid., 169.
state society characterized by a form of racism reminiscent of that which Jews faced ever so recently in Europe.

Racism toward Palestinian Arabs was not the only after-effect of the Jew turned anti-Semite. As I have explained, on top of the racialized contempt expressed toward Holocaust survivors and other visible signs of the Ashkenazi Diaspora—i.e. Yiddishkeit, ultra-orthodox dress—there developed a profound racist attitude toward Sephardi Jews of North African and Asian origin. In her article *Sephardim in Israel: Zionism from the Standpoint of its Jewish victims*, Shohat inserts Israel's internal others into a picture from which they had hitherto been largely disregarded. Arguing against the dominant discourse that Zionism “saved Sephardic Jews from the harsh rule of their Arab captors,” Shohat reveals a rather ugly history laden with severe discrimination, manipulation, and injustice. In need of greater numbers, and desiring “Hebrew labor” to replace the Palestinian Muslims and Christians, Zionist organizations worked hard to attract, facilitate, and in many cases provoke Arab Jewish immigration to the state of Israel. The most serious case of provocation was the alleged Zionist involvement in the bombing of the Mas'ouda Shemtob synagogue in Baghdad, which killed four people. Subsequent to the bombing, Iraqi Jews panicked and fled en masse to Israel.

Like the Holocaust survivors, the arrival of Sephardi Jews became a source of deep insecurity for the dominant Ashkenazi population in the new state. Since Israel was envisioned as a white state, an extension of Europe, it can be fairly deduced that the

288 Ibid., 13-16
289 Ibid., 12.
reasoning behind this insecurity lay in the threat than an introduction of hundreds of thousands of Arab, Central Asian, Persian, and Indian Jews posed to the whitening project. In one book cited by Shohat, author of the *Ashkenazi Revolution* Kalman Katznelson writes of the “tainting” of the Ashkenazi race by the Sephardi Jews, who he considered to be “black” by comparison. Shohat also cites Israeli politician and diplomat Abba Eban, who in 1969 wrote of the danger posed by Sephardi Jews that they would force Israel to “equalize its cultural level with that of the neighbouring world.” If Israel was to be a white state, than the Sephardim had to be cleansed of all Arabness and adopt the cultural norms of the Ashkenazi elite.

Considering the suppression of diasporic cultures and the Zionist modeling of Israel as an extension of Europe, popular perceptions of Israel continue to be of a white Jewish outpost of civilization surrounded by a sea of uncivilized non-white Arabs—this despite the fact that a substantial proportion of Jewish Israelis are themselves of Arab origin. As Goldberg suggests, “the Europeanness of politically and religiously dominant Israelis renders the Promised Land and its members, in the minds of most Americans (not least evangelical Christians) and in the dominant Israeli imagination as normatively white.” This perception is rooted in Israel's close alliance with the Western powers and in the idea of a shared “Judeo-Christian set of sensibilities, dispositions, and values.”

The idea of a Judeo-Christian civilization was actually only popularized in the post-

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ibid., 5.}
\footnote{Ibid., 4.}
\footnote{It is rare for Israeli Jews of Arab origin to identify as Arab, however, since Arab has become something of a pejorative term in Jewish-Israeli society, equivocated with the enemy. Jews of Arab origin more frequently identify as Mizrahi, or “Eastern.”}
\footnote{Goldberg, *The Threat of Race*,116.}
\footnote{Ibid., 115.}
\end{footnotes}
WWII era. Mamdani writes that prior to the war, it was generally assumed that whites were Christians and that “more often than not, the heritage of Christianity was defined in opposition to that of Judaism.”\textsuperscript{295} It was only following the war, according to Mamdani, that the idea of a single Judeo-Christian tradition developed, in large part, he suggests, as “America's antidote to anti-Semitism.”

Although I find the idea of retribution for anti-Semitism attractive, I am unsure as to the weight it had. Many North Americans and Europeans certainly felt remorse for the victims of the Holocaust, as they should have; but to say that this remorse was what led white-Christians to accept Jews as a part of a joint “civilization” seems slightly far-fetched. A more convincing argument, particularly since the early 1990s, lies in Zionism's re-fashioning of Judaism as consistent with Christian/Western values, and of Israel as an outpost of Western civilization against Islam and the “Arab threat.” In this imaginative geography, Israel's continued refusal to change its Jewish supremacist character or its racist policies toward the Palestinian people is portrayed in the international press and by official Israeli rhetoric as a defense of its “democratic” principles and in defense of a Jewish people whose historic persecution came to a halt only because of Zionism's intervention. However, the only way these arguments acquire any purchase is in the context of an international (read Western) commitment to Jewish supremacy, wherein Jews are seen as white Europeans defending white European values and civilization against the primitive Arab hordes.\textsuperscript{296}

This arrangement positions Israel at the forefront of the battle against Islam, defending the West against the uncivilized East, just as Herzl had imagined over a century ago, while by relation positioning Jews on the frontier of whiteness. What is perhaps most interesting—and ironic—is that it is anti-Semitism that has come to virtually define this

\textsuperscript{295} Mamdani, \textit{Good Muslim, Bad Muslim}, 244.
\textsuperscript{296} Massad, 151.
threat.

The “new anti-Semitism,” as it is commonly known, is said to differ from traditional anti-Semitism in that the main object of hatred is not so much individual Jews as the state of Israel. The “new anti-Semitism,” as it is commonly known, is said to differ from traditional anti-Semitism in that the main object of hatred is not so much individual Jews as the state of Israel. In the words of former leader of the Swedish Liberal Party and deputy prime minister of Sweden Per Ahlmark:

Compared to most previous anti-Jewish outbreaks, this [new anti-Semitism] is often less directed against individual Jews. It attacks primarily the collective Jews, the State of Israel. And then such attacks start a chain reaction of assaults on individual Jews and Jewish institutions... In the past, the most dangerous anti-Semites were those who wanted to make the world Judenrein, “free of Jews.” Today, the most dangerous anti-Semites might be those who want to make the world Judenstaatrein, “free of a Jewish state.”

What this logic implies is that anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism are “indelibly linked.” According to Canadian historian Morton Weinfeld, this is because “support for the anti-Zionist position leads to the defence of positions that are devastating to the well-being of Israeli Jews.” In Weinfeld’s view, such stances, advanced through “debate, boycotts, and terror,” even have the effect of aiding and abetting the “potential genocide of the Jewish

---

297 Former Soviet refusenik and Chairman of the JAFI Executive Natan Sharansky suggests what he calls the 3D test of (the new) anti-Semitism to determine whether or not criticism of Israel crosses the line into anti-Semitism: (1) demonization, (2) double standards, and (3) delegitimization. ‘Demonization’ refers to when Israel's actions are blown out of proportion, and compared, for instance, to Nazi Germany or apartheid South Africa. Double standards’ connotes a situation in which Israel is singled out in place of other more egregious abusers of human rights such as China and Sudan. ‘Delegitimization’ occurs when Israel’s “fundamental right to exist is denied – alone among all peoples in the world.”This final D is perhaps the most contentious because it includes all those who, for instance, call for Israel to be a unitary or binational state in which Jews and Palestinians would be equal citizens under the law. See Natan Sharansky, "3D Test of Anti-Semitism: Demonization, Double Standards, Delegitimization," *Jewish Political Studies Review* 16, no. 3-4 (Fall 2004), http://www.jcpa.org/phas/phas-sharansky-f04.htm.


The fear is that if the anti-Zionists get their way a Muslim majority will quickly emerge, leading to the mass killing, subordination, and/or expulsion of Israeli Jews.

This rather Islamophobic sentiment can be characterized in Žižekian terms as the fear of losing the nation—that Thing of enjoyment—to the other. Perpetuated, this fear finds recourse in racism and xenophobic nationalism and in the institutionalization of anti-democratic policies, the likes of which we are now seeing in Israel. As explained in Chapter Two, the fear of losing the nation-Thing is also experienced by those in diaspora. Since Diaspora Zionism is based on the idea that the fate of Jews everywhere relies on the continued existence of Israel as a Jewish state, it follows that when Israel, and by relation the ideology of Zionism, are under threat, no Jew is understood to be safe.

Considering the positioning of Israel and Jews on the forefront of the battle against Islam, feelings of insecurity felt by Jews are extended to include the West as a whole. The perpetual demonization of Palestinians as the most dangerous anti-Semites thereby functions to maintain the place of Jews on the racial hierarchy, above the cut-off which separates white from non-white, if only slightly. Ironically, it is thus by promoting the sense that Jews are under attack by (new) anti-Semites that Jews are positioned as (relationally) white.

For now, this “whiteness by permission,” as Bakan calls it, is a relatively comfortable place to be in, since it affords Jews around the world many of the privileges of whiteness. But to say that Jews are necessarily secure in their whiteness would certainly be an

---

300 Ibid., 45.
overstatement. Not so distant memories of persecution and racialization along with ongoing stigmas associated with stereotypes of Jewish weakness, etc, often mean that many Jews continue to actively secure their whiteness by seeking to obviate elements of their Jewishness deemed undesirable. Most, however, stop short of wanting to do away with their Jewish difference entirely.

“I'm not white, I'm Jewish”

Not trying to be a prophet but he who parted the sea,  
is a part of me and when look in my heart I see, the same mystery,  
and I know that we share the same history.  
Yeah, Hebrew is the language of G-D, so silently, I know he walks with me,  
like O.G., I'm G'ed up, I'm G-D'ed up,  
I'm a read up with my feet up,  
Sabbath is practice til we all get freed up  
so please plant your seeds up,  
Israel's the bride and the groom's inside  
and when I'm staring at the Lion, I'm like open wide  
and when I'm drowning in the ocean, I will choke the tide  
snatch a patch from the sky, put that patch in my eye  
you can tell me I’m fly, but it’s not for a ‘white’ guy.  
I’m not white I’m Jewish [repeated]303

These lyrics are courtesy of Matt Bar and Ori Salzberg, two young American Jews who head Bible Raps, an educational program that uses hip hop to teach Jewish kids about Judaism and Jewish tradition in a fun and interactive way. This song, entitled “I'm not white, I'm Jewish,” is among the various songs featured on their new album “Bible Raps Vol. 1.” For Bar and Salzberg, it seems that being white and being Jewish are irreconcilable. Whiteness means being part of the supposedly culture-less norm or mainstream. Jewishness

on the contrary signifies cultural or ethnic difference. Jewishness moreover involves ethnicity, whereas whiteness does not.

While Jews have attempted to aspire to whiteness in many ways over the course of the last century-plus, parallel currents have also been evident which suggest the opposite. There is actually a fairly extensive history among Jews, particularly in the US, of disassociation with whiteness. Returning again to the first half of the twentieth-century, Jews would, for instance, often self-identify as a separate, albeit white, race. Goldstein explains that one reason for this was that “Jews began to feel that a denial of racial identity not only prevented them from addressing the problem of antisemitism adequately, but could play into the hands of figures like Henry Ford who accused Jews of trying to conceal their true nature.”304 Unsurprisingly, those that were apparently the most adamant about maintaining this racial distinction were the Zionists, who saw racial identification as central to national revival.305

Jews were commonly ambivalent about the superior positions they held in relation to African Americans as well during this period. Although they did not want to be associated with blacks, many Jews, particularly new immigrants from Eastern Europe, empathized with their situation, as they could draw parallels between the situation of blacks and their own histories of oppression. Yet except for a few notable examples such as Jewish labour unions that stood in solidarity with blacks, the choice “between empathy and aspiration” tended to weigh on the side of whiteness during the inter-war periods.306

304 Goldstein, 168.
305 Ibid., 70.
306 Ibid., 147.
As racial liberalism came to be expressed as a core American value beginning in the 1960s, however, Jews were largely freed both to support black struggles and to express their Jewish identities in less confined ways.\(^{307}\) Meanwhile, with the rise of Black Nationalism, Jews were essentialized as part of the oppressive white majority, a perception that was difficult for many Jews to accept. There was also increased concern that the attainment of increased acceptance and whiteness would sever ties to Jewishness.\(^{308}\)

Jewish cultural studies scholar Ann Pellegrini gives an interesting example of this phenomenon in her examination of the character of Sandra Bernhard in the cinematic conversion of the 1989 off-Broadway musical *Without You I'm Nothing (sic)*. To Pellegrini, the portrayal of Bernhard, a Jewish female, impersonating a white woman impersonating blacks signifies the desire among Jews to want to hold on to a sense of their Jewish difference, at least in comparison with whites. By impersonating blacks as a Jew, Bernhard simultaneously reinforces the connection between Jews and blackness while at the same time trying to obviate the stigma of white guilt.\(^{309}\)

Goldstein identifies another example of this phenomenon: the contemporary trend among American Jewish youth of compounding elements of black culture with Jewish culture. This trend can be seen in various ways, from cheesy rap songs, to “Jew Tang” T-shirts,\(^{310}\) to *Heeb*, a magazine which Goldstein argues heralds the “birth of a new, lively subculture among young Jews who take great pleasure in distancing themselves from the

\(^{307}\) Ibid., 194.

\(^{308}\) Ibid., 210-12.

\(^{309}\) Pellegrini, 142.

\(^{310}\) “Jew Tang” is a play off Wu Tang Clan, a popular African-American rap group. These shirts were worn by Jewish students at the University of Toronto frosh in 2009.
white mainstream of which they are unquestionably a part.”\textsuperscript{311} Goldstein nevertheless cautions his readers not to take this as a sign that American Jews are ready to give up on whiteness. As he concludes, “even if whiteness has come into increasing conflict with their self-conception as a group apart, it has remained integral to most Jews' self-understanding and is critical to their ongoing desire for success and acceptance in an America defined by race.”\textsuperscript{312}

Canadian Jews are influenced strongly by American mainstream culture and Jewish-American institutions, so many of the same tendencies can be seen to apply in either country. But there are a few notable differences. Canadian Jews, for one, never experienced anything comparable to Black Nationalism. They experienced Quebecois nationalism, a factor which may well have encouraged Diaspora Zionism in Canada, but which had less to do with racial difference—that is, except for fringe sentiments which claimed that the Quebecois were the “white niggers” of America.\textsuperscript{313}

Canada also has multiculturalism as official government policy. Originally passed in 1971 by the Federal government under the leadership of Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, \textit{Multiculturalism Within a Bilingual Framework}, as the policy was officially named, sought to recognize Canada's ethno-cultural diversity outside of the two founding nations and to solidify the notion of Canada as a multicultural “mosaic” as opposed to an assimilationist ”melting pot” like the US or like Canada in the past. For minority groups like Jews this implied an increased sense of freedom to engage in Jewish cultural practices and to identify

\textsuperscript{311} Goldstein, 235.
\textsuperscript{312} Ibid., 238.
as Jews. Importantly, this did not mean that they were abandoning their Canadianness. As Michael Brown suggests, “to be a good Jew was now to be a better Canadian.” Yet to be truly Canadian, you still had to be unquestionably white.

Despite popular perceptions of Canadian nationality as being inclusive, the reservation of “national” status to particular people based on indicators of ancestry and appearance is apparent. Indeed, it is only those of predominantly northern and western European ancestry that are deemed unquestionably Canadian. These people are rarely asked where they are from, and if they are, responding that they are Canadian is usually not a matter of contention. Alternatively, those that do not fit into the prototypical image of what a Canadian is supposed to look or act like are often required to specify their ancestry, and at times, even defend their loyalty to Canada. Defined as others and assumed to be immigrants these people are often inundated with the question “where are you from?” to such an extent that having to define their lineage can become an everyday occurrence and an insult to any sense of belonging that they might have. Notably, many of these people may have roots in Canada that exceed those of British or French ancestry. Some Canadians of African descent, for instance, can trace their history in Nova Scotia back centuries yet they are still likely to be asked where they come from. If by chance those deemed as others or immigrants are recognized as Canadians, their Canadianness is nearly always qualified or tempered by a hyphen. Afro-Canadians, Pakistani-Canadians, Mexican-Canadians, Indian-Canadians; they are never simply Canadian. That label is reserved for those of the founding nations, in addition to a few other European groups who have seemingly achieved whiteness in the

---

314 Brown, “Canadian Jews.”
315 See Thobani.
The place of Jews within this arrangement is complicated. Jews are white only insofar as they can pass, though their Canadianness is nearly always hyphenated. The result is a somewhat ambiguous relationship between Canadian Jews and whiteness. I, for instance, am considered white by some and questionably white by others, but never a “person of colour,” since that would seem to imply a lesser degree of white privilege. I remain admittedly uncomfortable identifying as simply white, given my self-perception as different and considering histories and present realities of anti-Semitism in Canada. Quebecois writer Susan Judith Ship also shares this uneasiness. “I have always had an ambiguous relationship to ‘whiteness,’” writes Ship, “and I do not define myself as white [...] My sense of self as a Semite and my link with my ancient roots provide a more positive sense of my self-identification as a Jew.”

This desire to identify as Jewish instead of as white is facilitated by the reality that in today's racial context in North America, identifying as Jewish does not necessarily impede whiteness. For many, such as Arab Jews, it may bolster it, by differentiating them from Arab Muslims, who at this historical conjecture are positioned much lower on the racial hierarchy. For Jews in general, identifying as Jewish instead of as white, or by relation as simply Canadian or American is our means to stay and be different. It is about resisting full assimilation and holding on to that romantic, postmodern sense of being in diaspora.

The question then becomes how best to be Jewish without being associated with the

---

non-white anti-Semitic caricatures of the old Diaspora Jew. One way of doing this is to avoid
visibility. As Gilman argues in reference to Jews, “being too visible means being seen not as
an individual but as an other, one of the ‘ugly’ race.”\textsuperscript{317} The more Jews act and dress white,
the less they are otherized and the more they are seen to belong. Another way, effective
especially if invisibility is not an option, is through Zionism and association with Israel. The
whiteness of the Zionist project and of Israel's representation as a Western democracy
facilitates for Jews the ability to be white and Jewish at the same time. Diaspora Zionism
moreover provides Jews with the privileges of whiteness at the same time as it avoids
assimilation and loss of a distinct identity. This is undoubtedly an ideal position to be in,
particularly for historically racialized peoples such as Jews. Regrettably, identifying as non-
white does nothing to annul the oppressive consequences so often endemic to the quest for
whiteness.

\textbf{Conclusion}

The purpose of this chapter has been to demonstrate the close relationship between
Zionism and Jewish whiteness. I have suggested that in addition to the features detailed in the
previous chapters, a further, albeit related, appeal of Israel is its historic ability to position
Jews within the confines of whiteness. I have attributed this whitening ability to several
factors including Israel’s imperial nature and constructs of Israel and Jews being part of a
Western Judeo-Christian civilization at the forefront of the battle against Islam. Furthermore,
by assisting Jews in lining up as white while at the same time allowing them to identify as

\textsuperscript{317} Gilman, “\textit{Visibility}”, 30.
non-white, being a Diaspora Zionist, becomes an attractive subject position. The key for organizations invested in maintaining the hegemony of Zionism, therefore, is that they are able to effectively communicate such appeals to subsequent generations of Jewish youth. Due to the perceived importance of Diaspora Zionism for the survival of both Israel and the Jewish people, leaving this up to parents and the natural flow of discourse is ostensibly too much of a risk to take. Considering the challenges Israel is currently facing, Jewish-Zionist education thus takes on an added level of importance for the Zionist enterprise.
CHAPTER FOUR

Engineering Consent

Introduction

In 1947, Sigmund Freud’s nephew Edward Bernays published his landmark article *The Engineering of Consent*. Bernays' work was influenced considerably by his Uncle Sigmund's psychoanalytic theories of the self. He found Freud's postulation that we are all irrational beings, motivated by unconscious inner fears and desires to be particularly useful. By applying this psychoanalytic understanding to the fields of advertising and public relations, Bernays realized that people can be persuaded to buy-in to virtually anything. His conclusion: that “the engineering of consent should be based theoretically and practically on the complete understanding of those whom it attempts to win over.” The job of advertisers or public relations consultants, therefore, is to investigate what it is that triggers the fears and desires of their target market, and to develop campaigns that channel these emotions in the desired direction: toward a particular product, initiative, political leader or ideology.

As was explained in the introduction to this thesis, all ideologies rely on a combination of coercion and consent to become and to remain hegemonic. If support cannot

---

319 Ibid., 114.
be held through these means, hegemonies will cease to hold sway over the masses they stand to overlie, leading to their ultimate fall from ideological dominance. Faced with this prospect those with a vested interest in maintaining a particular hegemony will seek its prolongation by whatever means possible.

In this final chapter my aim is to identify some of the ways in which Zionist organizations have, in keeping with Bernays’ suggestions, sought to both maintain and “engineer” consent for Diaspora Zionism in Canada through the deployment of various discursive practices. As is explained below, these efforts, while by no means new, have been treated with an amplified degree of urgency as of late due in large part to widespread fears that young Jews are “distancing” from Israel and Zionism, thereby posing a considerable threat to the hegemony of Zionism in North America.

While the extent of this distancing is still a matter of debate, there is substantial evidence which suggests that an increasing number of young Jews have become overtly disenchanted with the pro-Israel “right-or-wrong” approach of the North American Jewish establishment.320 I personally have witnessed many—even those who I never could have imagined would make the leap—come out against Zionism and the ongoing, ever more troubling system of Israeli rule over the Palestinians. Many of these individuals were previously some of the most ardent defenders of Israel I have ever known—a few of them former core members of a campus Israel advocacy group.

Jewish-Zionist organizations in North America are undoubtedly aware of these trends. Disassociation with Israel, particularly among Jewish youth, is a topic that dominates much of the strategic discussion within mainstream Jewish organizational circles in North America today. With Israel perceived as the cornerstone of Jewish life in the Diaspora, lacking which the very survival of Jews may be at stake, and with the maintenance of a strong Zionist Diaspora seen as fundamental for the survival of Israel, securing a Zionist future in Diaspora Jewish communities is taken as an issue of supreme importance. Faced with this challenge to Diaspora Zionism, many mainstream Jewish organizations have invested an incredible amount of time, money, and effort into campaigns that seek to produce and reinforce Zionism, particularly, though not exclusively, amongst Jewish youth.

As noted in the introduction, discourse analysis can be a useful tool in examining the role of texts—written, spoken, illustrated, embodied, practiced—in inculcating and sustaining ideologies. My intent in this chapter is therefore to undertake a discourse analysis of several Jewish-Zionist education campaigns in order to shed light on some of the pedagogical techniques, which, at once, impose and maintain the dominance of Diaspora Zionism today. My focus is on two organizations directly involved in Jewish-Zionist education, albeit via informal approaches to education. These organizations are the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and Taglit Birthright Israel (TBI). I have chosen these particular organizations for a number of reasons. First, because they are two of the largest and most established Jewish-Zionist organizations in North America; second, because they are not considered to be fringe organizations but rather part of the Jewish mainstream; and third, because they focus primarily on different age cohorts. JNF campaigns tend to target children,
adolescents and adults, as opposed to TBI, which is geared exclusively toward young adults between the ages of 18 and 26.

In each of the case studies detailed below I provide a historical backdrop in addition to an analysis of how we might interpret the ideological and affective work of the discursive practices they are engaged in. Regarding the JNF, I look at two of their major pedagogical campaigns, both of which double as fundraisers: the JNF’s Blue Box and its tree planting initiatives. Under the category of tree planting, I also examine the JNF’s recent Twinning Programs, launched in 2009 at Toronto’s Downsview Park. With respect to TBI, I look specifically at the discursive practices employed by American tour organizer IsraelExperts as well as at those of the Canada-Israel Experience and Oranim Educational Initiatives.

The central argument that I make is that the appeals made by the JNF and TBI for support depend centrally on the historic appeal of Israel and Zionism detailed in the previous chapters, although this is not something that the organizations themselves are necessarily cognizant of. As I have explained, this appeal includes feelings of home and belonging bound up with Israel as the national homeland of the Jews, and Jewish desires to be perceived as strong, attractive, and white, yet different. Crucially, the more vulnerable and stigmatized participants feel, the more persuasive these practices are likely to be. Discourses of Jews being perpetually threatened by anti-Semitism, the omnipresence of the Holocaust in Jewish life, along with pervasive anti-Semitic stereotypes of Jewish weakness and unattractiveness, help to ensure that the appeal of Israel and Zionism remain significant for Jews today.
The Jewish National Fund

The JNF is the first major organization to globally take on the task of bringing the Jewish Diaspora in line with the Zionist movement, making it an appropriate point of departure. Also known by its Hebrew name Keren Kayemet L'Yisrael (KKL), the JNF was established in 1901 at the Fifth Zionist Congress as an arm of the World Zionist Organization for the explicit purpose of purchasing and developing land for Jewish settlement in Palestine. Following statehood in 1948, the JNF’s role was altered somewhat to include agricultural projects such as afforestation. In 1961, it was recognized as the official caretaker of Israel's forests, granted the privileges of a public authority under Israeli law, while preserving its ability to operate as a charitable organization around the world.

As the caretaker designate of Israel's forests, the JNF went on to occupy a central place in Zionist discourse. According to popular Jewish mythology, the Israel of the bible was like a “fertile garden,” but since the Jewish exile some 2000 years ago it had turned into swampland and desert as a result of apparent misuse and neglect by its Arab inhabitants. Palestine was understood to be uninhabited and uncultivated in the absence of the Jews, and Zionists of all political stripes believed that the return of the Jews redeemed the land as it redeemed the Jewish people. It is thus believed that the Jews brought the land back to life, returning it to its prior glory through, amongst other things, their unique love and biological connectedness to the land. As Israel's first President Chaim Weizmann (1874-1952) once remarked, “It seems as if God had covered the soil of Palestine with rocks and marshes and sand, so that its beauty can only be brought out by those who love it and will devote their

---

lives to healing its wounds.”

Accompanied by colonial discourses of civilizing and modernizing the landscape with superior European agricultural techniques, this type of logic has helped the JNF legitimize its operations and paint itself simply as a green environmental organization. The JNF has nonetheless never ceased acting as a central contributor to Zionist colonization, nor has it forfeited its historic role as an agent of Jewish-Zionist education, which it has generally conducted in unison with its fundraising efforts. Some JNF officials have even argued that the pedagogical aspect of its fundraising campaigns—its propaganda—have been even more important to the JNF than the direct generation of funds. As recent JNF director of fundraising Yechiel Leket once proclaimed, “we are not only raising funds but we are also raising people […] to raise people is more important than to raise funds.”

Israeli geographer Yoram Bar-Gal explains this logic further in his revealing book *Propaganda and Zionist education: The Jewish National Fund, 1924–1947*. He writes:

According to the JNF, “the donation in its purest form” was a highly efficient means for the accrual of money for the Zionist movement. Donation of this sort strengthened national consciousness, so one should consider this, not the collection of funds, as the success of Zionist propaganda. This was so since the main purpose of collecting donations was “to win over the person”—meaning to bring the masses closer to Zionism.

The JNF’s most famous fundraising technique has been its so-called Blue Box: a small tin box in which millions of Jews around the world have been socialized to deposit coins for the purpose of *tzedakah*, Hebrew for “charity.” Over the course of more than a

---

323 Yechiel Leket quoted in Braverman, 70.
century, millions of Blue Boxes have been distributed around the world to the extent that they are now found in the “vast majority of Zionist homes” and community centres in the Diaspora.\footnote{Braverman, 69.}

The convention of depositing coins in that Blue Box on the counter exemplifies what Foucault has described as discursive practice.\footnote{Bloch, 9.} It is an act, bound up with various meanings and significances and informed by the discourses upon which the JNF relies, in addition, of course, to the characteristics of the box itself. The appearance of the Blue Box has changed dozens of times. It was originally plain blue with the initials of the JNF written in Hebrew along with a bold Star of David. Later on, the JNF began putting images on the Blue Box such as a borderless map showing JNF development in what is now Israel extending to the east into Trans-Jordan and often accompanied by small depictions of halutzim, “Zionist pioneers” tilling the soil. In successive versions the map came to be more defined. The new map showed an outline of Israel from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, notably without demarcating the borders of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, under Israeli occupation since 1967. This image is still used in many of the JNF’s materials.

Most recently, the JNF has dropped the map on its Blue Boxes, possibly due to widespread acceptance amongst world Jewry of a two-state solution, which would see a Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip alongside a Jewish-majority Zionist state. In its place are images of Jewish youth depicted as young pioneers assisting in the development of the land.\footnote{See “JNF Store: New Blue Box,” Jewish National Fund, accessed March 21, 2011,} Although by no means self-reflexive about notions of Jewish
regeneration and Zionist colonization, the caption for the new Blue Box on the JNF website is honest about its intentions:

Since its debut in 1901 as JNF’s official fundraising “pushke,” the Blue Box has represented JNF and its efforts to develop the land and roads, build communities, strengthen agriculture, and create water reservoirs in Israel. It is also a vehicle for educating Jewish youth and involving them in these efforts in order to foster their Zionistic spirit and inspire their support for the State of Israel. For many Jews, the Blue Box is bound up with childhood memories from home and the traditional contributions they made in kindergarten and grade school.

Besides the Blue Box, the JNF’s tree planting initiatives are another excellent example of discursive practice. Tree planting is encouraged as a great gift idea for any occasion: weddings, Bar or Bat Mitzvahs, birthdays, births, Chanukkah, and so on. But most of all, tree planting is encouraged as a way for children to commemorate Tu Bishvat, the Jewish new year for trees.

During the late Second Temple period Tu Bishvat was marked as a key date on the tithing calendar, which determined when food offerings were taken to the Temple “to celebrate the Source of all abundance and to recycle that abundance to the poor.” After the Temple was destroyed, Tu Bishvat lost its relevance until it was revived in the sixteenth century by Kabbalists, Jewish mystics who found significance in marking the occasion. Tu Bishvat remained an obscure holiday marked by only a small minority of Jews until re-

---

328 *Pushke* is Yiddish for “can.”
emerging once again in the 1920s, this time by the JNF Teacher's Movement, which saw in Tu Bishvat a perfect “ritual through which to cultivate Hebrew identity.”

In Israel, tree-planting in general, celebrated annually on Tu Bishvat, became a central activity by which to naturalize new immigrants with the land and to root them in the soil. It also served as a means of fulfilling the Zionist promise of normalizing the Jew by transforming the stereotypically weak and effeminate Jewish body into a strong, masculine, Hebrew one. As critical legal scholar Irus Braverman explains: “through the performance of planting, an attempt is made to transform the 'rootless cosmopolitan' Jew into a physical laborer. The labor of planting thus naturalizes the Jew, while at the same time normalizing her to fit with the new national image.”

JNF afforestation has also been used as a means to “Judaise” the landscape and to prevent Palestinians from returning to their lands. The JNF's Canadian chapter is particularly implicated in this respect through the now infamous Canada Park project. Canada Park was established in 1973 to cover up the ruins of three Palestinian villages depopulated and demolished only a few years earlier by the IDF. Fifteen million Canadian dollars were donated to plant a forest on the remains of the villages, which lie in the occupied West Bank and thus beyond Israel's internationally recognized borders.

---

331 Long, 71.
332 Braverman, 77.
334 Canada Park was in fact the fourth JNF project to bear ‘Canada’ or ‘Canadian’ in its name as a result of donations by JNF Canada. The first such project was the establishment of Canada Forest following a donation of one million trees by JNF Canada. Canada Forest lies just outside of the village of Ein Kerem, better known to Palestinians as Ayn Karim, one of the many villages depopulated by Zionist militias in 1948.
335 Eitan Bronstein, Restless Park: On the Latrun Villages and Zochrot, 2007, 2,
continues to be a popular destination for Jewish Israelis from across Israel, while many of the Palestinians who had called what is now Canada Park their home continue to live in refugee camps on the other side of the separation wall, forbidden to return. Elsewhere in the West Bank, JNF planting programs are used to prevent Palestinians from planting as well as to expand areas surrounding illegal Jewish settlements.\footnote{Eyal Weizman, *Hollow Land: Israel's Architecture of Occupation* (New York: Verso, 2007), 120.} To accomplish these aims the JNF has made it their practice to plant European pines. Aside from producing a more familiar, white, European landscape, pines are used because they grow quickly and destroy most other small plants because of their acidity, ultimately making the land unusable for Palestinian shepherds. In this respect, JNF trees act as “facts on the ground” much like Jewish settler colonies in the West Bank, intended to stake claim to as much land as possible in case a Palestinian state ever comes into fruition. Discursively, the pines can also be interpreted as “proxy immigrants,”\footnote{Simon Schama, *Landscape and Memory* (New York: Vintage Books, 1996), 5.} as historian Simon Schama once put it, or perhaps more accurately as “proxy settlers” for Jews in the Diaspora.

Currently, much of the JNF's efforts are focused in the Negev desert (known in Arabic as the Naqab) under the banner of the *Blueprint Negev* campaign. Hopes are that this initiative will make way for 250,000 Jews to be settled in the area, referred to by the JNF itself as “Israel’s last frontier.”\footnote{“Israel: The Next 10 Years: JNF's Bold Vision and Commitment to the North and the South,” Jewish National Fund, October 25, 2006, http://support.jnf.org/site/PageServer?pagename=pr_Next_102006.} In partnership with the Israeli government and a number of private organizations, this project aims to spread out the Israeli population as well as attract new immigrants, particularly from Canada and the US, to be among “Israel's newest

generation of pioneers.” The overtly colonial discourse of this campaign is indicative of the ongoing project of internal colonization that continues apace. Like colonization campaigns in previous years, the Negev is depicted as “empty” land, a “frontier,” just waiting to be settled by Zionist “pioneers.” Unsurprisingly, of course, the Negev is far from empty, and is in fact home to over 170,000 Naqab Bedouin.\footnote{Clinton Bailey, “The Bedouin are not to blame.” \textit{Haaretz}. Dec 6, 2009, http://www.haaretz.com/print-edition/opinion/the-bedouin-are-not-to-blame-1.2807. The Naqab Bedouin live primarily in an area northwest of the Jewish-Israeli city of Beersheva known as the Siyag, or “closure,” in which the remnants of the Negev Bedouin population were forced by Israeli authorities to live following the 1948 Nakba. Restricted to living within this small area, Naqab Bedouin are further confined by the fact that Israel has only recognized seven out of more than fifty villages in the Siyag. The rest of the villages in the area are “unrecognized” and are therefore denied access to public services such as water, electricity, and sewage treatment. These villages are frequently demolished to make way for development projects including Jewish residential settlements and JNF forests, planted with the assistance of donors both in Israel and abroad.}

The JNF has recently developed a new type of tree planting program that allows participants to physically act out the role of the pioneer by actually planting trees in their cities of residence. We might think of this as a discursive practice that is truly embodied. The arrangement is that for every tree they plant, another is planted in Israel. These “Twinning Programs,” as they are called, were inaugurated in June 2009 in Toronto. The programs link the federally-funded Canada Forest at Downsview Park with the Toronto Community Forest in Israel, which is part of the larger Yatir Forest in the northern Negev. Four twinning activities have taken place since 2009, with programs in May for Tu Bishvat and again in September around the time of Rosh Hashanah. The spring programs have been aimed at students from grade five through eight, hailing from various area Jewish and non-Jewish schools. The fall programs have been open to the public, targeted mainly at the Toronto Jewish community.

According to the press release for the first fall event in September 2009, the Twinning
Programs intend to “build bridges of sustainability” and “highlight the shared values of Canada and Israel with respect to the environment.” For a minimum donation of $36 per tree to the JNF, participants spend the day planting trees and engaging in other environment-related activities according to the same reciprocal relationship as the spring events. For each tree they plant, another is planted in Israel.

In one of the more famous scenes of the 1964 Oscar-nominated Israeli comedy *Sallah Shabati*, the main character, a Moroccan immigrant played by actor Haim Topol of *Fiddler on the Roof* fame, is planting trees in a JNF forest—a common practice for new immigrants to Israel. As Shabati is planting, the American donor for whom the forest is named arrives to have his picture taken, but soon after he leaves, the sign is swiftly replaced with a different name, ready for the next foolish donor who had been convinced that an area of the forest was actually named after him. It is this scene that came to mind when staff at the JNF Toronto office informed me that no map actually exists which indicates where the Toronto Community Forest is actually located. The only way I could find out where the forest lies within the expansive Yatir Forest was if a JNF forester were to physically take me there and show it to me. Had an area really been set aside in the Yatir Forest for the so-called Toronto Community Forest? Does the money donated by the participants of the second Twinning Program event actually go to planting trees in Yatir, or does it simply go to supporting JNF operations as a whole? The answer to these questions remains uncertain. Clearer are the

---

pedagogical implications of the program.

Material or not, the act of naming a place after one's self or one's community establishes a personalized link to the land of Israel that is the hallmark of the JNF's work. “We connect the Diaspora to Israel like no one else can” boasts the JNF in a 2006 press release.342 Certainly in this respect, by allowing donors to believe that they have the ability to name a forest after their community or a tree after themselves, they are probably correct. Bar-Gal notes that tree planting is a “symbolic act of linking the forest to a personal or collective commemoration,”343 which thereby facilitates a connection between the donor and the imagined landscape. The fact that it is children who are targeted by JNF campaigns is also relevant in this respect since, as Bar-Gal notes, it is during the younger ages that personal identification with place, or place identification, occurs.344 There is also considerable cultural significance behind naming forests after individuals and communities, given the importance allotted to commemoration in the Jewish tradition.345

Beyond the significance of naming are the implications of allowing Jewish subjects to physically act out the planting as if they themselves were Zionist pioneers breaking the soil in Israel and “making the desert bloom.” In this regard, the experience of planting has the potential to be profoundly affective, as it facilitates the virtual embodiment of the desired subject: the strong, white, new Jew.

More generally, all of these campaigns can be read to bolster Jewish whiteness

---

342 “Israel,” Jewish National Fund.
343 Bar-Gal, 53.
344 Ibid., 152.
through the linkages they foster between Israel, Jews, and environmentalism. This coupling reinforces Jewish and Israeli whiteness by characterizing Israel in terms that resonate with white subjects in the West—in Canada in particular. As critical race scholar Sherene Razack argues, environmentalism in Canada remains a central trope of whiteness today, tied closely with settler-colonial myths of *terra nullius* and the creation of pure places “unsullied by racial others.”

By positioning Israel as a country that goes out of its way to respect the environment, the JNF is positioning Israel as a modern, white country in the eyes of participants, and therefore as part of the Western “us.”

Moreover, by playing into historical Jewish desires for whiteness, such campaigns function to channel Jews in the direction of Zionism. Though this affect may not register until later in life for the younger participants, its significance could be profound enough to influence the degree to which they adhere to Zionism in the future. The main hope is that they will go on to become major supporters of the JNF and the Zionist movement well into the future.

**Taglit Birthright Israel**

I turn now to Taglit Birthright Israel (TBI). TBI is an initiative that offers Diaspora Jewish youth the opportunity of a lifetime by giving them the chance to see Israel up close, to smell it, to know its geography and to experience the intense sense of national belonging that it inspires—all at essentially zero cost to the participant.

Homeland tours have acted as a central item in the Zionist pedagogical toolbox for

---

nearly a century. Much like tree planting initiatives developed during the same period, early tours were a way to connect new olim, “Jewish immigrants,” to a foreign land. The platform was the hiking tour, or tiyul, instrumentalized by the Yishuv's educational establishment “as a medium of nationalist pedagogy.”347 “Hiking tours were intended not merely to convey information but to generate affect, instil commitment and accomplish the paradoxical mission of constructing an organic connection,” writes sociologist and Jewish studies scholar Shaul Kelner. The tiyul was also embraced by Zionist youth movements as part of their efforts to create young, nationalist subjects, the future backbone of a Jewish state.348 Yoram and Bruria Bar-Gal write that youth groups from the Diaspora and Palestine/Israel educated their members “to know their homeland and to love it through field trips and camping out.”349 This emphasis on geography education was notably common among other European states as well, influenced in particular by the rise of German nationalism and the spread of colonialism during this period.350 The sense was that knowledge of geography was essential for the formation of strong national identities, and in the case of the Zionist youth groups, to establish connections to a new and foreign territory.

In subsequent years, the pedagogical logic of the tiyul was expanded to include youth Diaspora tourism in general. Come the 1950s, organized Jewish Diaspora youth tours were commonplace. Yet these pilgrimages to the homeland “rarely pressed the ideological point,” according to Kelner.351 Although generally aligned with the Zionist movement, the tours were

348 Ibid., 28.
349 Ibid., 54.
350 Bar-Gal and Bar-Gal, 45.
351 Kelner, 34.
more often presented simply as Jewish identity builders.

The concern in the Diaspora, particularly in the US, was that intermarriage would have negative long-term effects on the future of world Jewry. Israel tours were seen as one way to stem the tide. Jewish communal organizations thus began subsidizing trips to Israel in hopes that they would strengthen Jewish identity. The cost of the trips, however, made them relatively inaccessible to most Jews.

Into the 1980's, there was a new concern. Israel's increasing reputation as a regional bully following the 1982 Israeli-backed Sabra and Shatila massacre was feared to have negative effects on the attachment of American Jews to Israel. The anxiety over the “distancing hypothesis,” as it came to be known, was fuelled by various articles and studies published in subsequent years by prominent Jewish studies researcher Steven M. Cohen among others.352 In a 1996 article Cohen backtracks slightly, arguing that the anxiety was largely misplaced and that there was in fact no major change in attachment levels to Israel among American Jews, at least within his study range of 1986-1993.353 He nevertheless concludes that “the patterns in Israel attachment associated with age certainly point to the possibility of broad-scale erosion among the American Jewish population over the medium term.”354

Cohen's conclusion had the effect of catapulting Israel experience trips to the top of the Jewish philanthropic agenda. One idea was to fully cover the costs of the trips and have

---


354 Ibid., 371.
them be eligible for all Jewish youth in the Diaspora. This idea was first proposed by Israeli politician Yossi Beilin at a United Jewish Federations General Assembly in 1994. His proposal was to offer a free voucher plan, which would give all Jewish youth the opportunity to travel to Israel regardless of his or her economic status, or level of affiliation to the Jewish community.\(^{355}\) Beilin's proposal quickly caught the interest of Canadian-born Seagram’s heir Charles Bronfman and American hedge fund tycoon Michael Steinhardt. In 1996 the two philanthropists launched Israel Experience Inc., which a few months later adopted the name Taglit, Hebrew for “discovery.”

TBI sent its first group to Israel in 2000. Funded by Bronfman and Steinhardt and other Jewish philanthropists through the Birthright Israel Foundation, along with the Jewish Agency for Israel, North American Jewish Federations, and the Israeli government, approximately 250,000 participants have since been able to travel to Israel for free.\(^{356}\) The exorbitant costs associated with the trips are justified from the point of view of its funders and advocates due to the believed effectiveness of TBI for securing Jewish continuity and maintaining support for Israel.

According to Kelner this latter goal came to the fore in the same year of TBI's launch as a result of the eruption of the Second Palestinian Intifada in September 2000.\(^{357}\) TBI's “ideological work is oriented primarily toward shoring up Zionism's own base of Jewish


\(^{357}\) Kelner, 43.
support and creating a bulwark against the ideological struggles being waged against it,”358 writes Kelner. It is thus at its core a discursive practice aimed at reinforcing Zionism among participants.

The effectiveness of TBI is demonstrated in a number of recent studies. In one of these studies, titled *Generation Birthright Israel: The Impact of an Israel Experience of Jewish Identity and Choices* it is demonstrated that TBI indeed has a positive impact on the desired identity changes. The study focuses on a group of American Jewish youth who applied to participate in a TBI trip between 2001 and 2004. The sample includes both those who participated and those who did not. Of those who were interviewed, those who participated demonstrated a much stronger relationship with Israel, with 23 percent feeling “very much connected to Israel,” 50 percent feeling “very confident” in their ability to “give a good explanation” of the “situation” in Israel, and 25 percent “more likely to have consulted Israeli news sources during the 2009 war in Gaza and southern Israel.” Participants were also more likely to have a stronger sense of Jewish identity and peoplehood if they had gone on the trip, as well as a much stronger will to marry Jewish. Findings indicated that “among unmarried respondents, participants were 46 percent more likely than nonparticipants to view marrying a Jewish person as ’very important’.”

These results were certainly a relief for the American Jewish establishment, especially following the release of a 2007 report by Steven Cohen and Ari Kelman titled *Beyond Distancing: Young Adult American Jews and Their Alienation from Israel*, which predicted a

---

358 Ibid., 195.
“long-term and ongoing decline in Israel attachment” amongst American Jewish youth.\textsuperscript{359}

Among the more shocking findings of this study for the Jewish establishment was that less than 50% of American Jews under the age of 35 “would see Israel's destruction as a personal tragedy,” compared with close to 80% among those 65 and older. Commenting on these findings, Cohen and Kelman write that “insofar as younger Jews are less attached to Israel, the inevitable replacement of the older population with younger birth cohorts leads to a growing distancing in the population overall.”\textsuperscript{360}

Inevitably, if sufficiently pronounced and widespread, this prospective sea-change in attitudes toward Israel will have profound effects upon American Jews' relationships with Israel, with direct bearing upon Israel’s security. In turn, it will also affect Israelis' sense of connection with, or isolation from, Diaspora Jewry, of which American Jews comprise the majority and the most symbolically and strategically prominent component.\textsuperscript{361}

As it appeared, TBI became that much more crucial.

Kelner provides an interesting interpretation as to why Israel experience tourism is so effective. He argues that it is the powerful affective component of the trips that accounts for their apparent success:

The power of tourism as a medium of socialization rests to a large extent in the fact that it is an embodied practice that fully engages people as actors in an immersive environment. Its semiotic and discursive work occurs not in a rarefied realm of pure thought but in the context of a situated, lived experience that generates affect and awareness of a self-in-context[…] In their efforts to deploy the affective dimensions of tourism to validate the cognitive work of the tours, Israel experience programs seek to ensure that these

\textsuperscript{359} Cohen and Kelman, 11.
\textsuperscript{360} Ibid, 1. A number of scholars have argued against this conclusion, or at least against Cohen and Kelman's reading of their data. Sasson, Kadushin and Saxe most notably argue that statistical levels of attachment according to age-cohort more accurately indicate that Jews tend to grow closer to Israel as they age. See Theodore Sasson, Charles Kadushin and Leonard Saxe, “Trends in American Jewish Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the 'Distancing' Hypothesis,” \textit{Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies}, Brandeis University, September 2010, http://www.brandeis.edu/cmjs/pdfs/Trends.Jewish.Attachment.12.16.10.pdf.
\textsuperscript{361} Cohen and Kelman, 1.
environments and behaviors foster an experience of self that is uplifting and empowering in the extreme.\textsuperscript{362}

This is the case whoever the TBI trip provider may be. TBI functions by supporting private organizations that are mandated with organizing their own tours within an overarching framework. Numerous such providers exist today ranging from those that offer more standard TBI tours to those that specialize in alternative tours such as gay and lesbian tours, adventure-hiking tours, and denominationally-specific tours.

IsraelExperts is among the more popular providers in the US today for those in the older age-cohort of 22+. IsraelExperts guarantees the following:\textsuperscript{363}

- “Politics, not propaganda”
- “Participants your own age”
- “More outdoors than indoors”
- “Travel the country with Israelis your own age”
- “See a side of Israel that you have never seen before”
- “Experience Tel Aviv nightlife first-hand”
- “See three seas, climb two mountains and cross the desert”
- “Educators with passion”
- “You'll talk about the conflict, we won't avoid it”
- “No force-feeding of ideas”
- “A balanced program including independent time to explore”
- “Tour educators, not tour guides”

As a number of these guarantees suggest, IsraelExperts makes a concerted effort to assure participants that they are not being lodged into an exercise of indoctrination. Journalist K.E. Feldman documents her TBI trip with IsraelExperts in a piece on the progressive Jewish American radio show \textit{Beyond the Pale} entitled \textit{The Birthright Israel Chronicles}. In two segments Kelman paints a fascinating picture of what her March 2009 TBI trip was like from

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item\textsuperscript{362} Kelner, 182.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
a critical perspective. “Birthright is a Zionist summer camp for adults,”\textsuperscript{364} she explains, “at once the most fun and horrifying experience I have ever had.”\textsuperscript{365}

She notes a number of points in her trip when an attempt was made to counterbalance the Zionist pro-Israel narrative with sympathy for the Palestinians. For instance, while her group was driving past an unrecognized Bedouin village in the Negev desert the tour guide led a brief discussion about the displacement of Bedouin farmers and about the general inequalities that exist between Israeli Jews and Palestinian Arabs, including Bedouin and Palestinian citizens of Israel.\textsuperscript{366} Feldman explains that this led to confusion and inner-conflict amongst the tour participants, who she explains mostly self-identified as liberals.

Nevertheless, she notes that most of the participants did not seem overly affected by the negative revelations. “It's hard to imagine anyone else's suffering when you're having the time of your life” she suggests. “In this way, pleasure is a remarkable medium for propaganda. Dissent is for fun-suckers.”\textsuperscript{367}

Moreover, although IsraelExperts presents itself as balanced and as objective in its presentation of Israel to the diasporic participants, it is quite heavily biased in favour of a Zionist perspective. Producing strong Zionists is after all one of TBI's central aims. To again quote Kelner:

The fundamental asymmetry in the experience of Arab and Jewish narratives helps to accomplish the important ideological work of the tours in securing diaspora Jewish support for Zionism's claim of a right to Jewish self-determination in the ancestral land. By making these claims subjectively

\textsuperscript{366} Feldman, “Part 1.”  
\textsuperscript{367} Feldman, “Part 2.”
compelling and experientially self-evident, the tours work to win Jewish hearts and minds in the face of global campaigns to delegitimize Jewish assertions of national rights in Israel.\textsuperscript{368}

Testimonials listed on the IsraelExperts website speak to the success it has had in this regard.

The following are a few of the most notable:\textsuperscript{369}

This program has given me a different perspective and helped me understand and sympathize with the Zionist movement a lot more than I previously did. Also it has made me more open-minded about the Israeli Army, and the Israeli state in general. And oh yes, I fell in love with the land of Israel :)

\textbf{Jenny Zbrizher}

My birthright israel [sic] experience has left me feeling a part of something larger in a way I have never felt before. I feel a deep connection to the land of Israel and to the culture of Judaism.

\textbf{Jonathan Kleiman}

Mission accomplished.

IsraelExperts does not operate in Canada but there are various tour operators that do. The Canada-Israel Experience (CIE) is the most popular tour provider among Canadian Jewish youth.\textsuperscript{370} CIE's stated goal is to “meet and respond to the needs of the Canadian Jewish community” by strengthening Jewish identity among youth, orienting them to Israel, and helping them obtain the “necessary tools and knowledge needed to get involved in their home Jewish community and/or return to Israel.”\textsuperscript{371} CIE's “original program” takes participants to several sites, which are common in most, if not all, TBI tours. Indeed, despite

\textsuperscript{368} Kelmer, 195.
being organized by Oranim Educational Initiatives as opposed to CIE, the itinerary of my trip was nearly identical to that displayed on the CIE website.

My TBI trip began with a greeting by the tour director who jump-started the intoxicating sense of national belonging that the trip seeks to offer by welcoming us all “home.” Shortly thereafter we went to the northern Israeli city of Haifa. It was there that the party began. Late night drinking and partying would be a central component throughout. Not everything was a party, however. Cheerful nights of partying were counterbalanced with full-day itineraries that included many of the most notable tourist sites in Israel.

One particularly memorable stop was our visit to the Yad Vashem Holocaust Museum. Yad Vashem is designed to replicate the ascent from destruction to salvation. This is done in two separate ways. First is the museum itself, which guides visitors on a slight upward slope through the exhibits, eventually leaving them breathless overlooking the lush green hills of Jerusalem. Second is in the geographical location of the museum at the bottom or Har Hazikaron, the “Mount of Memory,” where lies a military cemetery that includes the tombs of early Zionist leaders, fallen soldiers, and a specific cemetery for victims of Palestinian terrorist attacks.

Kelner describes the discursive significance of travelling from Yad Vashem to the military cemetery atop the hill. He writes that “as one ascends Har Hazikaron, one symbolically moves from the depths of annihilation to the sacrifices made to secure the state

---

372 Oranim Educational Initiatives is no longer affiliated with TBI.
374 Ironically, the view from the platform includes the site of Deir Yassin, the site of the most notorious massacre of Palestinians during the 1947-9 Nakba.
and finally to the triumph of a free and independent Jewish people in their homeland, symbolized at the summit by the tomb of Theodore Herzl."375 Participants on the TBI trip are taken from “ashes-to-redemption” and from “exile-to-home” as their tour bus climbs the hill to their next destination. Yet it is therein that threats to Jewish life re-emerge. By appending a visit to a cemetery of fallen soldiers and victims of terrorist attacks with Yad Vashem, a link is implicitly made between the threats of the past and the threats of the present, between the oppression faced by Jews in Europe at the hands of the Nazis and the existential threat Israelis feel from Arabs. The fact that it is a national military cemetery in which virtue, militarism, and Zionist ideology are intricately bound together is also significant.376 Anger leads to salvation, leads to fear of salvation lost and ultimately to support for Israel and Zionism. This is an equation that is at the heart of the Yad Vashem/ Har Hazikaron juxtaposition, making it one of TBI's most persuasive discursive techniques.

Various other activities contribute to this end, a number of which involve connecting participants with Israel's geography. This is a discursive practice which as I have explained has been central to Israel experience tourism for many decades. My trip's tiyul component featured various hikes in the north and south of the country. These journeys off the beaten track allowed us to familiarize ourselves with the geography of our new/old homeland. It also included archaeological digs meant to act as proof of our ancestral ties to the land buried deep beneath the soil. It was our job to uncover this history and bring it to the surface. Said has called this the “royal road to Jewish identity,” one which is constantly summoned to draw

375 Kelner, 118.
376 See Peto.
a historical connection between Biblical Eretz Yisrael and the state of Israel.  

The connection between ancient times and the present is also made at the ruins of the fortress-mountain of Masada where participants are recounted the story of the Jewish Zealots who decided to jump and take their lives instead of surrendering to their Roman enemies who had surrounded them. Consistent with Zionist discourse, Masada is not remembered as a catastrophe, but rather as a place that epitomizes the heroism and steadfastness of the Jewish people. The message is that despite being surrounded by enemies, Masada, as a symbol of the Jewish people, “shall not fall again.” The implied message is that we must defend Israel against its enemies at all costs.

Unlike the IsraelExperts trip described by Feldman, my tour did not breach the subject of inequality in Israel. The only time non-Jewish others appeared on the trip was during our visit to a Bedouin tent in the Negev. This component of the trip allowed participants to view the supposed Western-style tolerance of Israel first hand and to question any preconceived notions of Jewish-Israeli Islamophobia and anti-Arab oppression they may have arrived with. Revealingly, Feldman notes that Bedouin hosts face the threat of losing their jobs if someone were to complain about them saying negative things about Israel.

A final element of TBI trips worth discussing is their mifgash component. Mifgash is Hebrew for a meeting between Jews, but in this case it refers specifically to the encounter between Diaspora Jews on the trip and a group of four to six Jewish-Israeli soldiers. My trip

---


378 This slogan is pronounced by soldiers upon being sworn into the Israeli military. For more analysis on Masada’s pedagogical use see Avenge But One Of My Two Eyes, DVD, directed by Avi Mograbi, (France: Alliance Atlantic Vivafilm, 2005).

379 Feldman, “Part 2.”
hosted six soldiers: three males and three females. The development of relationships with the soldiers was indeed one of the highlights of my trip, as it has been for others. Apart from the novelty of encountering peers of a different, albeit related culture, there is an added significance to this meeting that I argue adds considerable strength to its affective component. It is what the Israel soldier represents in relation to the diasporic participant that makes this encounter so significant. Strong, attractive, and imagined as being devoid of stereotypically Jewish traits, the soldiers serve as an example of what the Diaspora Jew could be if he or she so willed it. All Jews, after all, have the right to attain automatic citizenship and become Israelis according to the Israeli Law of Return. Furthermore, though many are undoubtedly oblivious to Israel's colonial past and present, many Jewish youth understand that there is a power relationship in place which positions Israeli Jews in a privileged position over Palestinian Arabs, who are racialized as non-white and uncivilized. This relationship allows Jews to come to know themselves in association with the whiteness of Israel and the new Jew—a whiteness that is of course dependent on the maintenance of a hierarchical relationship with the non-white Palestinian Arab.

Embodied, experiential pedagogy of this sort therefore not only helps to strengthen the level of attachment between Diasporic Jews and Israel, but it helps to reinforce feelings of normalcy and whiteness so intricately bound with the Zionist project. The hope, again, is that such practices will help to ensure the survival both of Israel and the Jewish people.

**Conclusion**

Joseph Massad uses the analogy of the *holodeck* on the popular television series Star
Trek to articulate the relevance of Palestine/Israel in the transformation of the Jewish body:

Like the *holodeck* on the starship Enterprise, which can be programmed to re-create any time, space, and body and which the programmer enters with an identity commensurate with the programming, Palestine was/is Zionism's holodeck. On the Enterprise, re-created bodies cannot exist outside the holodeck, even if they become conscious of their holodeck condition[...]

Similarly, the Israeli Sabra with – almost always - “his” new body can exist only *within* the Israeli space-time, outside of which “he” reverts to being the “feminine schlemiel” that he was before.  

I agree with Massad's reading in terms of the force of Palestine/Israel in forming and shaping the strong, new Jewish subject: the Israeli Sabra. I disagree, however, with his assertion that the Israeli Sabra loses “his” characteristic masculinity (and whiteness) when “he” leaves the space of Palestine/Israel. Likewise, I contend that Jewish subjects do not even have to step foot in Israel to know themselves as such, although programs such as TBI certainly do not hurt; simply being a *stalwart Zionist*, as Freud suggested in his letter to Sabrina Spielrien, can be sufficient.

What organizations like the JNF and TBI do is simply connect the dots. By appealing to notions of Jewish strength and whiteness, these organizations play a crucial role in the engineering and maintenance of consent for Zionist hegemony in Canada and in the North American Jewish Diaspora as a whole. The question is: will their efforts be enough to keep Jews from turning their backs on Israel and Zionism?

---

380 Massad, 340.
CONCLUSION

Rupture

Each year the umbrella body for the North American Jewish Federation system, the JFNA, holds a General Assembly (GA). Located in a different city every year, these are major events, featuring big name speakers and attracting hundreds of Jewish communal leaders, students, and professionals from across North America. This past year's GA was no different. The 2010 GA in New Orleans featured speeches by various prominent individuals including U.S. Vice-President Joe Biden, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israeli Opposition Leader Tzipi Livni, and the current head of the Jewish Agency for Israel Natan Sharansky. Over 4000 people were in attendance this year, and as per usual, the GA got a substantial amount of press coverage. But in contrast to other years, there was a twist that made this year's GA slightly more interesting as a news story.

It happened as Netanyahu was giving his keynote address. Following a round of applause from the audience, a young woman stood up in protest and shouted “Young Jews say the loyalty oath delegitimizes Israel!” a play off of the delegitimization discourse popularized by Sharansky. Security guards were quick to escort her away, but they could not quieten her until she left the conference hall. Netanyahu resumed his speech, but it was to no avail. A few minutes later, another young person stood up. This time the message was that “the occupation delegitimizes Israel.” The young man was swiftly tackled by security

381 The Israeli government recently passed a law demanding all prospective non-Jewish citizens swear an oath of allegiance to Israel as a Jewish and democratic state.
personnel and escorted out. As if to add insult to injury, a traditionally-dressed orthodox man stood up on a chair and tore the protester's banner, which he managed to obtain in the fray, as the crowd began chanting Am Yisrael Chai to show that unlike the young activists they still avowedly supported Netanyahu and the state of Israel. The unreceptive response from the crowd nevertheless failed to dissuade three others from doing the same thing, exclaiming that the settlements, the siege of Gaza, the silencing of dissent, and even Netanyahu himself, delegitimize Israel.

This action was only one example of the growing hostility amongst American Jews, particularly Jewish youth, toward Israel's ongoing occupation and discriminatory policies vis-à-vis the Palestinians. As co-chair of the Jewish Voices for Peace Rabbinical Council Rabbi Brant Rosen wrote on the day after the action, the “five young people in that hall [were] only the tip of the iceberg. They are growing in number, they are rapidly finding their voice, and as their new moniker indicates, they are ‘young, Jewish and proud.’”

The Jewish establishment was certainly caught off guard by the Young, Jewish and Proud contingent; but it is doubtful that they were wholly surprised by the sentiment, especially in light of the attention received by a June 2010 essay in the New York Review of

---

382 Rabbi Brant Rosen, “Young, Jewish and Proud: Time to Make Room at the Table,” Shalom Rav, November 9, 2010, http://rabbibrant.com/2010/11/09/young-jewish-and-proud-time-to-make-room-at-the-table/. To read the declaration see “The Young Jewish Declaration,” Young Jewish and Proud, accessed November 10, 2010, http://www.youngjewishproud.org/about/. Young, Jewish and Proud is the newly established youth wing of Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), which is currently among the most prominent Jewish organizations that actively oppose Israel’s treatment of the Palestinians. JVP differs notably from more mainstream American Jewish organizations that overtly condemn the Israeli occupation but that remain explicitly Zionist, such as J-Street and American Friends of Peace Now. In addition to calling for an end to the occupation, JVP supports full equality for Palestinian citizens of Israel and a resolution to the Palestinian refugee problem that is consistent with international law and equity. See “JVP Mission Statement,” Jewish Voice for Peace, accessed April 12, 2011, http://jewishvoiceforpeace.org/content/jvp-mission-statement. Other such organizations that likewise appear to be growing include the International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network and Independent Jewish Voices (Canada).
Books titled “The Failure of the American Jewish Establishment.” The essay, written by well-respected American professor, journalist, and self-proclaimed liberal Zionist Peter Beinart, is a forceful castigation of what Beinart argues has been the Jewish establishment’s failure to allow for diverse perspectives on Zionism. “For several decades,” writes Beinart, “the Jewish establishment has asked American Jews to check their liberalism at Zionism’s door, and now, to their horror, they are finding that many young Jews have checked their Zionism instead.” As a result, Beinart warns that secular, liberal Zionism is under threat of being completely obliterated. Secular, liberal Zionists are simply not reproducing themselves, their children have no memory of Arab armies massed on Israel’s border and of Israel surviving in part thanks to urgent military assistance from the United States. Instead, they have grown up viewing Israel as a regional hegemon and an occupying power. As a result, they are more conscious than their parents of the degree to which Israeli behavior violates liberal ideals, and less willing to grant Israel an exemption because its survival seems in peril. Because they have inherited their parents’ liberalism, they cannot embrace their uncritical Zionism. Because their liberalism is real, they can see that the liberalism of the American Jewish establishment is fake.

What this implies is that the Jewish establishment, and by extension Israel, could be headed for a major downturn with respect to fundraising and support. It could mean that the strength and cohesion of the mainstream Jewish community could be at risk of being divided on a much larger scale between Zionists and non-Zionist or anti-Zionists. It could even mean that if the trends continue, Israel’s very survival (as a Jewish state) could be at stake. As

---

383 Beinart. There have notably been several challenges to Beinart’s conclusions that are worth mentioning. Theodore Sasson and Leonard Saxe contest Beinart’s findings by pointing to several surveys, which suggest that the distancing hypothesis is inaccurate and misleading. As they have argued in the past contra Cohen and Kelman, Sasson and Saxe maintain that lower degrees of attachment to Israel among younger Jews have little to do with politics and more to do with lifecycle changes. They also point to the increasing number of American Jews who have applied to TBI over the past few years. See Theodore Sasson and Leonard Saxe, “Wrong Numbers: Peter Beinart’s Argument about Israel and Liberal American Jews is Built on Misread Data,” The Tablet, May 28, 2010, http://www.tabletmag.com/news-and-politics/34533/wrong-numbers/.
Haaretz columnist Bradley Burston argues, “Long term, American emotional divestment, Jewish and non, may well prove more of a threat to Israel's future than (Iranian President Mahmoud) Ahmedinejad and his bomb factories, or [Hezbollah leader Hassan Nasrallah and [Chairman of the Hamas Political Bureau Khaled] Mashaal and their rockets.” In other words, the prospect of losing the support of the mainstream American Jewish community is perceived as more of a threat to Israel than that posed by those who would physically attack it.

American political scientist and co-author of the controversial book The Israel Lobby and U.S. Foreign Policy John Mearsheimer also argues that Israel could be in serious trouble if it were to lose its strong base of Jewish support in America. In an April 2010 lecture titled, The Future of Palestine: Righteous Jews vs. the New Afrikaners, Mearsheimer suggests that American Jews with deep emotional attachments to Israel can be divided into three broad categories. The first category includes what Mearsheimer refers to as “righteous Jews.” These are Jews that “have a powerful attachment to core liberal values” such as human rights, who recognize the incredible injustices that Palestinians have been forced to endure since the creation of Israel in 1948, and who support either the creation of a true Palestinian state or, in some cases, a democratic bi-national state for both Israelis and Palestinians.

At the other end of the spectrum are the “new Afrikaners,” the category which Beinart

---

likewise fears is taking over. In Meirshiemers terms, “these are individuals who will back
Israel no matter what it does, because they have blind loyalty to the Jewish state.” They will
not be shaken from this support regardless of what Israel does, even if it is an apartheid state,
which Meirshiemer suggests may already be the case. In response, they will “try to come up
with clever arguments to convince themselves and others that Israel is really not an apartheid
state, and that those who say it is are anti-Semites.”

The third category in Mearsheimer's schema is what he calls the “great ambivalent
middle,” which he argues could go either way; “the key to determining whether the lobby can
protect apartheid Israel over the long run is whether the great ambivalent middle sides with
the new Afrikaners or the righteous Jews.” At present, Mearsheimer notes that the balance of
power unequivocally favours the former; but he is not convinced that this will last. Part of the
reason for the present power balance lies, in Mearsheimer's view, in the fact that most
American Jews, including many righteous Jews, “think that the two-state solution is still a
viable option” and “have little understanding of how far down the apartheid road Israel has
travelled.” This situation has allowed the new Afrikaners to hold sway over the Jewish
masses. It will nevertheless not be long, in Mearsheimer's estimation, before they figure it
out. Once this happens, Mearsheimer believes that the masses in the middle will either keep
quiet or side with the righteous Jews; but they will not, at least for the most part, continue
defending Israel once it is more widely recognized as an apartheid state.

A number of rationales lead Mearsheimer to this conclusion. One rationale is that
apartheid is a “despicable political system [...] at odds with basic American values as well as
core Jewish values,” contradictions that make supporting Israel virtually impossible for
American Jews who wish to continue to identify as liberal. He suggests that this is the main reason why the new Afrikaners will work tirelessly to ensure that the apartheid label does not stick. Another factor is the survey data, which shows that younger Jews are less attached to Israel than the older generations. “Not surprisingly,” writes Mearsheimer, “younger Jews are less disposed to see Israel as a safe haven should the goyim\textsuperscript{387} go on another anti-Semitic rampage, because they recognize that this is simply not going to happen here in the United States.” This, of course, is all hypothetical, but bears taking into consideration.

Mearsheimer’s final rationale for his conclusion that many American Jews are likely to abandon Israel (and Zionism) lies in the changing nature of Israel's demographic make-up. The Jewish Israeli population is simply becoming increasingly ultra-orthodox on account of their “stunningly high birthrates.” With the average ultra-orthodox woman giving birth to an estimated 7.8 children, it will not be long before the ultra-orthodox come to dominate Jewish Israeli society.\textsuperscript{388} When this happens, it will be much more difficult for the vast majority of non-ultra-orthodox American Jews to identify with Israel. In other words, Mearsheimer suggests that liberal Jews will only continue to identify with Israel if it is perceived to reflect their values and, I would add, desires. If it comes to be further stigmatized as an apartheid state and as a state dominated by visibly ultra-orthodox Jews, Israel could thereby become an impediment to these desires, a source of stigma and shame rather than whiteness and normalcy.

What I have sought to do in this thesis is to uncover what it is that drives and maintains Diaspora Zionism as it has come to be manifested in North America, and

\textsuperscript{387} “Goy,” or “goyim” (plural), is Yiddish for non-Jew(s).
\textsuperscript{388} Mearsheimer, “Future of Palestine.”
specifically in Canada. In Chapter One, I argued that from the perspective of the Israeli government, the Zionist movement and the Diaspora Jewish establishment, maintaining a strong base of support for Israel in North America is crucial both for reasons of Jewish continuity and unity, and for the benefit of the Israeli government and Zionist institutions that depend on fundraising, moral, and discursive support. I also argued in Chapter One that Diaspora Zionism acts as somewhat of a cure for the precarity of Diaspora life by giving Jews the freedom to retreat to Israel if need be, and by providing them with a sense of home, belonging, and purpose. In Chapter Two, I described how Zionism's appeal has not only been rooted in its opposition to the precariousness of life in diaspora, but in its ability to provide Jews with an alternative subject position in relation to that of the new Jew. As I demonstrated, desires to alter the Jewish subject position lie largely in the internalization of anti-Semitism. I also argued that the existence of the new Jew is contingent upon maintaining the state of Israel—the Jewish Thing of enjoyment—as a Jewish state. In Chapter Three, I argued that the appeal of Israel and Zionism can furthermore be conceptualized in terms of whiteness. As I have suggested, adherence to Zionism has allowed Diaspora Jews to approximate whiteness while at the same time permitting a degree of difference from the white norm. Finally, in Chapter Four I demonstrated how the various appeals of Israel and Zionism examined previously are evident in the discursive practices employed by the JNF and TBI in their efforts to secure Zionist hegemony in the Diaspora.

To reiterate my cautionary note in my introduction, I do not claim to suggest that the factors that attract Jews to Israel and Zionism detailed in this thesis are the only ones. Many Jews are certainly attracted to Israel and Zionism for religious reasons, for instance. I am
however willing to suggest that whatever the individual circumstances, there are a variety of factors at play, including most notably the attraction of a new Jewish subject position.

I want to conclude by suggesting that, though powerful, the appeal of Israel and Zionism is not immutable. Furthermore, just because Zionism enjoys hegemonic status now, does not mean that it always will. Support for universal human rights, experiences of acceptance in diaspora, and a growing sense of unwillingness to voluntarily be associated with a state that is increasingly alienated in the world due to its abhorrent treatment of the Palestinians has meant that Zionism’s hegemony in North America is likely already in jeopardy.

The works of a few notable Jewish anti-Zionist thinkers are instructive for thinking about alternatives to Jewish life dominated by, and dependent on, Zionism. Daniel and Jonathan Boyarin, for instance, propose a “privileging of Diaspora” and an embrace of exile, “a dissociation of ethnicities and political hegemonies as the only social structure that even begins to make possible a maintenance of cultural identities.”389 In this respect, the Boyarins suggest somewhat of a return to the Jewish Diaspora of old, which paid much more emphasis on the lateral axes of diaspora, as opposed to a single diasporic centre. Melanie Kaye-Kantrowitz suggests a “diasporism” that repudiates notions that “true home and safety are to be found in the nation state.”390 Kaye-Kantrowitz’s diasporism is about “valuing the margins,” about challenging injustice and not giving into those who would relegate anyone to positions of inferiority. Diasporism is

390 Kaye-Kantrowitz, 199.
committed to an endless paradoxical dance between cultural integrity and multicultural complexity. Diasporism depends not on dominance but on balance, perpetual back and forth, home and away, community and outside, always slightly on the edge except perhaps at intensely personal moments in the family created by blood or by love, or at moments of transcendent solidarity.

These proposals give us a lot to think about. Although they do not deal with the appeals of Israel directly, they present an alternative vision to strive for in which Jews are rid of the problematic racial trappings of Zionism and free to embrace Jewish life in a post-Zionist Diaspora. Such a future requires not only that Zionism continues to be challenged, but anti-Semitism, both real and perceived, as well. As Massad has poignantly argued, “The persistence of the Palestinian Question [...] is the persistence of the Jewish Question. Both questions can only be resolved by the negation of anti-Semitism, which still plagues much of Europe and America and which mobilizes Zionism's own hatred of [stereotypically] Jewish Jews and of the Palestinians.”391 My hope is that this thesis has contributed to both: to combating Zionism and to combating anti-Semitism.

Future studies along similar lines could look at the many ways in which Jews have already begun to embrace their Jewishness in ways that challenge, or that are detached from Zionism. They could look more closely at the micro level to see how the draws I have described play out, or not, in the lives of individual Diaspora Jews, and in particular, female Jews, whose historic relationships to Zionism have thus far been grossly under-theorized. A lot more scholarship is needed that focuses on the Canadian context, as there are thus far too few resources, especially when compared with the U.S., on topics such as Canadian Jewish whiteness and Canadian Zionism. It would be interesting to know, for instance, to what

---

391 Massad, 178.
extent the distancing hypothesis applies specifically to Canadian Jews.

If one thing is certain it is that critical and dissenting voices are now managing to break through. This goes for the Canadian Jewish Diaspora as well, albeit to a lesser extent considering its historically more unified and conservative character. Though marginal in relation to some of the more dominant Canadian Jewish organizations, groups like Independent Jewish Voices (Canada)—a national organization that advocates for the fundamental rights of both Israelis and Palestinians—are growing in numbers and beginning to show Canadian Jews that there are alternatives to a Jewish existence asphyxiated by Zionism. If the trends continue—and I imagine they will—the Canadian Jewish Diaspora is destined for a serious shift in the coming years. At the rate Israel is going, I would not be surprised if this shift comes sooner rather than later.
Bibliography


Brown, Michael. “Canadian Jews and Multiculturalism: Myths and Realities.” *Jewish Political Studies Review* 19, no. 3-4 (Fall 2007).


Kaplan, Caren. “‘Beyond the Pale’: Rearticulating U.S. Jewish Whiteness.” In *Talking...*
http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/ht/display/ContentDetails/i/10466/pid/3584.
Avenge But One Of My Two Eyes. DVD. Directed by Avi Mograbi. France: Alliance Atlantic
Vivafilm, 2005.
Attachment to Israel: An Assessment of the 'Distancing' Hypothesis.” Cohen Center for Modern Jewish Studies, Brandeis University, September 2010. 


Vertovec, Steven. “Three Meanings of 'Diaspora' Exemplified among South Asian
Religions.” *Diaspora* 6, no. 3 (Winter 1997): 277-299.


